

# Villar supports Marcos Jr's easing of agriculture importation

[Cecille Suerte Felipe](#) April 24, 2024 | 12:00am



Sen. Cynthia Villar, chairperson of the Senate committee on agriculture, clarified that the President's Administrative Order 20, directing the Department of Agriculture (DA) to address existing challenges and remove non-tariff barriers, would not take away the tariff, thus the government would still be able to collect taxes.

MANILA, Philippines — Sen. Cynthia Villar expressed support for President Marcos' order to ease the process of importation, which could also help sell agricultural products at cheaper prices.

Villar, chairperson of the Senate committee on agriculture, clarified that the President's Administrative Order 20, directing the Department of Agriculture (DA) to address existing challenges and remove non-tariff barriers, would not take away the tariff, thus the government would still be able to collect taxes.

"I'm very supportive because I read his order, ease the case of importing so that it's not a tariff, the tariff will be the same but the paperwork of importation is easier. I think that means the importers will not have difficulty. If they do not have difficulty, the products can be sold cheaper," the senator said in an interview.

Villar was one of the guests during the 73rd Philippine Society of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineers (PSABE) Inc. Annual National Convention, the 35th Philippine Agricultural Engineering Week Celebration and the 19th International Agricultural Engineering Conference in Legazpi City on April 22, with the theme “Sustainable Innovations in Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering: Greener Future for Food-secured Philippines.”

“There was an order to help the farmers and fisherfolk to produce more and to lessen the importation, because the prediction is that you will lessen the importation of rice this year compared to last year,” she said.

AO 20 directed the DA to address existing challenges and remove non-tariff barriers that have contributed to rising domestic prices of agricultural commodities. Marcos likewise instructed the DA, along with the Department of Trade and Industry and the 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.”

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/24/2350080/villar-supports-marcos-jrs-easing-agriculture-importation>

# CA halts planting of Golden Rice, Bt Eggplant

[Daphne Galvez](#) April 24, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Court of Appeals (CA) has ordered a halt to the commercial propagation of Golden Rice and Bt Eggplant, citing their potential risks to the environment and public health.

In a 143-page decision written by CA Associate Justice Jennifer Joy Ong and promulgated on April 17, the CA's Fourth Division also ordered halting the field testing and use as well as importation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) until strengthened risk assessment and monitoring procedures are in place.

The appellate court granted the privilege of Writ of Kalikasan to the Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad Agrikultura (MASIPAG), Greenpeace Southeast Asia-Philippines and others, "citing the constitutional right to health and maintaining environmental integrity."

A Writ of Kalikasan is a legal recourse aimed at safeguarding individuals from environmental harm that jeopardizes life, health or property across two or more municipalities.

The CA issued a cease and desist order directing the University of the Philippines-Los Baños and the Philippine Rice Research Institute to halt the commercial propagation of Golden Rice and Bt Eggplant.

"Considering the unmistakable importance of the constitutional right to a balanced and healthful ecology, especially in these times, we remind the government of its eminent duty to assiduously protect said right," the CA ruling stated.

The CA said the petitioners were able to prove that the adverse health and ecological effects of the Golden Rice and Bt Eggplant projects, while scientifically plausible, are uncertain.

The appellate court applied the precautionary principle recognized under the Rules of Procedure on Environmental Cases due to the lack of "full scientific certainty" on the effects – good or bad – of GMO products Golden Rice and Bt Eggplant.

Under the said principle, actions must be taken to avoid or diminish the threats of serious and irreversible damage to the environment.

The Supreme Court earlier granted the petitioners the Writ of Kalikasan, referring the case to the appellate court for "acceptance of the following returns on the Writ of Kalikasan and for hearing, reception of evidence and rendition of judgment."

MASIPAG, a coalition of farmers and scientists, had asked for a temporary environmental protection order against the Department of Agriculture to halt the commercial cultivation of Golden Rice and Bt Eggplant until evidence of safety and compliance with legal requirements are provided.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/24/2350079/ca-halts-planting-golden-rice-bt-eggplant>

# CA stops commercial growing of GMO crops

By: [Jane Bautista](#) – Reporter 05:55 AM April 24, 2024



**GOLDEN GRAIN** The Golden Rice, shown in this 2019 photo from the International Rice Research Institute, is genetically engineered to contain additional levels of beta-carotene to ease Vitamin A deficiency among consumers. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

MANILA, Philippines — The Court of Appeals (CA) has issued a cease-and-desist order on the commercial propagation of two genetically modified crops—Golden Rice and Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) eggplant—over the lack of “full scientific certainty” on the impact of these food products.

In a 143-page decision on April 17, the appeals court ruled in favor of the petitioners led by Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad Agrikultura (Masipag) and Greenpeace Southeast Asia, as it revoked the biosafety permits issued by the government to the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) and the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice).

**READ: LGUs urged to oppose GM crops propagation after SC grants writ of kalikasan**

The CA acted on the groups' petition for a temporary environmental protection order, which was originally filed before the Supreme Court on Oct. 17, 2022. Named respondents are the secretaries of the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Department of Health (DOH); the director of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI); PhilRice; and UPLB.

On April 18, 2023, the Supreme Court issued a writ of kalikasan—a legal remedy for persons whose constitutional right to “a balanced and healthful ecology” is violated—and required the respondents to file a verified return of the writ.

In another resolution on June 13 that same year, the high tribunal referred the case to the CA for acceptance of the returns and hearing, reception of evidence and rendition of judgment.

In its ruling, the CA granted the privilege of the writ of kalikasan to the petitioners, as well as the writ of continuing mandamus, which ordered the concerned respondent government agencies to submit their enhanced risk assessment and procedures in monitoring activities related to genetically modified organisms (GMO), mainly plant and plant products derived from modern biotechnology.

**‘Precautionary principle’**

According to the CA, the evidence presented compelled the application of the “precautionary principle” under Rule 1, Section 4(d) of the Rules of Procedure for Environmental Cases.

The principle provides that “when human activities may lead to threats of serious and irreversible damage to the environment that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that threat.”

“After a judicious examination of the evidence on record, this Court finds that the three conditions for the precautionary principle to apply: uncertainty, the possibility

of irreversible harm, and the possibility of serious harm, are present in the case,” the CA said.

It cited the opinion of expert witnesses for all parties based on their judicial affidavits, the numerous studies submitted in evidence, and their testimonies.

According to the court, “no consensus” was reached on the safety or harmful effects of Golden Rice and Bt eggplant on humans and the environment.

“To reiterate, the burden of evidence of harm is placed on those desiring to change the status quo, who, in this case, are the respondents,” the court said.

“While it may be argued that the trials on Golden Rice and Bt eggplant were conducted precisely to determine the effects or risks of GMOs (genetically modified organisms), as well as to obtain data and information thereon, it must be equally remembered that the overall safety guarantee thereof is still unknown,” the CA added.

## **Field trials**

The Golden Rice is genetically engineered to contain additional levels of beta-carotene to mitigate Vitamin A deficiency among consumers.

It was patented to transnational agrochemical corporation Syngenta and was first developed in 1999 by Ingo Potrykus, a professor at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, and Peter Beyer of the University of Freiburg, Germany. It was developed through genetic engineering using genes from corn and a common soil microorganism that together produce beta-carotene in the rice grain.

In 2017, the Nueva Ecija-based PhilRice and the International Rice Research Institute in Laguna filed applications with the BPI to conduct field trials and for direct use as food and feed, or processing of Golden Rice.

Despite opposition from various groups, the BPI issued consolidated reports for the field trial and direct use of Golden Rice in 2019.

In July 2021, the DA approved the propagation of Golden Rice in 17 pilot areas across the country.

But according to Masipag, data shows that the beta-carotene content of Golden Rice is meager and inconsistent and that “a wide array of safe and low-cost vegetables, fruits and other crops would be a more dependable source of nutrition for the communities.”

Meanwhile, Bt eggplant, which is owned and licensed by UPLB, was developed using genetic engineering procedures to provide resistance against eggplant fruit-and-shoot borer pests.

In 2009, UPLB applied for a field trial of the GMO before the DA, which issued the biosafety permit in 2010. Bt eggplant was designed so that the plant itself would produce its own toxin to kill the common pests that damage eggplants. It was first developed by the Indian Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company Ltd. and was then developed in the Institute of Plant Breeding at UPLB.

However, environmental groups and individual advocates also objected to the field testing of Bt eggplant, saying there was no peer-reviewed study conducted on its safety for human consumption and the environment.

## **Ruling on GMOs**

In 2015, the Supreme Court permanently stopped the government from doing field trials propagation, commercialization and importing GMOs used on plants to prevent health risks to humans and damage to the environment.

But the high tribunal overturned its decision the following year, saying the writ of kalikasan was rendered moot by the expiration of the biosafety permits issued by the BPI and the termination of Bt eggplant field trials subject to the permits.

The present case before the CA stemmed from the dismissed petition for review filed before the DA after the petitioners learned in 2021 that the BPI still issued



biosafety permits for the commercial propagation and direct use of the GMOs despite the high court's writ of kalikasan.

In a resolution dated June 30, 2022, then Agriculture Secretary William Dar justified the issuance of the permits, saying they strictly complied with the procedural requirements of the Joint Department Circular (JDC) No. 01-2016 governing the management of GMOs.

PhilRice argued that the DA resolution had already attained finality after the petitioners failed to file a motion for reconsideration and appeal.

However, according to the CA, it was “unreasonable” to expect the petitioner to exhaust all administrative remedies and defer judicial action as their concern involved strong public interest regarding the perceived threats and adverse effects of Golden Rice and Bt eggplant on the people's constitutional right to health and to a balanced, healthful ecology.

The CA also noted that the respondent government regulators did not comply with the monitoring mechanism and risk assessment procedure under JDC No. 1-2016, which was signed by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), DA, DENR, DOH and the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

“Based on the foregoing, it is clear that no genuine, exhaustive, independent, and active monitoring activity is being conducted by the BPI or the other government agency regulators,” it said.

Flerida Carino of the DOST Biosafety Committee of the Philippines said the BPI's receipt of new information on a GMO product from a consumer would trigger a review of the regulators' decision.

The CA, however, said this government approach, rather than being “proactive” and initiating monitoring activities, was just “waiting to receive information from the proponents or the public.”

“It must be stressed that monitoring of GMO activities by the government cannot be taken lightly. It is not an empty formality that can be disregarded or passed on to others,” the court said. —*WITH A REPORT FROM INQUIRER RESEARCH*

[https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1932891/ca-stops-commercial-growing-of-gmo-crops?utm\\_source=\(direct\)&utm\\_medium=gallery](https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1932891/ca-stops-commercial-growing-of-gmo-crops?utm_source=(direct)&utm_medium=gallery)

# **DA to build solar-powered cold storage in Occidental Mindoro**

**BY [GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG](#)**

Apr 23, 2024 05:01 PM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said the government plans to construct solar-powered cold storage facilities in Occidental Mindoro to soften the impact of the power crisis in the province.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that they are collaborating with the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to build five more cold storages in the area.

Occidental Mindoro has recently been experiencing 20-hour daily power outages, leading to a state of calamity in the region.

Tiu Laurel said the plan is to achieve a capacity of 1,400 metric tons with the construction of the additional cold storages, adding to the two existing ones located in San Jose and Magsaysay.

Tiu Laurel believes that solar-powered cold storage facilities would help to stabilize commodity prices and prevent pests and other climate interventions, such as extreme heat, like other postharvest facilities.

In addition to the construction of cold storage facilities, he said better irrigation systems and the construction of dams in San Jose and Magsaysay have been proposed to further aid the province.

**<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/23/da-to-build-solar-powered-cold-storage-in-occidental-mindoro>**

# Of water rations and rights

**BY [ATTY. GREGORIO LARRAZABAL](#)**

Apr 24, 2024 06:28 AM

## **OFF THE BEATEN PATH**

As El Niño tightens its grip, anxieties surrounding water scarcity rise. Without sufficient water from reservoirs, agriculture suffers, jeopardizing food security for millions of Filipinos. This is not mere inconvenience as we observe the heat index hitting record highs; the resultant social unrest is not an imagined threat. El Niño may be a temporary phenomenon, but the consequences of inadequate water management are long-lasting. We cannot afford to wait for the next drought to expose our vulnerabilities. We need a water governance system that prioritizes long-term planning, sustainable practices, and equitable access to clean water for all Filipinos. We need it now.

When a presidential candidate proposed the creation of a department of water, during a Commission on Elections-sponsored debate in 2022, and held it up as a solution to our water woes, it was quickly – and unfortunately – dismissed as being un-serious. For a more informed opinion, it will help the readers to first examine the merits of that proposal by reading Senate Bill (SB) 102 authored by Sen. Poe, the proposed National Water Resource Management Act, and its counterpart House Bill (HB) 35, authored by Rep. Joey Salceda. Regardless of the differing positions on the correctness of the supposed remedy, the reasons with functional integration as the foremost deserve a serious look, a rethink if we may.

Any sensible personal reflection by ordinary citizens, or policy deliberation by those in positions of power, will necessarily bring us back to the early 1990s. That decade saw the wave of privatization around the world. Financial institutions and development organizations offered finance programs to address water needs in developing countries. The national water crisis during the same period and the inherent problems then with water utilities – from procurement and financing to personnel among other factors – led to the privatization of the water sector. To say that the move initially delivered on its promises is an understatement. The countless stories of those who had to endure pre-privatization problems have more than established that.

The more important point is that our problems on water governance persist. In crafting solutions, we are always bound to factor the emerging challenges that call for reassessment. While the shift to privatization was convincingly a decisive step that indicated progress, our call for better and more sustainable solutions does not end.

Some promising approaches deserve exploration. Here are two, based on experiences in neighboring Asian countries as presented by Professor Eduardo Tadem, Professor Emeritus at the University of the Philippines Diliman–Asian Center, and convenor of the Program on Alternative Development of the UP-Center for Integrative and Development Studies:

\* Public/nonprofit partnerships (PuNPP). In PuNPPs, one or more public sector agency works with one or more civil society or community-based organization to deliver water services. The joint management between local communities and the water utility is based on equity, resource management, reduction of water consumption, improvement of reliability, and reduction in operating and maintenance costs.

\* Public-Public partnerships (PuP). This involves collaboration among public sector agencies in collectively developing performance benchmarks, implementing tertiary-level treatment of wastewater and reducing demand for piped water, use of excess water, and access to other water sources such as natural springs.

The UN recognizes safe water as essential for a dignified life, and our own policies echo this sentiment. Yet, these pronouncements ring hollow in the face of depleted reservoirs, controversies surrounding private investments in public utilities and brewing conflicts. Alarming, reports from Mindanao reveal rising tensions and even armed intimidation as communities clash over limited irrigation water. Whether noble affirmations are of consequence to this part of the world, the answer will always depend on how we manage this precious resource precisely because of its scarcity. As El Niño and the water crisis test our national resolve, may the lessons of history not go down the drain.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/24/of-water-rations-and-rights>

# Inflation may ease in 2nd half — NEDA

April 24, 2024 | 12:45 am

HEADLINE INFLATION may start easing in the second half of the year as pressure on food prices subsides after the El Niño weather event ends, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) chief said.

"In the second half of this year, we expect the pressure from food prices to diminish, because a big part of that food inflation was imported in the sense that food prices, particularly for staple, have been rising in the world market," NEDA Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan told reporters on the sidelines of a forum on Monday afternoon.

Inflation rose for a second straight month in March to 3.7% amid rising food prices. Food inflation accelerated to 5.7%, its fastest pace in four months, mainly driven by rice.

Rice inflation surged to 24.4% in March, the highest since the 24.6% print in February 2009.

"But for rice, (pressure) is expected to decline, (as prices) reached the peak and will start falling after June as the El Niño phenomenon is waning," Mr. Balisacan said.

The El Niño weather phenomenon is expected to persist until May, but the Philippines may continue to feel its impact until August, the Department of Science and Technology said earlier.

Mr. Balisacan said he is hoping that April inflation would fall within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) 2-4% target band, although oil prices pose a risk.

He noted April inflation will likely be close to the 3.7% print recorded in March.

"[The] 2-4% is still a fighting target. Of course, we are watching closely the developments in the Middle East. If the oil prices would be affected by the development, there would be some pressure for us," Mr. Balisacan said, referring to the conflict between Israel and Iran.

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

Mr. Balisacan said that economic growth in the first half may be affected if inflation continues to breach the target.

"[It's] a challenge because domestic consumption, particularly home consumption and investment, are very sensitive to inflation and interest rates," he said.

Earlier this month, the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) revised its gross domestic product (GDP) growth target range to 6-7% this year from 6.5-7.5% previously amid geopolitical tensions, price upticks, and trade restrictions.

The local statistics agency is set to release first-quarter GDP data on May 9.

"With food prices starting to come down, that should be good for growth. But of course, if the energy prices continue to rise, then it could affect logistics, distribution, and it could impact food prices too. But we hope that it will not be serious," Mr. Balisacan said.

Oxford Economics economist Makoto Tsuchiya said he expects inflation to quicken to 3.9% in April due to base effects. He also noted that sequential momentum was largely flat this month.

"Although rice prices remain elevated, prices for other agricultural products including vegetables and fruits are starting to decline, which should help ease inflationary pressures in the coming months," he said in an e-mail.

"Higher oil prices due to escalation of the conflicts in the Middle East is an emerging risk, but so far the impact remains limited."

Monetary Board Member V. Bruce J. Tolentino said the government should keep a close eye on global developments that could impact commodity prices and stoke inflation.

"The elections in India are ongoing, and if Mr. [Narendra] Modi wins, he will focus on his domestic priorities of ensuring that food prices are low in India. That means the export ban [on non-basmati rice] may continue, which will worsen inflation," he said in a Viber chat.

Last year, India imposed export curbs on non-basmati rice and other commodities to address rising domestic prices. The supply shortage drove global prices higher, affecting the Philippines which is one of the biggest importers of rice.

Mr. Tolentino noted that the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war may cause an uptick in fertilizer prices and constrain wheat supply.

"It is crucial that the government maintain its efforts to invest in productivity-enhancing measures. These have been paying off in the record rice harvests attained over the past 2-3 years," Mr. Tolentino said. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/04/24/590373/inflation-may-ease-in-2nd-half-neda/>

# DA promises no abuse of import easing scheme

April 23, 2024 | 10:01 pm

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said the streamlined food import process under Administrative Order No. 20 will be open only to legitimate traders to prevent abuse of the rules by would-be smugglers.

“We will be giving all the necessary safeguards” to ensure that the system is not abused, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said by telephone.

“There are still 30 days for us to prepare the guidelines,” he added.

Administrative Order No. 20 (AO 20) instructed the Departments of Agriculture (DA), Finance (DoF), and Trade and Industry (DTI) to remove nontariff barriers to imports of farm goods.

The DA was also tasked with simplifying administrative procedures for imports of sugar and fisheries products.

Mr. De Mesa added that AO 20 is mainly focused on making agricultural imports for legitimate importers easier.

The mandate also aimed at streamlining the requirements and procedures for the approval of importers.

“(The AO) is still subject to further study by the DA to ensure that we are protecting our farmers,” he added.

Mr. De Mesa said that if domestic production were to increase, there would be less need to import, as happened with rice.

Palay (unmilled rice) production was 20.06 million metric tons (MT) in 2023, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority, against 19.76 million MT in 2022.

Rice imports, on the other hand, declined to 3.62 million MT last year from 3.83 million MT in 2022, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura Executive Director Jayson H. Cainglet said that the new import procedures will not open the country to more undervalued or misdeclared agricultural imports.



“We also hope that the same zest and commitment to ease (of) doing business for the importers pampered by the economic team will also be applied to domestic producers that continue to face stringent requirements,” Mr. Cainglet said in a Viber message.

Senator Maria Imelda Josefa Remedios R. Marcos said that easing import restrictions will lead to reduced prices of onions, fish, pork, and sugar.

“But this will also impact local producers — particularly onion farmers even now selling well below their production cost. Frequent consultations between farmers, consumers and other stakeholders will be essential to monitor and evaluate the effects of AO 20,” Ms. Marcos said in a statement.

She added that further investigation and intervention is needed to address the gap between farmgate and retail prices of farm goods.

AGRI Party-List Representative Wilbert T. Lee said that farmers and fisherfolk should also be provided more support to increase their production and address the high prices of food.

“We understand the purpose of AO 20 is to immediately lower the price of goods and reduce the burden on our consumers. But we can consider this as a short-term solution,” Mr. Lee said in a statement. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/23/590241/da-promises-no-abuse-of-import-easing-scheme/>

# Need to upskill agribusiness executives: The Dualtech Agritech approach

April 24, 2024 | 12:04 am

## Human Side Of Economics

Bernardo M. Villegas

*(Part 3)*

I told the graduating participants of the Agribusiness Executives Program (AEP) that these strategies will remain at the theoretical level, unless their respective business enterprises operationalize them through concrete action programs in the short run, which must be reflected in their respective budgets for 2024 to 2025. I want to see in their plans for the current year their acquiring more hectares of land to reach more efficient scales; budgeting larger amounts for the mechanization of their farming operations; diversifying into other food products, whether in livestock, vegetables and fruits benefiting from the technologies provided by such companies as East-West Seeds and Harbest Co.; being more daring in approaching the leading banks (including the Maharlika Investment Fund) to obtain longer-term credit for their diversification, digitalization or industrialization strategies; and, pursuing forward or backward linkages along the entire agribusiness supply chain.

They can study the experiences of the role models of Philippine agribusiness such as San Miguel Corp. that successfully diversified from being a food and beverage company to a major participant in the infrastructure, and transport and logistic sectors. It will not be long before these large agribusiness ventures, joined by medium-size companies like North Star Meat and Bounty Fresh, will loom large not only in the domestic market but become multinational giants in the food industry like Jollibee already is today.

As a last piece of advice, I told the graduates that as top executives of some of the leading agribusiness companies in the country, they have a serious responsibility to respond to the appeal of industry leaders, especially from the officers and members of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to be very involved in upskilling, reskilling, and retooling their respective workforces.

In this regard, let me describe here a very innovative approach to producing, as quickly as possible, highly skilled workers for the different phases of agribusiness, from farming to post-harvest to logistics and all the way to manufacturing of the finished food or feed products. I am referring to the launching of Project Dual Agritech by a group of businessmen, in cooperation with some technical schools. This is a combination of the French-inspired Family Farm School that was

established in 1986 by an NGO called the Pampamilyang Paaralan Agrikultura Foundation in Batangas (inaugurated by the late President Corazon C. Aquino herself) and the now famous Dualtech Institute, put up with the help of a German foundation in 1981, that has turned out more than 10,000 electro-mechanic workers through the dual training system perfected in Germany.

The family farm approach had little success in the Philippines because the students were limited to the children of small farmers who are among the poorest in Philippine society, in contrast with the economically well-endowed French and Spanish farmers among whom the model was perfected. The early students of the family farm school were frustrated by the lack of resources of their farmer-parents who were unable to help them apply the new approaches and technologies they were learning in the classroom.

The new approach of the Dual Agri-Tech collaboration model will not limit the students to children of farmers. In addition to learning modern farming techniques, the students will spend six months at the Dualtech campus to acquire electro-mechanical skills that are needed in such tasks as repairing and maintaining farm machinery, irrigation systems, post-harvest facilities, cold storage facilities, and other equipment. While at Dualtech, they will also develop digital skills that are increasingly needed in the various phases of agribusiness operations.

Both the Family Farm School in Dagatan, Lipa and the Dualtech are well known for giving as much importance to character or values formation as to technical competence.

As regards farming technology, the learning modules will be established in a 1,000-square meter pilot farm inside the school campus in Barangay Dagatan, Lipa, Batangas, together with a two- to three-hectare off-campus cooperated demo farm. The modules will showcase the latest technology and best practices of select crops' value chain, from planting materials, growing, post-harvest, and processing. These modules will be used and maintained by students at the Senior High School Technology and Livelihood Education strand.

As has already been perfected by Dualtech over more than 40 years, on-the-job training (OJT) corporate slots will be provided by cooperating agribusiness enterprises. The students will have access to OJT opportunities for six months on the farm or factory facilities of agribusiness companies in different parts of the Philippines. This will allow the trainees to acquire hands-on experience to perform as farm operators or as skilled workers in other phases of the agribusiness value chain. The host collaborating companies may provide regulated approved allowances for the trainees.

Through close collaboration among Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), industry, and the academe (UA&P, for example, is providing the faculty for the IT component of Dualtech), it is hoped that this new skills training approach of the Dualtech Agritech School will be replicated by other groups in the agribusiness sector. I already am aware that family farm schools in other regions such as Mindoro, Iloilo, and Dumaguete are contemplating making the same transition towards a dualtech agritech curriculum.

This new initiative is a very concrete response to the appeal of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. in his second State of the Nation address for the business and academic communities to collaborate in modifying the K to 10 and K to 12 curricula to motivate more senior high school students to follow the TESDA track rather than continue pursuing college degree programs that do not produce employable workers. For more information about the Dualtech Agritech School, contact Rey dela Cruz at kingrcdc@gmail.com. n

Bernardo M. Villegas has a Ph.D. in Economics from Harvard, is professor emeritus at the University of Asia and the Pacific, and a visiting professor at the IESE Business School in Barcelona, Spain. He was a member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/opinion/2024/04/24/590189/need-to-upskill-agribusiness-executives-the-dualtech-agritech-approach/>

## *Assurance of support*



*President Marcos assures farmers and fishermen in Occidental Mindoro of government support in the El Niño stricken areas of Occidental Mindoro during his visit yesterday.*

By PCO

April 24, 2024, 1:15 am

President Marcos assures farmers and fishermen in Occidental Mindoro of government support in the El Niño stricken areas of Occidental Mindoro during his visit yesterday.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/gallery/314439155/assurance-of-support.html>

# *Farmers, fishermen need more gov't support—solon*

By Manila Standard

April 23, 2024, 11:25 pm

A PARTY-LIST lawmaker on Tuesday urged the government to provide more support for farmers and fishermen to boost local production and effectively address inflation.

Rep. Wilbert Lee of AGRI party-list group stressed that local food producers deserve better services from the government which should be an enabler to achieve food security and cheaper basic commodities.

Lee made the statement after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. issued Administrative Order (AO) No. 20 to streamline the procedures and policies on the importation of agricultural products and remove non-tariff barriers in a bid to stabilize food supply and curb rising domestic prices.

“We understand the purpose of AO 20 to immediately lower the price of goods and reduce the burden on our consumers. But we can consider this as a short term solution. We see that the long-term solution to inflation is the additional support to our local food producers that will benefit the people—from our farmers and fishermen to our consumers,” he said.

“We cannot be import dependent forever. Even if we speed up the importation process, we cannot control the export policy of other countries which can be tightened or changed at any time depending on circumstances such as calamities or unrest in other countries,” Lee added.

Inflation rate in the country rose to 3.7 percent in March from the previous month's 3.4 percent with food inflation as the main contributor to the overall inflation.

The Bicolano lawmaker reiterated that the government must aggressively address factors contributing to food inflation to curb rising prices of basic goods.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314439090/farmers-fishermen-need-more-govt-support-solon.html>

# *Imported rice still costly for Filipinos— Imee*

By [Manila Standard](#) April 23, 2024, 11:30 pm

DESPITE easing the importation of agricultural products, Senator Imee Marcos on Tuesday said Filipinos might not feel the decline in the cost of rice due to an increase in the price of imported ones.

For this reason, Marcos noted it remains incumbent upon the government to probe the wide gap between farmgate and retail prices of agricultural products.

“We should further investigate and intervene against the huge disparity between farmgate and retail prices, thence punishing exorbitant charges and cartelization,” she said.

Marcos issued the statement in reaction to Administrative Order (AO) No. 20, which streamlines administrative procedures and policies, and removes non-tariff barriers on the importation of agricultural products.

Marcos likewise mentioned that the harvest season of rice is already over. “It is also impossible for the minimum access volume (MAV) to remedy the high cost of rice,” she noted.

While easing restrictions will not lower the price of rice, Marcos believes it will, however, reduce the prices of products such as onions, fish, pork, and sugar. But she pointed out this will also on impact local producers—particularly onion farmers who now sell way below their production cost.

Frequent and candid consultations between farmers, consumers and other stakeholders, will be essential to monitor and evaluate the effects of AO 20, as well as past MAV measures, Marcos said.

The senator also batted for support to the Filipino farmers with investment, technology, and minimal, well-regulated importation.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314439099/imported-rice-still-costly-for-filipinos-imee.html>

## ***NFA starts buying palay to boost buffer stocks***

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://www.manilastandard.net/news/314438650/nfa-starts-buying-palay-to-boost-buffer-stocks.html>



# **Rice self-sufficiency, according to snake oil salesmen**

[By Marlen Ronquillo](#) April 24, 2024

EVEN people who prefer truth over lies and fact over fiction mostly abstain from reacting to state-sponsored propaganda because selling the good points of government is a legitimate undertaking of governance. Public funds pay for the operations of the government information offices, a multimedia information complex in the specific case of the Philippines, and taxpayers don't mind the cost. Keep your peace and don't mind the propaganda overload, which are the general but unspoken rules on how to react to state propaganda.

Of course, the general public has only one requirement: there are thresholds and lines that should not be crossed. What triggers negative public reaction are claims so outlandish and so patently untrue — like Vladimir Putin's claim that the invasion of Ukraine was a mere "special military operation" to defenestrate the dens of drug addicts (sounds familiar), the moral degenerates and Nazis there. It is, in fact, an unprovoked invasion of a neighbor who just wants to keep its distance from both Putin and Russia.

So, the public cannot but react when the likes of born-again sycophant Arsenio Balisacan, the NEDA director general, claims without any empirical basis that rice at P20 per kilogram is still possible. We all know that such rock-bottom prices for the staple food would not come in the current generation's lifetime or in the next unless, of course, you are speaking of plastic rice from China. To insist that a P20 per kg rice is still possible defies all the known normative assumptions on agronomy, agri economics, global rice production and trade patterns, and a planet on the grip of calamitous climactic disruptions. It was a campaign promise that should have

no afterlife after having suckered so many. Still, the likes of Balisacan, who should know better, hang on to that outright lie just to please their principals.

And if you are observant enough, you will also notice that peddlers of hoaxes have mostly rice-centric stories to peddle. Like the one that unequivocally stated that the country will be "95-percent rice self-sufficient by 2028," the end of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s term. A few weeks back, it was NIA Administrator Eduardo Guillen who said, with neither doubt nor equivocation, that 2028 will see the fruition of that agricultural milestone. The country that has been the top or second-biggest rice importer since 2019, and with no break from this embarrassing cycle, will be at least 95 percent self-sufficient in rice by 2028 due to a combination of several positive factors, including adequate irrigation water for the rice farms that will be delivered by the agency he heads.

The second the motion toward the attainment of that historic agricultural accomplishment came several days later from Flordeliza Bordey, PhilRice deputy executive director for social concerns, who said the government has put in place the necessary programs to produce 95 percent of the country's rice needs by 2028.

Seeds, technology and adequate irrigation will be the key to achieving the 95-percent self-sufficiency in the basic staple by 2028, said Bordey, without any hedging, without any doubt and equivocation, on her fearless forecast.

But here is the rub. On the same day the newspapers carried Bordey's glowing forecast on the country's final liberation from the embarrassing cycle as the world's top or second-biggest rice importer, the front pages of the newspapers also ran stories on a scheduled rise in fuel prices and the decision of the MWSS to cut the water pressure for Metro Manila. And rice farmers know that the rise in diesel and gasoline prices and the cut in the water pressure in Metro Manila are ominous signs that may sabotage all the well-laid plans for increased rice production. I am a farmer, and

I can connect the dots. First, how does the rise in fuel prices negatively impact rice production?

There are very few farming areas in the country with adequate and year-round irrigation water. The rice farming areas with inadequate and off-and-on irrigation services have shallow tube wells that supply surface water into their paddies because, well, of the sheer inadequacy of irrigation services. In fact, in vast swaths of rice farms in Pampanga, rice farmers do not rely on state-provided irrigation services at all, and these are farms that have been 100 percent dependent on rainwater and shallow tube wells.

The shallow tube wells are powered by either diesel or gasoline. And if the diesel and gasoline prices rise to a level of P50 per liter and above, which they are right now, producing rice via water generated by shallow tube wells becomes economically untenable. Even if the palay farm gate price is between P19 to P23 per kg. And common sense dictates that when production conditions are economically untenable, rice farms shift to crops that are less dependent on water. And that means fewer areas for rice production.

The cut in the MWSS water pressure for Metro Manila is related to the unstable water supply from the dams. And these multipurpose dams that supply water to Metro Manila prioritize household use over-irrigation services during crunch time, which is exactly where we are right now. When the water supply is tight, it is the rice farms that suffer because multipurpose dams give less priority to the delivery of irrigation to the farms.

Irrigation water is just one of the many problems beset rice production. We are the regional laggard in credit delivery to farmers and in farm mechanization. We don't have the single-digit agricultural production loans available to rice farmers in many Southeast Asian countries. Farming loans carry higher interest rates than commercial loans, and we all know that credit is the lifeblood of production.

You may want to ask this question: What about the news report that said the banking system had more than doubled the grant of loans to agriculture last year? Yes, true, to Big Agriculture, to corporate entities involved in agriculture, not to small farmers that need the loans most. That's the problem with reporting without context.

And you know what? Even the legendary extension service rendered by those Enduro-riding agronomists of the past is no longer available.

Do you know what the Department of Agriculture has in overwhelming numbers? Snake oil salesmen peddling hoaxes like rice self-sufficiency. The DA, tragically, is currently a press release factory that is more focused on propaganda and image-building than serious food production undertakings and helping small farmers.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/24/opinion/columns/rice-self-sufficiency-according-to-snake-oil-salesmen/1942975>

# **Marcos tells NIA to aid Mindoro farmers**

[By Kristina Maralit](#) April 24, 2024

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday directed the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to put up more irrigation systems in several municipalities in Occidental Mindoro to help boost production of farmers affected by the El Niño phenomenon.

Among the areas pinpointed by the Chief Executive are the towns of San Jose and Magsaysay where the livelihood of farmers have severely declined due to the dry spell.

"We have a plan to put up a dam to cover San Jose and Magsaysay so that even if there is very little rainfall, water would still be available," he said during the distribution of government assistance to the locals held at the municipal gymnasium in San Jose town.

Among the assistance extended by the Department of Agriculture (DA) during the President's visit include P3,000 fuel subsidy to 393 farmers; P5,000 each to 1,153 affected farmers under the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance; P5.1 million to 193 farmers under the El Niño Indemnification Fund; and P77.5 million in Survival and Recovery Aid loans.

The NIA, on the other hand, extended P7.38 million worth of operations and maintenance subsidy to two irrigators associations and a certificate of condonation and exemption worth P18.48 million to one association.

NIA also gave 24 units of solar pump irrigation projects worth P50 million to three irrigators associations and three communal irrigation projects worth P89.26 million to three other associations.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Technical Education and Skills Development Administration (Tesda) also provided various assistance to beneficiaries in Occidental Mindoro.

Aside from irrigation water from dams, Marcos said the government will also provide the farmers solar-powered pumps to irrigate hard-to-reach upland areas.

Pointing out that even with the complete provision of fertilizer, pesticides, farm equipment and other inputs, the President stated that optimum output can't be achieved without sufficient water supply. Thus, an efficient irrigation system must be put in place to increase agricultural production.

"We will change that, because we know that for our farmers, especially when it comes to harvesting rice, water is vital," he said.

Meanwhile, Marcos also assured that the country still has ample food supply, particularly rice, despite the devastating effects of El Niño.

"The public should not be worried.... Here in Occidental Mindoro, only one percent of the irrigated lands was affected by El Niño. But those not irrigated, we are really rushing the placement of solar pumps so that we can widen the reach of the water supply," he said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/24/regions/marcos-tells-nia-to-aid-mindoro-farmers/1943019>

# Govt still wary of inflation – Balisacan

[By Niña Myka Pauline Arceo](#) April 24, 2024

THE government remains wary of the impact of inflation and other headwinds on the country's growth, an economic manager said.

All possible risks — particularly if inflation again goes beyond the 2.0- to 4.0-percent target — are being monitored, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan told reporters on Monday.

"[D]omestic consumption, particularly home consumption and investment, are very sensitive to inflation and interest rates," he noted.

The economy grew by a below-target 5.6 percent last year, weighed down by rate hikes implemented by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to temper surging inflation.

While consumer price growth has since returned to target, it has risen for the last two months and is expected to top 4.0 percent in the second quarter.

Fresh rate hikes are unlikely but continued inflation uncertainties have delayed expectations of monetary policy easing that will help spur growth.

Economic managers last month lowered this year's growth target to 6.0 to 7.0 percent, from 6.5 to 7.5 percent, and also narrowed the 2025 range to 6.5 to 7.5 percent from 6.6 to 8.0 percent.

They noted possible trade disruptions — exports and imports growth assumptions were also trimmed — and geopolitical tensions as factors behind the revisions.

"We are watching closely the developments in the Middle East," Balisacan said, noting that higher oil prices would drive up inflation.

The government remains hopeful that pressures will ease in the second half of the year, especially since the El Niño weather pattern, whose droughts have led to farm losses and higher food prices, will have ended.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/24/business/top-business/govt-still-wary-of-inflation-balisacan/1943045>



# Davao Region loses 320 farm lands to El Niño

- [Manuel Cayon](#)
- [April 23, 2024](#)
- DAVAO CITY—The Davao Region already lost 320 hectares midway into the El Niño dry spell phenomenon as government is also watching for any critical signs of its marine resources.
- The Department of Agriculture here said a total of 547 hectares have been affected by the dry spell, of which the crops planted in the 320 hectares were all damaged and have “no chance of recovery.” The other 227 hectares could still be recovered of their crops, it added.
- The DA said total production losses reached 1,297 metric tons valued at P22.5 million.
- All of the affected farm lands were all located in Davao del Sur and 556 farmers were affected, mostly among upland vegetable and corn farmers.
- The number may be minimal though for a province that has 86,394 farmers.
- The DA said that its El Niño Action Plan was already in place last year with a P1-billion mitigation plan that included aiding vulnerable areas expected in Davao del Sur and Davao Occidental. This specific effort would involve providing of drought-resistant rice seed varieties, plastic drums for rainwater catchment, constructing spring development projects in upland areas and assessment irrigation network systems.
- Meanwhile, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources here said it was monitoring for any sign of the destructive impact of the El Niño, such as incidents of fish kills, red tide contamination of shell fishes, coral bleaching, or the sudden discoloration of corals that commonly leads to damage or death, and rising sea temperature and salinity.
- The BFAR said these warning signs would reduce the survival rate among fishes and other marine life and the emergence of diseases, especially among sea weeds.
- As of this week, there was no report of red tide contamination in the Balile and Pujada bays in Mati, Davao Oriental, Tagabuli Bay in Davao del Sur and Malalag Bay in Davao Occidental. Nonetheless, the BFAR said it received report of fish mortalities in Davao City and Davao Oriental due to “management challenges of operators.”
- The other monitoring stations in the country where shell fishes are often extracted have all registered positive for red tide contamination, including two from Mindanao, the Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur and San Benito Bay in Surigao del Norte.

- On April 7, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) has warned that Cotabato City is among seven areas where temperatures are expected to soar up to 51°C. Likewise, Lanao del Norte is among 31 provinces experiencing drought worsened by El Niño, the weather agency noted.
- Five days later, the Department of Agriculture (DA) reported substantial agricultural losses amounting to P2.63 billion, affecting over 54,000 farmers and 53,879 hectares of farmland across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao due to El Niño.
- Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel has warned of an increase in agricultural product prices in the following weeks due to concerns over El Niño's impact on global rice supply and increased demand.
- "The current drought makes agricultural production difficult, resulting in lower supply levels," read an article by the Department of Science and Technology." This suggests that prices of agricultural commodities greatly affected by the drought, such as vegetables, corn, and rice, are expected to increase in response to supply scarcity and increased demand. This may impact consumers' purchasing power and operations of businesses reliant on agricultural products."

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/23/commercial-release-of-gm-rice-eggplant-halted-by-ca/>

# Extending RCEF: A key to boosting Philippine rice production

- [BusinessMirror Editorial](#)
- [April 24, 2024](#)
- Among all the crops grown in the Philippines, rice is heavily favored in terms of the support it receives from the government. The increase in spending in agriculture in recent years has largely benefited the rice sector. Billions of pesos have been poured into activities that sought to increase rice production, such as the repair and rehabilitation of irrigation systems that primarily serve rice lands.
- Given that rice is the staple of food of Filipinos, it becomes imperative to adopt appropriate strategies to guarantee the consistent availability and ample supply of this essential grain. One such measure is Republic Act (RA) 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL). Signed by former President Duterte on February 14, 2019, the law liberalized the importation, export and trading of rice and lifted the quantitative restriction on imports.
- One of the salient provisions of the RA 11203 is the setup of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), which consisted of tariffs from rice imports. The government allotted P10 billion a year for the RCEF, of which P5 billion was set aside for the free distribution of farm machinery and equipment, P3 billion for the free distribution of inbred certified seeds. The remaining P2 billion was channeled to credit support and to the training of farmers and extension.
- Tariff collections in excess of P10 billion are distributed as cash assistance to small rice farmers tilling two hectares of land and below until this year. If RCEF is not extended, planters will no longer be able to access the interventions it bankrolled starting next year. Crucial among the support financed by RCEF is extension, which used to be provided by the Department of Agriculture.
- We agree with lawmakers who had declared that the RCEF should be extended for another six years to make the sector competitive. For one,

despite the existence of RCEF and the allocation of billions of funds to boost output, there has been no marked increase in the productivity of rice farms. Average yield per hectare of rice lands remained stuck at a little over 4 metric tons based on the 2023 data of the Philippine Statistics Authority, which is unacceptable if the Philippines is keen on pulling down rice prices.

- Aside from tweaking certain provisions, such as allocating a part of the rice fund for postharvest facilities, lawmakers should also consider the suggestion of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) to allow nonrice sectors to benefit from it. Neda said the rice fund could help planters of other crops boost their productivity. **(See, “Extending RCEF, using it for non-rice sectors, possible,” in the BusinessMirror, April 23, 2024).**

If the RCEF is extended, agencies that are mandated to oversee programs financed by it should fast-track interventions, such as the distribution or provision of equipment aimed at increasing productivity. The pandemic has certainly made it difficult to implement RA 11203. With the easing of mobility restrictions, however, they no longer have an excuse to delay the rollout of programs that will benefit not only rice planters, but the whole farm sector in general.

**<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/24/extending-rcef-a-key-to-boosting-philippine-rice-production/>**

# ‘Rice supply enough despite El Niño’

By **Jocelyn Montemayor** April 24, 2024



*Inspection. President Marcos Jr. inspects the damage at an onion and rice field badly hit by drought caused by El Niño in Barangay Central in the municipality of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro on Tuesday in the company of (from left) Occidental Mindoro Rep. Leody Tarriela, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., National Irrigation Administration Administrator Eduardo Guillen, and Occidental Mindoro Vice Governor Aniceta Diana Apigo-Tayag. PPA PHOTO*

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. yesterday assured the public that there is enough rice supply in the country despite the ongoing El Niño phenomenon and its lingering effects.

The President, in an ambush interview in Occidental Mindoro, reiterated that the government is doing all it can to assist the agricultural sector, which has been heavily affected by the phenomenon.

“Kung ang pag-uusapan natin ay bigas, sapat naman ang ating supply. Hindi kailangang mag-alala ang tao... Sa katotohanan, iyung mga area na may patubig, tumaas pa iyung ating naging ani, iyung tons per hectare natin (If we are talking about rice, there is a steady supply. There is no need to worry about that. In truth, areas that have irrigation have even increased their harvest, the tons per hectare),” Marcos said.

Data from the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center show that damage to the agriculture sector due to El Niño has jumped 49.8 percent to P3.94 billion from P2.63 billion last April 1.

The DA attached agency said that as of April 16, equivalent to 66,065 hectares (ha) of areas tended by 77,713 farmers in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Davao and Soccsksargen have been affected by the weather phenomenon.

This is equivalent to a total volume loss of 162,793 metric tons (MT).

It placed damage to rice at 98,243 MT worth P2.36 billion; high-value crops, 24,102 MT worth P868.84 million; corn, 40,195 MT worth P669.44 million; 102 heads of livestock and poultry worth P6.95 million; and 38 MT of cassava worth P497,900.

Impact on fisheries is felt by 2,261 fisherfolk with P33.83 million worth of damage.

To address the problems caused by the phenomenon, the President said the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) is already planning on putting up more dams and impounding ponds in the country to increase water supply, including irrigation water in areas where it is needed, as a long term solution.

For the short term, the government is fast tracking the installation of solar pumps especially in upland non-irrigated areas to boost production.

Marcos said NIA's goal is to widen irrigation coverage to enable farmers to plant crops, particularly palay, even during the drought season.

### *EXTREME HEAT*

As the agriculture sector continue to suffer due to the drought caused by the El Niño, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said 31 areas, including Quezon City and Pasay City, are forecast to have danger level heat index today.

Forecast to have 45 degrees in heat index are Roxas City in Capiz and Zamboanga City in Zamboanga del Sur.

Expected to have a 44 degrees heat index are Dagupan City in Pangasinan, and Puerto Princesa City and Aborlan town in Palawan.

Ten areas are forecast to have 43 degrees in heat index. These are Tuguegarao City in Cagayan, Echague town in Isabela, Munoz town in Nueva Ecija, Sangley Point in Cavite, Virac town in Catanduanes, Pili town in Camarines Sur, Guian town in Eastern Samar, Dipolog City in Zamboanga del Norte, Cotabato City in Maguindanao del Norte, and Butuan City in Agusan del Norte.

Pasay City and Quezon City, both in Metro Manila, will feel a heat index of 42 degrees, as well Bacnotan town in La Union, Clark airport in Pampanga, Baler and Casiguran towns in Aurora, Olongapo City in Zambales, Tanauan town in Batangas, Infanta town in Quezon, Calapan town in Oriental Mindoro, Coron town in Palawan, San Jose town in

Occidental Mindoro, Masbate City in Masbate, Iloilo City and Dumangas town in Iloilo, and Davao City in Davao del Sur.

A heat index ranging from 42 to 51 degrees Celsius has been classified by PAGASA under the danger level. It said heat cramps and heat exhaustion are likely to be experienced by residents, while heat stroke is possible under this condition.

## *OCCIDENTAL MINDORO*

The President said that with one percent of lands in Occidental Mindoro still not irrigated, the government is committed in making sure that the matter is addressed immediately.

Occidental Mindoro has been placed under a state of calamity due to the effects of El Niño, which has already affected the province's agricultural sector, particularly its rice and onion harvest as well as fishing industry.

The President, accompanied by several of his Cabinet, inspected the effects of El Niño in Occidental Mindoro. He led the distribution of assistance to affected families in Barangay San Roque in the town of San Jose.

In a speech, the President ordered NIA to put up additional irrigation systems in parts of Occidental Mindoro, particularly the towns of San Jose and Magsaysay, to boost agricultural production.

NIA reported that it has deployed three new long-arm backhoes and one wheel-type backhoe to

areas in Occidental Mindoro that need immediate canal clearing and desilting works.

It also said that some 1,200 liters of diesel fuel were also distributed to farmers affected by the drought to subsidize their fuel requirement for diesel-powered water pumps, in addition to 68 solar, diesel and water-powered pumps installed to irrigate 274 hectares of farmlands.

The agency has also constructed 18.06 kilometers of concrete irrigation canal, along with 64 units of canal structures, to improve the delivery of irrigation water. Some 7.6 kilometers of canal was also desilted by the agency to ensure unhampered water delivery and high efficiency of irrigation services to local farmers.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said they have started distributing solar pumps and putting up solar-powered storage systems to assist farmers and fisherfolks and help ensure that their harvests are not wasted or spoiled.

Laurel said the DA is including in their proposed 2025 budget funding for more solar powered pumps and storage systems which are easier to distribute and more practical especially in areas where there are power supply problems like Mindoro.

During the event, the DA provided P3,000 worth of fuel assistance each for nearly 400 beneficiaries and other cash aid under its Rice Farmers Financial Assistance, P5.1 million of aid to 193 farmers under the El Niño Indemnification Fund, and P77.5 million Survival and Recovery Aid loans.

The NIA, on the other hand, provided P7.38 million worth of operations and maintenance subsidy to irrigators' groups, issued certificate of condonation and exemption worth P18.48 million, and distributed 24 units of solar pump irrigation projects worth P50 million,

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) provided P5,000 each to 10,000 beneficiaries under its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS); and P15,000 each to 13 beneficiaries under the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP); while the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) provided P12.9 million worth of cash for work to 2,953 beneficiaries under the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD), P4.5 million to 94 beneficiaries under its government internship program, and installed fish aggregating devices worth P994,480 under its Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP) for 58 beneficiaries.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) provided "One Town, One Product Brand Development" packages worth P50,000 to five beneficiaries, while the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) provided over P1.55 million worth of assistance to 70 beneficiaries.

The national government also organized a "Serbisyo Caravan" to bring government services closer to Occidental Mindoro residents especially those in far-flung areas, and the "Kadiwa ng Pangulo" that offered various products at lower prices, including rice which is sold at P35 per kilo.

Other agencies such as the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC), Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), and the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) were also present to provide aid including loans to farmers and fishermen who were affected by the El Niño. – ***With Victor Reyes***

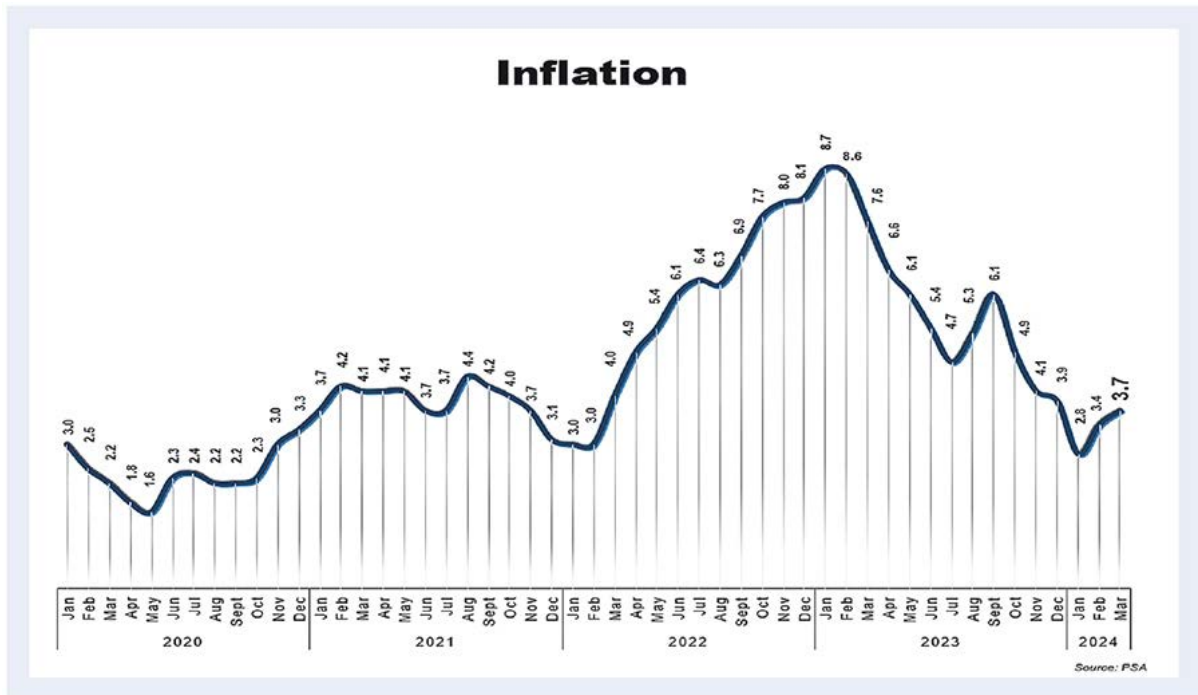
[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_news/rice-supply-enough-despite-el-nino/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_news/rice-supply-enough-despite-el-nino/)

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT**



# NEDA: 2-4% inflation still a fighting goal

By [Angela Celis](#) April 24, 2024



The country's socioeconomic planning chief still sees the government's two to four percent inflation target as a fighting goal, even as it continues to monitor developments abroad.

National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan told reporters in an interview last Monday that should the inflation rate breach this target, it would be a "challenge."

"Two to four (percent) is still a fighting target. Of course, we are watching closely the developments in the Middle East, as you know. If the oil prices would be affected by the development, there would be some pressure for us," Balisacan said.

"(In the) second half of this year, we expect the pressure from food prices to diminish, because a big part of that food inflation was imported in the sense that food prices, particularly for staple, have been rising in the world market. But for rice... that is expected to decline, to have reached its peak and start falling after June as the El Niño phenomenon is waning. Yeah, so hopefully, that is a plus factor for us," he added.

Latest available data showed that the headline inflation increased to 3.7 percent in March from 3.4 percent in February.

For the first three months of the year, headline inflation settled at 3.3 percent, still within the government's two to four percent target.

"It's 3.7 percent last time so, hopefully, we get as close to that as possible (for April). What you want is to keep that within the band so that there will be not much instability in prices," Balisacan said.

Asked about a scenario where the inflation rate breaches the government's target this year, Balisacan said: "Of course, it's (a) challenge because, you know, domestic consumption... (is) very sensitive to inflation and interest rates. Of course, if there is higher inflation, then that would... give a reason for the BSP (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas) to keep the high interest rates... but of course, there are many other factors that the BSP is watching for."

"I think that going back to the times when inflation hit eight percent, would not be... unless something very drastic happens in the global economy. Just crossing our fingers that the conflict there, in the Middle East, will not spread far and wide. That could affect global supply chains. Because then, no one will be spared from that," the NEDA chief said.

On Monday, the National Price Coordinating Council said the Department of Agriculture has proposed the issuance of implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of Section 9 of the Price Act to allocate buffer funds in its annual appropriations exclusively for procuring, purchasing, importing, or stockpiling essential commodities such as rice, corn, pork, sugar, onion, and fertilizer.

The buffer stocking will ensure stable supply and arrest inflation while preventing hoarding.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_business/neda-2-4-inflation-still-a-fighting-goal/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/neda-2-4-inflation-still-a-fighting-goal/)

# Hunger, poverty tackled

By [Malaya Business Insight](#) April 24, 2024

FOOD security is the goal of every leader of the nation, since food is the most basic among the fundamental human needs. Previous presidents before Bongbong Marcos had tried to ensure food security for the nation. Whatever accomplishments they made in this regard must have been lacking, because now the leadership still needs to provide enough food for the booming population.

This felt need is behind the President's push for a whole-of-government approach to gain food security and proper nutrition in a bid to promote zero hunger and nutrition security in the Philippines under the administration's Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. In a two-page Memorandum Circular No. 47 signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on April 19, President Marcos directed all government agencies and urged all local government units (LGUs) to support the implementation of the Enhanced Partnership Against Hunger and Poverty (EPAHP) program.

The EPAHP is one of the banner programs of the Task Force on Zero Hunger, which aims to institutionalize efforts to mitigate hunger and promote food and nutrition security by linking community-based organizations to prospective markets and providing credit assistance to support food production, processing and distribution.

*It's about time the government agencies tasked to help the nation attain food security, fight hunger and poverty... deliver some results.'*

Fighting hunger and ensuring that millions of Filipinos have food on their tables, even if the food is not enough, is as much an emergency concern as fighting poverty is. Hunger, malnutrition and poverty may be remedied by the creation of more jobs and other livelihood sources in the economy. The citizens, however poor, do not want to be tied forever to dole-outs and "ayuda" since if practiced for a long time, financial assistance from government promotes laziness and dehumanizes recipients.

Early in his term, at a Cabinet meeting in September 2022, PBBM directed several departments to craft a three-year Food Logistics Action Agenda aimed at revolutionizing the country's food distribution system. The order was specifically for the agriculture, trade, transportation, public works, information and communications, and interior departments to develop a food logistics chain, cold chain industry, ports infrastructure, and farm-to-market roads.

The Presidential Communications Office said the action plan's general objective is to ensure the availability, accessibility, and affordability of food for Filipinos and that consumers reliably get the right product at the right time. Nearly two years after the issuance of this directive, we wonder what these departments have done by way of compliance.

Now, Malacañang had to do some reiteration, saying all government agencies and instrumentalities should support the continuous and effective implementation of the

EPAHP program to bolster government efforts towards attaining zero hunger, food and nutrition security, and sustainable agriculture.

The Task Force Zero Hunger, established through Executive Order No. 10 s. 2020, as amended by EO 27 s. 2023, is directed to ensure the continued and effective implementation of the EPAHP Program, as it is mandated to carry out measures in coordination with the relevant government agencies.

The measures include efforts to strengthen institutional feeding programs of partner agencies; extend credit assistance to support food production, processing and distribution in partnership with government financial intuitions; and link participating CBOs to prospective markets.

The task force is also mandated to enhance provision of farm production technologies and extension of services to government-assisted family farms and rural based-organizations, as well as enhancing the sustainability of the EPAHP program through implementation of policies that will engage the private sector, and institutionalize mechanisms in LGUs.

It is also directed to adopt a community participation procurement program to encourage community-based groups to participate in the EPAHP program, and construct, repair and improve irrigation facilities and appurtenant structures in irrigable areas in the countryside.

It's about time the government agencies tasked to help the nation attain food security, fight hunger and poverty through the specific programs listed by the President deliver some results.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_opinion/hunger-poverty-tackled/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_opinion/hunger-poverty-tackled/)

**ABANTE TONITE**

# PBBM tiniyak suplay ng bigas kahit may El Niño

April 23, 2024



Mayroong sapat na suplay ng pagkain ang bansa partikular na ang bigas kahit nakakaranas ang bansa ng matinding epekto ng El Niño phenomenon.

Ito ang tiniyak ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr sa publiko dahil sa mga bagong sistema aniya sa pagsasaka at pinahusay na sistema ng irigasyon.

Sinabi ng Pangulo na walang dapat na ipag-alala ang publiko na baka kapusin sa suplay ng bigas kahit panahon ng tagtuyot dahil ang katotohanan ay tumaas pa ang ani ng mga magsasaka sa mga lugar na mayroong patubig.

“Well, kung ang pag-uusapan nation ay bigas, sapat naman ang ating supply. Hindi kailangang mag-alala ang tao. Sa katotohanan, ‘yung mga ar-ea na may patubig, tumaas pa yung ating naging ani,” anang Pangulo.

Sa kanyang pagbisita nitong Martes sa San Jose, Occidental Mindoro ay nakita ng Pangulo ang sitwasyon ng mga magsasaka na tinamaan ng tagtuyot dulot ng El Niño.

Pero sinabi ng Presidente na batay sa pagtaya, isang porsiyento lamang ng mga sakahan na dinadaan ng irigasyon ang naapektuhan ng El Niño pero kailangan pa ring tulungan at alalayan ang mga ito. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/04/23/pbbm-tiniyak-suplay-ng-bigas-kahit-may-el-nino>

**ABANTE**

# **BBM tinulungan mga apektado ng El Niño sa Mindoro**

Abante News April 23, 2024

Namahagi ng tulong si Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. sa mga magsasakang matinding naapektuhan ng El Niño sa San Jose, Occidental Mindoro nitong Martes.

Personal na ininspeksiyon ng Presidente ang tanim ng palay at nakita nito ang mga tuyot na sakahan gayundin ang iba pang mga pananim gaya ng sibuyas at iba pang gulay.

Sa kanyang talumpati, sinabi ng Presidente na lahat ng ahensiya ng gobyerno ay sabay-sabay na tumutulong upang maalalayan ang mga taga-Occidental Mindoro na makaahon mula sa epektong idinulot ng tagtuyot.

Kabilang sa mga ipinamigay ng gobyerno ay mga gamit pansakahan mula sa Department of Agriculture habang tulong pinansiyal at pangkabuhayan naman ang ipinagkaloob sa mga benepisyaryo sa pamamagitan ng Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation at sustainable livelihood programs.

Kasama rin ang Department of Labor and Employment sa pamamahagi ng tulong sa pamamagitan ng Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged Workers (TUPAD). (Aileen Taliping)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/04/23/bbm-tinulungan-mga-apektado-ng-el-nino-sa-mindoro/>

## REMATE

# PBBM: Suplay ng bigas sa Pinas sapat sa gitna ng El Niño

April 23, 2024 18:00



**MANILA, Philippines-** Tiniyak ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. nitong Martes sa publiko na may sapat na suplay ng bigas sa bansa sa kabila ng El Niño phenomenon.

Sa isang ambush interview, inihayag ni Marcos na ginawa itong posible ng bagong farming techniques at pinahusay na irrigation system na pinairal ng pamahalaan.

"Well, kung ang pag-uusapan natin ay bigas, sapat naman ang ating supply. Hindi kailangang mag-alala ang tao. Sa katotohanan, 'yung mga area na may patubig, tumaas pa 'yung ating naging ani, 'yung tons per hectare natin," wika ni Marcos.

“Pero siyempre, marami pa. Kagaya dito, siguro mga 50 porsyento lamang ang irrigated at so, ‘yung iba talagang nahihirapan. Dito sa Occidental Mindoro, ang calculation namin, one percent lamang nung mga irrigated lands ang naapektuhan ng El Niño na talagang kailangan ng tulong,” patuloy niya.

Ayon pa sa Pangulo, nagtatayo ang pamahalaan ng mga dam at impounding ponds upang matiyak ang malagong agricultural production.

Sinabi ng National Irrigation Administration na kabilang sa tulong sa El Niño-affected areas sa lalawigan ang deployment ng tatlong bagong long-arm backhoes at isang wheel-type backhoe sa lahat ng apektadong lugar, na nangangailangan ng agarang canal clearing at desilting works.

Halos 1,200 litro ng diesel fuel din ang ipinamahagi sa mga magsasakang apektado ng tagtuyot upang dagdagan ang fuel requirement para sa diesel-powered water pumps bukod pa sa 68 solar, diesel at water-powered pumps na ikinabit para sa irigasyon ng 274 ektarya ng palayan. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/pbbm-suplay-ng-bigas-sa-pinas-sapat-sa-gitna-ng-el-nino/>