

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Laurel vows 100% support to Pinoy fishers as BFAR launches LAYAG-WPS

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Apr 16, 2024 05:28 PM



(BFAR PHOTO)

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel vowed to provide full support to Filipino fishers during the launching of Livelihood Activities to Enhance Fisheries Yields and Economic Gains from the West Philippine Sea (LAYAG-WPS) in Subic, Zambales on Tuesday, April 16.

Programs such as LAYAG-WPS, according to him, have the full backing of the agriculture department, adding that President Marcos has ordered national agencies to align government programs to avoid overlaps and repetitions.

LAYAG-WPS seeks to enhance the quality of life for Filipino fishing communities that front the West Philippine Sea by utilizing the abundant resources of the fishing ground and promoting opportunities for fisheries as a means of subsistence in the regions of MIMAROPA (Mindoro Occidental, Mindoro Oriental, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan), Central Luzon, and Ilocos.

“Sa ating lokal na mangingisda, ipinaaabot ko ang aking taos-pusong pasasalamat sa inyong pagsusumikap na i-angat hindi lamang ang inyong kabuhayan kundi pati na rin ang antas ng seguridad sa pagkain ng ating bansa. Bukod dito, kayo po ang nagsisilbing haligi sa pagtatag ng ating blue economy o ang likas-kayang paggamit ng mga yamang katubigan para sa pagpapalago ng ating ekonomiya at maging sa pangangalaga ng saribuhay at ekosistema ng ating mga karagatan (To our local fishermen, I extend my sincere gratitude for your efforts to secure not only your livelihood but also the food security of our country. You are the pillar of

the blue economy or the sustainable use of the ocean resources for the growth of our economy and the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems of our seas),” he said in his speech.

During the launching, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) turned over 62-footer Fiber Reinforced Plastic (RFP) vessels complete with modernized fishing equipment to select fisherfolk associations from Central Luzon and the Ilocos Region.

They also provided livelihood inputs such as gillnets to around 100 fisherfolk, while 50 women fisherfolk underwent post-harvest training and received post-harvest implements.

BFAR Director Demosthenes Escoto has also committed to empowering Filipino fisherfolk through the programs of the government to improve their lives.

Meanwhile, he urged their multi-sector partners to maintain their coordination and collaboration for the effective development of the West Philippine Sea.

Fausto Alpay, one of the fisherfolk leaders and beneficiaries, expressed gratefulness to the agriculture department and the BFAR for the livelihood inputs they received.

"Kami ay lubos na nagpapasalamat sa ating pamahalaan sa pangunguna ng DA-BFAR at lokal na pamahalaan ng Zambales sa kanilang suporta para sa gaya naming mangingisda. Malaking tulong ito para sa aming kabuhayan (We are grateful to the government – the DA-BFAR and the local government units of Zambales – for their unwavering support. It is a big help to our livelihood),” he said.

Other government officials present in the launching were Senator Cynthia Villar, National Security Council Deputy Director General Nestor Herico, Agriculture Undersecretary Drusila Esther E. Bayate, Presidential Assistant for Maritime Concerns National Coast Watch Council Secretariat Secretary Andres Centino, and other key officials from the local and provincial government of Zambales.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/16/laurel-vows-100-support-to-pinoy-fishers-as-bfar-launches-layag-wps>

## MANILA BULLETIN:

# DA pushes for extension of RCEF

BY [GABRIELL CRISTEL GALANG](#)

Apr 16, 2024 01:50 PM

To enhance farm productivity and the agricultural sector, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is considering extending and enhancing the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters that they are finalizing proposals to refine the RCEF under by the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

Tiu Laurel said the proposed changes aim to facilitate the modernization and enhancement of farm mechanization, fostering competitiveness among rice farmers.

The RTL was enacted to promote liberalization in the rice market by implementing import tariffs and allocating an annual budget through the RCEF.

Currently, the RCEF is allocated P10 billion per year for the next six years to support Filipino farmers.

This budget is distributed to small-scale rice farmers as financial assistance, which will continue to be available in the coming years.

“Definitely I think [the RTL] should be extended,” he said. “But of course, we need to make small adjustments so we can adapt to the times.”

Last year, a total of P29 billion in tariffs was collected. Tiu Laurel believes that the fund for farm inputs should be increased to bump rice recovery for every kilogram of palay by 15 percent.

“Only P10 billion goes to the RCEF... We should exceed this [budget] and invest more in harvest and mechanization,” the agri chief emphasized.

He added that the additional or extra funding can be used for fertilizer to boost farm production. Better domestic yields could solve the high import volumes, according to the DA secretary.

Nueva Ecija Representative Rosanna Vergara filed a bill to stretch out RCEF by six years. Subsequently, Senator Cynthia Villar also supports this extension.

Meanwhile, the US-DA decreased their Philippine rice imports from 4.1 million to 3.9 million metric tons. This was due to the forecasted higher rice output in the first quarter, as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

El Niño affecting the country also brought an impression on the US agriculture sector but is expecting the effects of the incoming La Niña to resolve field irrigation.

“Irrigation and post-harvest are equally important... As of now there is about 12 to 15 percent of rice produce wasted because they lack the post-harvest facilities. Because of this they’re usually laid out on the road which are drove by passing cars, ultimately wasting production,” Tiu Laurel explained.

“Less wastage, more income to farmers,” he added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/16/da-pushes-for-extension-of-rcef>

## MANILA BULLETIN:

# Gatchalian says agriculture modernization a must for better food security

BY [DHEL NAZARIO](#)

Apr 16, 2024 06:17 PM

## AT A GLANCE

- Senator Sherwin Gatchalian is calling on the government to invest in agriculture modernization and irrigation development in a bid to further improve the country's food security amid steady population growth.

Senator Sherwin Gatchalian is calling on the government to invest in agriculture modernization and irrigation development in a bid to further improve the country's food security amid steady population growth.

“Unless the government embarks on a comprehensive modernization program, it would be difficult for the country to achieve food security, especially that of rice,” Gatchalian said.

He emphasized that a steady increase in the country's population makes it imperative to aim for increased productivity through the modernization of the farm sector, including the use of modern farm implements.

Gatchalian pointed out that the need for a whole-of-government approach, with local government units (LGU) playing a major role to achieve modernization, particularly in areas where financial support and cooperation are wanting.

“In the case of rice, which is the Philippines' main staple food, the country needs to produce at least 98 percent of its rice requirement,” said Gatchalian.

“On the other hand, our population has increasingly swelled in comparison to rice production. As our population grows, so does our need for rice, and we should address that. However, currently, we can't catch up because our population is growing faster than our rice production,” he added.

The country's population was estimated to have reached 112 million in 2023, based on the projected population growth rate using the 2020 census result, according to the Commission on Population and Development.

“Hindi natin matatakas ang pangangailangan na gawing moderno ang pangkalahatang sektor ng agrikultura upang matugunan ang suplay ng pagkain kasunod ng lumolobo nating populasyon. Dahil dito, mapapaunlad din natin ang kabuhayan ng ating mga magsasaka (We cannot escape the need to modernize the entire agriculture sector to address the food supply amid the growing population. Because of this, we can improve the lives of our farmers),” he said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/16/gatchalian-says-agriculture-modernization-a-must-for-better-food-security>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA team 90 percent complete, says Tiu Laurel

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

April 17, 2024 | 12:00am



Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

MANILA, Philippines — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said his leadership team is now 90 percent complete, noting that he is just awaiting the appointment of his last undersecretary.

“Only one undersecretary is missing but basically the team is 90 percent complete,” Tiu Laurel told reporters on the sidelines of the inauguration of PMFTC Inc.’s P8.8 billion factory expansion in Tanauan City, Batangas.

Tiu Laurel said the forthcoming undersecretary is already in the DA “working” and just awaiting appointment papers.

The last remaining undersecretary would be the 14th under the leadership of Tiu Laurel, who is nearing his sixth month in office.

“We already 100 percent working,” he said.

According to Tiu Laurel, he has a lot of undersecretaries so that there would be a key official or focal person for every area that the department covers.

“The DA covers from vegetables to fish and meat, even irrigation, it is a lot. We have I think 29 bureaus and GOCCs (government-owned and controlled

corporations). DA is one of the most complicated departments in the country,” he said.

Tiu Laurel said an overlapping in the duties of the undersecretaries could not be avoided initially but pointed out that they would be able to properly adjust and focus on their respective areas “as they go along.”

“We have laid out everything already, there is a direction already. We are meeting weekly compared to previous wherein the meetings at the DA are once every quarter,” he said.

“We’re tackling everything on a weekly basis,” he added.

Tiu Laurel described his team at the DA as a mix of “organic” agriculture officials who rose from the ranks, industry players and retired technical people who are all capable of creating a “whole of nation” approach in addressing the problems of the agriculture sector.

He said he is also still relying on the Private Sector Advisory Council Agriculture Sector to “countercheck” the direction of the DA so that the government would be a “solid” coordination and “everyone is in unison.”

The latest to join Tiu Laurel at the DA are Nora Oliveros as undersecretary for finance and Allan Umali as undersecretary for administration.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/04/17/2348158/da-team-90-percent-complete-says-tiu-laurel>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Philippines military vessels shouldn't accompany fishers in West Philippine Sea – Villar

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

April 17, 2024 | 12:00am



Sen. Cynthia Villar joins officials of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in sending off fishermen during the launching of BFAR's 'Layag' West Philippine Sea project in Subic, Zambales yesterday.

SUBIC, Zambales, Philippines — The country's military vessels should not accompany fisherfolk in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) to prevent possible attack from Chinese ships, Sen. Cynthia Villar said yesterday.

“Ever since – I have long been the chairman of the Senate committee on agriculture and food – it was the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources that provided assistance to the fishermen. It should be the BFAR so that it will not be militarized,” Villar said in her speech during the launch of the Livelihood Activities to Enhance Fisheries Yields and Economic Gains from the West Philippines Sea (LAYAG-WPS) here.

She added that Congress regularly provides a budget for BFAR for the acquisition of vessels that can be used to assist the fishermen.

“(The BFAR) is given ships to watch (over) fishermen and to make sure that they are safe. If it's BFAR, it's not too obvious,” Villar said.

“The ships of BFAR should be present while fishermen are fishing in the WPS,” she added.

The presence of military vessels in areas where the fishers operate could agitate Chinese vessels, according to the senator.

She noted that based on government data, fish production in the West Philippine Sea represents 15 percent of the country's total output.

“The BFAR cannot afford to neglect the fishermen in WPS as 15 percent is essential in the country's fisheries production,” she said.

She added that the fisherfolk have no choice but to still operate in the WPS despite the threats, as it is their only source of livelihood.

“The fishermen are only trying to make a living despite the fact that it is really very dangerous in the West Philippine Sea. We cannot stop them because without it, they have no livelihood. It will also endanger food security, that's why we should give our all-out support to the fisherfolk,” she said.

Villar expressed belief that there should be a compromise between the Philippines and China amid the growing tension in the WPS.

“We are not in a position to fight with China, so I believe there should be a compromise. They have to find a common ground. I don't know what compromise they can negotiate,” she said.

The senator refused to comment on the ongoing word war between President Marcos and former president Rodrigo Duterte.

“The difference is that former president Duterte is pro-China (while) President Marcos is pro-America. For me, it is better if we don't quarrel with China, we don't quarrel with the US,” Villar said.

Meanwhile, BFAR national director Demosthenes Escoto said the government aims to sustainably harness the full potential of the West Philippine Sea.

“The WPS is one of the most important and richest sources of fish in the country,” Escoto said during the formal launch of LAYAG-WPS, which aims to boost the country's fish production in areas covered by the WPS.

Escoto noted that last year, the total fish production in regions covered by the WPS, including Ilocos Region, Central Luzon and Mimaropa, reached 201,895 metric tons.

“We believe that we can still improve the numbers. We can sustainably harness the whole potential of the WPS, and with the help of our government agencies and Congress, we will be able to do it,” he said.

He added that there are more than 300,000 fishers in the WPS.



For National Security Council deputy director general Nestor Herico, LAYAG-WPS will enhance the livelihood of those living in areas situated along the WPS.

“The NSC would like to express its full support not only to this project, but also to all kinds of projects and initiatives aiming to protect, preserve and promote the rights of Filipinos in the WPS. The livelihood assistance to be given to more than 140 fishermen today will surely benefit hundreds and even thousands of Filipino families hailing from Central Luzon and Ilocos,” Herico said.

He added that LAYAG-WPS would boost the economic livelihood of Filipinos affected by territorial disputes and maritime claims.

“This issue in the WPS does not only pose security threats, but also affects the livelihood of our fisherfolk and becomes detrimental to marine environment as foreign claimants build their outpost. It is now time for us Filipinos to claim what we own and what we deserve,” Herico said.

The BFAR awarded livelihood inputs to 100 fishers while women fisherfolk underwent post-harvest training and received various implements.

Over 62-foot fiber-reinforced plastic vessels complete with modernized fishing equipment were turned over to select fisherfolk associations from Central Luzon and Ilocos Region.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel said the program could help unlock the potential of resource-rich fishing grounds and increase opportunities in parts of Ilocos Region, Central Luzon and Mimaropa. — **Romina Cabrera, Mark Ernest Villeza**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/17/2348310/philippines-military-vessels-shouldnt-accompany-fishers-west-philippine-sea-villar>

# DA chief backs rice fund extension

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

April 17, 2024 | 12:00am



A vendor arranges rice for sale at a market in Paco, Manila on March 13, 2024.

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is supporting the extension of the rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF), and proposes tweaks to the program such as making the allocation more flexible and hiking the budget of key components.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the RCEF, which lapses this year, should be extended, but emphasized that adjustments are necessary so that the fund would adapt to the needs of the times.

RCEF is a six-year earmarked fund created under Republic Act (RA) 11203 or the rice trade liberalization law that seeks to make local farmers competitive through the provision of seeds, machinery, credit and training.

Tiu Laurel said the department is preparing its position paper on the proposed extension of the RCEF.

The fund is set to expire this year but lawmakers, including Sen. Cynthia Villar, the principal author of RA 11203, have filed bills that seek to extend the RCEF.

Villar wants to extend the RCEF by six more years, with new proposed allocations for excess rice tariffs collected by the state.

Tiu Laurel proposed to increase the guaranteed P10 billion annual allocation of RCEF since total rice tariff collections have been above that amount in recent years.

According to Tiu Laurel, tariff collections reached at least P29 billion in 2023.

Under existing laws, rice tariffs collected by the state in excess of P10 billion would not go to the regular RCEF but would instead fund the financial assistance program for rice farmers.

Tiu Laurel said the share in the overall RCEF of mechanization and post-harvest facilities should be increased to reduce the country's rice wastage.

He added that a certain percentage of the tariffs collected should also be allocated for the purchase of fertilizer as well as irrigation facilities such as small water impounding projects and solar-powered irrigation systems.

“Right now about 12 percent to 15 percent of our rice produced is wasted because of the lack of post-harvest facilities. Some of the produce are being dried on the roads, so a lot are damaged and wasted,” he told reporters on the sidelines of the inauguration of the expansion of PMFTC Inc.'s factory in Batangas.

“Less wastage would mean more income to the farmers,” he added.

Tiu Laurel also floated the idea of making the RCEF components more flexible by having an annual review of the program and allowing the reallocation of funds to the pressing needs of rice farmers.

“The fund should go where we lack support. For example if we have already mechanized this year then let's not mechanize again next year. Let's bring the money where it is needed the most,” Tiu Laurel said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/04/17/2348179/da-chief-backs-rice-fund-extension>

# La Union farmers shift to drought-resistant crops

[Artemio Dumlao](#) - The Philippine Star

April 16, 2024 | 12:00am



Map of San Fernando, La Union

**BAGUIO CITY, Philippines** — Farmers in La Union have shifted to drought-resistant crops to cushion the effects of the El Niño phenomenon in the agriculture sector.

Instead of rice, farmer Carlito Eslava of San Gabriel town is now planting corn and mung beans, which do not require much water to grow.

This developed after the provincial agriculture office advised farmers to look for alternative crops that can thrive in the extreme heat to avoid losses.

Sharon Viloría of the provincial agriculture office encouraged farmers to cultivate short-gestating crops like vegetables that could be harvested within a short period.

The provincial government is beefing up efforts to mitigate the impact of El Niño on farmers' livelihood.

Viloría said registered local farmers and fishermen affected by El Niño could avail themselves of emergency loans that would be offered by the provincial government upon validation.

The emergency trust fund was created to help farmers cope with their losses from calamities like El Niño.

The provincial government procured vegetable seeds and farming tools to be distributed this month as additional assistance to farmers.

Gov. Raphaelle Veronica Ortega-David assured the farming and fishery sector that the provincial government is ready to provide them assistance.

Aside from rice and vegetable farmers, tobacco planters are also reeling from the effects of El Niño.

The National Tobacco Administration said it has yet to assess the amount of damage incurred by the tobacco industry

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/04/16/2347967/la-union-farmers-shift-drought-resistant-crops>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# RCEF needs to be extended, given set percentage of tariffs, DA says

April 16, 2024 | 8:35 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/KRIZ JOHN ROSALES

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it supports an extension of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), with an adjusted budget allocation per year.

“Definitely, I think it should be extended. But there should be adjustments so we can adapt to the times,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters.

Mr. Laurel added that the DA is finalizing its proposal on adjustments to the funding allocated to RCEF.

“Only P10 billion goes into RCEF. It should be increased. We also have to invest more on postharvest facilities and mechanization,” he said.

He added that some funds may also be allocated for fertilizer distribution to farmers to increase their yields.

“Right now, about 12% to 15% of our rice production is wasted because there are no post-harvest facilities... Reducing waste means more income for farmers,” Mr. Laurel said.

The RCEF is intended to modernize the rice industry and is funded by import tariffs generated as a result of Republic Act 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law.

The fund supports the supply of machinery, seed, and fertilizer, among others, to farmers. Some P10 billion worth of rice tariffs finance support RCEF. The tariff allocations are set to expire in June.

He said that the allocation for RCEF should vary with the amount of tariffs collected.

The Philippines collected P30 billion in rice tariffs in 2023, according to the Bureau of Customs.

“Every year the collection is different, so it should be a percentage. (The budget) needs to be raised ... If possible, it should be reviewed every year,” Mr. Laurel said.

The Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) gets a P5 billion allocation from RCEF to fund the distribution of farm machinery.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute handles the distribution of certified inbred seed to farmers.

Senator Cynthia A. Villar proposed an extension of RCEF for another six years, with an increased budget of P20 billion per year. Likewise, Nueva Ecija Rep. Rosanna V. Vergara also filed a bill seeking an RCEF extension.

Meanwhile, Mr. Laurel said that the National Food Authority (NFA) needs to regain its ability to influence rice prices and not be limited to buying rice from farmers to build reserves.

The Rice Tariffication Law stripped the NFA of its power to import; instead, private traders were allowed to bring in rice with no restrictions, but have to pay a 35% tariff on grain sourced from Southeast Asia. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/16/588609/rcef-needs-to-be-extended-given-set-percentage-of-tariffs-da-says/>



## BUSINESS WORLD:

# PSA hikes 1<sup>st</sup> quarter palay output estimate

April 16, 2024 | 8:34 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

PRODUCTION of palay or unmilled rice, is expected to come in at 4.82 million metric tons (MT) during the first quarter, based estimates of the standing crop as of March 1, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

PSA's projection, if borne out, would represent a 0.3% increase from the initial 4.8 million MT estimate issued on Jan. 1 and an 0.8% year from actual output a year earlier.

The PSA said that the estimated harvest area for the first quarter declined 0.1% year on year to 1.17 million hectares.

"Based on standing crop for the period... the yield per hectare of palay may increase to 4.10 MT or 1.0%," it added.

It said that about 677.34 thousand hectares or 57.7% of the 1.17 million hectares planted to rice had been harvested as of Feb. 1, with the resulting palay output at 2.74 million MT.

About 91.2% of the crop yet to be harvested was in the maturing stage, while 8.8% was in the reproductive stage.

The Department of Agriculture has projected that palay production this year would exceed 20 million MT.

Meanwhile, corn output is estimated to rise 4.8% in the first quarter to 2.64 million MT, based on the standing crop as of March 1.

The area planted to corn is estimated to have risen 0.4% to 697.35 thousand hectares, while yields are expected to be flat at 3.79 MT per hectare.

The PSA said that about 59.3% or 413.48 thousand hectares of the standing crop had been harvested, producing about 1.42 million MT of corn.

“Of the total area of 283.86 thousand hectares standing corn yet to be harvested... 5.7% were at the reproductive stage and 94.3% were at the maturing stage,” the PSA said. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/16/588608/psa-hikes-1st-quarter-palay-output-estimate/>

**REMATE:**

# Kadiwa store sa Maynila dinumog

April 16, 2024 17:38



**DINUMOG** ng mga empleyado ng Manila City Hall ang Kadiwa Store upang mabigyan sila ng pagkakataon na makapamilya ng mga murang halaga tulad ng gulay, prutas, bigas at iba pang klase ng pagkain.

**Binuksan** ang Kadiwa Store na matatagpuan sa “inner court” ng Manila City Hall na tatagal ng tatlong araw kung saan sinimulan itong buksan nitong Lunes, Abril 15.







**Nabatid kay Atty. Princess Abante, Manila Public Information Office Chief, na binuksan ang nasabing Kadiwa store sa pakikipagtulungan ng department of Agriculture.**

**Makakapamilya ang mga empleyado ng cityhall sa nasabing pamilihan sa murang presyo kung saan nasa P39 per kilo lamang ang murang bigas ngunit maaari lamang sila makapamilya nang hanggang 5 kilo lamang.**





Dahil dito, mas makamumura umano ang mga mamimili partikular na ang mga sapat lamang ang kinikita na empleyado na makapamilya ng mas murang halaga ng mga pagkain na kanilang maihahain sa kanilang pamilya kumpara sa ilang mga pamilihan. *Jay Reyes*

<https://remate.ph/kadiwa-store-sa-maynila-dinumog/>

**REMATE:**

# Halos kalahating bilyong agri damage sa El Niño naitala sa Cordillera

April 16, 2024 16:53



**MANILA, Philippines – SINABI** ng Department of Agriculture (DA) humigit-kumulang **PHP444.94** milyong halaga ng pinsala sa agrikultura ang naitala sa rehiyon ng Cordillera noong Marso 22 dahil sa tagtuyot, ayon sa ulat mula sa regional office ng Department of Agriculture (DA).

Ayon sa DA-Cordillera Director Jennilyn Dawyan, sa isang ulat, karamihan sa mga pinsala ay kasangkot sa yellow corn para sa mga feed ng hayop at bigas.

Aniya, **5,896** na magsasaka ng mais ang nagtala ng pagkawala ng produksyon na halos **PHP411.34** milyon habang **1,912** na magsasaka ng palay ang nagtala ng kabuuang pagkawala ng produksyon na halos **P33.38** milyon.

**Sinabi ng DA na bukod dito, 62 mangingisda din ang naapektuhan, na may kabuuang pagkawala ng produksyon na 1,470 kg. ng isda na nagkakahalaga ng PHP226,090.**

**Ang ulat ay nagsabi na ang Ifugao ay nakakuha ng pinakamaraming pinsala na nagkakahalaga ng humigit-kumulang P232.12 milyon, na sinundan ng Mountain Province, P160.51 milyon; Kalinga, P51.14 milyon; Abra, P591,880; at Benguet, P323,910.**

**Sa mga pangyayaring ito, sinabi ni Dawyan na humingi sila ng tulong sa iba't ibang ahensya at lokal na pamahalaan sa rehiyon para sa tulong sa mga magsasaka na apektado ng El Niño.**

**Sinabi ni Dawyan na ang mga katapat sa provincial at municipal government units ay tinapik din hindi lamang para sa monitoring, assessment, at surveillance kundi para tingnan din ang karagdagang tulong sa mga apektadong magsasaka at mangingisda.**

**Sinabi niya na humiling din sila sa Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. para sa isang updated na listahan ng mga magsasaka na naka-enroll para sa insurance at sa mga naka-avail ng insurance benefits kaugnay ng El Niño.**

**Ang pamamahagi ng mga sistema ng network ng irigasyon sa mga lugar na nanganganib sa tagtuyot ay binigyang-prioridad, ani Dawyan, at binanggit na ang mga awtoridad ay gumagawa din ng imbentaryo ng mga maliliit na proyekto ng patubig at reserba ng binhi.**

**Ipinapakita ng datos ng DA na sa 7,361 ektarya ng lupain na may mga pananim na apektado ng tagtuyot, ang mga halaman sa humigit-kumulang 6,600 ektarya ay may tsansa na makabangon at idineklara lamang na “partially damaged.”**

**Bukod sa pagmomonitor ng pinsala sa mga sakahan at paghahanap ng interbensyon, binabantayan din ng DA ang presyo ng mga bilihin sa merkado.**



**Ang ulat ay nagsabi na ang DA at ang rehiyonal na tanggapan ng National Irrigation Authority ay nagpapatupad ng rotational water delivery at distribution para payagan ang lahat ng mga sakahan na magkaroon ng tubig para sa kanilang mga pananim. *Santi***

*Celario*

**<https://remate.ph/halos-kalahating-bilyong-agri-damage-sa-el-nino-naitala-sa-cordillera/>**

# **Livelihood for WPS fishing communities launched**

By Othel V. Campos April 16, 2024, 8:10 pm

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) launched LAYAG-WPS or Livelihood Activities to Enhance Fisheries Yields and Economic Gains from the West Philippine Sea in Subic, Zambales on Tuesday.

The new project aims to improve the lives of Filipino fishing communities facing the West Philippine Sea by unlocking the potential of the resource-rich fishing ground and providing fisheries livelihood opportunities in the regions of Ilocos, Central Luzon and MIMAROPA.

“To our local fishermen, I extend my sincere gratitude for your efforts to secure not only your livelihood but also the food security of our country. You are the pillar of the blue economy or the sustainable use of the ocean resources for the growth of our economy and the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems of our seas,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in his message.

He assured the fishing communities of Department of Agriculture’s (DA) support to programs such as LAYAG-WPS, adding that the President instructed national agencies to align government programs to avoid overlaps and repetitions, ensuring that government programs complement and hit targets.

Under the program, BFAR turned over 62-footer fiber reinforced plastic (RFP) vessels complete with modernized fishing equipment to select fisherfolk associations from Central Luzon and the Ilocos Region.

Some 100 WPS fisherfolk received livelihood inputs like gillnets while 50 women fisherfolk trained to develop post-harvest skills.

“The DA-BFAR commits to the task of empowering Filipino fisherfolk and ensuring that this program is justly and equitably implemented,” said BFAR director Demosthenes Escoto.

He called on the agency’s multi-sector partners to maintain their coordination and collaboration for the effective development of the West Philippine Sea.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/business/314436514/livelihood-for-wps-fishing-communities-launched.html>

**MANILA STANDARD**

## **DA chief says new PMI facility to recharge PH tobacco industry**



*Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (right) joins the inauguration of the Philip Morris International's new manufacturing facility for smokeless products in Batangas province. With Laurel are (from left) PMI region president Frederic De Wilde, PMFTC Inc. manufacturing director Elvio Rocco, PMI senior vice president for operations Scott Coutts, PMI chief executive Jacek Olczak, First Lady Louise Araneta-Marcos, PMFTC president Denis Gorkun, PMFTC director Michael Tan and LT Group president Lucio Tan III.*

By Othel V. Campos

April 16, 2024, 9:15 pm

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. expressed confidence local tobacco leaves will meet the required grade needed by cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris International (PMI) for its smokeless tobacco products.

Speaking at the inauguration of the PMI's new manufacturing facility in Batangas province, Tiu Laurel commended PMI and its local affiliate PMFTC. Inc. for fulfilling its investment commitment to President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. and for its continued support of tobacco farmers.

“I understand that local leaf is being considered for inclusion in the production of smoke-free products, including heated tobacco sticks in the new manufacturing lines. I'm confident that our local tobacco leaf will be able to meet this new demand,” he said.

Tiu-Laurel said the P8.8-billion facility could revitalize the declining local tobacco leaf industry and benefit millions of Filipino farmers who depend on it.

The new facility, spanning 1.2 hectares in Tanauan City, will produce specially-designed tobacco sticks for PMI's smoke-free products. This marks a significant step in PMI's efforts to manufacture innovative cigarette alternatives in the Philippines.

The agriculture chief said he is optimistic that local tobacco farmers would benefit from PMI's and PMFTC's focus on domestic manufacturing.

PMFTC employs around 4,500 Filipinos with local leaf purchases averaging P1.8 billion annually. It also boosted tobacco exports of finished and semi-finished goods, contributed hundreds of billions to the national and local treasury in excise, VAT, income, local business tax and duties and introduced various corporate social responsibility projects.

'Our government has always recognized PMFTC's substantial contributions to the Philippine economy and society,' Tiu Laurel said.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/business/314436597/da-chief-says-new-pmi-facility-to-recharge-ph-tobacco-industry.html>

# **PH compliance to EU food safety boosts export market**

By Othel V. Campos April 16, 2024, 8:05 pm

The Export Marketing Bureau (EMB), an attached agency of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), underscored how the Philippines' compliance to the new EU food safety regulations influenced consumer confidence, public health and sustainable economic development.

“Throughout this training, our primary goal is to deepen our understanding of the food safety regulations in the European Union on their food management system, specific regulations related to food hygiene, pesticide residues, contaminants, and the EU Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES) and EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), as well as the import requirements on non-shelf stable composite products,” said EMB director Bianca Sykimte during a two-day training for Filipino exporters.

She said that in 2023, the EU emerged as the Philippines' 6th largest export market with total export sales amounting to \$8.4 billion including food exports valued at more than \$400 million.

These include tuna, desiccated coconuts, preserved pineapples and pineapple juice, fruits and nuts, bread and pastries, rum and other distilled fermented sugarcane products.

The EU, through the ARISE Plus Philippines project, conducted a two-day training for over 400 Philippine food exporters on the EU Food Safety Regulations Manila and on the virtual platform.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) keenly sought a deeper understanding of the requirements to export to the EU.

An expert from the EU's directorate-general for Health and Food Safety Sylvie Coulon conducted the sessions which focused on the structure of the EU, the EU Food Safety Regulations and the specific commodities of interest to the Philippines.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/business/314436512/ph-compliance-to-eu-food-safety-boosts-export-market.html>

## **Tiu Laurel backs RCEF extension**

By Janine Alexis Miguel

April 17, 2024

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. backs the proposed extension of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) and to give it a higher allocation from the tariffs collected from imported rice.

"Definitely, I think it should be extended. But there should be adjustments so we can adapt to the times," Tiu Laurel said during an interview with reporters on Monday.

The agriculture chief said that one of the adjustments he wants is the higher allocation for RCEF that has a mandated funding of P10 billion annually from 2019 to 2024 as stipulated by Republic Act (RA) 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law. He added that tariffs from imported reached P29 billion last year.



"So, it should be a percentage. It needs to be raised, and it needs to be placed where it lacks," the agriculture chief said.

Out of the P10 billion allocated for RCEF annually, P5 billion is for boosting the mechanization of rice farms, P3 billion for the distribution of high-yielding rice seeds, P1 billion for credit support and P1 billion for training of rice farmers.

Tiu Laurel also emphasized the importance of funding projects for the construction of postharvest facilities, which could raise rice recovery rates by up to 15 percent per kilogram of palay or unmilled rice.

"Less wastage means more income for our rice farmers," he said, adding that the initiative also aims to reduce import volume.

Tiu Laurel said that irrigation and postharvest facilities are equally important as about 12 to 15 percent of the country's rice produce goes to waste due to the lack of proper facilities.

Moreover, Tiu Laurel said the new law should allow for annual review on fund allocation to maximize farm productivity.

"We need to review the funding allocation every year and put it where it is most needed. If we mechanized this year and it's sufficient, we could allot the funds somewhere else," he said.

RA 11203 liberalized the importation of rice and removed the authority of the National Food Authority (NFA) to engage in the trading of the commodity. Instead, the NFA was mandated to maintain rice buffer stocks for emergencies and natural disasters.

Sen. Cynthia Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, earlier expressed her support to extend RCEF's term for another six year and double its annual allocation to P20 billion.

For her part, Rep. Rosanna Vergara of the third district of Nueva Ecija, the top rice-producing province in the country, has also filed a bill seeking to extend RCEF by another six years.

[https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/17/business/top-business/tiu-laurel-backs-rcef-extension/1941901?utm\\_source=izooto&utm\\_medium=on\\_site\\_interactions&utm\\_campaign=Exit\\_Intent\\_Recommendations](https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/17/business/top-business/tiu-laurel-backs-rcef-extension/1941901?utm_source=izooto&utm_medium=on_site_interactions&utm_campaign=Exit_Intent_Recommendations)



# 10 priority bills up for Marcos signature

By Javier Joe Ismael

April 17, 2024

TEN priority bills are expected to be signed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. before his third State of the Nation Address on July 29.

Talking to reporters during the Kapihan sa Senado weekly media forum on Tuesday, April 16, Senate Majority Leader Joel Villanueva said that although they have limited time to pass more priority measures, senators are confident that at least 10 bills can be immediately signed by the President into laws.

These include the Philippine Maritime Zones Act, Real Property Valuation Assessment Reform Act, Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act and Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act that are currently in the bicameral conference committee.

Additionally, the House of Representatives has adopted the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System, as well as the bills to be passed in the returning session, including the Anti-Financial Accounts Scamming Act, New Government Procurement Act, Blue Economy Act, and Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act.

However, despite Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri's promise to immediately discuss the Mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) bill, the measure's passage is still uncertain.

Villanueva said there are measures with issues that are subject for debate — the Mandatory ROTC, for instance — which some of his fellow senators, including himself, have reservations about.

His issue with the Mandatory ROTC is the cost required for its implementation. From 2023 to 2025, or from Phase 1 to Phase 5 of the program's implementation, the Armed Forces of the Philippines

will need P 61.2 billion and 9,584 personnel, where billions will be spent on salaries alone.

Earlier, Sen. Ronald de la Rosa, a staunch supporter of the measure, said he is confident that the upper chamber will be able to pass the ROTC bill.

"If we were to vote on it, I am sure it would win. However, it will not be overwhelming," he said.

De la Rosa said that based on his "personal estimate," the measure will win by a "slim margin." De la Rosa's remarks came after Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri's disclosure that the Senate will prioritize the Mandatory ROTC bill in May before the sine-die break.

In a chance interview, Zubiri said they will give the bill a chance, adding that he thinks more senators favor ROTC. Likewise, the Senate leader disclosed that he commissioned a Pulse Asia survey in December 2023, revealing that 77 percent of Filipinos favor the return of ROTC.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/17/news/national/10-priority-bills-up-for-marcos-signature/1941945>

# Your morning coffee may be more than a half million years old

By Agence France-Presse

April 16, 2024

That coffee you slurped this morning? It's 600,000 years old.

Using genes from coffee plants around the world, researchers built a family tree for the world's most popular type of coffee, known to scientists as *Coffea arabica* and to coffee lovers simply as "arabica."

The researchers, hoping to learn more about the plants to better protect them from pests and climate change, found that the species emerged around 600,000 years ago through natural crossbreeding of two other coffee species.

"In other words, prior to any intervention from man," said Victor Albert, a biologist at the University at Buffalo who co-led the study.

These wild coffee plants originated in Ethiopia but are thought to have been first roasted and brewed primarily in Yemen starting in the 1400s. In the 1600s, Indian monk Baba Budan is fabled to have smuggled seven raw coffee beans back to his homeland from Yemen, laying the foundation for coffee's global takeover.

Arabica coffee, prized for its smooth and relatively sweet flavor, now makes up 60 percent – 70 percent of the global coffee market and is brewed by brands such as Starbucks, Tim Horton's and Dunkin'. The rest is robusta, a stronger and more bitter coffee made from one of arabica's parents, *Coffea canephora*.

To piece together arabica coffee's past, researchers studied genomes of *C. canephora*, another parent called *Coffea eugenioides*, and more than 30 different arabica plants, including a sample from the 1700s

— courtesy of the Natural History Museum in London — that Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus used to name the plant.

The study was published Monday in the journal *Nature Genetics*. Researchers from Nestlé, which owns several coffee brands, contributed to the study.

The arabica plant's population fluctuated over thousands of years before humans began cultivating it, flourishing during warm, wet periods and suffering through dry ones. These lean times created so-called population bottlenecks, when only a small number of genetically similar plants survived.

Today, that renders arabica coffee plants more vulnerable to diseases like coffee leaf rust, which cause billions of dollars in losses every year. The researchers explored the makeup of one arabica variety that is resistant to coffee leaf rust, highlighting sections of its genetic code that could help protect the plant.

The study clarifies how arabica came to be and spotlights clues that could help safeguard the crop, said Fabian Echeverria, an adviser for the Center for Coffee Research and Education at Texas A&M University who was not involved with the research.

Exploring arabica's past and present could yield insight into keeping coffee plants healthy – and coffee cups full – for future early mornings.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/16/world/your-morning-coffee-may-be-more-than-a-half-million-years-old/1941655>

# Palay output expected to have edged up in Q1

By Janine Alexis Miguel

April 17, 2024

THE country's palay (unmilled rice) production from January to March was estimated to be higher by 0.8 percent from the actual output last year, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

In its latest report, the PSA said that local palay production could have hit 4.82 million metric tons (MT), higher than the actual harvest of 4.78 million MT in the same period of 2023.

The updated palay production estimate for the period was also higher by 0.3 percent from the previous estimate of 4.80 million MT as of January 2024.

Based on the standing crop for the first quarter, the estimated harvest area is seen to decrease to 1.17 million hectares or by 0.1 percent from 1.18 million hectares of actual harvested area last year.

The palay yield per hectare is seen to increase by 1.0 percent to 4.10 MT from 2023's 4.06 MT. Also, more than 50 percent of the area planted to the crop has been harvested.

"As of 1 March 2024, about 677,340 hectares or 57.7 percent of 1.17 million hectares [of the] updated harvest area of standing crop have been harvested," the PSA said.

This is equivalent to palay output of about 2.74 million MT.

The remaining area of about 497,520 hectares of standing crop yet to be harvested is made up of 8.8 percent crops at the reproductive stage and 91.2 percent at the maturing stage.

In 2023, the Philippines produced a record-high 20 million MT of palay, 1.5 percent higher than 19.76 million MT logged in 2022.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said the Philippines is seen producing around 12.125 million MT of rice this year due to increased funding from the government. The USDA placed local rice production at 12.6 million MT.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said that higher local palay production this year may reduce the country's need for imported rice, forecasting that imports of the staple are unlikely to exceed 4.0 million MT.

As of April 11, inbound shipments of the rice reached 1.23 million MT, according to the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

From January to the whole of April last year, the rice import volume reached 1.3 million MT.

Since the year started, the BPI has released a total of 3,094 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances to accredited importers.

Last year, inbound shipments of the staple totaled 3.6 million MT, down 5.9 percent from the record-high 3.82 million MT logged in 2022.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/17/business/top-business/palay-output-expected-to-have-edged-up-in-q1/1941902>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

# Iloilo governor eyes agriculture value chain strengthening

- John Eiron R. Francisco
- April 16, 2024
- ILOILO CITY—Provincial Governor Arthur Defensor Jr. has set his sights on establishing a robust value chain for agricultural products within the city, urging private sector involvement to enhance tourist offerings.
- This initiative aligns with the Visit Iloilo Campaign, further solidified through the signing on the commitment wall at the Iloilo Convention Center in Mandurriao on Monday, April 15, 2024.
- “We need our private sector to think about that and do that. So we can offer more,” Defensor told the BusinessMirror.
- He said that the province is driven by motivation, highlighting existing programs tailored for small and medium enterprises. However, the primary emphasis remains on improving offerings within the business sector, which he cited as a tangible goal sought after by the provincial government.
- “We are together with the private sector. Capital will come from initiative and the business will come from the private sector,” he said.
- Defensor said that due to the nature of governance and business in the Philippines, around 90 percent of interventions in businesses are handled by the private sector, while the government provides essential groundwork.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/16/iloilo-gov-eyes-agriculture-value-chain-strengthening/>



# Extend, increase rice fund: DA

By **Jed Macapagal** April 17, 2024



*Tweaks. The DA believes the RTL needs to include modernization and enhancement measures that would improve the income of rice farmers and boost their competitiveness. (DA Photo)*

The Department of Agriculture (DA) supports the proposed extension of the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund (RCEF), including an increase in the existing fund size of P10 billion.

“Definitely, I think it should be extended. But there should be adjustments so we can adapt to the times,” said DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on the sidelines of a corporate event in Batangas on Monday.

Tiu Laurel said amendments should incorporate modernization and enhancement measures that would improve the income of rice farmers and boost their competitiveness.

Tiu Laurel believes the P10-billion RCEF for farm and other inputs should be increased as total tariff collection last year reached P29 billion.

RCEF was created by the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) which among others provides for the allocation of all tariffs collected from rice imports to programs that would benefit local rice farmers and the industry.

Under RTL, collection will be up to June 2024 after it started in 2019.

Tiu Laurel said the allocation on steps that would improve farmers’ competitiveness should be increased.

He said each project funded by RCEF must include post-harvest facilities that could increase rice recovery for every kilo of palay by as much as 15 percent. In turn, higher productivity would result to lower import volumes.

Nueva Ecija Rep. Rosanna Vergara has filed a bill seeking to extend RCEF by another six years.

Her proposal is supported by Sen. Cynthia Villar, chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture.

Aside from higher rice fund budget for mechanization and post-harvest facilities, Tiu Laurel said the new law should have a provision allowing for an annual review on the fund allocation to further maximize farm productivity.

“We need to review the funding allocation every year and put it where it is most needed. If we mechanize this year and its sufficient, we could allot the funds somewhere else,” Tiu Laurel added.

In earlier discussions, Tiu Laurel also mentioned the need to allow DA or the National Food Authority (NFA) to regain its ability to influence rice prices in the market and not be limited to buying rice from local farmers for buffer stocking.

Until RTL, the NFA was authorized to import rice and sell them through authorized dealers to influence the market price of rice.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_business/extend-increase-rice-fund-da/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/extend-increase-rice-fund-da/)

## ABANTE TONITE

# P39 per kilong bigas sa Kadiwa ng Pangulo, pinilahan

- Abante Tonight
- April 16, 2024

Pinilahan ng mga mamimili ang P39 per kilo na bigas na ibinebenta sa mga Kadiwa ng Pangulo sa Metro Manila kasama na ang mga sariwang prutas at gulay na mas mura ang presyo kumpara sa mga palengke.

Ayon sa Presidential Communications Office, kabilang sa mga dinumog dahil sa murang presyo ng bigas ay ang Kadiwa outlet sa Brgy. Pamplona sa Las Pinas City.

Sinabi ng PCO na ang mga Kadiwa ng Pangulo outlets ay binuksan sa iba't ibang lugar upang makabili ang publiko ng mga murang bilingin at matulungan ang mga magsasaka at mga maliliit na negosyante na kumita.

Inanyayahan ng Department of Agriculture ang publiko na samantalain ang oportunidad sa mga Kadiwa outlet na matatagpuan sa Employees Park sa Taguig City Hall, People's Park sa McArthur Highway, Malinta, Valenzuela City at Ma-nila City Hall inner court sa Ermita, Maynila.

Mayroon ding bubuksang Kadiwa outlet sa April 19 sa Brgy. Moonwalk, Parañaque City at sa April 20 ay sa Brgy. Merville sa Parañaque City. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/04/16/p39-per-kilong-bigas-sa-kadiwa-ng-pangulo-pinilahan/>