

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA seeks reduction of pork imports

BY [TARA YAP](#)

Apr 22, 2024 12:03 PM

ILOILO CITY – The Department of Agriculture (DA) is calling for the reduction of pork importation as many areas in the country are still recovering from the impact of African Swine Fever (ASF).



AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (left) partakes of a ‘lechon’ or roasted pig at the 30th Hog Convention and Trade Exhibits in Iloilo City. (DA-Western Visayas)

“If we could produce more pork, we could reduce our importation. Our goal also embodies the DA’s stride towards abundant agriculture across the first economy,” said DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Iloilo City last week hosted the 30th Hog Convention and Trade Exhibits co-organized by the Pork Federations of the Philippines Inc. (PFPI) and the National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. (NFHFI).

The reduction of pork importation is part of DA’s larger goal in national food security.

“The commitment to excellence in pork production benefits livelihoods and contributes to our nation’s collective well-being and prosperity,” Tiu added.

The Agriculture Secretary also said the DA is set to launch this year the Cold Examination Facilities for Agriculture (CEFA) in eight selected areas across the country.

The CEFA aims “to prevent the smuggling of imported agricultural commodities and the entry of trans-boundary agricultural diseases, ensuring the safety and quality of locally-produced pork.”

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<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/22/da-seeks-reduction-of-pork-imports>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA eyes buffer stock system for agri products

BY [KHRISCIELLE YALAO](#)

Apr 22, 2024 06:15 PM

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) officials disclosed that a buffer stocking mechanism for the sale of agricultural and fisheries products is being eyed by the Department of Agriculture (DA), following the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC)'s meeting on April 22.

In a press conference in Makati City, DTI Assistant Secretary Amanda Nograles of the Consumer Protection Group (CPG) shared that the DA has proposed the creation of implementing rules and regulations (IRR) for the potential buffer stocking system, which will serve as guidelines for its implementation.

DTI Undersecretary Ed Sunico said the DA's proposal involves a 10-day buffer stock, which the NPCC hopes to help stabilize prices.

"They will work with the private sector to ensure that the 10 days worth of inventory has a place to be kept in, whether it's warehousing or cold chain storages, etc," he added.

Nograles clarified that the IRR provides for a maximum of 10 days buffer stock nationwide, but the DA will determine the amount of items to be stocked, since the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) told the NPCC that "they do not estimate the daily requirements since it involves stocking food items."

She said that among the products mentioned for the buffer stocking were rice, corn, sugar, onion, pork, and fertilizers. However, she clarified that this is not a definitive list for inclusion in the buffer stock.

"The goal of this, in addition to creating a market-based mechanism to decrease the price by increasing the supply, this will also become a deterrent to hoarders and those engaged in illegal price manipulation," she explained.

"If we have a buffer stock, they [violators] may think that, the government can intervene anytime," she added.

Nograles highlighted that this was the first time that the Section 9 provision of the Price Act (Republic Act No. 7581) has been invoked, since the Act took effect in 1992.

According to the law, Section 9 states that, "the implementing agency may procure, purchase, import, or stockpile any basic necessity or prime commodity, devise ways and means of distributing them for sale at reasonable prices in areas where there is shortage of supply or a need to effect changes in its prevailing price. For any or all of these purposes, a buffer fund shall be allocated in the annual appropriations of the implementing agencies."

She noted that this will be different from the buffer stocking policy of the National Food Authority (NFA).

Comments were solicited from the NPCC for the buffer stocking IRR, but "there is still no indication when this will be signed and when it would be made effective," she said.

The timeline for the IRR is deferred to the DA.

Under the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2024, there is no buffer stock fund, so the DA will need additional funding. The sources of these funds have not yet been disclosed.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/22/da-eyes-buffer-stock-system-for-agri-products>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Senators urge PBBM to boost PH agriculture despite easing rules on agri imports

BY [HANNAH TORREGOZA](#)

Apr 22, 2024 03:17 PM

Senators on Monday, April 22 urged President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. to ramp up local production even after releasing Administrative Order No. 20 easing the rules on the importation of agricultural products.

Sen. Francis “Chiz” Escudero said that while he supports the latest move by the President to curb the increasing prices of basic commodities, the Marcos administration should also ramp up local production.

Marcos had earlier released the administrative order in order to enhance food security by easing procedures related to the importation of agricultural products.

“I agree with the President but I would have preferred that more emphasis is given on local production than importation,” Escudero said in a statement.

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As far as he is concerned, Escudero said importation should only be a temporary solution to the country’s needs for agricultural products such as pork and fishery products.

“True and genuine food security is based on domestic ability and supply to answer our needs with importation simply being a stop-gap or in the interim while we haven’t achieved food security yet in order to curb inflation of basic food staples,” the senator added.

Escudero also said he is confident Agriculture Secretary Francis Tiu Laurel, Jr. would be able to address concerns of possible abuse when easing of administrative procedures and the removal of non-tariff barriers are imposed.

“I trust that Secretary Laurel will hold accountable whoever commits abuses as I know him to be a man of integrity and will not tolerate corruption,” he said.

AO 20 primarily directs the Department of Agriculture (DA) to address existing challenges and remove non-tariff barriers that have contributed to rising domestic prices of agricultural commodities.

Likewise, the Chief Executive, has ordered the DA, along with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) or the Department of Finance (DOF), to ease, among others, the procedures and requirements “in the licensing of importers, minimize processing time of application for importation, and exempt licensed traders from submission of registration requirements.”

Sen. Maria Lourdes Nancy Binay said it is crucial for the government to first study and give appropriate direction to this policy based on the cost-benefit implications of granting relief to the importation of agricultural products.

“While we understand that these barriers often create unnecessary complexities and costs for our farmers and consumers alike, the DA must ensure transparency once administrative measures are eased to achieve a more open and equitable market atmosphere,” Binay said.

“By evaluating both costs and benefits, we can guarantee that any adjustments to import regulations align with our goals of realizing food security, and fostering a resilient and sustainable agricultural sector,” she added.

Sen. Risa Hontiveros also cautioned the government in implementing AO 20, saying that while many will benefit from the policy, it is not enough for all that the country’s farmers and local businessmen are going through.

Hontiveros also said that even though the regulations and non-tariff barriers in the importation of agricultural products will be relaxed, it is still necessary to ensure the correct use of import permits.

“Kahit pa maibsan ang kuntsabahan ng mga backers at kasosyo sa pag-angkat, kailangan pa ring tiyakin na ligtas ang ating mga ihahahing ulam (Even if we can curb the connivance between backers and importing partners, we still need to make sure that our dishes are safe),” Hontiveros noted.

“Halimbawa na lang, hindi simpleng AO No. 20 lang ang susugpo sa ASF sa mga baboy (For example, a simple AO No. 20 can put a stop to the African Swine Fever),” she pointed out.

“Kahit pa maengganyo ang mas maraming negosyanteng makilahok sa agrikultura, may problema rin sa lokal na pamilihan. Halimbawa muli, mura ang landing cost sa mga pantalan ng galunggong, pero pagdating sa palengke malaki na ang patong. Mahalagang siyasatin ang sanhi nito (Even if more entrepreneurs are attracted to participate in agriculture, there is also a problem in the local market. For example again, the landing cost at the fish docks is cheap, but when it comes to the market, the cost is high. It is important to investigate its cause),” Hontiveros suggested.

And most importantly, Hontiveros said the government should make the necessary policy to impose the right tariff or tax on imports during harvest or abundant production to avoid wastage and dumping, which brings income losses to the country’s farmers, fishermen and those in the animal husbandry.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/22/senators-urge-pbbm-to-boost-ph-agriculture-despite-easing-rules-on-agri-imports>

Balisacan backs rice fund extension

BY [XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS](#)

Apr 22, 2024 05:05 PM

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has expressed its support for the Department of Agriculture's proposal to extend the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

"NEDA is looking at that issue. There are pros, there are cons. I would like to think that keeping the RCEF and targeting it well to improve the productivity of rice is not a bad idea," NEDA Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said on the sidelines of 2024 National Innovation Day.

The NEDA chief stated that keeping the tariffs from the rice imports would be good but it should be decided "whether you dedicate that tariff collection from the rice imports to rice only or to become a part of the general fund of government."

"For me, using it for agriculture but ensuring this time that it's really used for highly productive uses especially those that will address the low productivity issues in the rice sector, I think that will be a good move," he added.

According to the Rice Tariffication Act or Republic Act No. 11203, the RCEF, which was implemented in 2018, should be allocated P10 billion each year for the next six years to support Filipino farmers.

The P10 billion budget for RCEF comes from the tariff collection from imported rice.

Asked if there's a possibility to raise the budget for RCEF, NEDA Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon said that the previous implementation should be evaluated first before increasing the allocation.

The rice tariffication law states that if the annual tariff revenues from rice importation exceeds P10 billion in any given year, the excess tariff revenues shall be earmarked by Congress and included in the General Appropriations Act of the following year.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that a total of P29 billion in tariffs was collected last year, noting that there should be an increase for rice funding to bump rice recovery.

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

Furthermore, President Marcos issued Administrative Order (AO) No. 20 that orders the Agriculture department to remove non-tariff barriers on the importation of agricultural products, to lower prices, and to ensure supply.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/22/balisacan-backs-rice-fund-extension>

MANILA BULLETIN:

IRRI, PhilRice unveil drone protocols to enhance rice farming

BY [GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG](#)

Apr 22, 2024 03:15 PM

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) have launched a new project that aims to improve rice farmers' productivity and sustainability by utilizing drone technology.

In a statement on Monday, April 22, IRRI and PhilRice said their project, Drones4Rice, plans to develop standardized protocols for drone applications of seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides for rice production in the Philippines.

"Drones serve various agricultural purposes, including irrigation planning, crop health monitoring, damage assessment, soil health analysis, and fertilizer and pesticide application," IRRI stated.

By optimizing protocols and streamlining regulations, IRRI and PhilRice said it is expected to facilitate the private sector in scaling affordable drone services for farmers..

"The project also plans to set up a drone-based system to monitor crops, and map weeds and nutrient levels in rice fields to develop a new method for adjusting nutrient and weed management during the growing season, as well as scaling up sustainable drone-based precision farming technologies and finding ways to adopt them widely at the farm cluster level," IRRI reported.

To further ensure reliability, the drones have advanced sensors that could optimize resource management and minimize labor costs.

Labor cost is one of the challenges faced in the local rice production cost as it consists third of the total rice production expenses. IRRI and PhilRice believe that enhanced mechanization would lower the prices while simultaneously allowing farmers to be more productive.

IRRI senior scientist Stephen Klassen shared that drone technology could be used for precision agriculture as this could lead to higher yields while being cost-efficient.

Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Christopher Morales also stated the importance of drone technology as "this emphasizes the rice industry's need to adapt to emerging trends and technologies, with digital transformation being a key strategy of the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program. It is crucial for our industry to stay current."

The project will be institutionalized with the financial help of the DA-National Program through the Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR).

Other DA-attached agencies and bureaus, the DA regional offices, the private sector, and the regulatory agencies will partner up for the drone project.

Agricultural drones are currently being utilized as part of farm mechanization in China and Japan, while Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam are also keeping up.

As of now, the Philippines is at its early stages, while its existing partnerships would expedite this technology to small rice farms.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/22/irri-phil-rice-unveil-drone-protocols-to-enhance-rice-farming>

Agricultural extension workers need more incentives—PIDS

BY [XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS](#)

Apr 22, 2024 04:16 PM

State think tank Philippine Institute for Development Studies said that more incentives should be given to agricultural extension workers (AEW) to motivate them to reach farmers in far-flung areas.

During an online webinar, PIDS Supervising Research Specialist Ivory Myka R. Galang noted that AEWs play a crucial role in minimizing the digital divide among Filipino farmers but are often discouraged because of fewer incentives.

“Nakita po natin sa study is kulang yung number mismo ng AEW sa bansa and yung mismong incentives for them to actually go out, pumunta sa pinaka remote na area, ‘di ganon kataas yung incentives na binibigay sa kanila,” Galang said.

[In the study, we observed that the number of AEWs in the country is insufficient, as well as the incentives provided to them to actually go out and reach the most remote areas. The incentives given to them are not very high]

“Sila yung susi para maabot po natin yung pinakamalawak na numero ng mga magsasaka at mangingisda so kailangan nating paramihin ang AEW at bigyan sila ng mga nararapat na incentives para magampanan ang kanilang trabaho at mapataas yung kalidad ng serbisyo na kanilang binibigay,” she added.

[They are the key to reaching the largest number of farmers and fishermen, so we need to increase the number of AEWs and provide them with the appropriate incentives to fulfill their duties and improve the quality of service they provide.]

In her study titled “Transforming Philippine Agri-Food Systems with Digital Technology: Extent, Prospects, and Inclusiveness,” AEWs are described as those who use technology to relay recommendations about advanced farming ideas.

Roehlano M. Briones, a PIDS senior research fellow, said that incentives could be in the form of transportation budget allocation, noting that it could be costly to go to the farmers’ areas.

“The reason why they’re [farmers] poor is there’s budget constraint, and budget constraint prevents us from helping those who are poor but somehow we need to be able to bridge this because we can’t just be looking at the problem decade after decade without any improvement,” he said.

These AEWs are also hindered by a low number of permanent appointments, with job orders, Galang stated in the PIDS study.

“Even in LGUs that are highly agricultural, the number of AEWs are too few compared to the number of farmers that need to be served,” the researcher further said.

Minimizing digital divide among Filipino farmers is crucial as it could aid farmers in advanced farming, citing examples such as Rice Crop Manager Advisory Service and Digital Clustered Rice Farming that led to more accurate crop management.

Galang cited an instance wherein a farmer, prior to DCRF, his typical harvest would cost P14 per kilogram and gross around P70,000, but in his most recent harvest, he harvested more cavans of rice and had a gross of P120,118 with minimal expenses.

Based on 2022 data from the Philippines Statistics Authority, the gross value added (GVA) in agriculture reached P2.1 trillion in current prices, which is about a tenth of total growth, measured in gross domestic product.

The crops together sum up to less than half of GVA which is 46.4 percent, while capture and raising of animals account for 41.9 percent.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/22/agricultural-extension-workers-need-more-incentives-pids>

Misconduct



[FIRST PERSON](#) - [Alex Magno](#) - The Philippine Star

April 23, 2024 | 12:00am

Graft need not have happened. The ombudsman sets new ground by designating misconduct as sufficient ground for dismissal from the service.

Earlier this month, the Office of the Ombudsman ordered the dismissal from the service of Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) national director Demosthenes R. Escoto. The order was based on a 22-page decision prepared by Graft Investigator and Prosecution Officer Cezar M. Tirol II which found Escoto guilty of grave misconduct.

It does not appear the administration will contest the ombudsman's order. Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. promptly appointed career official Isidro Velayo as officer-in-charge of the BFAR. The agriculture department assured there will be no disruption in the operations and projects of this key agency responsible for overseeing the country's exclusive economic zone.

The case stems from what appears to be an anomalous awarding of the P2-billion contract for the vessel monitoring system (VMS) project. The contract was awarded in 2018.

The case involves the purchase of technology and equipment for the first phase of the Integrated Marine Environment Monitoring System, also known as the PHILO Project. This project aims to enhance marine resource protection and combat illegal fishing by installing VMS devices in all commercial vessels above 30 tons operating in our exclusive economic zone. Transmitters and transceivers will be supplied these commercial vessels.

This project was originally supposed to be funded by way of a P1.6-billion loan from the French government. The loan, however, required bidders to be either French or part of a joint venture with a French entity.

Some serious lack of due diligence happened on the part of the BFAR. In 2017, the agency declared SRT-France the winning bidder to supply the equipment for the monitoring project.

SRT-France, it turned out, was only recently organized and had no manufacturing nor engineering facilities in France. It was merely a subsidiary of SRT-UK. That did not meet the conditions for the French loan and Paris subsequently asked that SRT-France be disqualified. The loan offer was eventually withdrawn.

In 2018, a new round of bidding was held by the BFAR with the project financed locally. The project budget was increased to P2.09 billion and awarded to SRT-UK.

Reviewing the proceedings, the ombudsman deemed that Escoto, in exercise of his function as bids and awards committee chair, “clearly gave unwarranted benefit or advantage to SRT-France and SRT-UK.”

Although the award of the contract to SRT-France was cancelled, it nevertheless remained that the BFAR gave the company unwarranted benefit to participate in the bid and be post-qualified, notwithstanding its ineligibility. This constitutes, according to the ombudsman, “willful violation of the law and established rule.”

The unwarranted benefit given SRT-France paved the way for awarding the contract to SRT-UK. In this second award, the Philippine government assumed a larger contractual obligation than initially requested for the project. The ombudsman notes that instead of procuring the originally planned 3,736 VMS transceivers, Escoto obliged government to purchase 5,000 units.

“This is a contractual obligation that is grossly disadvantageous to the government and unreasonably beneficial to SRT-UK,” the ombudsman concludes. The practical outcome of this contract is that BFAR now has many more transceivers than it needs.

The dismissal order carries the accessory penalties of cancellation of civil service eligibility, forfeiture of retirement benefits, perpetual disqualification from holding office and prohibition from taking civil service examinations. The law may be harsh, but that is the law.

This dismissal order sends appropriate warnings to all government agencies to be more circumspect in the award of contracts. There are many cases where, in the process of awarding contracts, the size of the procurement is increased.

Signaling

In response to a massive Iranian missile assault involving 350 projectiles, Israel has retaliated by sending its own missiles into central Iran. The missiles had apparently succeeded in penetrating Iranian air defense and caused some damage to an army base close to some of Tehran's vital nuclear facilities.

Following Israel's "retaliation," global oil prices softened. The market has clearly concluded that the Iran-Israel confrontation would likely wind down. The missile attacks by both sides were understood as well-calculated signaling exercises.

In the case of Iran, its missile assault, although massive, was well-telegraphed. Israel and her allies had every opportunity to intercept the horde of drones and missiles launched by Tehran.

In the case of Israel's "retaliation," Tel Aviv apparently decided against hitting Iran's nuclear facilities. It was sufficient, for the Israelis, to demonstrate their capacity to penetrate Iran's air defense systems. Although the missile attack on Iran was never formally acknowledged by Tel Aviv, it was convincing enough to warn Iran of the perils of escalation.

Let us hope that the global oil market is reading the situation correctly. Any escalation of the Iran-Israel confrontation could lead to a dangerous sequence no one wants.

The status quo is expected to hold. But that status quo includes Iran's use of proxy militias in Yemen, Iraq and Syria to continue attacking Israel. This explains why, after the direct attack on Iranian territory, Israel has followed up with devastating air attacks on Iran-supported militia groups in Iraq. Tel Aviv had not relented attacking Hezbollah targets in Lebanon.

The proxy warfare continues. It is not necessarily the sort of "low-intensity" warfare that we saw in other places and in previous decades. But it remains containable.

An uncontrolled escalation could set the stage for a third world war.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/04/23/2349683/misconduct>

Ex-DA chief hits easing food imports

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

April 23, 2024 | 12:00am



MANILA, Philippines — Only importers will benefit from Administrative Order 20 issued by President Marcos – reportedly without consulting concerned officials – to remove non-tariff barriers to agriculture importation, a former agriculture chief said yesterday.

In an interview with The STAR, former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor said that the AO, reportedly the idea of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), would have adverse impact on agriculture, particularly on the local fisheries and sugar industries.

“It will weaken the local agricultural sector, especially fisheries and sugar. Worse, it did not undergo consultation. Based on my knowledge, the Department of Agriculture has a different position on this,” Montemayor said.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa declined to comment.

Citing constraints that increase importation costs and limit the supply of farm goods, President Marcos ordered the removal of non-tariff import restrictions through the issuance of AO 20.

In the AO, the Chief Executive likewise instructed the DA, Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Finance to ease, among others, the procedures and

requirements “in the licensing of importers, minimize processing time of application for importation and exempt licensed traders from submission of registration requirements.”

“This (AO 20) was pushed by the economic managers, particularly NEDA. The meaning of NEDA is now national importation and development authority or NIDA and not NEDA,” Montemayor said.

“In the case of sugar, there is a de facto import quota restriction where it needs the approval of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) Board. Second, on the fisheries, you cannot import unless there is a certificate of necessity to import from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR),” he pointed out.

According to Montemayor, AO 20 clashes with the Philippine Fisheries Code or Republic Act 8550 and Republic Act 10659 or Sugarcane Industry Development Act of 2015.

“In both cases, laws are being followed in the implementation of quantitative restrictions. The question is can an administrative order overrule the existing laws, and second what will be the impact on local fisheries and sugar production,” he added.

Montemayor said AO 20 has effectively removed the oversight functions of both the SRA and BFAR.

No guarantee

At the same time, Montemayor said the removal of restrictions on importation is not a guarantee that the prices of food products will go down.

“It is not automatic that it will result in lower prices as in the case of rice, lower tariffs imposed on the imported rice from India, Pakistan and on imported frozen pork did not benefit the consumers,” Montemayor noted.

“What we know is that it will only benefit the importers. It will lessen the taxes they pay and they can easily import. It will also discourage our local producers,” he maintained.

Montemayor added that the government should increase the budget of the DA if it wants to boost the country’s local production.

“We are monitoring the budget of the DA for 2025 as if it remains small, it means that the government is not serious in strengthening the local production and instead it is more serious in increasing the country’s importation,” he added.

He warned that the administrative order would result in the flooding in the market of smuggled agricultural products.

For his part, Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) national manager Raul Montemayor said the government had already reduced the tariffs on prime commodities like rice, pork and corn.

“Tariffs on other products are already very low. But these have not been able to reduce retail prices. There is no assurance that reducing non-tariff measures will result in lower consumer prices. And it might only encourage smuggling, undervaluation and misdeclaration of imports,” the FFF national manager told The STAR.

“And why focus on making it easier to import. Why don’t they address the barriers to domestic trade that make it expensive and difficult to bring local products from the farms to the consumers?” he added.

Mixed reactions

Senators, meanwhile, have mixed reactions to President Marcos’ issuance of AO 20. Sen. Francis Escudero said he agreed with the President’s move “but would have preferred that more emphasis was given on local production than importation.”

“True and genuine food security is based on domestic ability and supply to answer our needs, with importation simply being a ‘stop-gap’ or in the interim while we haven’t achieved ‘food security’ in order to curb inflation of basic food staples,” Escudero added.

On the possibility of abuse by unscrupulous importers, Escudero said he is confident that Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. would be able to effectively address such concerns.

“I trust that Secretary Laurel will hold accountable whoever commits abuses as I know him to be a man of integrity and will not tolerate corruption,” he said.

Sen. Nancy Binay said she thinks “it is important to first study and give appropriate direction to this policy based on the cost-benefit implications of granting relief to the importation of agricultural products.”

“While we understand that these barriers often create unnecessary complexities and costs for our farmers and consumers alike, the DA must ensure transparency once administrative measures are eased to achieve a more open and equitable market atmosphere,” she said.

“By evaluating both costs and benefits, we can guarantee that any adjustments to import regulations align with our goals of realizing food security and fostering a resilient and sustainable agricultural sector,” Binay added.

Sen. Risa Hontiveros said that while the easing of import restrictions would have benefits, they would not be enough to ease the plight of farmers and businessmen.

“Even if regulations and non-tariff barriers are relaxed, it is still necessary to ensure proper use of import permits. Even if the connivance between backers and their import partners is minimized, we still have to make sure the food on the table is safe. For example, AO 20 alone cannot eliminate the ASF (African swine fever) in pigs,” she said.

“And finally, during harvest or abundant production, it is necessary to impose the right tariff or tax on imports to avoid dumping, which is causing losses to our farmers, fishermen, and livestock keepers,” she pointed out. – **Cecille Suerte Felipe**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/23/2349777/ex-da-chief-hits-easing-food-imports>

DENR: Philippines loses \$890 million annually to recyclable plastic dumping

[Jose Rodel Clapano](#), [Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

April 23, 2024 | 12:00am



In her speech during the celebration of Earth Day, Loyzaga said the country produces around 2.7 million tons of plastic waste each year, with most of it ending in landfills, dumpsites, rivers and water supply systems.

AFP / Bertrand Guay

MANILA, Philippines — The country loses \$890 million a year because of indiscriminate dumping of recyclable plastic instead of repurposing it, Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said yesterday.

In her speech during the celebration of Earth Day, Loyzaga said the country produces around 2.7 million tons of plastic waste each year, with most of it ending in landfills, dumpsites, rivers and water supply systems.

“However, about 20 percent of this ends up in our oceans. Over and above our organic waste, plastic for our market needs, food wrapping and packaging for our consumers all make up the 61,000 metric tons of solid waste we produce daily,” Loyzaga said.

This year’s Earth Day is an urgent call to face a deadly challenge against plastic, she added.

Loyzaga pointed out that many are unaware plastics have traditionally been made from oil, natural gas, or coal – the very fossil fuel sources that have driven climate change.

“On a daily basis, we consume plastics in the fish caught in the seas, through the substandard water bottles we use and in the very air we breathe. Microplastics have been found in raindrops and are being studied for their impact on clouds and climate change,” she added.

To address the issue, she said the government passed the Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022 or the EPR Law, which shifted the burden of collecting used plastic from local governments to the producers and manufacturers.

“Over 800 large-scale companies have registered and committed to reducing plastic use through the substitution and development of sustainable packaging solutions and collection, treatment and recycling initiatives. They have also committed to education and raising awareness of the environmental impact of plastic pollution,” Loyzaga noted.

She stressed that the government and the corporations cannot do it alone, adding that transformation toward a plastics-free world begins at home.

“Together, we can win this battle of planet vs. plastics. Every step we take counts, and we will need to work as one. It is our choice to act today or let our plastic waste determine our tomorrow. Earth Day must be every day. We will fight to win the war of Planet vs. Plastics. We must embrace the environment for life,” she added.

Meanwhile, the environmental group Center for Energy, Ecology and Development (CEED) yesterday asked President Marcos to declare a national climate emergency amid the impact of El Niño in the country.

At a press conference, CEED executive director Gerry Arances said the damage El Niño brought to the agriculture sector has reached almost P4 billion, and it could still get worse in the next days.

“Today, together with other organizations, we urge President Marcos to declare a national climate emergency as the effect of the El Niño that we are currently experiencing is expected to exacerbate,” Arances said, adding that the government’s preparations to minimize the impact of the phenomenon were inadequate.

“We are experiencing a different kind of El Niño as in the past weeks the heat index already reached almost 50 degrees Celsius. Its damage to agriculture already reached billions, as well as in the fish catch. We expect more problems in the next weeks and months,” he added.

Arances said Marcos should acknowledge that the current El Niño is different from the previous drought. “Extraordinary measures are needed. Government officials are still treating climate change as business as usual. For us, we are warning that we should expect it to exacerbate.”

He said the declaration of a national climate emergency is necessary for national survival.

Batang Bantay Kalikasan

The city government of Pasig launched yesterday the Batang Bantay Kalikasan or BBK project, which aims to empower the youth in the campaign for the protection of the environment, and did a tree-planting activity in observance of this year’s Earth Day.

The BBK officers, led by Samantha Nicole Salingay of De Castro Elementary School, from 21 public schools in Pasig took their oath during the flag-raising ceremony of the employees and officials of the city.

The city government handed over the BBK badge to its officers to symbolize the recognition of the city government to the group.

It also encouraged all private companies in the city to join the search for the “Most Sustainable Landscape” as part of the push to create green spaces in support of the Green Building Ordinance of Pasig.

After the flag-raising ceremony, Pasig Mayor Vico Sotto and other city officials led the ribbon-cutting for the Earth Day fair at the city hall lobby where 10 exhibitors participated in showcasing their environment-friendly products.

Sotto, along with Vice Mayor Robert Jaworski Jr., city councilors, representatives from the Mint College of Ortigas, AsiaLink and Department of Education -Schools Division office of Pasig led the tree-planting and growing activity at the Pasig Central Elementary School.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/23/2349763/denr-philippines-loses-890-million-annually-recyclable-plastic-dumping>

EDITORIAL - Easing food importation

The Philippine Star

April 23, 2024 | 12:00am



With food-fueled inflation accelerating for the second straight month in March, and the latest surveys showing rising prices still the top concern of Filipinos, the government's has once again opted for its go-to response: increased importation.

The 3.7 percent increase in the consumer price index last month from the 3.4 percent in February was within the 3.4 to 4.2 percent forecast of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. Food, however, accounted for the biggest component of the CPI increase, at 5.7 percent – its highest since November last year. And prices of rice – a sensitive commodity for the Marcos administration – registered their steepest hike at 24.4 percent, accounting for nearly half of the headline inflation. This was the sharpest increase in rice prices since the 24.6 percent in February 2009.

Last week, as rice retail prices rose by P2 per kilo according to government monitoring, President Marcos ordered the easing of non-tariff barriers and procedures for the importation of agricultural commodities. These barriers include licensing systems, quotas and regulations. The President's Administrative Order No. 20 dated April 18 also directed the Bureau of Customs to speed up the processing and release of agricultural imports.

Timely importation, when domestic production is low, can stabilize supply and prices of agricultural commodities, as the nation learned during the onion crisis of 2022. Sometimes, however, even massive importations fail to bring down prices of farm products, which has been the case with white refined sugar. As sugar prices surged into the stratosphere, food-fueled inflation also jumped, with confectionery and other sweetened food products accounting for the biggest component. There was the usual talk about pursuing hoarders, price manipulators and technical smugglers,

with speculation swirling about a well-connected cabal raking in billions from the dizzying retail prices. If any serious probe was conducted, however, the outcome is unclear. Sugar prices began softening from exorbitant highs only in mid-2023.

The President's order to relax food importation barriers must be balanced with the need to raise the productivity and competitiveness of the domestic agriculture sector. Even before the order came out, domestic producers of certain agricultural commodities were already complaining about a flood of imports pulling farmgate prices so low it was endangering the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and livestock breeders.

Easing farm import barriers is meant to tame food inflation. This quick fix must be employed without further weakening domestic agricultural production, which could pose long-term risks to the nation's food security.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/04/23/2349685/editorial-easing-food-importation>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Marcos appoints retired CA Justice Melchor Sadang as new PCGG chair

By: [Jean Mangaluz](#) - Reporter / [@JMangaluzINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:43 PM April 22, 2024



(Photo from PCGG/FACEBOOK)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. named retired Court of Appeals Associate Justice Melchor Sadang the new chairman of the Presidential Commission on Good Government — the government body created to locate his family’s alleged ill-gotten wealth.

The Presidential Communications Office posted on Facebook on Monday that Sadang had been appointed to the post.

Sadang was part of the five-man committee tasked to help clean the ranks of the Philippine National Police in 2023.

Sadang replaces John Agbayani at the commission.

The Palace also announced the following appointments:

- Commission on Higher Education

- Ethel Valenzuela – commissioner
- Manila Economic and Cultural Office
- Rose Marie J. Arenas – member, board of directors
- National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
- Dahlielyn Dait-Cawed – director IV
- Philippine Racing Commission
- Bienvenido Niles Jr. – member, representative of the Racehorse Owners Association
- Department of Agrarian Reform
- Eric Arevalo – director III
- Claire Aznar – provincial agrarian reform program officer I
- Department of Agriculture
- Asis Perez – undersecretary
- Department of Foreign Affairs
- Ella Mitra – foreign service officer, class I
- Department of Trade and Industry
- Grace Baluyan – assistance secretary
- Raymond Panhon – director IV

- Intellectual Property Office
- Nathaniel Arevalo – deputy director general
- Supreme Court, Legal Education Board
- Jason Barlis – chair
- Manuel Barrios – regular member, representing the Philippine Association of Law Professors
- Voltaire San Pedro – regular member, representing the Philippine Association of Law Schools
- Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development
- Gregorio Montenegro, member of the Home Development Mutual Fund Board of Trustees, representing the Private Employees
- Department of Labor and Employment
- Raymond Fel Sajor, director III
- Department of National Defense, Veterans Memorial Medical Center
- Godwin Hernaez, chief of medical professional staff II
- Department of Tourism, Philippine Retirement Authority
- Roberto Zozobrado, general manager, chief executive officer, member of the Board of Trustees
- Department of Transportation

- Jesus Nathaniel Martin Gonzales, undersecretary
- Al-Amanah Islamic Investment Bank of the Philippines
- member, board of directors
- Salma Angkaya-Kuhutan
- Mohamad Dimaporo
- Analiza Flores
- Catherine Magana
- Ma. Cristina Malab
- Ronaldo Tepora
- Development Bank of the Philippines
- Eduardo Saguil – member of the board of trustees
- Insurance Commission
- Martin Yasay – deputy commissioner
- Social Security System
- Eva Arcos – member representing the Workers’ Group, Social Security Commission

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1932262/marcos-appoints-retired-ca-justice-melchor-sadang-as-new-pcgg-chair>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Ombudsman orders graft raps vs ex-BFAR execs in P2.1-B VMS bidding

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lulu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLuluINQ](#)
INQUIRER.net / 04:46 PM April 22, 2024



Office of the Ombudsman. (File photo by NOY MORCOSO | INQUIRER.net)

MANILA, Philippines — The Office of the Ombudsman has ordered the filing of graft complaints against three [former officials of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources \(BFAR\)](#) accused of involvement in the P2.1 billion deal with a controversial foreign firm for the government's [vessel monitoring system \(VMS\)](#).

In a 25-page resolution signed by Ombudsman Samuel Martires last April 11, a case for graft will be filed against former Agriculture undersecretary Eduardo Gongona, former BFAR national director Demosthenes Escoto, former Agriculture assistant secretary Hansel Didulo, and Simon Tucker and Richard Hurd of SRT Marine Systems Solutions, Ltd.

According to the resolution, the former BFAR officials continued to sign a contract with SRT-France for the supply of technology and equipment for the Integrated Marine Environment Monitoring System Project Phase 1 or the PHILO Project even though the French Embassy to the Philippines deemed the company ineligible.

The PHILO Project was initiated in 2015, with the French government offering a loan of 28,520,000 Euros, with the condition that the project's products be sourced from French suppliers.

The first bidding did not push through due to an issue with the mode of procurement, while the second bidding in 2017 was initially successful after Philippine officials picked SRT-France, a subsidiary company of SRT-United Kingdom (SRT-UK).

The French embassy, however, deemed SRT-France disqualified as it was only established a month before the first bidding.

It was found to have no manufacturing or engineering facilities in France, which means the Philippine government would have bought technology and parts from a UK-based company.

Instead of removing SRT-France from the list of bidders, however, the Ombudsman said BFAR officials chose to stop the bidding process, cancel the French loan, and suggest that the government fund the full cost of the program to avoid interest payments—only to have a new bidding process in which SRT-France won.

To the [Ombudsman](#), this is an act of giving unwarranted benefits to SRT-France.

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“Escoto and Gongona, while in the exercise of their official functions as Chairman of the BAC, and as Head of the Procuring Entity, respectively, and in conspiracy with Tucker, clearly gave unwarranted benefit or advantage to SRT-France and SRT-UK,” the Ombudsman said.

“Although the award of the contract to SRT-France was canceled, the unwarranted benefit they gave to SRT-France to participate in the bid and to be post-qualified despite its ineligibility already consummates a violation of Section 3(e) of RA No. 3019 (Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act).”

The Ombudsman also took notice of the fact that the French Embassy, when it disqualified SRT-France, did not forfeit the loan it was offering to the Philippine government.

“When the French Embassy ruled on the disqualification of SRT-France, it did not seek the cancellation of the French Loan. In fact, the French Embassy was still open to discussion and was apparently willing to proceed with the Loan Agreement. The

closing statement of Laurent Estrade, Head of the Economic Department, French Embassy, in his Letter dated 28 May 2018 to Gongona, reads: ‘We are at your disposal to discuss this matter further, and look forward to receiving any forthcoming updates on the project,’” the Ombudsman said.

“However, instead of discussing the matter with the French Government, the BAC (Bids and Awards Committee) immediately resolved to cancel the award to SRT-France on 4 June 2018 [...] In fact, it was not the French Government that canceled the French Loan. It was canceled upon the request of DA-BFAR, and this request was approved by the NEDA ICC-CC only on 16 August 2018,” it added.

The Ombudsman said that it shows evidence that from the very beginning, the BFAR officials wanted to give the contract to SRT-France, or their parent company, SRT-UK.

“These series of events are circumstantial evidence proving that the contract for the PHILO Project was, at the very first instance, meant by Escoto and Gongona to be awarded to SRT-UK. The sudden creation of SRT-France a month before the second bidding; the permission given to SRT-France to participate in the bidding despite knowledge that it will have to depend on SRT-UK’s technical, professional and financial capabilities,” the Ombudsman said. “[...] all these paved the way for SRT-UK to participate in the bidding — a bidding for a project with an expanded scope and increased project cost,” it added.

The PHILO Project would have enhanced the government’s efforts to protect its marine resources and fight illegal fishing by implementing a VMS for large commercial vessels that are operating within the country’s exclusive economic zone. Last April 18, it was reported that the [Ombudsman dismissed Escoto](#) from his post due to his alleged participation in the “anomalous scheme.”

This prompted Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. to tap Isidro Velayo Jr. as the officer in charge of BFAR to ensure no disruption in the operations and implementation of the bureau’s major projects.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1932291/ombudsman-orders-graft-raps-vs-ex-bfar-execs-in-p2-1-b-vms-bidding>

Marcos appoints new PCGG head

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:45 AM April 23, 2024



PCGG/FACEBOOK

MANILA, Philippines — Malacañang on Monday announced the appointment of 35 key officials of various government agencies, including the new chair of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), the body mainly tasked to recover the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcos family.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. named retired Court of Appeals Justice Melchor Quirino Sadang as PCGG chair, replacing its former head John Agbayani.

Created during the term of then President Corazon Aquino, the PCGG has reportedly recovered about \$5 billion in ill-gotten Marcos wealth while about \$2.4 billion remain under litigation.

Aside from Sadang, Marcos also named Jesus Nathaniel Martin Gonzales as undersecretary of the Department of Transportation; while Asis Perez returns to the Department of Agriculture as undersecretary.

Other new key appointees include Ethel Agnes Valenzuela as commissioner of the Commission on Higher Education; and Rose Marie Arenas as board member of the Manila Economic and Cultural Office. —**MELVIN GASCON**

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1932448/marcos-appoints-new-pcgg-head>

NFA starts paying higher palay buying prices

April 22, 2024 | 10:17 pm



THE National Food Authority (NFA) said Monday that it started paying the new, increased rates for procuring palay (unmilled rice), with prices paid to farmers varying by location.”

“This is unique in a sense that provinces will have different prices depending on the conditions in the province such as prevailing farmgate price, remaining harvest, and most importantly the target palay procurement for the area,” NFA Acting Administrator Larry Lacson said in a statement.

The NFA Council, earlier approved the increased buying price for palay at P23 to P30 per kilogram (kg) for dry and clean palay and P17 to P23 per kg for fresh palay.

Clean and dry palay should at least be 90% pure and have a moisture content of no more than 14%, while fresh and wet palay must have a moisture range of 22-29.9%.

“The NFA Council had to raise buying prices for palay after prolonged high farmgate prices,” it said, citing the need to obtain supply in the face of competition from private traders.

Traders were reportedly buying dry palay at P27 to 30 per kg, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The old purchase prices for dry and wet palay were set last year at P19-P23 (dry) and P16-P19 per kg (wet).

“This new pricing scheme will mark a new era for NFA palay buying,” Mr. Lacson added.

The NFA said that it discontinued the one-price scheme for palay purchases to consider the support price provided by some local government units as an alternative to private traders.

The agency is required to maintain a buffer stock of rice of about 300,000 metric tons (MT), which is sufficient for nine days’ consumption.

The national inventory of rice declined 3% to 1.37 million MT, the Philippine Statistics Authority said.

Stocks held by NFA facilities declined 59.9% year on year to 41,290 MT. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/22/589943/nfa-starts-paying-higher-palay-buying-prices/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Gov't signals preparations for onion, pork, fertilizer reserves

April 22, 2024 | 10:21 pm



THE NATIONAL Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) said its views were solicited on a proposal to build up a 10-day reserve of key agricultural products, according to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

DTI Consumer Protection Group Assistant Secretary Amanda F. Nograles said that the Department of Agriculture (DA) floated draft Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) for the Price Act covering the building up of commodity reserves at an NPCC meeting Monday.

“(During the meeting) we were able to point out that the target for the buffer stocks are onion, pork, and fertilizers,” Ms. Nograles said, in addition to rice, corn and sugar.

“The goal of this, in addition to creating a market-based mechanism to decrease the price by increasing the supply, is to deter hoarders and those who are engaged in illegal price manipulation,” she added.

She said that this will be the first time that the government will invoke the provision on buffer stocks since the Price Act was implemented.

Trade Undersecretary Jose Edgardo G. Sunico said that the plan is to maintain a reserve equivalent to 10 days of consumption.

“This will be enough to address problems when it comes to stabilizing our prices, and we will also coordinate with the private sector to ensure that the 10 days worth of inventory will have storage, whether that’s warehousing or cold storage,” Mr. Sunico said.

Ms. Nograles said that the IRR is currently unsigned since the members of the NPCC were only asked to comment on the draft.

“So far, there is still no indication when it will be signed or when it will be made effective. However, under Section 9 of the Price Act, there is no provision that says that there is a need to create an IRR,” she said.

“The IRR merely provides guidelines on how it will be implemented. So, we defer to the DA on their timelines and their official position as to whether they will wait to issue the IRR or actually enforce the rules,” she added.

She also said that the DA will also determine the volumes held in reserve,.

“The (Philippine Statistics Authority) doesn’t estimate the daily requirements, so we do not have a basis, but the IRR provides for a maximum of 10 days of buffer stock,” she added.

However, Ms. Nograles said that the government will need additional funding to build up the reserves as it is not provided for in the General Appropriations Act. — **Justine Irish DP Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/22/589956/govt-signals-preparations-for-onion-pork-fertilizer-reserves/>

Gov't urged to improve agri info system

April 22, 2024 | 10:13 pm



THE government should improve digital platforms for distributing agricultural information, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) said at an online seminar Monday.

“There should be a centralized repository or portal for all government agri-sites and applications, for the convenience of farmers,” Ivory R. Galang, a supervising research specialist for PIDS, said.

Ms. Galang said agricultural datasets and advisories should be consolidated on a single platform.

In a study, PIDS recommended the establishment of a high-level steering committee to oversee the harmonization of government data within digital platforms.

“We need to harmonize conflicting advisories or recommendations. It needs to be fixed so that there will be no confusion and the information given becomes effective,” she added.

It added that the creation of a single government portal that links to the various advisory tools should unify the numerous farm advisory applications.

“We are suggesting a single portal where different applications are housed, to make it easier for farmers and agricultural extension workers,” Ms. Galang said.

However, PIDS said 42.4% of farmers and fisherfolk get their information through training, coaching, or mentoring.

It added that only 4.8% use the internet.

Due to the lack of infrastructure for information and communications technology in far flung areas, uneven access to this service becomes a problem,” she said.

Meanwhile, Ms. Galang added that there should be a centralized online marketplace for micro, small and medium enterprises selling agri-food products.

“We are envisioning a single government e-commerce platform through the (Department of Trade and Industry) so that they can consolidate the various platforms and avoid confusion,” she added. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/22/589889/govt-urged-to-improve-agri-info-system/>

Inflation uptick unlikely in April, says NEDA official

April 23, 2024 | 12:35 am



A rice field is seen in Bustos, Bulacan in this file photo. -- Photo by KJ ROSALES, The Philippine Star

HEADLINE INFLATION is unlikely to accelerate in April amid the harvest season, although risks from the El Niño dry spell remain, a National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) official said on Monday.

“We’re hoping that it (inflation) will be good because we’re already harvesting,” NEDA Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon told reporters on the sidelines of a forum.

The dry harvest season for rice started last month and will last until end-April.

Inflation accelerated for the second straight month in March to 3.7%, as prices of food products continued to rise. In particular, rice inflation quickened to 24.4% in March, the highest since 24.6% in February 2009.

The statistics agency will release April inflation data on May 7.

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“Of course, we are concerned that many areas are still experiencing this intense heat, but with respect to our farming sector, a lot of them were able to do advance planting,” Ms. Edillon said in mixed English and Filipino.

Agricultural output is being affected by the dry spell and drought caused by El Niño. Latest data from the Agriculture department showed that agricultural damage due to El Niño has reached P3.94 billion, with rice accounting for more than half of the total damage.

While the dry spell is a “concern,” Ms. Edillon said the harvest would still be enough to meet the country’s demand.

The El Niño dry spell would likely persist until May, but the Philippines would still feel its impact until August, the Department of Science and Technology said last month.

Meanwhile, the NEDA is cool to a proposal to remove the minimum access volume (MAV) system.

“The MAV is actually a WTO (World Trade Organization) commitment, and yes, we can actually move towards removing it, but that might reduce our flexibility later on if we need to reimpose it, and this would be anti-WTO,” Ms. Edillon said. “So, we can adjust as necessary.”

Monetary Board Member V. Bruce J. Tolentino earlier proposed the removal of the MAV system, saying the allocation process is vulnerable to corruption. The MAV allows trading partners guaranteed market access subject to volume quotas. It is a feature of the WTO trading system.

“The fundamental rationale underlying the MAV is the global commitment to more open and less restrictive trade. So, by adopting a lower and more uniform tariff structure plus eliminating the MAV system, we are fulfilling our WTO commitment,” Mr. Tolentino said in a Viber message.

The reimposition of MAV is “backtracking on our overall goal of trade opening coupled with enhanced food security and farm competitiveness,” he added.

In December, the government extended the lowered tariff regime on pork, rice and corn until end-December through Executive Order (EO) No. 50.

EO 50 kept tariff rates for corn at 5% for shipments within the quota and 15% for those exceeding it, while pork was kept at 15% for in-quota and 25% for out-of-quota shipments. The tariff on rice stands at 35%, re-gardless of its country of origin. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/04/23/589834/inflation-uptick-unlikely-in-april-says-neda-official/>

Impact of import streamlining on food prices deemed uncertain

April 22, 2024 | 10:18 pm



By **Adrian H. Halili**, Reporter

THE streamlined approval process for agricultural imports may not result in lower food prices while endangering the livelihoods of domestic producers, analysts said.

“There is no assurance that relaxing non-tariff measures will result in lower consumer prices. And it might only encourage smuggling, undervaluation and misdeclaration of imports,” Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said in a Viber message.

Administrative Order No. 20 (AO 20) instructed the Departments of Agriculture (DA), Finance (DoF), and Trade and Industry (DTI) to simplify the administrative procedures for agricultural imports, as well as remove non-tariff barriers.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. said the order was issued to ensure food security and bolster supply.

The DA was also tasked with reviewing the guidelines for importing sugar and fisheries products.

“The government (has) reduced the tariffs on prime commodities like rice, pork, and corn. Tariffs on other products are already very low. But these (measures) have not reduced retail prices,” Mr. Montemayor added.

Last year, the President approved Executive Order (EO) No. 50, extending the reduced tariff regime for rice imports to 35% for another year, applicable to shipments within or exceeding the minimum access volume.

Corn tariffs were set at 5% and 15% for in-quota and out-of-quota shipments, respectively. Pork tariffs were retained at 15% for shipments within the quota and 25% for those exceeding the quota.

Leonardo A. Lanzona, an economics professor with the Ateneo de Manila, said the order will not solve the country's long-term supply problem.

"Allowing more imports can be a way of reducing inflation, mostly favoring consumers. General prices might have been reduced but remain higher than expected," Mr. Lanzona said in a Messenger chat.

Inflation picked up to 3.7% in March from 3.4% in February and 7.6% a year earlier. Food inflation accelerated to 5.7%, the strongest reading since the 5.8% posted in November.

Danilo V. Fausto, president of the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food, Inc. said in a Viber message that AO 20 may have a short-term impact on inflation but may "damage agricultural production over the long term.

"AO 20 will encourage and incentivize imports... If producers cannot compete with imports... farmers will leave farming and do something else to earn a living," Mr. Fausto added.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/22/589946/impact-of-import-streamlining-on-food-prices-deemed-uncertain/>

REMATE:

Dauis, Bohol pinasok ng ASF

April 22, 2024 18:22



MANILA, Philippines – Umabot sa Limampu't pitong baboy sa Dauis, Bohol ang natagpuang may African swine fever.

Sinabi ni Bohol Governor Aris Aumentado na ang mga apektadong baboy ay nasa Barangay Mayacabac, Biking, at Mariveles.

Dahil dito, pansamantalang ipinagbawal ng mga awtoridad ang transportasyon sa mainland Bohol ng mga live hogs at meat products mula sa Panglao Island kung saan matatagpuan ang Dauis.

Ang pansamantalang pagbabawal ay magkakabisa hanggang Mayo 18. **RNT**

<https://remate.ph/dauis-bohol-pinasok-ng-asf/>

REMATE:

P229M lugi sa agrikultura sa NegOr dahil sa El Nino

April 22, 2024 11:55



DUMAGUETE CITY – Umabot na sa mahigit P229 milyon ang pinsala sa pananim at iba pang pagkalugi sa produksyon ng agrikultura sa Negros Oriental dahil sa El Niño.

Ang ulat mula sa Department of Agriculture-Provincial Agriculture Technology Coordinating Office (DA-PATCO) ay nagpakita na noong Abril 18, ang pagkawala ng produksyon sa halaga ay naka-peg sa P229.881 milyon.

Kabilang dito ang palay, mais, mga high-value crops tulad ng prutas at gulay, pangisdaan, livestock at agricultural infrastructures mula sa 13 bayan at lungsod.

Ang mga apektadong lugar ay Mabinay, Bayawan City, Zamboanguita, Vallehermoso, Bais City, Dumaguete City, La Libertad, Tanjay, Manjuyod, Bindoy, Dauin, Tayasan, at Canlaon City.

Nakapagtala ang Mabinay ng pinakamataas na pagkalugi sa mahigit PHP90.6 milyon sa mga high-value crops at humigit-kumulang P18.5 milyon sa palay.

Samantala, ang Zamboanguita ay nakapagtala ng P23.5 milyon na pinsala sa isang sistema ng irigasyon.

Ang bilang ng mga magsasaka at mangingisdang apektado ay umabot sa 5,193.

May 1,306 na ektarya na naapektuhan ay walang pagkakataong makabawi (total nasira) habang ang mga bahagyang nasira at maaari pa ring makabawi ay naka-pegged sa humigit-kumulang 3,542 ektarya, ayon sa ulat.

Nangangamba ang ahensya na patuloy na tataas ang bilang sa mga susunod na linggo dahil hindi pa lahat ng local government units ang nagsumite ng kanilang mga ulat. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/p229m-lugi-sa-agrikultura-sa-negor-dahil-sa-el-nino/>

REMATE:

2 bayan sa NegOcc nasa state of calamity sa El Nino

April 22, 2024 11:35



BACOLOD CITY – Nakasailalikh sa state of calamity ngayon ang dalawang local government units (LGUs) sa Negros Occidental matapos makapagtala ng ilang milyong pisong pinsala sa mga pananim dahil sa tagtuyot dulot ng El Niño.

Ang Kabankalan City ang pinakahuling naglabas ng deklarasyon pagkatapos ng bayan ng San Enrique noong nakaraang linggo.

Sinabi ni Gobernador Eugenio Jose Lacson na sa kani-kanilang mga aksyon, ang dalawang LGU ay maaaring gumamit ng ilang pondo upang tumugon sa mga pangangailangan ng kanilang mga lokalidad.

Sinabi ni Kabankalan City Vice Mayor Miguel Zayco na nagkakaisang inaprubahan ng Sangguniang Panlungsod ang deklarasyon ng state of calamity dahil sa El Niño noong Huwebes ng hapon.

atay sa ulat ng Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPA) na may petsang Abril 17, ang Kabankalan City ay nagkaroon ng pinsala sa mga pananim na palay na nagkakahalaga ng PHP41.91 milyon.

Apektado ang 1,214 na magsasaka na nagbubungkal ng halos 979 ektarya ng lupang palay.

Iniulat ni San Enrique ang PHP3.581 milyon na pinsala sa pananim, na nakaapekto sa 96 na magsasaka na nagtanim ng 117 ektarya ng palay sa anim na barangay.

Sa kanyang bahagi, sinabi ni Lacson na hindi pa rin kailangan ng pamahalaang panlalawigan na magdeklara ng state of calamity. **RNT**

<https://remate.ph/2-bayan-sa-negocc-nasa-state-of-calamity-sa-el-nino/>

REMATE:

P5.1B irrigation project sa M'danao pinantapat sa El Nino

April 22, 2024 10:50



Sa gitna ng El Niño phenomenon, nananatiling matatag ang National Irrigation Administration (NIA) sa pagbibigay ng sustainable irrigation service sa mga Pilipinong magsasaka, lalo na sa Mindanao.

Nabatid na sa pamumuno ni NIA Administrator Engr. Eduardo Eddie G. Guillen, ay matagumpay na ipinatupad ang P5.133-bilyong MMIP-II na matatagpuan sa Barangay Villarica, Midsayap, North Cotabato.

Ayon sa NIA noong Marso 2024, nagtala ang proyekto ng pangkalahatang weighted physical accomplishment (OWPA) na 99.56%. Isinagawa ang serye ng test run sa mga natapos na istruktura ng kanal sa Lower Malitubog Service Area noong Marso 18, 2024. Layunin nitong subukan ang kahandaan at kondisyon ng pagpapatakbo ng mga istruktura bago ito ibigay sa mga benepisyaryo ng mga magsasaka.

Ayon pa sa ulat may pinagmumulan ng tubig mula sa Maridagao River, ang MMIP-II ay sumasaklaw sa 9,528 ektarya ng agricultural land sa Munisipyo ng Aleosan, North Cotabato, at mga bayan ng Pangalungan at Datu Montawal sa Maguindanao del Sur sa ilalim ng

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Ang proyekto ay mayroong 4,043 magsasaka-benepisyaryo.

Kaugnay nito nito nananawagan naman si Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. para sa pagkakaisa upang makamit ang pangmatagalang kapayapaan at pambansang pag-unlad, si Administrator Guillen ay nagtataguyod ng bayanihan at personal na nakipag-usap sa mga residente tungkol sa mga positibong epekto ng pagkumpleto ng MMIP-II sa kanilang kabuhayan.

Nakipagpulong siya sa mga pangulo at miyembro ng IA at binigyang-diin ang kahalagahan ng suporta at pakikipagtulungan ng mga IA tungo sa pagsasakatuparan ng proyekto.

Kaugnay nito ang paglalagay ng mga solar sump pump sa tabi ng dike ay tinutuon upang magbigay ng irigasyon sa mga tuyong lugar na may mapapalitang pasilidad para sa wastong pamamahala ng tubig at produksyon ng agrikultura. Kapag napatunayang mabisa, ito ay uulitin sa matabang agricultural na mga lugar sa loob ng Liguasan Marsh na sa huli ay magpapabago sa nasabing lugar bilang isang economic zone ng Southern Mindanao. Ang proyekto ay naglalayon din na makamit at mapanatili ang kapayapaan at kaayusan sa rehiyon sa pamamagitan ng panlipunan at agrikultural na pag-unlad.

Upang higit na mapaunlad ang irigasyong agrikultura sa Mindanao, target ng NIA na magpatupad ng panibagong P2.1-bilyong halaga ng proyektong patubig sa Lower Malitubog area na may service area na 800 ektarya. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/p5-1b-irrigation-project-sa-mdanao-pinantapat-sa-el-nino/>

REMATE:

P39 kada kilo ng bigas alok sa ‘Super Kadiwa’ – DILG

April 22, 2024 08:05



MANILA, Philippines – Hinimok ni Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary “Benhur” Abalos Jr. ang publiko na samantalain ang P39 kada kilo ng bigas at iba pang may mataas na diskwentong produkto na iniaalok sa mga tindahan ng “Super Kadiwa” sa Metro Manila.

Sa mga alok na ito na may mataas na diskuwento, inanyayahan ni Abalos ang publiko na suportahan ang proyektong “Super Kadiwa” upang matulungan ang mga lokal na magsasaka.

Ipinaliwanag ng DILG na ang “Super Kadiwa’ ay limitadong handog ng Kadiwa ng Pangulo, na nagsimula noong Abril ngayong taon at magbubukas hanggang sa katapusan ng Hunyo sa iba’t ibang local government units (LGUs) sa National Capital Region (NCR).”

Ipinaliwanag ng DILG na ang programa ay naglalayong magtatag ng karagdagang merkado para sa mga magsasaka at mangingisda upang direktang ibenta ang kanilang mga produkto at dagdagan ang kanilang kita, habang ibinababa rin ang mga presyo ng mga bilihan ng pagkain sa merkado habang tinatanggal ng konsepto ang papel ng middlemen.

“Ang mga ‘Super Kadiwa’ platforms ay binuksan noong Abril 15-16 sa San Antonio, Parañaque City; Central, Quezon City; Tunasan, Muntinlupa City; Addition Hills, Mandaluyong City; San Juan City Hall; Pamplona Tres, Las Piñas City; Santo Tomas, Pasig City; Caloocan City Hall; Navotas City Hall; Poblacion, Pateros; at, Dulong Bayan, Lungsod ng San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan. Ang parehong ay inilunsad din sa Employee’s Park, Taguig City Hall; People’s Park, Malinta, Valenzuela City; Manila City Hall, Inner Court, Antonio Villegas St., Ermita noong Abril 16-17, 2024,” sabi ng DILG.

Sinabi ni Abalos na ang “Super Kadiwa” store project ay inorganisa ng Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) at ng DILG. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/p39-kada-kilo-ng-bigas-alok-sa-super-kadiwa-dilg/>

DOST, LGU Valencia grant tech upgrading support to IP coffee producers

Monday, April 22, 2024 Journal Online



Photo op of the ceremonial turnover of funds with (Left to Right) Jocelyn Tango-an, Architect Bjorn Didaagon, Ritchie Mae Guno, Hon. Azucena Huervas, Datu Smith Ecat, Joel Escaño, Marven Selecios, Atty. Marlowe Selecios

The Department of Science and Technology and the Local Government Unit of Valencia City in Bukidnon granted technology upgrading support for the Arabica coffee production of MANTALA, Inc., a group of 147 IP farmers in Sitio Migtulod, Mt. Nebo. The project was approved with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement on March 11, 2024.

The technology upgrading covers various coffee processing equipment such as coffee roasting machine, coffee dehuller, etc. that aims to improve the quality and overall processing time of the coffee.

DOST region X will also provide training on Food Safety and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) to the coffee farmers, which have pivotal roles in the acquisition of the License to Operate issued by the Food and Drug Administration.

LGU Valencia has also committed to assist the association in building their coffee processing facility worth 2 million pesos. Moreover, the said LGU requested the inclusion of proposed construction of a warehouse with multipurpose drying pavement at Sitio Migtulod, in the Provincial Commodity Investment Plan (PPCIP) of Bukidnon, with a project cost of 15 million pesos.

With these packages of interventions, the firm is expected to acquire a sustainable source of income and provide quality job opportunities in the locality, boosting the local economy.



Datu Smith Ecat talks and expresses his gratitude to DOST and LGU Valencia for the support provided for the MANTALA Arabica coffee production.

At the opening ceremony, Valencia City Mayor Azucena Huervas underscored the significance of this project in fostering economic empowerment within the local community of Valencia City. “Among ipaabot sa DOST, ang among dakung pagpasalamat sa pagtabang sa atung local coffee farmers diri sa Valencia,” Mayor Huervas said.

[We express to DOST, our deepest gratitude in helping our local coffee farmers here in Valencia]

DOST Bukidnon Provincial Director Ritchie Mae Guno conveyed her support for the project, anticipating its successful implementation and sustainability. “Nakita namo ang potensyal sa MANTALA sa pag compete sa ubang mga brand sa kape. Busa, nahimo namo nang motivation sa pag-upgrade sa ilang proseso sa paghimo sa kape pinaagi sa S & T innovation, kay nahibawan namo nga mas makigbisog sila pinaagi niining intervention.”

[We have seen the potential of MANTALA in competing against other coffee brands. That’s became our motivation to upgrade their process in making coffee using S&T innovation, because we’ve known that they will be resilient with this intervention.”]

Datu Smith Ecat, the president of MANTALA Incorporated, expressed heartfelt gratitude to DOST and LGU Valencia for their substantial assistance in the community. He shared his astonishment at witnessing the realization of their vision for MANTALA Coffee.

“Wala namo damha nga maabot namo nig ikan sa among simple nga pangandoy para sa MANTALA Coffee,” said Datu Smith Ecat.

[We did not expect that this simple dream of MANTALA coffee would be realized.]

The City Planning and Development Office, through its Officer-in-Charge Architect Bjorn Didaagon, presented the floor plan of the proposed coffee processing facility of MANTALA Inc. This aligns with the goal of ensuring compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and paving the way for the acquisition of the License to Operate issued by the FDA.

This intervention is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal number one, zero poverty and sdg number eight, decent work and economic growth. This is also anchored in the DOST Pillar of Wealth Creation. (*Asmerah Sarip / DOST- Bukidnon*)

#ScienceForThePeople
#OneDOST4U

About DOST-10

The Department of Science and Technology – Region 10 (DOST 10) envisions to be an effective and competent catalyst of inclusive development by providing world-class and innovative Science & Technology services in Region 10.

<https://journal.com.ph/dost-lgu-valencia-grant-tech-upgrading-support-to-ip-coffee-producers/>

ABANTE:

NFA tinaas bilihan ng palay sa P30

- Abante News
- April 22, 2024



Tinaas na ng National Food Authority ang presyuhan ng bibilhin nitong palay para magkaroon ito ng suplay dahil hindi bumababa ang farmgate price.

Sabi ng Department of Agriculture (DA), P17-P23 na ang bilihan ng NFA ng sariwa o basang palay na noon ay P16-P19 lamang. Samantala, P23-30 per kilo na ang bilihan nito ng tuyo o malinis na palay.

Ayon sa DA, inaprubahan ng NFA Council sa huling meeting nito ang mas mataas na presyo ng palay na bibilhin nito.

Sabi ni NFA Acting Administrator Larry Lacson, bagong yugto ito sa pamimili ng NFA ng palay dahil mas malaki ang lawak ng presyuhan. Ngayon, magkakaroon ng pagkakataon ang NFA na rumesponde sa sitwasyon sa iba't ibang mga lalawigan at makabili ng mas marami sa mas masaganang mga lugar para makamit ang palay procurement target nito.

Maituturing na ang pagtaas ng NFA ng buying price na hudyat o pagkilala sa tumataas na presyo ng bigas, ang pinakamabigat na gastusin para sa mga mahihirap. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/04/22/nfa-tinaas-bilihan-ng-palay-sa-p30/>

MANILA STANDARD:

Rural project

Gallery



By Manila Standard

April 22, 2024, 8:46 pm

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. leads the opening of an exhibit on April 22 showcasing the achievements and milestones of the DA-Philippine Rural Development Project in partnership with the World Bank. The booths display successful subprojects and stories of small-scale farmers and fisherfolk who benefited from PRDP interventions.

<https://manilastandard.net/gallery/news-in-photos/314438783/rural-project.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

NFA starts buying palay to boost buffer stocks

NewsNational



By Othel V. Campos

April 22, 2024, 11:55 pm

The National Food Authority (NFA) began aggressively buying palay at higher prices on Monday, seeking to boost buffer stocks.

The NFA council recently raised the agency's buying price at a range of P17 to P23 for fresh or wet palay and P23 to P30 for clean and dry palay.

“This new pricing scheme will mark a new era for NFA palay buying,” said NFA acting administrator Larry Lacson.

“This is unique in a sense that different provinces will have different prices depending on the conditions in the province such as prevailing farm gate price, remaining harvest, and most importantly the target palay procurement for the area,” he added.

Clean and dry palay must be at least be 90 percent pure with a moisture content of 14 percent or less, while fresh/wet palay is acceptable at a moisture range of 22 to 29.9 percent.

Previously, buying prices ranged from P16 to P19 per kilo for fresh/wet palay and P19 to P23 per kilo for clean and dry.

Lacson said the new pricing scheme marks a significant shift in NFA's palay buying strategy.

The NFA abandoned a single pricing system to better compete with private traders and support local government efforts to improve farmers' income.

The Rice Tariffication Law limits the NFA to buffer stocking for emergencies, requiring them to maintain 300,000 metric tons (MT) rice reserve, enough for approximately 9 days of consumption.

Lacson said the NFA will sustain its mandate to secure sufficient supply amid persistently high farm gate prices.

https://manilastandard.net/news/314438650/nfa-starts-buying-palay-to-boost-buffer-stocks.html#google_vignette

MANILA STANDARD:

Buffer stock mulled to fight inflation

NewsNational



By Othel V. Campos

April 23, 2024, 12:25 am

The National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) is mulling to create a 10-day buffer stock of critical agricultural produce to safeguard consumers against run-away inflation.

During the NPCC meeting held Monday at the Board of Investments (BOI) building in Makati, City, Trade assistant secretary Amanda Nograles said the multi-sectoral group is working on the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the proposed buffer stocking policy.

“The goal, in addition to creating a market-based mechanism to decrease the price by increasing the supply, is for the mechanism to act as deterrent to hoarders and to those who are engaged in illegal price manipulation,” she said.

“They will think that the government can intervene anytime,” she added.

This is the first time that the provision on buffer stocking will be invoked under the Price Act of 1999.

While the government intends to shoulder the procurement cost, it wants to engage the private sector to help in the storage of the produce.

The NPCC is yet to identify warehouses and cold storage facilities which can be tapped as storage for the buffer stock which is different from the buffer stocking mandate of the National Food Authority (NFA).

The provision specifically involves the sale of agricultural and fisheries products.

The Department of Agriculture (DA), as an active member of the NPCC, identified the critical commodities as rice, corn, sugar, onion, pork and fertilizers.

The NPCC is yet to identify where to source the budget for proposed buffer stock or whether it will be forced to import some commodities that the Philippines is not sufficiently producing like corn and pork.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314438681/buffer-stock-mulled-to-fight-inflation.html>

NFA starts buying palay at higher prices

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

April 23, 2024

THE National Food Authority (NFA) has started procuring palay (unmilled rice) from farmers at higher prices as part of its effort to increase its rice buffer stocks.

NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said on Monday that the NFA Council approved on April 11 a higher buying price for palay to improve the income of Filipino rice farmers, marking "new era for NFA palay buying."

The new buying prices for palay now range from P17 to P23 per kilo (kg) for fresh or wet palay and P23 to P30 per kg for dry.

"The NFA Council had to raise buying prices for palay after prolonged high farm gate prices persist to secure supply," the NFA said on Monday.

The latest prices are higher than the previous prices of P23 per kg for dry and P19 per kg for wet. The NFA said that it ditched the single pricing system, and there will be no uniform price nationwide like before.

"This is unique in a sense that different provinces will have different prices depending on the conditions in the province such as prevailing farm gate price, remaining harvest, and most importantly the target palay procurement for the area," Lacson said.

The new buying prices will be on a per province basis as a consideration to the support price provided by some local government units to help improve farmers' income. This is also an alternative to selling palay to private traders.

Lacson earlier said that they will issue a price bulletin for each province as prices of palay vary in different areas.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/23/business/top-business/nfa-starts-buying-palay-at-higher-prices/1942826>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Balisacan backs RCEF extension

[By Niña Myka Pauline Arceo](#)

April 23, 2024

SOCIOECONOMIC Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan backs the proposed extension of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), but said this will need studies.

"NEDA (National Economic and Development Authority) is looking at that issue," Balisacan told reporters on the sidelines of the 2024 National Innovation Day Celebration on Monday.

"There are pros, there are cons. I would like to think that keeping the RCEF and targeting it well, using it well to improve the productivity of rice is not a bad idea," he added.

Nueva Ecija 3rd District Rep. Rosanna Vergara and Sen. Cynthia Villar, the Senate Committee on Agriculture chairman, have filed separate measures seeking to extend RCEF by another six years.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. also backs the extension of RCEF and wants to give it a higher allocation than the P10 billion annually from 2019 to 2024 as stipulated by Republic Act (RA) 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law.

RCEF is funded by tariffs collected from imported rice that reached P29 billion last year.

Of the P10 billion allocated annually for RCEF under RA 11203, P5 billion is for boosting the mechanization level of rice farms, P3 billion for the distribution of high-yielding rice seeds, P1 billion for credit support, and another P1 billion for training rice farmers.

Balisacan said there are certain issues that need to be resolved in deciding to extend RCEF.

"I think the only issue is whether you dedicate that tariff collection from the rice imports to rice only or to become a part of the general fund of the government," he added.

"For me, using it for agriculture, but ensuring this time that it's really used for highly productive uses, especially those that will address low productivity issues in the rice sector ... I think that will be a good move," he remarked.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort said that extending RECF could partially finance enhancing the productivity of the local agricultural sector, particularly rice production.

He stressed that this would involve greater mechanization and the adoption of technology to boost harvests, increase yields, and bolster local food supplies.

"This, in turn, helps bring down rice and other agricultural or food prices and overall inflation," he said.

Meanwhile, Balisacan said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has also issued an administrative order reducing unnecessary barriers to imports, especially when there are domestic shortages.

In that sense, "inflation will be averted, so things like that would need to be examined," Balisacan said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/23/business/top-business/balisacan-backs-rcef-extension/1942827>

AO 20 could favor undervalued, misdeclared agri goods—Sinag

- Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz
- April 22, 2024

LOCAL producers are concerned by the recent enforcement of Administrative Order 20 (AO 20), apprehensive that the new regulations might pave the way for an influx of undervalued or misdeclared agricultural imports.

Jayson H. Cainglet, the executive director of Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag), said the problem facing the industry lies not with legitimate imports and accredited importers paying the correct tariffs, but with outright smuggled agricultural goods and those that are misdeclared and undervalued.

“The problem of the industry lies in the outright smuggling of agricultural goods and those that are misdeclared and undervalued,” he said.

Cainglet also highlighted the longstanding issue of inadequate border inspection, citing the absence of a 100-percent inspection of all agricultural products as mandated by the Food Safety Act of 2013 (RA 10611) and the Anti-Agri Smuggling Law (RA 10845).

Sinag’s primary concern is that AO 20 may worsen the problem by potentially opening the floodgates for more undervalued or misdeclared agricultural imports.

“This is happening because we don’t have 100-percent border inspection of all agri products as provided by the Food Safety Act of 2013 [RA 10611] and the Anti-Agri Smuggling Law [RA 10845]. We just hope that the new AO 20 will not open the floodgates for more undervalued or mis-declared agri imports,” he said.

The Sinag official also expressed frustration over the unequal treatment between importers and local producers.

While importers benefit from streamlined processes and favorable policies, local producers continue to face stringent requirements in securing business permits, arbitrary closures of farms, and inconsistent regulations across different jurisdictions, Cainglet said.

He emphasized the urgent need for policymakers to prioritize the interests of local producers and ensure that AO 20 does not exacerbate the challenges faced by the domestic agriculture sector.

A four-page Administrative Order No. 20, signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on April 18, emphasized that administrative constraints and non-tariff barriers continue to persist, which have caused a continued increase in the domestic prices of agricultural commodities despite existing measures.

Non-tariff barriers are policy measures, other than customs tariffs, that restrict trade, including but not limited to quotas, import licensing systems, regulations, and red tape.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/22/ao-20-could-favor-undervalued-misdeclared-agri-goods-sinag/>

Extending RCEF, using it for non-rice sectors, possible

Cai U. Ordinario

April 23, 2024

THE National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) is open to extending the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) and using it for other sectors apart from rice.

According to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan, using the RCEF for other sectors may lead to higher productivity in other agriculture sectors and will also bode well for the country.

Balisacan said there are arguments to support and do not support the extension of the RCEF, but all these should be carefully studied.

“Using it for agriculture, but ensuring this time that it’s really used for highly productive uses, especially those that will address low productivity issues in the rice sector. I think that will be a good move,” Balisacan said.

Neda Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon also said proposals to extend the RCEF are welcome, but should be made pending an evaluation of the previous program.

Edillon said evaluating how the RCEF was used can help inform the government’s decision to extend the RCEF and increase its funding.

Reports earlier said Senator Cynthia A. Villar is proposing to extend the RCEF for another six years, doubling the support for farmers to P20 billion. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/15/ifpri-farm-subsidies-must-have-sunset-clauses/>).

“We’re actually supportive of the proposal to extend the validity of the RCEF. With respect to the funding, especially the allocation, I think that has to benefit muna from the evaluation of the previous implementation,” Edillon said.

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 RTL law, or Republic Act 11203, which deregulated the rice industry.

The law allocates P5 billion 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 already be used to finance the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA).

Earlier, the International Food Policy Research Institute (Ifpri) said a measure allowing the extension of the RCEF should include its gradual phaseout.

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 that it is important to place sunset provisions on farm subsidies.

Once the RCEF is phased out, 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," he explained. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/15/ifpri-farm-subsidies-must-have-sunset-clauses/>).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/23/extending-rcef-using-it-for-non-rice-sectors-possible/>

Neda bares new list of inflation busters

- Cai U. Ordinario
- April 23, 2024

THE government is preparing new measures to combat the steep rise in commodity prices, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda). The President has issued Administrative Order (AO) No. 20, which instructed the Department of Agriculture (DA) to take the lead in streamlining administrative procedures

and policies on the importation of agricultural products, and remove non-tariff barriers. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/22/marcos-wants-non-tariff-curbs-on-farm-products-out/>).

Local producers, however, are wary of the order, saying it will gravely hurt even more their ranks. Story on A14 “AO 20 could favor undervalued, misdeclared agri goods—Sinag”

On the sidelines of the Filipinnovation forum on Monday, Neda Undersecretary for Planning and Policy Rosemarie G. Edillon told reporters these measures include fast-tracking the release of Sanitary & Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSIC).

“If there’s really a pressing issue, to disapprove it, do it right away. If none, then once it’s not acted upon for a certain period, and it seems there’s no problem, then, it should be deemed approved,” Edillon told reporters.

Edillon said these are some examples of non-tariff measures (NTMs) that can be addressed to bring down the cost of food as well as encourage the free flow of goods into the market.

She explained that the AO issued by the President was part of the recommendations of the inter-agency Committee on Tariff-Related Matters (CTRM), one of the seven interagency committees under the Neda Board, chaired by the President.

“We’re saying that these are what we call strategic trade policies. And therefore, to the extent that such trade might be facilitated, then that should be the case. So that we can really get the full benefits of that policy,” Edillon said, partly in Filipino.

Inflation outlook

Edillon said that while intense heat has affected many parts of the country, inflation in April may have improved compared to March, given the rice harvest.

As of April 20, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported that damage caused by the El Niño amounted to P1.24 billion.

The severe dry spell affected 29,409 farmers and 26,731.4 hectares of crops nationwide. No damage was recorded for agriculture infrastructure, machineries and equipment as well as livestock, poultry, and fisheries.

NDRRMC said 19 provinces in Luzon; 14 provinces in the Visayas; and eight provinces in Mindanao have a potential to experience meteorological drought conditions.

There are also 23 provinces with the potential to experience a dry spell; and eight provinces have the potential to experience dry conditions.

“We are concerned that many areas are still experiencing this intense heat. But with respect to our farming sector, many of them have done advance planting. And so we hope that it will still be enough to meet our demand,” Edillon said.

MAV concerns

Edillon said removing the minimum access volume (MAV) scheme can be considered. The MAV scheme was part of the Philippines’s commitment to the World Trade Organization (WTO) which tends to limit access to imports.

However, Edillon said an important consideration is the possible lack of flexibility it can cause the Philippines later on.

Earlier, Monetary Board V. Bruce J. Tolentino said the MAV must be abolished as it could be a source of corruption. 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. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/15/mav-scheme-must-be-nixed-risks-corruption-mb-member/>).

“Yes, we can actually move towards removing it, but that might reduce our flexibility later on. If we need to re-impose it, ito yung medyo anti-WTO [World Trade Organization]. Pwede naman siyang i-adjust as necessary,” Edillon said.

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.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/23/neda-bares-new-list-of-inflation-busters/>

NFA starts buying local palay at higher prices

By

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April 23, 2024

The National Food Authority (NFA) started procuring palay at higher prices yesterday to beef up supply and boost local buffer stocks.

The NFA Council recently raised the grains corporation's buying price for fresh or wet palay to a range of P17 and P23 per kilogram (kg) and clean and dry to P23 and P30 per kg.

The previous buying prices were a range of P16 to P19 per kg for fresh or wet and P19 to P23 per kg for clean and dry.

The NFA Council had to raise buying prices for palay after prolonged high farm gate prices persists.

“This new pricing scheme will mark a new era for NFA palay buying... This is unique in a sense that different provinces will have different prices depending on the conditions in the province such as prevailing farm gate price, remaining harvest and most importantly the target palay procurement for the area,” said Larry Lacson, NFA actin administrator, in a statement.

Lacson added the NFA abandoned a single pricing system to take into account the support price provided by some local government units to help improve farmers' income by being a viable alternative to private traders.

The Rice Tariffication Law stripped the NFA of its rice trading responsibilities and limited it to buffer stocking to ensure rice supply in case of disasters and calamities.

The agency is required to maintain a stock of at least 300,000 tons of rice which is enough for nine days consumption.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/nfa-starts-buying-local-palay-at-higher-prices/

Wheat firms, corn down

By
Reuters

-
April 23, 2024

SINGAPORE- Chicago wheat firmed on Monday, hovering close to a two-week high hit in the previous session and rising for a third consecutive session as short-covering and geopolitical tensions underpinned prices.

Corn and soybeans ticked lower.

“Tensions in the Middle East have eased from what we saw on Friday but the threat remains,” said one Singapore-based trader. “The conflict could impact crude prices, which could spill into other commodities. Rally in crude could also increase freight prices.”

The most-active wheat contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was up 0.1 percent at \$5.67-1/4 a bushel, as of 0328 GMT, having gained 2.5 percent on Friday. The market climbed to its highest since April 5 in the previous session.

Corn lost 0.3 percent to \$4.32-1/4 a bushel, while soybeans gave up 0.4 percent to \$11.61 a bushel.

Reports of Israeli missile strikes in Iran on Friday fueled fears of an escalating conflict in the Middle East, although Tehran played down the incident.

Traders had feared that expanding violence could impact shipments in the region and from Russia, the world’s biggest wheat exporter and an ally of Iran.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/wheat-firms-corn-down/

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

Presyo ng bigas sumirit sa P2 kada kilo – DA

By

[Doris Franche-Borja](#)(Pilipino Star Ngayon)

April 22, 2024 - 12:00am



Rice dealers display rice and their prices at New York Street, Cubao, Quezon City on April 16, 2023. STAR/ Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — Kinumpirma ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang pagtataas ng P2 kada kilo sa presyo ng regular at well-milled rice.

Ayon kay Agriculture Assistant Secretary at spokesman Arnel De Mesa, kumpara sa nakaraang presyuhan ng bigas na P50-P51 kada kilo, pumapalo na ito ngayon ng P51-P52 kada kilo.

Sinabi ni De Mesa na inaalang na nila ang dahilan ng pagtaas ng presyo dahil nasa harvest season pa rin kaya dapat ay mas mababa ang presyo kada kilo ng bigas.

Ani De Mesa, bagama't hindi malaki ang itinaas, kailangan na matukoy kung bakit nagkakaroon ng pagtataas. Nakikipag-ugnayan na rin sila sa National Food Authority at iba pang ahensiya ng gobyerno upang maresolba ang isyu.

Lumilitaw sa monitoring ng DA, ang retail price ng local regular rice ay nasa P48 at P52 per kilo; local well-milled rice, P48 at P55 per kilo; local premium rice, P51 at P58 per kilo at local special rice, P57 at 67 kada kilo.

Naglalaro naman sa P48 at P51 ang imported regular; P50 at P58 kada kilo sa imported well milled; P50 at 62 kada kilo sa imported premium rice, habang P56 at P64 per kilo ang imported special rice.

Dagdag pa ni De Mesa, sa pagtaya ng United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) posibleng bumaba ang total importation ng Pilipinas sa 3.9 million metric tons (MT) mula sa dating 4.1 million MT.

Indikasyon lamang na inaasahan ang magandang anihan sa kabila ng dinanas na El Niño at pag-ulan sa bansa.

May maayos na irrigation sa Central Luzon at produksiyon ng palay.

Samantala, sinabi pa ni De Mesa na itinutulak ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr. ang P250 billion budget sa 2025 upang maipatupad ang four-year plan para sa agriculture sector.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/04/22/2349485/presyo-ng-bigas-sumirit-sa-p2-kada-kilo-da/amp/>

ABANTE TONITE:

DA mag-iimbak ng bigas, 6 pang bilihin

- Abante Tonite
- April 22, 2024



Naglatag na ang Department of Agriculture ng plano para sa buffer stocking o pag-iimbak ng ilang produktong agrikultura na magiging pansangga ng pamahalaan sa pagsirit ng presyo at pangtapat sa manipulasyon ng mga hoarder.

Ayon kay Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Undersecretary Jose Edgardo Sunico, pinag-usapan hahapon sa pulong ng National Price Coordinating Council ang panukala ng DA tungkol sa buffer stocking ng bigas, mais, asukal, sibuyas, baboy, at fertilizer.

Sabi ni DTI Assistant Secretary Amanda Nograles, may puwang sa ilalim ng Price Act para magkaroon ng buffer stock ang pamahalaan ng mga produktong agrikultura na maaaring ibenta sa merkado kapag kinakailangan.

Simula nang pinasa ang Price Act noong 1990s, ngayon pa lamang magagamit ang probisyon nito tungkol sa buffer stocking at ngayon pa lamang ginagawa ang implementing rules and regulation tungkol dito stocking.

Ayon kay Sunico, hanggang 10 araw na pangangailangan ng isang produkto ang maaaring iimbak ng pamahalaan.

Sa bigas, nasa 37,000 hanggang 38,000 tonelada ang daily requirement. Ibig sabihin, maaaring mag-stock ang pamahalaan ng hanggang 370,000 hanggang 380,000 tonelada.

Para sa ibang mga produkto, aalamin pa kung gaanong karami ang maaaring gawing buffer stock ng pamahalaan.

Makikipag ugnayan ang DA sa private sektor para sa cold storage na paglalagakan ng buffer stock nito. Hindi malinaw kung saan kukuhanin ng DA ang pera para mamili ng stocks.

Sabi ni Nograles, walang nakalaan sa budget ng pamahalaan ngayong taon para sa pambili ng buffer stock ng agricultural products. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/04/22/da-mag-iimbak-ng-bigas-6-pang-bilihin/>