

Solon cites NFA's increase of buying prices for palay from farmers

By Rio N. Araja

April 14, 2024, 10:10 pm

AGRI party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee on Sunday lauded the approval of the National Food Authority Council to procure local palay at higher prices to beef up the country's rice buffer stock.

“The administration's measure to boost the country's rice buffer stock by buying local palay at a higher price is what the farmers — our food security soldiers — need now more than ever as they struggle with the effects of El Niño and low income. Spending more to boost their productivity is the right way to go,” Lee said.

According to the NFA Council, the approved increase in the procurement price of rice would give them flexibility to compete with private traders and help rice farmers boost their income.

The NFA's adjusted buying price for dry and clean local palay is P23 to P30 per kilo from the previous P19 to P23 per kilo, while wet and fresh palay will be purchased at P17 to P23 a kilo from P16 to P19 per kilo.

Lee reiterated his call for the urgent passage of his proposed House Bill No. 9020 or the Cheaper Rice Act to institutionalize a price subsidy program for the government to buy palay from local farmers at a higher price to ensure their profit and entice them to boost their production.

“With the proposed Cheaper Rice Act, we will legislate an additional P5 to P10 to the prevailing farmgate price per kilo of rice that the government will buy from local farmers so that they can make a profit. When there is income, they will continue to increase their production. When the supply of rice increases, the market price will also decrease, which will also contribute to achieving food security in the country,” he said.

“If we want to reach P20/kilo of rice, we should make this proposal a priority measure and enact it as soon as possible,” he noted.

Lee believes the enactment of the bill would also address the concerns that farmers are forced to sell their land because they are not earning.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314435877/solon-cites-nfas-increase-of-buying-prices-for-palay-from-farmers.html>

Isabela swine industry gets big boost

By Leander C. Domingo

April 15, 2024

TUGUEGARAO CITY: The Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office (DA-RFO2) turned over two community-based swine clustering projects (CBSCP) worth P11 million to two cooperatives in Tumauni town in Isabela.



INSPIRE PROGRAM Undersecretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor 'DV' Savellano (left) of the Department of Agriculture (DA) leads the turnover of over P11 million worth of two community-based swine clustering projects under the Integrated National Swine Program Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (Inspire) Program of the DA in Tumauni town in Isabela province. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

DA-RFO2 Executive Director Rose Mary Aquino said the two CBSCPs, which were under the DA's Integrated National Swine Program Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (Inspire) program, were given to the Northern Tumauni Cereal and Dairy Farmers Cooperative and Northern Luzon MultiPurpose Cooperative.

Agriculture Undersecretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor "DV" Savellano led the turnover of the facilities on April 12 to the farmers' cooperatives associations (FCAs) beneficiaries.

Savellano congratulated the beneficiaries and the local officials for accepting and implementing the projects that will support the "development of the swine industry which was being affected by African Swine Fever."

"If you have other needs, especially those that pertain to livestock, just coordinate with our regional office, and we will evaluate your proposals," he said, assuring them the DA will support their initiatives in agriculture.

"Through the leadership of Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., we are currently packaging special programs for farmers per district in the whole country," Savellano said.

According to Aquino, the swine clustering project aims to hasten the recovery of the hog industry by enhancing production to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of swine and pork products.

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"This is to restore the swine production livelihood, increase the income and expand market opportunities for swine raisers," she added.

The recipient FCAs and local government unit (LGU) officials here, headed by Mayor Venus Bautista, were acknowledged for the smooth implementation of the Inspire projects.

Aquino noted that the Cagayan Valley Region had 93 targets for 2022 and 2023 amounting to P673 million, and that with the convergence efforts of DA, LGUs, other partner agencies and FCAs, the majority of

their targets had already been completed and others are in the above 90 percent completed.

Former mayor Arnold Bautista, infrastructure and other development programs consultant, thanked the Agriculture Department for allocating funds to the projects and assured that they will take care of these facilities.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/15/regions/isabela-swine-industry-gets-big-boost/1941479>

Visayas lags in updating farmers' registry – Imee

By Rjay Zuriaga Castor

April 15, 2024

ILOILO CITY: Sen. Imee Marcos said that the Visayas region is lagging behind other regions in updating the list of farmers registered in the government's Registry System for Basic Agriculture (RSBA).

"Nahuhuli ang Visayas sa listahan sa RSBA. Ang listahan ng Visayas at ng DA (Department of Agriculture) medyo outdated (Visayas is lagging in the RSBA list. The Visayas list and that of the DA are outdated)," the senator said during a press conference in Iloilo on Thursday, April 11.

The RSBA is a master list of farmers used by the government to identify beneficiaries for different agriculture-related programs and services, such as the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance, where an assistance of P5,000 is given to farmers tilling rice farms of 2 hectares.

Marcos emphasized that the updated list for the agriculture sector is essential to identify farmers who need to be given aid amid the devastation caused by the El Niño phenomenon to agricultural crops in Iloilo.

"Pagpasok ko sa Iloilo nagulat ako sobrang alikabok, wala ka nang makitang green, wala kang tubig, walang tanim. Nagulat ako kasi akala ko sa Luzon lang 'yung ganun [...] pero Iloilo is not much better pala (When I entered Iloilo I was shocked because of so much dust,

you can't see any green, there's no water, there's no plant. I was surprised because I thought it's only Luzon that is in a situation like that, and Iloilo is not much better)," Senator Marcos said.

The senator stressed that the situation in Iloilo is a major concern since it is the largest producer of palay (unmilled rice) in the region.

"It's a dangerous situation because we always look toward Iloilo as the single largest rice producer in the entire Visayas. It is only Iloilo that has a significant rice crop, and it's now being threatened by El Niño," the senator added.

The Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council reported that as of April 4, the effects of El Niño have translated to over P770 million in damages and losses to agriculture in Western Visayas, with Iloilo registering the largest damage at P519 million.

The extreme weather conditions resulted in a production loss of 23 metric tons, affecting a total of 10,116 farmers and fisherfolk in the province.

Marcos has recently filed a Senate resolution seeking an investigation into the ongoing El Niño phenomenon and its effects, such as the water crisis in several areas of the country.

"I filed a resolution to investigate so that we will know exactly what are the preparations for El Niño and what our farmers can avail of," she said during the press conference.

Senate Resolution 986 cited the drought conditions in 37 provinces reported by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, and the loss in crop production with Western Visayas being the hardest hit.

"Despite the various efforts and initiatives being conducted by the government and the increase in water rates, the entire country is still experiencing strained water resources and water crisis in various regions and provinces," the resolution read.

Marcos also emphasized the need for measures to be in place in light of escalating rice export restrictions implemented by countries that are sources of rice imports.

"The issue also is what do we do with rice because while we have smaller crops of rice, the rice exporting countries, the ones that we buy from, have already begun to set export restrictions," she said.

"Papaano tayo niyan kung hindi na sila magbebenta kahit may pera tayo? Wala tayong pagkukunan. Syempre they want to guarantee and safeguard their local supplies (What's in store for us if they don't sell rice? We have no source. Of course, they want to guarantee and safeguard their local supplies)," Marcos added.

She said the current weather conditions call for an overturning of the planting calendar and a need to invest more in early maturing and drought-resistant rice varieties.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/15/regions/visayas-lags-in-updating-farmers-registry-imee/1941477>

THE MANILA TIMES

By Janine Alexis Miguel

April 15, 2024

TRADE in agricultural goods posted a deficit of \$11.49 billion last year as both imports and exports fell, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

In a report, the PSA said this represents a 2.6-percent dip from the \$11.8 billion posted in 2022. In 2022 and 2021, the total balance of trade registered annual increments of 32.8 percent and 39.4 percent, respectively

Last year, the country's agricultural trade decreased by 9.2 percent to \$24.34 billion, a reversal from 2022's 19 percent growth and totaling \$26.8 billion.

The country's total agricultural exports last year fell to \$6.42 billion, a 14.3-percent decline from \$7.49 billion logged in the previous year. Agricultural exports accounted for 8.7 percent of the country's total exports during the period.

Imports of farm goods, likewise, dropped by 7.2 percent to \$17.92 billion from \$19.3 billion; this accounted for 14.2 percent of the country's total trade.

Edible fruits and nuts and peels of citrus fruit melons accounted for the largest share of agriculture exports during the year at \$1.96 billion, up by 2.07 percent from the previous year's \$435.59 million.

Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; and animal or vegetable waxes fell by 41.25 percent to \$1.29 billion from the previous year's \$2.2 billion.

Preparations of vegetables, fruit, nuts or other parts of plants were valued at \$748.83 million, 9.18 percent lower than the \$824.58 million recorded a year earlier.

To round up the country's top five agricultural exports in 2023, shipments of tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes totaled \$503.97 million, and preparations of meat, fish and crustaceans, mollusks, and other aquatic invertebrates at \$456.76 million.

The top 10 commodity groups, in terms of the value of agricultural exports, contributed \$6.21 billion or 96.6 percent of the country's total agricultural export revenue last year.

As for agricultural imports, cereals accounted for the biggest share at 21.2 percent and were valued at \$3.80 billion, showing a decline of 4.86 percent from \$3.98 billion a year earlier.

Residues and waste from food industries and prepared animal fodder followed with \$2.22 billion; miscellaneous edible preparations at \$1.87 billion; meat and edible meat offal at \$1.67 billion; and a total of \$1.2 billion for dairy produce, birds' eggs, natural honey, and edible products of animal origin not elsewhere classified.

Among Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) member countries, Malaysia remains the top buyer of the Philippines' agricultural exports valued at \$214.32 million.

Meanwhile, the Netherlands was the top trading partner of the Philippines in the exports of farm goods among the European Union with \$137.16 million.

The Netherlands was the country's top destination for agricultural commodities valued at \$594.23 million among European Union member countries.

As for import value, Vietnam was the leading supplier of agricultural products to the Philippines among Asean member- countries and contributed \$1.94 billion or 30.1 percent to the country's total value of agricultural imports.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/15/business/top-business/agri-trade-deficit-narrows-in-2023/1941461>

Tobacco growers: Enforce Vape law

By Janine Alexis Miguel

April 15, 2024

LOCAL tobacco growers said that the proliferation of illicit cigarettes and vape products is to blame for lower excise collections, urging the government to enforce Republic Act (RA) 11900.

RA 11900 is the "Vaporized Nicotine and Non-Nicotine Products Regulation Act."

The Philippine Tobacco Growers Association (PTGA) and the National Federation of Tobacco Farmers Association and Cooperatives (Naftac) said that illegal and disposable vape products threaten the livelihood of tobacco farmers and their families.

"Tobacco farmers are already reeling from the proliferation of illicit cigarettes, which has reduced demand for locally produced tobacco leaf among domestic manufacturers," said PTGA President Ka Turning Distor.

Distor said that vape products do not contain dried tobacco leaves and do not directly benefit tobacco farmers.

"Illegal vapes only benefit smugglers and crooked retailers since they don't even pay taxes. We need the help of the government to stop this 'vapedemic' and save the local tobacco industry," he said.

The groups also said that the proliferation of illicit cigarettes and vape products has reduced the demand for locally produced tobacco and has led to a drop in tobacco excise tax collections.

Tobacco excise taxes fell from P176 billion in 2021 to P160 billion in 2022. In 2023, a 16-percent drop to P135 billion was reported, falling short of the targeted P170 billion for the year, according to the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

"Less excise tax collections from tobacco means less support for us farmers," Distor said.

Under RA 11346, 40 percent of tobacco excise taxes are allocated for Philippine Health Insurance Corp. while 10 percent goes to the Health Facilities Enhancement Program of the Department of Health.

The remaining percentage, meanwhile, is allocated to the national budget and tobacco-producing provinces to support farmers of the crop.

In line with this, PTGA, Naftac and other farmers' groups urged the national government to enforce RA 11900 strictly.

Naftac Chairman Bernard Vicente said that they also support the Vape Bill to regulate cigarette alternatives such as vape products and heated tobacco products and promote the utilization of local tobacco.

"Unfortunately, this new law is now being abused by unscrupulous businessmen who are blatantly smuggling and distributing illegal vapes," Vicente said.

Data from the National Tobacco Administration showed that there are currently 2.2 million Filipinos who are financially dependent on tobacco, including more than 430,000 farmers, farm workers and their family members.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/15/business/top-business/tobacco-growers-enforce-vape-law/1941458>

Higher NFA palay buying price range may spur inflation

• April 15, 2024

- RICE prices are vulnerable to spikes because of the drought, but the decision of the National Food Authority (NFA) Council to compete with the private sector could put pressure on prices, according to economists.
- The NFA Council on Thursday approved a higher buying price range for palay to a range of P23 to P30 per kilo of clean and dry palay, and P17 to P23 a kilo for wet and fresh palay. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/12/nfa-council-okays-higher-palay-buying-price-range/>).
- Unionbank Chief economist Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion told BusinessMirror NFA's recent move owed to its aim to be more competitive against private traders when it comes to purchasing rice to fill the government's buffer stock.
- "It may be that this move can even help maintain prices and help NFA with their buffers. Nonetheless, rice prices are still vulnerable to spikes because of the current challenges brought about by the drought," Asuncion said.
- Ateneo de Manila University economist Leonardo Lanzona Jr. said the increase in the NFA's buying price could lead to an increase in rice prices nationwide, as the government can directly compete with the private sector.
- Lanzona said if the government's main goal is to build its reserves, buying rice should be done in areas where demand for rice is "stagnant and price is generally low."
- This, Lanzona told BusinessMirror, will not only impact rice prices but will also achieve better regional distribution. However, NFA is buying rice in areas where prices are high.
- "Given its access to taxpayers' money, the government has undue advantage over the private sector, hence creating an upward pressure on prices," Lanzona told this newspaper.
- "With the directive to raise buying prices, the NFA is now heading in areas where prices are already high and the added demand pushes prices higher," he added.
- Lanzona said if the government's aim is to help the farmers, this cannot be done by raising its buying price for palay which ultimately "distorts the markets and unfairly penalizes the private sector."

- Extending assistance to farmers can be done by providing public goods such as farm-to-market roads and irrigation.
- Lanzona said such public goods will lead to lower production costs and benefit consumers and producers.
- “Conceptually, it is wrong for the government to intervene through prices as this distorts the markets and unfairly penalizes the private sector,” Lanzona said.

“If government intends to help the farmers, this can best be accomplished by providing public goods which the private sector are not expected to produce,” he stressed.

Inflationary–UA&P exec

Meanwhile, University of Asia and the Pacific Center for Food and Agribusiness (CFA) Executive Director Senen U. Reyes said the increase in the NFA’s buying price for palay may be inflationary.

Reyes told BusinessMirror that the NFA earlier admitted that it had a buffer stock of less than one day making it necessary to purchase stocks.

However, given a buying price of P23 per kilo, Reyes said the NFA may face stiff competition from private traders who are also buying stocks for consumers.

“Usually when NFA raises prices it does not revert to the old [prices], thus traders are likely to adjust their buying price depending on their assessment of supply with the El Nino,” Reyes told this newspaper.

Not inflationary

Meanwhile, economists such as former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante B. Canlas told BusinessMirror the NFA Council decision will not lead to higher inflation in the short-term.

Canlas explained that the decision was reached to help farmers through a “price-support program” as they have been negatively affected by adverse weather conditions such as droughts and floods.

“Going by past behavior of NFA, it will maintain the retail prices in order not to reduce consumer welfare. NFA will support the price support by running a bigger deficit. Hence, the price support will not be inflationary in the short run,” Canlas told BusinessMirror.

Monetary Board Member V. Bruce J. Tolentino thinks it is crucial to ask how the NFA intends to finance the increase in the buying price.

Canlas said it is likely that the increase will be financed by NFA by incurring higher deficits.

Tolentino agreed and said the NFA did not have the funds to procure at higher prices given the significant volume.

Should this happen, Canlas and Tolentino said, the reckoning will have an effect, though negligible, on the market.

“Since the price-support program has no impact on inflation in the short run, nothing will deter the BSP from the interest-rate easing it announced may start in Q3 this year to support GDP growth,” Canlas told BusinessMirror.

“The prospects for higher inflation are for next year when financing NFA’s enlarged deficit has to be faced. That’s when BSP will cross the bridge,” he added.

On Thursday, NFA’s policymaking body last raised the buying price to a range of P19 to P23 per kilo of dry palay and P16 to P19 per kilo of wet palay in September last year.

Based on the Rice Tariffication Law, NFA said it needs to maintain a national rice buffer stock equivalent to at least nine days consumption, which now stands at 330,000 metric tons, to cover requirements in case of disasters and other calamities.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/15/higher-nfa-palay-buying-price-range-may-spur-inflation/>

MAV scheme must be nixed, risks corruption— MB member

• Cai U. Ordinario April 15, 2024

- A SYSTEM that allows traders to import a certain amount of goods at lower tariffs must be abolished, according to a member of the Monetary Board.
- The minimum access volume (MAV) scheme committed by the Philippines to the World Trade Organization (WTO) tends to limit access to imports and could be a source of corruption, Monetary Board V. Bruce J. Tolentino told reporters.
- “One of the recommendations that we have is really to get rid of the entire MAV system completely because the MAVs are relatively small. And the process of allocating the MAV is prone to corruption,” Tolentino said.
- He said the government wants to increase access for everyone who wants to bring in imported agricultural goods which will help beef up domestic food supply.
- Under Republic Act 8178, the Agricultural Tariffication Act, the MAV “refers to the volume of a specific agricultural product that is allowed to be imported with a lower tariff as committed by the Philippines to the World Trade Organization [WTO] under the Uruguay Round Final Act.”

The law also mandated the establishment of an equitable and transparent mechanism to allocate the MAV for agricultural commodities whose quantitative restrictions have been lifted.

Furthermore, the law said the mechanism should have the least government intervention, address the requirements of each geographical area, and should not entail any cost to importers of these products to the detriment of local consumers.

In May 2021, former President Rodrigo Duterte signed Executive Order 133 which raised the country’s pork MAV to 200,000 metric tons (MT) from the previous level of 54,210 MT.

As for the impact of abolishing MAV on inflation, Tolentino said he views the scheme “more as a source of corruption, rather than an instrument for bringing down prices.”

Apart from rice, meat prices contributed to the increase in March inflation, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Inflation posted by Meat and Other Parts of Slaughtered Land Animals was at 2 percent year on year, faster than the 0.7 percent posted in February 2024. This increase was particularly caused by rising pork prices.

The PSA noted that meat inflation increased after four consecutive months of slowdown. Prices of fresh pork were higher on a month-on-month and year-on-year basis.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/15/mav-scheme-must-be-nixed-risks-corruption-member/>

Ifpri: Farm subsidies must have sunset clauses

• April 15, 2024

- The International Food Policy Research Institute (Ifpri) said a measure that will allow the extension of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) should include its gradual phase out.
- Research Fellow Emeritus at the IFPRI Director General's Office, Mark Rosegrant, recently told reporters on the sidelines of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Food Security Forum held recently that it is important to place sunset provisions on farm subsidies.
- Rosegrant issued the statement after recent reports indicated that Senator Cynthia A. Villar is proposing to extend the RCEF for another six years, doubling the support for farmers to P20 billion.
- "Granted they're going to do it [extension] for six years but why not start phasing down the level of support at two to three years and you could briefly put that into just direct payments to farmers? So that it doesn't distort the way the production decisions are made. I think that would be a useful way to do it."
- Once the RCEF is phased out, he said the funds from rice tariffs could be used for other investments in the agriculture sector. This will ensure that government funds are spent for agriculture that could lead to "higher returns."
- These other areas include research and development, improving value chains, and efforts that would help reduce post-harvest losses, among others.
- One key investment, Rosegrant said, is irrigation systems that may become too expensive in the medium- to long-term. "So the idea then for repurposing, is to move funding from some of the subsidies programs into more productive investments."
- The RCEF is a fund dedicated to improving farmers' competitiveness through the provision of certified seeds, mechanization, expansion of credit access, and delivery of extension services.
- RCEF is a six-year P10-billion rice production development program created under the rice tariffication law, or Republic Act 11203, which deregulated the rice industry.
- The law mandates that P5 billion should be allocated for farm mechanization, P3 billion for inbred seed distribution, P1 billion for credit and P1 billion for extension.

- In 2020, two years before the mandatory review of RCEF, economists said the P10-billion RCEF can be used to finance the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA).
- The National Economic and Development Authority said the mandatory review is part of the Implementing Rules and Regulation of the Rice Trade Liberalization law.
- The University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) Center for Food and Agribusiness (CFA) told the BusinessMirror that the RSBSA's budget allocation was only P200 million when the World Bank estimated that it should be P1.7 billion to P2 billion. The funding from RCEF can finance the support given to farmers through the RSBSA.
- The CFA also said the other components of RCEF should also be examined and funded. Some P5 billion of the funds should also finance other attachments of farm mechanization.
- It pushed for other improvements in the law, such as allowing farmers to choose the seeds they will plant.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/15/ifpri-farm-subsidies-must-have-sunset-clauses/>

Roving testing lab for food safety launched

- Butch Fernandez April 15, 2024
- To guarantee that plant-based foods are safe for human consumption, a modern Mobile Plant Food Safety Laboratory was launched by the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).
- Sen. Cynthia A. Villar and BPI Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban led the inauguration of the first roving laboratory for food testing of plant-based food produce last April 12, at the BPI complex in Manila.
- “It will ensure the safety of consumers to make sure that plant-based foods are free from pesticide residues, chemicals and microbial contaminants particularly in markets where access to conventional laboratories are restricted,” Villar said.
- “As Filipinos we are used to evaluating our fruits and vegetables by merely using our eyes. We look at their appearance, or by touching, smelling and tasting them and we conclude that they are fit for consumption, or whether they are acceptable or rejected.”
- The chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food said the roving modern laboratory will tour markets in the capital city to raise awareness of food safety and good food handling practices.

It is equipped to test for a range of harmful food contaminants and pathogens including toxic chemicals, heavy metals, pesticides, antibiotics, among others.

The BPI mobile laboratory will check the presence of toxic chemicals, pesticides in fruits and vegetables, E.coli in water and salmonella.

“Test results take just a few minutes to a few hours. Although these tests are not as thorough as analyses performed in large laboratories, they are enough to detect the worst cases of contamination, allowing officials to alert sellers and buyers,” said Villar.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/15/roving-testing-lab-for-food-safety-launched/>

Groups form coalition to promote use of coconut in biodiesel

- Rizal Raoul Reyes April 15, 2024
- Several groups formed a coalition to highlight the benefits of coconut, particularly in biodiesel production.
- “We have been holding meetings to maximize our knowledge about the unusual gifts of the coconut in biodiesel while also promoting nationwide planting,” said Clara Reyes-Lapus, President of Mama Sita Foundation and Philippine Association of Condiments Producers Inc. (PACPI), who is leading the discussion group, in a breakfast forum held in Quezon City last Friday.
- The other members of the discussion group are Agnes Cristobal, Vice President of PACPI; Rafael Diaz, adviser of the Philippine Biodiesel Association (TPBA) and former Executive Director of the Asian Institute of Petroleum Studies Inc. (AIPSI); Yvonne Agustin, executive director of the United Coconut Association of the Philippines Inc.; and Bataan 3rd District Representative Gila Garcia.
- “My view of the coconut has evolved and matured since I and my staff encountered various resource persons who were interviewed for our video project on coconut as food and fuel,” said Reyes-Lapus.
- To highlight the importance of the coconut as a superb biodiesel and sustainable fuel source, Reyes-Lapus recently produced a coconut video project, scheduled for release this month.
- Last January, the Department of Energy mandated the gradual increase of the country’s long-standing 2 per cent coconut methyl ester (CME) blend in diesel over the next few years—to 3 percent this year, 4 percent in 2025 and 5 percent in 2026.
- CME—which comes from coconuts—is added to diesel to create a coconut-based biodiesel (also known as “cocobiodiesel”), which is the only kind of biodiesel used in the Philippines.
- Reyes-Lapus said the mandate is a landmark move for the Philippine biodiesel industry after almost two decades. The Philippines has remained at 2 percent CME blend over the last 17 years since the passage of Republic Act 9367 or the Biofuels Act of 2006.

- Unfortunately, the Philippines has been left behind by other Asean countries in terms of biodiesel blending mandates—with Indonesia currently at a 35 percent biodiesel blend (“B35”) and Malaysia at a 20 percent biodiesel blend (“B20”).
- According to Diaz, the higher addition of CME in diesel has been scientifically proven to improve fuel combustion and engine performance while contributing to cleaner air by substantially removing toxic emissions.
- He also said CME in diesel is capable of dissolving hard-to-burn carbon components, ensuring a complete combustion of fuel that guarantees better engine power and cleaner emissions.
- Diaz said the greatest feature of CME is that it ensures the elimination of diesel soot emissions while boosting engine power because of its high solvency features that prevent carbon deposition and emissions, which are also carcinogenic. He added that the high solvency of CME in diesel de-clogs injector nozzles and fuel feeder lines, normalizing the fuel spray pattern of diesel engines.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/15/groups-form-coalition-to-promote-use-of-coconut-in-biodiesel/>

COA okays P4.5M NFA claim for unpaid rice deliveries

By **Peter Tabingo** April 15, 2024

THE National Food Authority (NFA) will finally get paid for thousands of sacks of rice delivered between 2008 to 2012 at the request of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

In a seven-page decision released last week, the Commission on Audit (COA) partially granted NFA's request for payment for the unpaid deliveries but held that only P4.51 million was fully documented, while P7.28 million needs more documentary support for confirmation.

The COA en banc's ruling was signed by chairperson Gamaliel A. Cordoba and Commissioners Roland Café Pondoc and Mario G. Lipana.

The NFA claimed it had delivered 12,212 bags of rice at 50 kilograms each as of June 2016 worth P15,534,375 in total, but the DSWD only acknowledged P11.79 million which was issued a certification dated July 30, 2018. Officials from both agencies are still working to reconcile the discrepancy based on available records.

It was in January 2007 under former DSWD secretary Esperanza Cabral and then NFA administrator Jessup Navarro that a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed allowing the DSWD to purchase rice from the NFA for disaster relief and other emergency operations.

From 2008 to 2014, these transactions were supposed to be chargeable against the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) of various legislators.

On February 21, 2017, the DSWD informed the NFA that it can no longer pay its obligations after the Supreme Court declared the PDAF unconstitutional and halted all releases from the pork barrel allocations of all lawmakers.

At the DSWD's advice, NFA OIC administrator Tomas Escarez filed the petition with the COA on March 9, 2020 submitting copies of 18 billing notices as well as the DSWD's certification acknowledging P11.79 million payable to the NFA.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_news/coa-okays-p4-5m-nfa-claim-for-unpaid-rice-deliveries/

MANILA BUSINESS INSIGHT

Supplier's P11M claim vs DA Region 6 denied

By **Peter Tabingo** April 15, 2024

A SUPPLIER of the Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Office 6 will not receive a centavo despite delivering 235,000 cacao seedlings worth P11.7 million for failure to faithfully comply with the terms of the contract.

The Commission on Audit denied the petition of Renel's Fruit Nursery on the grounds that it failed to satisfy the requirement of the contract that each cacao seedling should be certified by the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

Although the claimant invoked the principle of "quantum meruit" which allows reasonable payment commensurate to services rendered, the commission held that there is no obligation on the part of the DA-Region 6 since the seedlings cannot be used by the government agency.

"The delivered seedlings have not benefitted the government and the public because they were not accepted by the DA RFO No. 6 for being non-compliant with the stipulated specifications," the COA said.

According to records, Renel's Fruit Nursery won public bidding in 2015 for the supply of UF18 or BR25 cacao seedlings worth P11,686,550.

The seedlings were supposed to be delivered to all six provinces of Western Visayas with 110,000 going to Iloilo, 37,500 to Antique, 35,000 to Aklan, 20,000 to Negros Occidental, 17,500 to Guimaras, and 15,000 to Capiz.

Noting the absence of BPI certification although the nursery was accredited, DA-RO 6 refused to accept the seedlings and requested the supplier to submit the certification in a letter dated March 9, 2016.

A supervising agriculturist of the BPI then informed the regional director that the nursery was unable to comply with the plant material certification because all 235,000 plants were grafted without the knowledge of plant nursery inspectors although the plants were authentic UF18 cacao.

On January 23, 2017, the DA-Region 6 gave the supplier a five-day deadline to submit an explanation why the contract should not be terminated due to its failure to comply with the terms and conditions.

On October 14, 2020 Tranquilina Haspe, representing Renel's Fruit Nursery, demanded payment from the DA Region 6. The agency replied that the seedlings remain unpaid because they were not compliant with specifications in the contract.

On November 13, 2020, the supplier filed its petition before the COA asking that the DA-Region 6 be ordered to release payment. She also asked that her cash bond of P586,000 be refunded.

In denying the claim, the COA en banc held that the supplier took the risk of loss when it failed to take back the seedlings despite the refusal of DA Region 6 to accept them without BPI certification.

"In this case, good faith cannot be considered in favor of Ms. Haspe because it appears that she intentionally disregarded the contract as to the specifications of the seedlings," the commission added.

Likewise, it pointed out that DA Region 6 had the right to forfeit the claimant's cash bond due to the termination of the contract attributable to the supplier's fault.

"In view of the foregoing discussions, the performance security should not be returned to claimant, and instead, it should be forfeited," the COA said.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_news/suppliers-p11m-claim-vs-da-region-6-denied/

Tobacco farmers decry illicit, disposable vapes

BY [GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG](#)

Apr 14, 2024 08:00 PM

EMBARGOED SUNDAY FOR MONDAY ISSUE

Tobacco farmers are pushing for the enactment of stricter vape regulations to combat the surge in illegal and disposable products that are harming their livelihoods.

Nearly a hundred thousand members of the Philippine Tobacco Growers Association (PTGA) and the National Federation of Tobacco Farmers Association and Cooperatives (NAFTAC) called on the national government to push through the Vaporized Nicotine and Non-Nicotine Products Regulation Act (RA 11900).

The bill entails the government's responsibility to regulate vape and novel tobacco products from importation, manufacturing, sale, distribution, and others for the public's well-being.

This was created due to the rapid demand for vapes from consumers, affecting thousands of farmers.

Besides the act benefitting the public, this could also protect the livelihood of tobacco farmers. About 2.2 million Filipinos financially depend on tobacco growing, with 430,000 or 19.5 percent of this being farmers, farm workers, and their families, according to the National Tobacco Administration (NTA).

Subsequently, tobacco farmers in Lidlidda, Ilocos shared that succession is a recurring problem in the tobacco livelihood.

PTGA President Ka Turning Distor noted that the demand for locally produced tobacco leaves among domestic manufacturers is significantly dropping due to the growing market of illicit cigarettes.

"Illegal vapes further endangers the livelihood of thousands of Filipinos who rely on the tobacco industry for sustenance since these are replacing legal, tax-paid cigarettes as well," he said.

"Unlike heated tobacco sticks, vapes do not contain dried tobacco leaves and has no direct benefit to tobacco farmers. Illegal vapes only benefit smugglers and crooked retailers since they don't even pay taxes. We need the help of the government to stop this 'vapedemic' and save the local tobacco industry," the PTGA chief added.

NAFTAC Chairman Bernard Vicente stressed that other businessmen disregard the act as they continue to smuggle and distribute illegal vapes to the public.

Aside from the tobacco leaf demand decreasing, Distor explained that support from the local government units (LGUs) has been cut back, stating “less excise tax collections from tobacco means less support for us farmers.”

The tobacco excise taxes are allocated to Philhealth, the Department of Health (DOH) Health Facilities Enhancement Program, the national budget, and finally to the tobacco-producing provinces.

Because of the lessened tobacco demand, excise taxes this drop from P176 billion in 2021 to P160 billion in 2022.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/14/tobacco-farmers-decry-illicit-disposable-vapes>

Filipino Food Month: Celebrate the flavors of our culture

BY [MANILA BULLETIN](#)

Apr 14, 2024 00:09 AM



Filipino food is a real buffet of flavors as it is a collection of cuisine from 17 regions where flavors have been blended by culture, tradition, and indigenous ingredients.

It's a fiesta every time Filipinos get together for meals with family and friends because it's part of our culture to show hospitality and respectfulness through food. Note that a still practiced respectful gesture by all Filipinos is the open invitation of "kain po tayo" (let's eat!) before one starts a meal, or even when a stranger passes while one is in the middle of a meal. It's a very charming gesture that distinguishes a Filipino anywhere in the world. All the flavors that compose what is known as Filipino food is celebrated every April which had been declared as Filipino Food Month or Buwan ng Kalutong Pilipino by Presidential Proclamation No. 469 signed in 2018.

Leading the celebration are the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the Department of Agriculture (DA), in coordination with the Department of Tourism (DOT), and

the Philippine Culinary Heritage Movement (PCHM). The government agencies have prepared various activities to present a truly flavorful journey that will promote Philippine culinary heritage and gastronomy around the country.

The month's celebration which focuses on the theme — Kalutong Filipino, Lakas ng Kabataang Makabago (Filipino Cuisine: Strength of Innovative Youth) – is particularly aimed at the youth, to empower them to be leaders in promoting Philippine culinary heritage and gastronomy.

It opened in Pampanga, regarded as the country's culinary capital, last April 5, and will close in San Jose de Buenavista, Antique on April 30.

Many food events are now happening in many parts of the country, each one offering the many traditional Filipino delights. In Manila, the DOT has started the Philippine Eatsperience, a fieta-themed food fair offering a wide variety of regional cuisines at Rizal Park (Luneta) and Intramuros. It will be open throughout the year.

A three-day academic research conference – KainCon – will be held starting April 15 hosted by the Far Eastern University, Manila. Students, academics, and industry professionals will gather and learn from the discussions around the theme “All things Filipino Food: Community, Culture, and Economy” which will especially discuss local food cultivation and preservation initiatives.

In several cities around the country, the food month celebration is presented by NCCA's “Hapag ng Pamana Philippine Food Festival” which promotes regional culinary heritage through trade fairs, cooking demonstrations, food symposiums, conferences, workshops, cultural shows, and food competitions.

In Iloilo City, and Roxas City, Capiz there will be food festivals to explore local cuisine from April 22 to 30. Iloilo City was recently named the UNESCO City of Gastronomy in the UNESCO Creative Network 2023.

The list of food-themed activities is long and these were held in various places to create a deeper awareness and appreciation for Filipino cuisine. After all, that's the reason why a Presidential proclamation has declared a month to celebrate Filipino food: “To appreciate, conserve, and protect culinary traditions; to establish Filipino culinary traditions as an art form and ensure its transmission to future generations; and to support the farmers and agricultural communities” from where our food comes from.

Do something special today to celebrate Filipino food.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/14/filipino-food-month-celebrate-the-flavors-of-our-culture>

Modernizing Philippine agriculture

BY [JAIME ARISTOTLE B. ALIP, PHD](#)

Apr 15, 2024 05:35 AM

Even as El Niño continues to affect many parts of the country, last week, the Department of Agriculture (DA) projected a 1.1 percent increase in rice production this first quarter. This is reassuring, especially in the face of rising inflation that, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), was driven by increased food prices and transportation costs. But with Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr.'s 8-Point Plan to modernize Philippine agriculture, this good news is hardly a surprise.

I was very impressed with Secretary Laurel, who sat down with the Makati Business Club (MBC) last month to explore possible public-private partnerships in agriculture. I was privileged to join the MBC contingent that met with the Secretary and discussed ways to modernize the sector and help our farmers. We were led by MBC Chairman Edgar Chua and joined by board members Manolito Tayag and Jose Victor Paterno. Also present were MBC members Danielle Del Rosario of PHINMA and Cris Ilagan of PEPSICO, as well as MBC Executive Director Bobby Batungbacal and his staff, Catch Ofilada, Bettina Bautista and Coco Alcuaz.

8-point plan

We had a very lively and fruitful discussion with the DA Secretary, who briefed us on his plans to build a modern agricultural supply chain that will increase production, lower food costs, and make farming/fisheries bankable investments. I liked Secretary Laurel. He was very forthright and earnest in wanting to improve the lot of Filipino farmers. His approach is very practical, employing best business practices to bring in more efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of DA's programs and projects to its target clients.

Secretary Laurel's 8-Point plan includes: (a) expanding/improving available agri-fishery areas; (b) mechanizing/modernizing agri-fishery production systems; (c) developing post-harvest systems and infrastructures; (d) developing efficient logistics systems for input and production output; (e) improving and expanding market access; (f) digitalization; (g) balancing DA's development and regulatory functions; and (h) forging strong partnerships with farmers, fisherfolks and the private sector.

His focus on improving logistics and cold storage is wise, and will positively impact not just agricultural productivity, but food security. His pursuit of strong partnerships with farmers/fisherfolks and the private sector is also very important.

Improving productivity and income

Secretary Laurel recognizes the need to address inefficiencies in the delivery of agricultural support services, post-harvest systems and infrastructure. It is lamentable that a significant percentage of the vegetables we produce is wasted, not only because of poor logistics in bringing the produce from the farm to the consumers, but due to the lack of cold storage facilities. This is

a priority for Secretary Laurel. He has asked for budgetary support from Congress and appointed an assistant secretary for logistics to help optimize costs for everyone involved in the value chain, from producers to consumers.

I appreciate the Secretary's efforts to not just improve farm productivity, but also to increase farmers' income. There should be more programs to encourage our farmers to plant different types of crops, raise more animals, and adopt other measures to increase farm income. I also agree with his observation that a great portion of our rice production areas lack irrigation, unlike in Vietnam, where almost all lands devoted to rice are irrigated. Hopefully, the provision of irrigation to unirrigated areas will be done soonest. I also hope that Secretary Laurel's plans to improve rice production and ensure higher farmgate prices by providing timely market information to farmers will come to fruition.

Public-Private Partnership

It is very reassuring that the DA's priorities jibe with the private sector's desire to partner with the government in improving our agricultural value chain. Secretary Laurel decried the high cost of transporting both agricultural inputs and products due to the limited number of ports in our archipelagic terrain. The DA has partnered with the Philippine Ports Authority to improve port operations and lower the logistics cost for farmers, but Secretary Laurel wants the private sector to partner with the government in building more ports to facilitate the delivery of farm inputs and agricultural products. He also seeks private sector support for DA's plans to develop cold storage facilities, especially those using solar energy and other affordable technologies.

Our chairman, Ed Chua, expressed support for Secretary Laurel's initiatives, since MBC believes that increasing food security is one of the most effective ways of uplifting Filipino lives. Plans are now in the offing to explore ways of improving linkages among players in the food supply chain. I believe MBC and other private sector representatives are open to helping DA establish direct links between farmers and businesses, strengthen agricultural cooperatives by engaging professional managers, and improving technologies/logistics for food distribution nationwide. I hope for strengthened Public-Private Partnership in agriculture, since prioritizing the sector will simultaneously address food security and poverty in the country.

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“If you want to eliminate hunger, everybody has to be involved.” – Bono
(Dr. Jaime Aristotle B. Alip is a poverty eradication advocate. He is the founder of the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development Mutually-Reinforcing Institutions (CARD MRI).)

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/15/modernizing-philippine-agriculture>

DA lifts ban on poultry products from Belgium, France

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

April 15, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has lifted the ban on the importation of poultry products from Belgium and France, saying the outbreak of avian influenza in the two countries has already been contained.

Laurel has issued Memorandum Order No. 15, allowing the resumption in the importation of domestic and wild birds and their products from Belgium.

The MO said that based on the official self-declaration report of Belgium to the World Organization for Animal Health, no additional outbreaks were reported after cases were reported on Feb. 21 in Belgium and Feb. 24 in France.

Laurel previously issued MO 2 banning the importation of live poultry, poultry, products and by-products, including day-old chicks and hatching eggs originating from Belgium, following outbreak of bird flu in that country.

Also covered by the lifting of the prohibition include poultry meat, day old chicks, eggs and semen.

“Based on the evaluation of the Department of Agriculture, the risk of contamination from importing live poultry, poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs and semen is negligible,” Laurel said.

He added that the resumption in the importation of poultry products from Belgium should be in accordance with existing rules and regulations of the DA.

Meanwhile, the agriculture chief also lifted the ban on the importation of poultry products from France after he issued MO 1 prohibiting the entry of products and by-products from that country.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/15/2347728/da-lifts-ban-poultry-products-belgium-france>

DA allots P500 million fuel subsidy for fishers, farmers

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

April 15, 2024 | 12:00am

De Mesa said farmers who have machinery registered under the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture can avail themselves of the fuel subsidy.

Philstar.com / Irra Lising

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) has allocated P500 million to provide fuel subsidies for fishers and farmers amid the unabated increase in the retail prices of petroleum products.

“We have allocated almost P500 million for our farmers who own machinery and for our fisherfolk. They can receive P3,000 each. It is a one-time assistance to cushion the impact of the spike of oil prices,” DA spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

De Mesa said farmers who have machinery registered under the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture can avail themselves of the fuel subsidy.

“For fisherfolk, their boats should not exceed three metric tons,” he added.

According to De Mesa, the DA is now finalizing the guidelines and will release fuel assistance to farmers and fishers in the next days.

The prices of diesel will increase by P0.80 to P1 per liter while kerosene prices will increase by P0.85 to P1 per liter tomorrow, according to the Department of Energy.

Last Tuesday, oil firms raised pump prices by P1.10 per liter for gasoline, P1.55 for diesel and P1.40 for kerosene.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/15/2347744/da-allots-p500-million-fuel-subsidy-fishers-farmers>

Oversupply pulls down onion farmgate price

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

April 15, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — An official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) has confirmed the decrease in the farmgate price of onion in Oriental Mindoro due to oversupply.

Arnel de Mesa, spokesman for the DA, said the farmgate price of onion in Oriental Mindoro dropped to P25 to P33 per kilo from P45 to P55 last week.

De Mesa attributed the oversupply to the increase in the number of production areas allotted for the bulbs.

“The farmgate price and production (of onions) were good last year. Areas planted with onions have increased by 40 percent, not only in Mindoro but also in Central and Northern Luzon,” De Mesa said.

The DA and its regional offices are helping onion farmers market their produce.

“Our regional field office (in Oriental Mindoro) is helping connect farmers to our Food Terminal Inc., where they can bring and store their produce for the meantime,” De Mesa said.

The DA recently inaugurated a cold storage facility in Bulalacao town.

De Mesa said the amount of damage caused by El Niño in the province’s agriculture sector has reached P770 million.

Based on the DA monitoring, the retail price of local red and white onions ranged between P60 and P120 per kilo while imported white onions were priced at P80 and P100 per kilo.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/04/15/2347695/oversupply-pulls-down-onion-farmgate-price>

Tobacco growers: Illegal vapes threatening farmer livelihoods

April 14, 2024 | 7:51 pm

TOBACCO farmers said the government needs to crack down on illegal vape products, calling them a threat to growers' livelihoods.

"Illegal vapes further endanger the livelihood of thousands of Filipinos who rely on the tobacco industry for sustenance since these are replacing legal, tax-paid cigarettes as well," Philippine Tobacco Growers Association President Saturnino Distor said over the weekend.

Mr. Distor added that the smuggled cigarettes have also reduced demand for locally produced tobacco leaf.

Republic Act 11900, or the Vaporized Nicotine and Non-Nicotine Products Regulation Act, regulates all imports and manufacturing of vaporized nicotine, non-nicotine, and novel tobacco products.

"Unlike heated tobacco sticks, vapes do not contain dried tobacco leaves and have no direct benefit to tobacco farmers... We need the help of the government to stop this 'vapedemic' and save the tobacco industry," he said.

Separately, Bernard R. Vicente, chairman of the Federation of Tobacco Farmers Associations and Cooperatives, said that as consumers switch to vape products, demand for tobacco leaf continues to decline.

Mr. Vicente added that support from local government units in tobacco-producing areas has declined due to the lower excise taxes collected on tobacco products.

Under Republic Act No. 11346, 40% of tobacco excise taxes are earmarked for the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. and 10% are for the Department of Health's Health Facilities Enhancement Program.

The remainder goes to the national budget and tobacco-producing areas to support farmers.

"Less excise tax collections from tobacco means less support for us farmers," Mr. Distor said.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue reported a 16% decline to P135 billion in excise tax collections in 2023. This was attributed to an increase in the smuggling and distribution of illegal cigarettes and vape products.

Meanwhile, the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) said that tobacco prices have risen to more than P100 per kilogram (kg) due to high demand.

The NTA reported that the buying price for Class AA of flue-cured Virginia tobacco was as high as P113 per kg, well above the approved floor price of P97 per kg.

Prices for the prime class of both air-cured Burley-type tobacco and Native-type tobacco is expected to hit P100 per kg. The approved floor price for these varieties is P81 per kg.

"The tobacco buying price increase reflects market demand and crop quality as well as the presence of good weather and the increase of floor prices," NTA Administrator Belinda S. Sanchez said in a statement last week.

Trading of flue-cured Virginia tobacco runs between February and June, while air-cured Burley and Native tobacco leaves trade between March and July.

Ms. Sanchez added that tobacco production may surpass the 43 million kg reported last year.

The major tobacco producing areas are Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Abra, Pangasinan, Isabela, and Cagayan.

The NTA said 2.2 million Filipinos are financially dependent on tobacco, including more than 430,000 farmers, farm workers, and their families. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/14/587917/tobacco-growers-illegal-vapes-threatening-farmer-livelihoods/>

New NFA palay buying prices not expected to push retail prices higher

April 15, 2024 | 12:03 am

By **Adrian H. Halili**, *Reporter*

THE National Food Authority's (NFA) new buying prices for palay or unmilled rice are not expected to push retail rice prices higher, with traders already paying much more at farmgate, analysts said.

"I don't see that happening (retail price increases) since NFA buying will be limited to buffer stock requirements," Raul Q. Montemayor, national manager of the Federation of Free Farmers said in a Viber message.

"NFA's main objective is to accumulate buffer stocks. Traders are already buying palay at relatively high prices, so propping up palay prices does not have to be NFA's concern at this time," he said.

The NFA Council last week hiked the buying price range for dry and clean palay to P23 to P30 per kilogram (kg) and to P17 to P23 per kg for fresh palay. Prices vary by grade and location.

The Department of Agriculture said that the increase was designed to offer farmers a more competitive price as the old NFA buying prices had diverged significantly from what private traders were paying.

Traders were reportedly buying dry palay from farmers for between P28 to P30 per kg.

Last year, the NFA set the purchase price for dry and wet palay at P19-P23 and P16-P19 per kg, respectively.

Monetary Board member V. Bruce J. Tolentino said that the NFA's uniform buying scheme may not be suitable for every part of the country.

"A fundamental weakness of NFA is that... its buying price is exactly the same all over the country, regardless of local demand and supply conditions," Mr. Tolentino said in a Viber message.

NFA OIC Administrator Larry Lacson has said that the NFA will set prices on a per province basis, with the new guidelines to be drafted this week.

The NFA Council had also approved a P10-billion modernization plan to increase its capacity to process and store rice.

He added that after modernization, the NFA's drying capacity will increase to 180,000 metric tons.

"What we need is at least 495,000 metric tons of drying capacity," Mr. Lacson said.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/04/15/587824/new-nfa-palay-buying-prices-not-expected-to-push-retail-prices-higher/>

ABANTE

Manok mula sa Belgium, France puwede na sa PH

- Abante News
- April 14, 2024

Pinapayagan na ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang pag-angkat ng mga domestic at wild bird galing Belgium at France.

Ayon kay DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., ito ay dahil wala nang paglaganap ng bird flu outbreak sa Belgium at France mula pa noong Pebrero.

Nag-isyu ng dalawang magkakahiwalay na memorandum order si Secretary Laurel na nagtatanggal ng pagbabawal sa pag-import ng mga poultry meat, itlog, sisiw at iba pa mula sa dalawang bansa dahil wala nang naiulat pa na outbreak ng bird flu doon simula February 24 ngayong taon.

Pinirmahan ni Laurel ang Memorandum Order No. 15 na nagbabawi ng ban sa pag-import ng mga manok, itik at iba pa mula Belgium nitong April 11 kasabay ng Memorandum Order No. 16 na nagbabawi ng ban sa pag-import ng mga mga ibon at poultry meat mula naman sa France.

Magugunitang noong huling bahagi ng 2023, naitala ang paglaganap ng highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 strain sa dalawang bansa. (Eileen Mencias/Dolly Cabreza)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/04/14/manok-mula-sa-belgium-france-puwede-na-sa-ph/>