

MANILA BULLETIN:

Relaxed food import process gets NEDA's backing

BY XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS

Apr 25, 2024 04:27 PM

The National Economic and Development Authority said that the implementation of non-tariff barriers on imports, such as the requirement of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC), has hurt Filipino consumers.

In a statement on Thursday, April 25, NEDA Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan shared that the use of clearances and permits as non-tariff barriers resulted in delays in the arrival of imported supplies.

In turn, private-sector importers were not able to respond to market signals and bring in the right volume of imports at the right time to meet the demand for food, Balisacan explained.

“This had the unintended effects of: 1) hurting our farmers when mistimed imports flooded the market during periods of harvest; 2) raising prices faced by Filipino consumers; and 3) prompting our monetary authorities to raise interest rates to rein in inflationary pressures,” he added.

To minimize these issues, the NEDA chief said that the Administrative Order No. 20, which aims to remove non-tariff barriers, will be a strategic and necessary measure to ensure food security and affordability of food.

Balisacan said that he acknowledges the effect of the AO 20 to local production and that they remain committed to investing measures that will raise the yield of farmers and increase their incomes, however, he noted that “the impact of these interventions takes time to materialize.”

“The complex and multifaceted issues troubling our agricultural sector run deep. Only fundamental reforms, along with committed and strategic interventions sustained over many years, will enable us to progressively address the gaps that constrain the sector’s supporting infrastructure, the adoption of modern technologies and processes, as well as farmers’ and fisherfolk’s access to markets and finance,” he said.

“It is crucial to emphasize that neither NEDA nor the government is biased toward importation. Rather, the government bears the responsibility of utilizing various instruments in its arsenal of policy tools to stabilize prices while performing a delicate balancing act,” he further said.

The AO 20, according to Balisacan, will enhance the transparency of the policy regime that governs the importation of food commodities and will streamline administrative processes by reducing importation requirements.

“Provided that importers comply with all the necessary administrative requirements, all SPSIC applications that are not processed within the specified period shall be considered approved,” he said.

President Marcos earlier issued AO 20, which ordered the Department of Agriculture (DA) to undertake measures easing the administrative procedures for importing agricultural products.

He also instructed DA, along with the Department of Trade and Industry or the Department of Finance, to ease the procedures and requirements “in the licensing of importers, minimize processing time of application for importation, and exempt licensed trades from submission of registration requirements.”

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/25/relaxed-food-import-process-gets-neda-s-backing>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Philippine rice imports double in February

Vietnam tops as foreign supplier of Filipino staple food

BY XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS

Apr 25, 2024 12:18 PM

AT A GLANCE

- The gains of rice imports stood at \$160.09 million in February this year, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported.
- Over 322,770 metric tons of rice were imported into the country during the month, up by 109 percent from the 154,160 metric tons a year ago.
- Vietnam was the PH top rice supplier, contributing the largest share with 51 percent or a total of \$81.70 million in rice import value.
- It is followed by Thailand with 25.7 percent or \$41.21 million, Pakistan with 16 percent or 25.55 million, and Myanmar with 11.58 percent or \$11.58 million.

The amount of rice brought into the country reached 322,770 metric tons in February this year, higher by 109 percent compared to last year, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

Based on the PSA report, the value of rice brought into the country reached \$160.09 million during the month.

Asian countries led the top suppliers of rice to the country with Vietnam contributing the largest share with 51 percent or a total of \$81.70 million in rice import value.

It is followed by Thailand with 25.7 percent or \$41.21 million, Pakistan with 16 percent or 25.55 million, and Myanmar contributing 11.58 percent or \$11.58 million to the country's rice imports.

Meanwhile, the average world price of rice stood at \$0.61 per kilo (P35.32), while its derived unit value remained at \$0.50 (P28.95).

On the other hand, the country's total import value during the month improved to \$9.55 billion, translating to an increase of 6.3 percent from the \$8.98 billion in February last year.

Export values also improved in February to \$5.91 billion, a substantial 16 percent surge from the \$5.1 billion recorded in the previous year.

This figure brings the total trade deficit, or the difference between export and import values, to \$3.65 billion, a six percent reduction compared to the \$3.88 billion gap in the month of 2023.

The Philippines is expected to import more rice this year as it is seen to bring home 3.9 million metric tons, surpassing the previous estimate of 3.8 million metric tons, according to a report by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The Philippines is the world's top importer of rice, sharing 25.7 percent of the global import requirements in 2024.

It is also expected to surpass China, the world's second most populous nation, in rice imports, with its expected import of only 2.3 million metric tons.

The Marcos administration had been strengthening its efforts to counter the effects of the El Niño phenomenon on rice production and the Filipinos' purchasing power such as importing rice.

The growth in the prices of rice has been moving at a quicker pace since December last year, reaching 24.4 percent from 23.7 percent last month — almost beating the comparable high record of 24.6 percent readout in February 2009.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/25/article-2209psaover322thousandriceimportedtophinfebraury>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Increased presence of Philippine gov't gives Pinoys confidence to fish in WPS—BFAR

BY JEL SANTOS

Apr 25, 2024 05:20 PM



The increased presence of the Philippine government in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) gives Filipino fisherfolk confidence to fish in the disputed waters, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said on Thursday, April 25.

During a televised media briefing aired on state-run PTV 4, BFAR spokesperson Nazario Briguera said that so far there are over 300,000 Filipinos fishing in the WPS.

^[1]_{SEP}“Nasa mahigit 300,000 ang bilang ng ating mangingisda sa West Philippine Sea. ‘Yung konteksto nung sinasabing nadaragdagan ang mga mangingisda, ito po ‘yung increased presence noong mga mangingisda na naiulat natin nitong mga nakaraang buwan doon sa Scarborough Shoal (The number of our fishermen in the West Philippine Sea is over 300,000. The context when it was said that fishermen are increasing, this is the increased presence of fishermen that we have reported in recent months at Scarborough Shoal),” he said.

“Kasi kung matatandaan natin, sunod-sunod ‘yung operations ng BFAR at nakita natin na kapag may presensya ang pamahalaan doon sa area, mas nagiging confident ang mga mangingisda na mangisda doon sa lugar dahil nakikita nila ang presensya ng pamahalaan (It can be recalled that BFAR has conducted consecutive operations at we found out that when the

government has a presence in the area, the fishermen become more confident to fish in the area because they see the presence of the government),” he went on.

Amid the tension in the WPS, Briguera said various government agencies, such as the Philippine Coast Guard, are now working together to ensure the safety and protection of Filipino fishers.

“Well, ang usapin po kasi ng West Philippine Sea ay hindi lamang isang bagay na dapat i-address ng BFAR. Ito pong ginagawa natin should be whole-of-government approach na dapat po ay dapat magkakasama ang iba’t ibang ahensya ng pamahalaan para mas mabigyan po natin ng kaukulang suporta ang mga mangingisda at bahagi na po diyan ang pagbibigay sa kanila ng proteksyon (Well, the matter of West Philippine Sea is not only something that should be addressed by BFAR. What we are doing should be a whole-of-government approach wherein different government agencies work together so that we can give more appropriate support to the fishermen and giving them protection is part of that),” the BFAR spokesperson stated.

Meanwhile, Briguera confirmed that they have spotted Chinese Maritime militia in the Recto Bank during BFAR’s recent refueling mission.

“May mga presensya ng Chinese Maritime militia doon sa [Recto Bank] pero hindi naman nagkaroon ng insidente (There’s presence of Chinese Maritime militia in the Recto bank but there is no incident),” he said.

“Wala naman untoward incident na nangyari doon sa lugar so nakita na may presensya doon. So far, wala naman untoward incident (Nothing untoward occurred in the area where we saw them. So far, there’s nothing untoward).”

LAYAG-WPS

On April 16, the BFAR formally launched Livelihood Activities to Enhance Fisheries Yields and Economic Gains from the West Philippine Sea (LAYAG-WPS) in Subic, Zambales.

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

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has vowed to provide full support to the LAYAG-WPS.

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

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

Earlier, BFAR had announced that the Philippines has allocated at least P2.5 billion to purchase new floating assets to increase the government’s presence and accompany Filipino fishers in the WPS.

In July 2016, China's nine-dash line claims in the South China Sea were rejected by an arbitral tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration. The case was brought by the Philippines based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

It can be recalled that Filipino fisherfolk have cried foul over the alleged harassment they experienced from foreign vessels while they were fishing in Bajo de Masinloc or Scarborough in 2021.

The PCG reported that a China Coast Guard ship (CCG) directed a military-grade laser light at a PCG vessel in Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal, West Philippine Sea on February 6, 2023.

In December 2023, a CCG ship fired a water cannon at BFAR vessels that were delivering supplies to fisherfolk communities in Bajo de Masinloc.

On February 18, the BFAR disclosed reports from Filipino fishers that Chinese fishermen are allegedly using cyanide to destroy Bajo de Masinloc in an apparent bid to discourage Filipinos from fishing in its waters.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/25/increased-presence-of-philippine-gov-t-gives-pinoys-confidence-to-fish-in-wps-bfar>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Maguindanao del Sur under state of calamity due to El Niño

BY KEITH BACONGCO

Apr 25, 2024 04:55 PM

DAVAO CITY – The provincial government has placed Maguindanao del Sur under a state of calamity due to the adverse impact of El Niño phenomenon.



A TEDURAY farmer inspects her farm destroyed by the extreme heat due to El Niño in South Upi, Maguindanao del Sur. (Keith Bacongco)

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Damage to agricultural crops and livestock due to El Niño in the province that has reached P346 million.

Gov. Mariam Sangki-Mangudadatu has approved Resolution No. 39 passed by the provincial board on April 16 declaring a state of calamity in the province due to the prolonged dry spell.

The resolution cited that 20 out of the 24 towns have been affected by the dry spell.

Mangudadatu said that at least 5,600 farmers have lost their livelihood as extreme heat destroyed corn and rice farms, banana plantations, livestock, and poultry.

The province is one of the severely affected areas in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The BARMM is composed of the provinces of Basilan, Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) climate outlook said Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur are among provinces in the country with below normal rainfall this month.

The State weather bureau noted that Maguindanao is one of the seven provinces in Mindanao with dry spell conditions. An area under a dry spell condition has experienced two consecutive months of below normal rainfall condition or 21 to 60 percent average rainfall reduction.

The Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office recorded that the heat index in the province in the last five days averaged 41 degrees Celsius.

The BARMM Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR) reported that 19,731 hectares of corn and 5,472 hectares of rice in the region have been destroyed due to extreme heat. Almost 700 hectares of vegetable farms, 45 hectares of fruit trees, and 56 hectares of root crops were also destroyed, MAFAR added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/25/maguindanao-del-sur-under-state-of-calamity-due-to-el-nino>

MANILA BULLETIN:

‘Not at the expense of our poor kababayans’: Solons warn ‘abusive’ traders over soaring prices of goods

BY DEXTER BARRO II

Apr 25, 2024 01:44 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Members of the House of Representatives have issued a stern warning to “abusive” businessmen following the directive of Speaker Martin Romualdez to investigate the price spike on basic goods.



(MANILA BULLETIN)

Members of the House of Representatives have issued a stern warning to “abusive” businessmen following the directive of Speaker Martin Romualdez to investigate the price spike on basic goods.

In a joint statement on Thursday, April 25, House Assistant Majority Leader and Zambales 1st district Rep. Jay Khonghun underscored that the Speaker’s pronouncements on holding a probe were serious and should serve as a warning to businessmen engaged in cartels in the agriculture sector.

“Please don’t do it, not at the expense of our poor kababayans (countrymen). Otherwise, we will be forced to implement the full force of the law,” he said.

Khonghun warned that if “worse comes to worst”, the House may pursue the filing of economic sabotage charges against the perpetrators. Such offense is non-bailable.

On Wednesday, Romualdez ordered the House Committee on Agriculture and Food to hold an inquiry in aid of legislation amid the "widening gap" between farm gate and retail prices of basic goods such as rice.

Taguig 2nd district Rep. Pammy Zamora noted that with the continued price hikes, government intervention becomes necessary to prevent abuses.

“We have to protect the interest of our consumers, especially those in the impoverished sector who could hardly make ends meet for their families,” said Zamora.

“Our request is for them (traders) not to make it too costly that it will be unbearable to our fellow Filipinos,” she added.

In the same statement, La Union 1st district Rep. Paolo Ortega advised these “abusive” traders to grow conscience for impoverished Filipinos.

“Let’s not victimize these people who are in a hand-to-mouth situation,” Ortega said. “Let’s make life easier by giving them affordable prices”.

The lawmaker pointed out that food is an essential part of everyone’s being, especially the poorest of the poor who need nourishment the most.

“Imagine they have to grapple with the almost never-ending inflation, yet our business sector still takes advantage of them. This shouldn’t be,” he noted.

The agriculture and food panel is expected to carry out the inquiry upon the resumption of sessions next week.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/25/not-at-the-expense-of-our-poor-kababayans-solons-warn-abusive-traders-over-soaring-prices-of-goods>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Town in Ilocos Norte under state of calamity due to El Niño

BY FREDDIE LAZARO

Apr 25, 2024 01:09 PM

SOLSONA, Ilocos Norte – This town is under a state of calamity after 15 out of 22 barangays are experiencing a water crisis due to the El Niño phenomenon.



THE town of Solsona in Ilocos Norte is rationing water due to El Niño.

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Mayor Joseph de Lara said that water rationing is ongoing in 15 barangays, specifically Barangays Mariquet, Talugtog, and Bubuos, as all their sources of water have dried up due to the extreme heat.

Lara said residents are being provided water by the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP).

“We declared our town under a state of calamity to enable us to use our calamity or emergency fund to provide sufficient and safe water supply for our residents,” said Lara.

The local government unit estimated the damage caused by El Niño to agriculture here at P7.5 million.

Lara said the BFP is having difficulty looking for sources for water rationing.

Senior Fire Officer 3 Venner Adena, municipal fire marshal, said that aside from residential houses, they are also conducting water rationing in schools, particularly at the Talugtog National High School and Solsona National High School, and local government offices.

Adena said that they are conducting daily water rationing operations using their two firetrucks and a truck from the municipal agriculturist's office.

Adena said their third truck is on standby in case of emergency.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/25/town-in-ilocos-norte-under-state-of-calamity-due-to-el-nino>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Romualdez-ordered probe on huge gap between farm gate and retail prices makes sense for 'Young Guns'

BY ELLSON QUISMORIO

Apr 25, 2024 12:11 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Members of the so-called "Young Guns" in the House of Representatives are fully behind Speaker Martin Romualdez's order to launch a probe on the widening gap between farm gate prices and retail prices of rice and other basic goods.



Lanao del Sur 1st district Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong (left), Davao Oriental 2nd district Rep. Cheeno Miguel Almario (PPAB, MANILA BULLETIN)

Members of the so-called "Young Guns" in the House of Representatives are fully behind Speaker Martin Romualdez's order to launch a probe on the widening gap between farm gate prices and retail prices of rice and other basic goods.

Expressing their support on Thursday, April 25 for the upcoming inquiry were Assistant Majority Leader Lanao del Sur 1st district Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong and Davao Oriental 2nd district Rep. Cheeno Miguel Almario.

Adiong thanked Speaker Romualdez for paving the way for the investigation, as he believed that it would bring the concerns of Filipino farmers to the fore.

"Unfortunately, our farmers continue to be among the more vulnerable sectors of our society. That means they need all the help and attention that they can get from leaders in government. Our Speaker understands this. Ang puso niya ay para sa maliliit na Pilipino, tulad ng mga magsasaka," Adiong said.

(His heart is with the poor Filipinos, like farmers.)

Farm gate prices refer to the prices received by farmers once their crops are sold at the farm's location. Retail prices, on the other hand, are the prices that consumers pay for products, particularly in small quantities.

"This means that there is a delicate balance between farm gate prices and retail prices," said Almario, a member of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food. The committee is scheduled to hold the investigation in aid of legislation once sessions resume next week.

"For farm gate prices to be low, and retail prices to be high is the worst case scenario since it hurts both the farmer and the consumer. If this is truly the case then House probe will nip this problem in the bud," he said.

"That's why we fully support it and I am personally eager to join the discussions and help the panel get to the bottom of the matter," Almario added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/25/romualdez-ordered-probe-on-huge-gap-between-farm-gate-and-retail-prices-makes-sense-for-young-guns>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Harvest Dinner brings together agri stakeholders for conversation and collaboration

BY [YVETTE TAN](#)

Apr 26, 2024 00:07 AM

AVANT GARDENER



Over the weekend I attended a Harvest Dinner co-presented by WOFEX’s CSR arm and Sanko Plastics, featuring dishes from Chef Waya Araos-Wijangco and Gilbert Lee.

“Harvest Dinners are a small gathering of different members of the food service industry and stakeholders for the agri-food chain to get together over food from different regions sourced directly from farmers and fisherfolk and interpreted by different chefs,” said Harold V. Lu, Special Project Lead for WOFEX’s CSR. “This began with the initiative of Jonathan Co of [Sanko] Plastic when he brought together people who focused on ecological sustainability. The idea clicked that we should do the same to bridge the many gaps in the agri-food sector.”

Dubbed “The Summer Bounty Dinner,” the dishes were made with ingredients from Benguet and seafood from BARMM, all freshly picked and caught and directly sourced from farmers and fishers. How freshly caught? Chef Waya shared how she needed a 30-45 kilo marlin for a 200 pax dinner so she asked her contact in BARMM (who also supplied the seafood for the Harvest Dinner) to procure one for her. After four hours, her supplier received word that the fishers she worked with had caught a 44 kilo marlin that only took one or two days to get to Manila.

“If we can make that kind of connection and replicate it nationwide, can you imagine the kind of benefits we can bring directly to the fishery? Also all the vegetables... We’ve been working with the Benguet farmers, connecting them directly to the market para wala nang middlemen. For the past three years that we’ve done that, a lot of the farmers in Benguet have reported increases in income from 1,000-3,000 percent in one year,” Araos-Wijangco shared.

“That’s the kind of difference things like this make. We’ve done this harvest dinner five times. Every month. And what’s interesting about these harvest dinners is we get people like you to talk about how we can improve this system and how we can push the envelope further and forward and let’s do this in our lifetime.”

The dinner was composed of mahi mahi kinilaw with coconut milk and cherry tomatoes, the fish caught fresh from Basilan just a few days before.

Grilled cuttlefish salad on a bed of arugula with dried biya, cherry tomatoes and radish from Benguet, mangoes, and pomelo served with a mango vinaigrette. The biya added a crunchy texture and bursts of saltiness to each bite, in contrast to the sweetness of the cherry tomatoes.

Superlux Tom Yam made with shrimp, clam, and crab broth and filled with whole shrimp, cherry tomatoes, clams, and herbs. Part soup, part stew, the broth had a full flavor reminiscent of the sea.

There was also black laksa paella cooked with crab, shrimp, clams, and what Araos-Wijangco called other “good things.” The squid-ink flavored rice topped with seafood were layers upon layers of flavor, from the seafood’s light char to the rice’s deep umami.

There was also grouper, snapper, and barramundi, also all from Basilan, wrapped in banana leaves, grilled, and served with sambal. Grilled fish is always delicious, particularly when it’s fresh. Dessert was a mini cake made from Davao’s famous Malagos chocolate. There were also cocktails from Toma Mnl.

“The attendees are members of the food service industry, social enterprise founders, chefs and some of the farmers and fisherfolk themselves as we seek to include them in the conversation - literally and figuratively,” Lu explained.

“It provides a venue for discovery for all sides which opens doors not only for markets to open but solutions to problems which no one group or person can monopolize. It is the proverbial bridging of many gaps for farm to table to become the norm with organized farmers and fisherfolk being the ones connecting directly with the market.”

Good food aside, I had a great time meeting new people from different parts of the agriculture industry, all of whom I shall be writing about in the future. What everyone had in common was the desire to support Filipino agriculture and its players. Everyone works toward the day when Filipino farmers and fishers aren’t automatically thought of as one of the poorest elements of society, but one of the most productive, progressive, and wealthy.

This isn’t just lip service. When I asked one of the people I met, a DA Young Farmers Challenge awardee, why, after witnessing her parents give up farming for 20 years in order to raise their family, she decided to go back, she said, “Because I can make money.”

Here’s to more dinners that bring stakeholders together for conversation and collaboration toward an equitably food secure nation. And here’s to more Filipino farmers, fishers, and other industry stakeholders making good money while feeding the Filipino people.

https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/26/harvest-dinner-brings-together-agri-stakeholders-for-conversation-and-collaboration#google_vignette

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

CA ruling vs Bt eggplant, golden rice propagation hit

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

April 26, 2024 | 12:00am



The Court of Appeals on April 17, 2024 ordered a stop to the commercial propagation, field testing and conduct of activities related to Golden Rice and Bt Eggplant until all safety, health and legal issues have been addressed.

Photo courtesy of Sibalom Municipal Agriculture Office

MANILA, Philippines — The judiciary should not overstep its authority on genetically modified organisms or GMOs as regulations on biotechnology must be left to scientists and pertinent regulators, according to a member of the Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

V. Bruce Tolentino of the BSP Monetary Board said the recent decision by the Court of Appeals (CA) stopping the propagation of Bt eggplant and golden rice is a “step backward for the Philippines.”

Tolentino said the appellate court’s decision would have “serious negative impact” on the country’s efforts to attain nutrition security and improve domestic crops.

He said the judiciary should respect scientists and their work in the same way as scientists should not venture in matters pertaining to law.

“Unfortunately, the (CA’s) decision was based on fear of science and misplaced populism,” Tolentino, former deputy director-general of the International Rice Research Institute, said.

The CA granted a writ of kalikasan to the Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad Agrikultura, Greenpeace Southeast Asia-Philippines and other environmental groups, citing potential risks of the two genetically modified crops to the environment and public health.

A writ of kalikasan is a legal remedy that safeguards people from environmental hazards that threaten life, health or property across two or more municipalities.

The CA issued a cease and desist order and directed the University of the Philippines-Los Baños and the Philippine Rice Research Institute to stop the commercial propagation of golden rice and Bt eggplant.

Tolentino said other countries have a “mixed trend” in dealing with the relationship between their judiciary and biotechnology regulators.

“Many jurisdictions are starting to learn that the precautionary principle is just too conservative and in fact constrains scientific progress,” he said, noting the precautionary principle is a “surrender to populist sentiment.”

Meanwhile, Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) president Danilo Fausto said the CA’s ruling must not impact soybean meal and corn, which are also genetically modified products, since the decision was only limited to Bt eggplant and golden rice.

Fausto said he received reports that the government has stopped issuing import permits for corn and soybean meal after the CA released the ruling early this week.

He said the PCAFI has raised the matter to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., who immediately addressed the issue to prevent any disruption in the country’s feed supply.

Soybean meal and corn are used by local feed millers for the production of various feed products for livestock and poultry.

Fausto said the CA’s ruling would mean that the proponents of the Bt eggplant and golden rice are “back to square one.”

Greenpeace earlier welcomed the CA’s decision, noting it was a “monumental win” for Filipinos, including farmers, who opposed GMOs.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/26/2350498/ca-ruling-vs-bt-eggplant-golden-rice-propagation-hit>

La Union farmers receive P1.7M worth of agri inputs ahead rainy season

[Artemio Dumlao](#) - Philstar.com

April 25, 2024 | 5:49pm



Photo shows the distribution of Agricultural Inputs worth P1.7 million for 40 farmer-cooperators from the municipalities of Bacnotan, Bangar, Luna, San Juan, Agoo, Bauang, Rosario, and Naguilian.

Rafy Ortega-David / Facebook

BAGUIO CITY — La Union Gov. Raphaele Veronica “Rafy” Ortega-David recently led the distribution of agricultural inputs worth P1.7 million to 40 farmer-cooperators from Bacnotan, Bangar, Luna, San Juan, Agoo, Bauang, Rosario, and Naguilian at the La Union Honey Bee Center in Bacnotan town.

The Provincial Government of La Union-initiated awarding through the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPAg), is a significant effort to bolster agricultural productivity and promote food sufficiency in the province as aligned with La Union’s vision to be the Heart of Agri-Tourism in Northern Luzon by 2025.

Ortega-David said the farmer-cooperators were given 25 packs of Hybrid Seeds, 15 bags of Urea, 20 bags of Complete, ten bags of Ammonium Phosphate, five bags of Muriate of Potash, 50 bags of Organic Fertilizers as well as five bottles for Insecticides, Herbicides, and Fungicides, in time for the incoming rainy season.

Aside from the input distribution, the office of the Provincial Agriculturist also conducted the La Union Clustered Hybrid Advocacy Mentoring Partnership (LU CHAMP) Technology Demonstration which aims to maximize the potential of

different hybrid rice varieties and capacitate farmers as they foster innovation in their practices.

“Pinapangako po namin sa inyo na kami sa Provincial Government of La Union ay patuloy na gagawa ng mga programa at iisip ng paraan para sa ikauunlad ng agrikultura sa probinsya, at para sa pagpapaganda ng antas ng buhay ng mga minamahal nating magsasaka,” the governor said.

(We promise you that the Provincial Government of La Union will continue to create programs and think of ways on how to boost the province's agriculture and to make the lives of our beloved farmers better).

The agri inputs distribution was also graced by OPAg OIC-Provincial Agriculturist Sharon Vilorio and OIC-Assistant Department Head Marcelo Otones.

The successful distribution of farming inputs and the establishment of LU CHAMP underscore the provincial government's “La Union PROBINSYAnihan” to support the agriculture sector of the province as it seeks to be the “Heart of Agri-Tourism in Northern Luzon by 2025”.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/04/25/2350422/la-union-farmers-receive-p17m-worth-agri-inputs-ahead-rainy-season>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Philippine court blocks GMO 'golden rice' production over safety fears

Agence France-Presse

April 25, 2024 | 1:49pm



Stock image of genetically modified golden rice. [BusinessWorld / IRR1](#)

MANILA, Philippines — A Philippine court has blocked the commercial propagation of genetically modified golden rice because it said conflicting scientific views gave rise to "severe" health and environmental safety concerns.

The Philippines was the first country in the world to approve golden rice, which is enriched with the Vitamin A precursor beta-carotene and has a bright yellow colour, in a bid to combat childhood blindness.

However, the Court of Appeals in Manila revoked a biosafety permit for commercial production of the rice granted by government regulators in 2021 after 14 opponents filed a challenge.

The court's ruling, issued on April 17 and seen by AFP on Thursday, also applies to a genetically modified eggplant, BT eggplant, that is pest resistant.

"By reason of the conflicting scientific views and uncertainties on the risks and effects of Golden Rice and Bt Eggplant, potential severe and grave threats to the welfare of people and the environment arise," the court said.

Commercial propagation was not allowed "until such time that the concerned respondent government agencies submit proof of safety and compliance with all legal requirements", it said.

Experts hope the rice will help combat childhood blindness and save lives in the developing world.

World Health Organization data show vitamin A deficiency causes up to 500,000 cases of childhood blindness every year, mostly in developing countries, with half of those dying within 12 months of losing their sight.

Golden rice was developed over two decades by the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), while BT eggplant was developed by the University of the Philippines Los Banos campus.

The scientists involved insist both are safe to eat. PhilRice executive director John de Leon said in a statement the institute was "reviewing the implications" of the ruling to prepare its response.

The IRRI said it would continue to work with PhilRice on "developing safe and effective nutritional interventions through rice research".

It also said golden rice had received "positive food safety evaluations" from regulators in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.

However, the rice faced strong resistance from environmental groups opposed to genetically altered food plants and at least one test field in the Philippines was attacked by activists.

The opponents who filed the objection, including Greenpeace, welcomed the ruling.

"This decision is a monumental win for Filipino farmers and Filipino people who have for decades stood up against genetically modified crops," Greenpeace Southeast Asia campaigner Wilhelmina Pelegrina said in a statement.

"GM crops have never been proven safe, and have hindered necessary progress on climate resilient ecological agriculture that keeps the control of seeds on our farmers."

Ordinary rice, a staple for hundreds of millions of people, particularly in Asia, produces beta-carotene in the plant but it is not found in the grain.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/04/25/2350395/philippine-court-blocks-gmo-golden-rice-production-over-safety-fears>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Lawmakers back probe on high cost of basic commodities

By: [Zacarian Sarao](#) - Reporter / [@zacariansINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 01:09 AM April 26, 2024



House of Representatives plenary. INQUIRER FILES

MANILA, Philippines — House leaders on Thursday said the upcoming probe on the price disparity in basic commodities will serve as a warning to abusive business owners who deliberately hike prices illegally.

This came after Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez and ACT-CIS party-list Rep. Erwin Tulfo on Tuesday announced that the lower chamber will investigate the reason for the high cost of basic commodities when farmers, manufacturers, and grocery stores have denied making significant price adjustments.

“The pronouncements of Speaker [Romualdez] about the investigation are serious, and it should serve as a warning to our unscrupulous businessmen who are engaged in cartels in various industries in the agriculture sector,” House Assistant Majority Leader Rep. Jay Khonghun said in a statement.

“Please don’t do it, not at the expense of our poor kababayans. Otherwise, we will be forced to implement the full force of the law. And if worse comes to worst, we can [take] them to court for economic sabotage, a non-bailable offense,” he added.

Other lawmakers such as La Union Rep. Paolo Ortega and Taguig Rep. Pammy Zamora, also shared Khonghun’s sentiments.

According to Zamora, the interest of consumers should be protected, especially those belonging to the impoverished sector.

“In times like these, government intervention is necessary to prevent abuses done with impunity,” Zamora said.

Ortega, for his part, pointed out that “food is an essential part of everyone’s being.”

“The poorest of the poor need nourishment the most among our population, which is a huge part. Imagine they have to grapple with the almost never-ending inflation, yet our business sector still takes advantage of them. This shouldn’t be,” Ortega said.

Meanwhile, other House lawmakers also committed to back the probe, with House Assistant Majority Leader Zia Alonto Adiong stressing how it could “shine light on the plights of farmers.”

Davao Oriental 2nd District Rep. Cheeno Almario, meanwhile, pointed out the “delicate balance” between farm gate prices and retail prices.

“For farm gate prices to be low, and retail prices to be high is the worst case scenario since it hurts both the farmer and the consumer,” said Almario.

“If this is truly the case then the House probe will nip this problem in the bud. That’s why we fully support it and I am personally eager to join the discussions and help the panel get to the bottom of the matter,” Almario, a member of the House committee on agriculture and food, said.

Deputy Majority Leader Margarita Nograles also committed to back the investigation, claiming that the huge gap in farm gate and retail prices of rice and other basic commodities shows an “abuse and utter disregard for the welfare of fellow Filipinos.”

“Our goal is to halt this apparent profiteering and to implement the laws where they apply,” she noted.

The lower chamber’s committee on agriculture and food is scheduled to hold the investigation in aid of legislation once sessions resume next week.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1933867/lawmakers-back-probe-on-high-cost-of-basic-commodities>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Group warns of scarce meat supply from abroad

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:16 AM April 26, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — A group of meat importers has raised the alarm over limited supplies coming from abroad amid increasing production costs and the ever-present problem of African swine fever (ASF).

Meat Importers and Traders Association (Mita) president emeritus Jesus Cham told the Inquirer, “our supply options are getting fewer while landed costs are likely to increase unless the conditions change.”

Meat items that entered the Philippines totaled 273.6 million kilograms in the three months ending March this year, an increase of 3.1 percent from 265.5 million kg in the same period a year ago, based on the latest figures from the Bureau of Animal Industry.

However, such “frontloading” or early influx could be associated with “importers’ expectations of [good] Christmas sales and the need to replenish supply,” Cham said in a separate press release, adding:

“Going forward, we are cautious on the supply side for pork as importers are facing headwinds.”

The group expressed apprehensions as the Department of Agriculture suspended the minimum access volume (MAV) or the tariff quota for pork and “did not push through with its distribution which ought to have been in January.” MAV allows importers to bring in certain goods at lower tariff rates.

Fewer supply options

Mita said although the government accredited several meat establishments in Brazil, Hungary, Germany, and Poland, Cham said certain items were not included in the list of items for import, such as pork belly, loin, and boneless cuts of leg and shoulder (kasim/pigue).

“Also abroad, the presence of ASF and the ensuing country bans have caused many countries to reduce production, constricting supply and exerting upward price pressure,” Cham said.

He also said a strong US dollar, if sustained, would affect the landed cost, or the cost associated with shipping a product, resulting in higher prices of imports.

“The ongoing conflicts in other parts of the world add support to the strong dollar. If this keeps up it will surely impact the landed cost of imported meat,” he added.

Mita had proposed certain measures to President Marcos’ economic managers to battle inflation, including extending the low tariff on pork for the duration of the current administration or at least two years while expanding the MAV for pork and poultry.

“The added supply and window of certainty and predictability will allow more opportunity for meaningful interventions against ‘sticky’ inflation,” he said.

As in the past, pork remains the most purchased meat product, accounting for 128.5 million kg or nearly half of the total during the first quarter. This is an increase of 11.9 percent.

[https://business.inquirer.net/456253/group-warns-of-scarce-meat-supply-from-abroad?utm_source=\(direct\)&utm_medium=gallery](https://business.inquirer.net/456253/group-warns-of-scarce-meat-supply-from-abroad?utm_source=(direct)&utm_medium=gallery)

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER (CDN):

El Niño causes P4 billion agriculture losses

By: Jean Mangaluz - 13 hours ago



DRY SPELL A young boy inspects rice plants in a parched field in Tanza, Cavite in this file photo taken in May 2023. —INQUIRER photo

MANILA, Philippines — The El Niño weather pattern has led to around P4 billion in losses for agriculture, a government official announced on Wednesday.

Joey Villarama, a spokesperson for the El Niño Task Force, stated that this amount reflects the harm done to 66,000 hectares of farmland due to the dry spell.

“Sa huling datos na galing sa Department of Agriculture, nasa P3.94 billion na po ang danyos sa agrikultura—that’s equivalent to about 66,065 hectares,” said Villarama during the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon public briefing.

(According to the latest Department of Agriculture data, damage to agriculture has reached P3.94 billion, equivalent to about 66,065 hectares.)

Villarama said that of the damaged agricultural land, 78 percent could still be recovered once the drought is over.

<https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/569984/el-nino-causes-p4-billion-agriculture-losses/amp>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Fish imports during closed season to decline

April 25, 2024 | 8:47 pm



IMPORTS during the closed fishing season are expected to decline starting next year, a agricultural organization said.

“From 2025 onwards, I am informed that the volume will be progressively reduced, “ Leonardo Q. Montemayor, chairman of the Federation of Free Farmers, said in a statement.

In a memorandum signed by Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu-Laurel, Jr., the Department of Agriculture approved imports of 25,000 metric tons (MT) of fish during the closed fishing season, which runs between Oct.1 and Dec. 31.

The approved import allocation is a 28.6% drop from the 35,000 MT fish import quota approved last year.

“(Mr.) Laurel is doing a balancing act, ensuring enough supply for consumers during the closed fishing season in the last quarter of 2024,” Mr. Montemayor added.

Under Republic Act No. 8550 or the Fisheries Code, closed fishing seasons are declared over certain fishing grounds to help stocks regenerate.

“Presumably, this year’s imports were recommended, as required by law, by the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC), before Secretary Laurel issued the certificate of neces-sity to import,” he said.

The DA said that at least 80%, or 20,000 MT, of the import allocation will go to commercial fishing companies, while the remaining 20%, or 5,000 MT, will be awarded to fisheries associations or cooperatives.

Mr. Montemayor said that the DA and the other agencies mentioned in Administrative Order No. 20 (AO 20) should check why cheaper local alternatives like tilapia are sold at retail at double or more the farmgate price.

AO 20 ordered the DA and the Departments of Finance (DoF), and Trade and Industry (DTI) to ease import requirements for agricultural products and remove non-tariff barriers.

It tasked the DA to review and revise current rules and regulations on importing frozen fish and fishery products during the closed fishing season.

In 2023, fisheries production dropped 6.5%, accelerating the 5% decline recorded in the prior year, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. — **Adrian H. Halili**

https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/25/591063/fish-imports-during-closed-season-to-decline/#google_vignette

BUSINESS WORLD:

Import easing to curb inflation, NEDA says

April 25, 2024 | 8:50 pm



THE National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) expressed its support for removing nontariff barriers in food imports, saying domestic production is inadequate in curbing inflation, Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said Thursday.

In a statement, Mr. Balisacan, the government's chief economic planner, said Administrative Order (AO) No. 20 was issued "as a supply-side response to help curb inflation by addressing its fundamental causes: shortages of food commodities due to inadequate and untimely imports."

Last week, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed AO No. 20, tasking the Agriculture, Trade, and Finance departments to streamline administrative procedures in importing agricultural products.

Mr. Balisacan said that the order serves to stabilize prices and manage inflation amid weak local supply.

"We reassure the public that AO 20 is a strategic and necessary measure to ensure our people's food security, particularly in terms of availability and affordability of food, and improve the overall welfare of Filipinos," he said.

Mr. Balisacan said the AO is "a tool that considers the welfare of our farmers and fisherfolk and the vibrancy and potential of our agricultural sector as a growth driver of the economy."

However, Mr. Balisacan said "neither the NEDA nor the government is biased toward imports."

"Rather, the government bears the responsibility of utilizing various instruments in its arsenal of policy tools to stabilize prices while performing a delicate balancing act," he said.

The order also allows imports of certain agricultural commodities beyond the authorized minimum access volume.

It also tasks agencies with simplifying procedures and requirements when issuing Sanitary Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSICs), and improving logistics, transport, distribution, and storage of agricultural imports.

The continued uptick in prices and inflation indicates that “domestic production is insufficient to meet the demand for key food commodities,” NEDA added.

“With the economy reopening, pent-up demand has spurred growth and contributed to faster inflation. At the same time, global supply chains and domestic production for key energy and food commodities and inputs were disrupted by several factors,” it said.

These include the Russia-Ukraine war, the continued spread of African Swine Fever (ASF) and Avian Influenza, and climate change-related disasters.

Inflation accelerated from 3% in January 2022, peaking at 8.7% in January 2023. Food inflation rose from 1.6% in January 2022 to 11.2% a year later.

Rice has been a major driver of inflation since August 2023. Last month, the commodity accounted for 2.2 percentage points of headline inflation.

The landed cost of imported rice is also 27-29% higher compared to a year earlier, it added.

NEDA said red onion prices surged to a record P465 per kilogram in January last year “amid the non-issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSIC)... since December 2021.”

Despite an expected 4.7% increase in domestic production this year, onion output is still 10% short of demand, NEDA said.

Sugarcane production fell 10.7% in 2022 with area planted to cane declining 4.5%, NEDA said.

For pork, “Local production has since fallen short of meeting domestic requirements amid the ASF outbreak,” NEDA said.

Despite domestic supply strains, the government will continue to develop domestic agriculture, NEDA said.

“However, even as the entire government works hard to implement and invest in measures that will raise the yield of our farmers and increase their incomes, we acknowledge that the impact of these interventions takes time to materialize,” NEDA said.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) executive director Jayson H. Cainglet said reduced tariffs and increased imports have not diminished food prices.

“Reduced tariffs for rice, pork, chicken and corn have been implemented for four years yet market prices aren’t going down,” he said in a Viber message.

“AO 20 might even open the floodgates for more undervalued and misdeclared agricultural imports,” Mr. Cainglet said, citing the lack of a 100% border inspection regime.

Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said increased imports do not guarantee a drop in prices.

“The problem of high prices mainly comes from inefficiencies in the domestic market (high transport costs, many layers, hoarding and price manipulation, profiteering, etcetera) and not from difficulties in importing food,” he said via Viber. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/25/591162/import-easing-to-curb-inflation-neda-says/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Meat imports up 3% in Q1 led by beef, pork

April 25, 2024 | 8:49 pm



MEAT imports rose by 3.06% during the first quarter, with growth seen in shipments of beef, pork, and turkey, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

The BAI tallied imports of 273.64 million kilograms of meat during the first half, against 265.52 million kilos a year earlier.

“The total imported volumes for Q1 appear steady for the years 2022-24, although 2023 total imports were lower than 2022. This “frontloading” could be attributed to the importers’ expectations of Christmas sales and the need to replenish supply,” Meat Importers and Traders Association (MITA) President Emeritus Jesus C. Cham said via Viber.

Pork imports, which accounted for 46.96% of meat imports overall, totaled 128.51 million kilos, up 11.92%.

Spain was the primary source for pork, accounting for 33.77 million kilos, followed by Brazil (31.89 million kilos) and Canada (18.38 million kilos).

“Going forward, we are cautious on the supply side for pork as importers are facing headwinds. The Department of Agriculture (DA) suspended the pork quota and did not push through with its distribution which ought to have been in January,” Mr. Cham added.

“DA has just announced May 3 as the date to conduct the distribution process. This is a three-month delay,” he said.

He added that the presence of African Swine Fever in source countries has hindered hog production, constricted supply, and exerted upward price pressure on pork.

Mr. Cham said that the government should extend the lowered tariff regime on pork imports for at least two years or for the duration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.’s administration.

Last year, Mr. Marcos approved Executive Order (EO) No. 50, extending the reduced tariff regime for pork, rice, and corn.

Pork tariffs were retained at 15% for shipments within the minimum access volume and 25% for those exceeding the quota.

He added that the President's economic managers should also consider expanding the MAV for pork and poultry.

Last week, Mr. Marcos approved Administrative Order No. 20 which instructed the DA, the Departments of Finance (DoF), and Trade and Industry (DTI) to remove nontariff barriers to imports of farm goods.

Nontariff barriers are policy measures that restrict trade such as quotas, import licenses, regulations, and red tape, among others.

"The added supply and window of certainty and predictability will allow more opportunity for meaningful interventions against 'sticky' inflation," Mr. Cham said.

Shipments of beef rose 6.55% during the three-month period to 35.32 million kilos. Beef accounted for 12.91% of the import total.

Brazil supplied 12.63 million kilos of beef, followed by Australia (10.75 million kilos), and Ireland (3.41 million kilos).

Turkey shipments also surged to 307,835 kilos from 87,739 kilos the same period in 2023.

Meanwhile, imports of chicken, buffalo, lamb, and duck all declined during the first quarter.

Chicken imports, which accounted for 35.46% of meat imports overall, totaled 128.51 million kilos, down 5.56% from a year earlier.

Brazil supplied 50.07 million kilos of chicken, followed by the US (36.05 million kilos) and Canada (3.65 million kilos).

Imports of buffalo dropped 14.92% to 12.32 million kilos, while duck and lamb fell 67.51% and 13.05% to 33,375 kilos and 122,483 kilos, respectively. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/25/591161/meat-imports-up-3-in-q1-led-by-beef-pork/>

REMATE:

Agri damage sa El Niño lampas P3.9B na

April 25, 2024 10:02

MANILA, Philippines – Nagdulot na ng P3.9 bilyong halaga ng pinsala sa mga pananim ang tagtuyot na dulot ng El Nino, sa 66,000 ektarya ng taniman sa buong bansa.

Sa panayam, sinabi ni Task Force El Niño Asst. Sec. Joey Villarama na kabuuang 103 lungsod at bayan, kabilang ang limang probinsya, ang nagdeklara na ng state of calamity dahil sa pinsala sa El Niño, partikular na ang kakulangan ng tubig sa irigasyon.

“Based on the latest data from the Department of Agriculture, the damage to agriculture has reached P3.94 billion—that’s equivalent to about 66,000 hectares,” ani Villarama.

Bagama’t apektado ng El Nino ang malaking bahagi ng bansa, limang probinsya ang nasa ilalim ng state of calamity dahil sa matinding tagtuyot. Ito ay ang Occidental Mindoro, Antique, Sultan Kudarat, Basilan at Maguindanao del Sur.

“The President has mentioned that the whole country is now affected albeit in varying degrees, so the focus and assistance that the government is giving to the localities is also dependent on the need of each province,” ani Villarama.

Sa kabila nito, umaasa ang pamahalaan na marerekober pa rin ng mga magsasaka ang 78% ng 66,000 ektarya ng mga napinsalang taniman.

“The rice farms may look dried up or burnt, but their crops may still be recovered; for those that are already unrecoverable, the dried-up plants can be given as feeds for farm animals,” dagdag pa niya.

“Based on those figures, we would like to state that somehow, the preventive measures and interventions that we have put in place somehow helped, because the damage is considered negligible compared to what we have experienced in terms of damage historically,” pagpapatuloy nito.

Gumagawa ng paraan ang pamahalaan ng short at long-term solutions para maresolba ang kakulangan sa tubig, na karamihan ay ginagamit para sa irigasyon sa mga taniman. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/agri-damage-sa-el-nino-lampas-p3-9b-na/>

Surveys shows Filipinos prefer cage-free eggs as customer values evolve

By Othel V. Campos April 25, 2024, 8:10 pm

A nationwide survey conducted by GMO Research, a leading Asian consumer research agency, reported a significant shift in Filipino consumer preferences towards cage-free eggs. The survey results showed that 83 percent of Filipino consumers believe restaurants, supermarkets and food companies should source their eggs from cage-free production farms. This indicates a strong desire for ethical treatment of egg-laying hens. The survey also found a high level of acceptance for a potential price increase associated with cage-free eggs. Nearly 90 percent of respondents acknowledged the potential benefits of cage-free eggs in terms of food safety, indicating a willingness to pay a slight premium for the perceived advantages. The survey disclosed that 80 percent of Filipinos are more likely to patronize brands that prioritize cage-free eggs. This highlights the growing importance of ethical sourcing practices in the food industry. It also underscored the increasing concern for animal welfare among Filipino consumers. About 95 percent of the respondents agreed on a growing ethical consciousness that hens should not be confined in cages and deserve the freedom to move around. Results showed that 99 percent of Filipinos believe food companies have a responsibility to source both eggs and meat from suppliers who adhere to humane standards of animal treatment, extending ethical practices throughout the food supply chain. Leading Filipino food brands like Jollibee and Red Ribbon are taking notice of these shifting consumer preferences and committed to using only cage-free eggs in the coming years, which demonstrates a willingness to adapt to evolving customer values. The survey findings highlighted a significant and growing demand for cage-free eggs in the Philippines, driven by a combination of factors, including concern for animal welfare, perceived food safety advantages, and a desire for ethical sourcing practices. The survey indicates that food companies prioritizing cage-free eggs stand to benefit from adhering to these evolving consumer values.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314439793/surveys-shows-filipinos-prefer-cage-free-eggs-as-customer-values-evolve.html>

Why we are suffering from global warming now

By John Lesaca April 26, 2024

THE effects of global warming are becoming increasingly evident in the world today, causing disruptions to our ecosystems, weather patterns and human societies. The primary reason behind the current state of global warming can be attributed to the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere.

These gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, act as a thermal blanket, trapping heat from the sun, preserving the heat underneath the atmospheric layers and thus leading to a rise in global temperatures. This is evident in the steady accelerated melting of our polar ice caps and huge chunks of glaciers breaking away and sliding into the ocean, ultimately melting away. This, plus the sliding movements of the main bodies of glaciers into the waters, results in the rise of ocean levels.

Human activities are the main drivers of the increase in greenhouse gas emissions and the resultant heating processes. The burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and natural gas, for energy production and transportation releases significant amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Deforestation, another human-induced activity, further exacerbates global warming by reducing the Earth's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide through photosynthesis. Industrial processes, agriculture and waste management practices also contribute to the emission of greenhouse gases and the intensification of global warming. People breed cattle and livestock but pay little or no attention to the efficient management of animal waste, which is a substantial source of methane.

The consequences of global warming are far-reaching and impactful. Rising temperatures have caused the melting of ice caps and glaciers, leading to sea-level rise and threatening coastal communities. Extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, droughts and heat waves, have become more frequent and severe, resulting in widespread damage to infrastructure and loss of life. Changes in precipitation patterns have disrupted agricultural systems, posing challenges to food security and livelihoods.

This week featured the most unlikely phenomenon, a desert country known for its extreme hot and cold climate, suddenly inundated by rains, causing widespread floods, damaging infrastructure and causing the deaths of people. This, in spite of the fantastic wealth of the country derived from fossil fuels.

Furthermore, the warming of the oceans has resulted in coral bleaching, endangering marine ecosystems and biodiversity. Species are facing challenges in adapting to rapidly changing environments, leading to disruptions in ecosystems and potential extinction risks. The interconnectedness of ecosystems means that the effects of global warming cascade through the natural world, impacting both wildlife and human populations.

Addressing the causes and effects of global warming requires a collective effort on a global scale. International agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, seek to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and limit global temperature rise to manageable levels. Transitioning to renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency and implementing sustainable land-use practices are critical steps in reducing the human impact on the climate.

It is interesting and ironic to note that the world's economic powers were the first polluters and abusers of natural resources. Today, now that they have achieved economic wealth, they have evolved into the champions of the environment but impose more responsibilities on the underdeveloped and developing nations. To be fair, they have

employed advanced technology as tools for mitigating the climate crisis we are suffering today.

Individual actions also play a significant role in combating global warming. Reducing energy consumption, using public transportation, recycling and supporting policies that promote environmental sustainability can contribute to a more sustainable future. Education and awareness-raising efforts are essential in fostering a sense of responsibility and urgency in addressing the climate crisis.

According to Pagasa (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), "there is a possibility that some areas of the country will experience serious discomfort or heat index levels of extreme danger, which is 52 degrees or higher. With this heat index, heat stroke is imminent or probable for people who are exposed to sunlight."

It is observed that "areas that posted high temperatures are coastal areas; while cities like Metro Manila are registering high heat levels due to urban heat island effect."

The consequences of human activities are evident in the form of extreme weather events, sea-level rise, ecosystem disruptions and biodiversity loss. Addressing global warming requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach that involves individuals, communities, governments and international organizations working together to reduce emissions and protect the planet for future generations.

As long as people litter and spit anywhere, as long as people cut trees and burn foliage, as long as people don't bother to build proper waste and sewage systems, as long as people think that their bad habits are too few to make an impact on the world, Homo sapiens will be the next endangered species. We are warned.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/26/opinion/columns/why-we-are-suffering-from-global-warming-now/1943319>

AO 20 to address supply shortages

By Niña Myka Pauline Arceo April 26, 2024

A PALACE order to facilitate imports of agricultural products will help address periods of low domestic output and help control prices, a Cabinet official said. Administrative Order (AO) 20 will facilitate the "sufficiency and timeliness of imports," Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said in a statement on Thursday, as it "seeks to enhance the country's agricultural importation policy regime by streamlining administrative processes and removing non-tariff barriers." President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed the Department of Agriculture to simplify importers' licensing procedures, streamline the import application process and waive registration requirements for licensed traders in collaboration with other agencies like the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Finance. Balisacan noted that not increasing supply during shortages worsens food insecurity and keeps poverty going. This has effects beyond just economic strains, affecting price stability and the well-being of Filipino children.

"High food prices disproportionately affect the poor and contribute to hunger, malnutrition and stunting, hindering the attainment of our development goals," he added. While there are concerns over the impact of AO 20, Balisacan said that it was a strategic step to safeguard food security, availability and affordability.

"In conjunction with other initiatives and programs, AO 20 is deployed as a tool that considers the welfare of our farmers and fisherfolk, and the vibrancy and potential of our agricultural sector as a growth driver of the economy," he added.

"It contributes to the Marcos administration's efforts to shield and protect the poor, the vulnerable and the youth from hunger, malnutrition and stunting."

The government, he claimed, remains committed to improving the well-being of farmers and boosting agricultural productivity. Results, however, will not be immediate. "Only fundamental reforms, along with committed and strategic interventions sustained over many years, will enable us to progressively address the gaps that constrain the sector's supporting infrastructure, the adoption of modern technologies and processes, as well as farmers' and fisherfolk's access to markets and finance," Balisacan said.

The government, he said, is "working diligently to overcome these challenges."

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/26/business/top-business/ao-20-to-address-supply-shortages/1943343>

Neda: Imports still needed, AO 20 vital to food security

- [Cai U. Ordinario](#)
- [April 26, 2024](#)
- IMPORTS remain necessary as local production is still unable to meet demand for key commodities like rice and pork, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).
- In a 14-page statement, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan defended Administrative Order No. 20 which aims to ensure the country's food security by removing non-tariff barriers for agricultural products. (<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/22/marcos-wants-non-tariff-curbs-on-farm-products-out/>).
- The Inter-Agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook (IAC-IMO) expects the local production of key commodities such as rice, pork, onion, and sugar to fall short of domestic demand this year.
- “By streamlining administrative procedures and removing non-tariff barriers, we aim to create a regulatory environment that enables—rather than hinders—the delivery of goods and services that our people need while safeguarding the welfare of our citizens,” Balisacan said.
- “It would be irresponsible not to augment local supply during periods of acute shortages. Failing to do so would lead to highly elevated prices, adversely affecting everyone—even farmers who are also consumers of agricultural products and fall victim to higher food prices themselves,” he added.
- Balisacan said domestic production of rice is expected to fall 15 percent below demand despite the 0.7-percent increase in output in 2024. There is also a deficit in the production of pork due to the African Swine Fever (ASF).
- The Neda chief explained that rice retail prices in the international market surged on the back of trade-restricting policies of major food exporters.
- In March 2024, he noted that the price of rice, 5 percent broken, from Vietnam and Thailand eased month-on-month but was still 27 to 37 percent higher than prices a year ago.
- The landed cost of imported rice, 5 percent broken, in 2024 remained stable at approximately P39 per kilo but is 27 to 29 percent higher than the previous year.
- “As landed cost includes tariffs and other fees [e.g., brokerage fee, arrastre charge, customs documentary stamp], carefully adjusting tariff rates

temporarily, or while world prices are increasing, could help in stabilizing rice prices in the country,” Balisacan said.

- Meanwhile, Balisacan said prior to the ASF outbreak, domestic pork production could meet local demand.
- From 2017 to 2019, local pork production in carcass weight averaged 1.61 million metric tons (MMT). This exceeded the average demand of 1.52 million metric tons with a surplus reaching 87,920 metric tons.
- With the ASF, which required culling thousands of hogs, the country had a deficit in pork production—with the 61,430 MT shortfall in 2020 rising to 389,770 MT in 2021-2022.
- Balisacan said imported pork has been critical in augmenting domestic production. The sharp increase in imported pork arrivals since 2021, he said, helped meet local demand.
- “While local hog production exhibited improvements in the past two years and is expected to increase by 2.8 percent in 2024, it will still fall 20 percent below pre-ASF levels,” Balisacan said.
- **Other commodities**
- Apart from rice and pork, AO No. 20 will also benefit commodities such as onion and sugar, which saw recent price spikes.
- The average retail price of red onions in January 2023 skyrocketed to P465 per kilogram, more than double or 113 percent higher than the P219 per kilo average in January 2022.
- The price of white onions, Balisacan said, posted a 215 percent year-on-year increase to P367.7 per kilogram from P116.7 in January 2022.
- This year, Balisacan said, despite the expected 4.7-percent increase in local onion production, local supply will still fall short of demand by 10 percent.
- “Onion prices in the Philippines reached a record high in January 2023 amid the non-issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSIC) for red and white onions since December 2021,” Balisacan said.
- Balisacan explained that in 2022, sugarcane production shrank 10.7 percent and the area harvested decreased by 4.5 percent.
- As a result, Balisacan said, sugar prices in 2023 stayed high and did not return to their levels in the years before 2022.
- He attributed this to low fertilizer usage due to high prices, resulting in lower yields; weather disturbances such as Typhoons Odette in December 2021 and Agaton in April 2022 were also a factor.
- These, Balisacan said, affected standing crops, disrupted operations of milling and refining facilities, and damaged sugar stocks and warehouses. “Relying mainly on the country’s production of refined sugar is insufficient to meet the domestic demand requirements.”
- **Rates**
- With the high prices of these commodities, food inflation increased from 1.6 percent in January 2022 to 11.2 percent in January 2023, he added.

- Rice started to become a main driver of inflation starting in August 2023. As of March 2024, it accounted for 58 percent or 2.2 percentage points of the observed 3.7 percent headline inflation.
- Given this, Balisacan noted, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) released its risk-adjusted inflation forecast of 3.9 percent for 2024, near the government's upper-bound target of 4 percent for the year.
- The BSP has also remained hawkish and said it will likely hold rates higher for longer, given the threat of inflation. (<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/09/inflation-may-prompt-rate-cuts-delay-to-2025/>).
-
- **HSBC revises forecast**
- Meanwhile, HSBC analyst Aris Dacanay said that given recent developments, they revised their policy rate forecast for the Philippines.
- They now expect the BSP to do its first 25-basis-point rate cut in the fourth quarter of 2024 from the initial estimate of the third quarter. Given this, he said policy rates in the country may end the year at 6.25 percent, higher than the initial forecast of 5.75 percent.
- Nonetheless, Dacanay said HSBC continues to expect the BSP to bring its policy rate down to as much as 5 percent by the end of 2025.
- “Even though interest rate hikes—a monetary policy tool utilized by the BSP—can decelerate inflation by discouraging consumption and investment activities, it may also dampen demand and reduce economic opportunities made available to Filipino workers,” Balisacan said.
- Neda said the IAC-IMO, along with other relevant government agencies of the Economic Development Group (EDG), recommended the issuance of AO 20.
- It is seen as a supply-side response to help curb inflation by addressing its fundamental causes: shortages of food commodities due to inadequate and untimely importation.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/26/neda-imports-still-needed-ao-20-vital-to-food-security/>

Middle East conflict to drive up food, gas prices—World Bank

- Cai U. Ordinario
- April 26, 2024
- IF the conflict in the Middle East escalates, the World Bank expects natural gas, fertilizers, and food to become even more expensive than they are today.
- In its latest Commodity Markets Outlook, the World Bank said a major outbreak of the conflict in the Middle East could stall the steady decline in inflation recorded in the past two years.
- Without the escalation of the conflict, the World Bank said food prices could decline to 6 percent in 2024 and 4 percent in 2025. Fertilizer prices are also expected to fall by 22 percent in 2024 and 6 percent in 2025.
- “Global inflation remains undefeated,” said Indermit Gill, the World Bank Group’s Chief Economist and Senior Vice President.
- “A key force for disinflation—falling commodity prices—has essentially hit a wall. That means interest rates could remain higher than currently expected this year and next. The world is at a vulnerable moment: a major energy shock could undermine much of the
- progress in reducing inflation over the past two years.”
- In 2024 and 2025, the report said, overall commodity prices are forecast to decline slightly but remain about 38 percent above prepandemic levels.
- Unlike prices for most other commodities, oil prices are set to increase in 2024, by 2 percent. Gold and copper prices are also set to rise this year, by 8 percent and 5 percent, respectively.
- “Risks to the price forecasts are tilted to the upside, with the primary risk arising from a broadening of the conflict in the Middle East. A conflict-driven rise in commodity prices could stoke stubbornly elevated global inflation, further delaying global monetary easing,” the report stated.
- “Food insecurity, which worsened markedly last year reflecting armed conflicts and elevated food prices, could also rise further,” it added.
- The World Bank noted that between mid-2022 and mid-2023, global commodity prices plummeted by nearly 40 percent. This helped to drive most of the roughly 2-percentage-point reduction in global inflation between 2022 and 2023.
- However, the World Bank estimates that should the conflict in the Middle East escalate, oil-supply disruptions could push up global inflation.

- A moderate conflict-related supply disruption could raise the average Brent price this year to \$92 per barrel while a more severe disruption could see oil prices surpass \$100 per barrel.
- If oil prices average above \$100 per barrel, the world could see global inflation in 2024 rise by nearly one percentage point. The estimate, without the conflict escalation, is for global inflation to average 3 percent in 2024 and 4 percent in 2025.
- A striking divergence is emerging between global growth and commodity prices: despite relatively weaker global growth, commodity prices will most likely remain higher in 2024-25 than in the half-decade before the Covid-19 pandemic,” said Ayhan Kose, the World Bank Group’s Deputy Chief Economist and Director of the Prospects Group.
- “One critical factor behind this divergence relates to heightened geopolitical tensions that are keeping upward pressure on prices of major commodities and stoking risks of sharp price movements. Central banks must remain alert about the inflationary implications of commodity-price spikes amid elevated geopolitical tensions.”
- The World Bank said the Middle East is a crucial gas supplier—20 percent of global liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade transits the Strait of Hormuz.
- If the LNG supply were interrupted, fertilizer prices would also rise substantially, likely driving up food prices.
- Earlier, local economists said geopolitical risks would make it more difficult for imported oil-dependent countries like the Philippines to tame inflation, which could accelerate to double digits if oil prices jump to unprecedented levels.
- Bloomberg initially reported that oil traders piled into more than 3 million barrels worth of options contracts in a bet that prices would spike to \$250 a barrel by June as geopolitical risks remain elevated. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/19/geopolitics-may-hurt-bid-to-tame-inflation/>).
- Regardless of whether oil prices reach \$250 per barrel, Ateneo de Manila University economist Leonardo Lanzona Jr. told BusinessMirror that addressing high oil prices cannot be similar to how the country responded in the 1970s.
- In order to keep oil prices stable locally, the government “imposed oil price regulations and subsidized gasoline consumption.” Lanzona added the government also too its response further by owning oil refineries that led to “tremendous loans.” (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/22/%e2%82%b1100-wage-hike-should-have-been-approved-yesterday/>).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/26/middle-east-conflict-to-drive-up-food-gas-prices-world-bank/>

Southeast Asian countries consider ways to boost ‘green financing’ as region chokes on smog

- BusinessMirror
- April 25, 2024



[FILE] As Philippine inflation rises amid the challenges posed by El Niño, farmers in Mabitac, Laguna, carry on with their crucial tasks despite the adversities. In the face of widespread water shortages induced by El Niño, the agricultural sector faces significant hurdles, with crop production damage being highest at this period. This impact extends beyond upland and rainfed areas to lowland irrigated areas like Mabitac. After meticulously tending to newly planted palay seedlings and applying fertilizers and pesticides, farmers now turn their attention to the essential task of irrigating the farm plots using the traditional “paiinumín” method.

LUANG PRABANG, Laos — Senior finance and central bank officials from Southeast Asia and major economies met April 4, 2024, in the scenic Laotian city of Luang Prabang to discuss ways to help the region build resilience against shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters brought on by climate change.

The need for faster progress was dramatically apparent as the city and surrounding region were engulfed in heavy smoke from fires — some set to clear forests for

crops, some ignited by record high temperatures and tinder-dry conditions. The air quality index early Thursday was nearly 300, or “very unhealthy.”

Laos and other countries in Southeast Asia have committed to seeking more sustainable ways to feed their people and power their economies. The question is where the money will come from to do that.

Green finance is among several items on the agenda of the finance meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations related to countering the mounting impacts of global warming. The officials also were set for talks on an ASEAN infrastructure fund and disaster risk financing and insurance, according to the agenda provided by hosts of this week’s meetings.

Also on the list, refining a “taxonomy” to help identify and agree on projects that support ASEAN’s sustainability agenda and align with its climate change commitments and other goals.

The 10 member nations of ASEAN — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — range from tiny but wealthy Brunei and Singapore to big, fast growing economies like Vietnam and Indonesia. They have pledged to cut carbon emissions to help reduce the impact of climate change but are struggling to find ways to unlock financing needed to make that transition.

ASEAN members are extremely vulnerable to extreme weather, drought and rising sea levels. Investments in clean energy need to increase by five to seven times, to more than \$200 billion a year, according to various estimates. Laos and its neighbors also are contending with a raft of other regional troubles, including human trafficking, a growing illicit drug trade and fast-growing enclaves of online scam centers run by criminal syndicates.

A landlocked country of about 7.5 million people, Laos is rich in hydroelectric power, but its economy has been shrinking in recent years and its national finances are fraught — strained by a heavy load of foreign and domestic debt, a weakening currency and inflation.

Longstanding traditions and a lack of funding to persuade farmers not to rely on crop burning — their most affordable option — mean that progress is slow. The government has set a goal of reducing the number of fires by 35% by the end of 2025. Similar burning in neighboring Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia leaves the region shrouded in heavy smog for weeks at a time during the spring.

Countries in the region have begun to build regional electricity grids as one step toward improving a balance between supply and demand.

A higher priority for Laos, a Communist state where annual incomes average below \$2,000 a person, is weaving itself into the wider regional economy of about 660 million people. Combined, the region is the world's fifth-largest economy at about \$3.3 trillion.

Like many countries in the region, Laos' economy has become increasingly entwined with that of China. Those ties have deepened with the building of a \$6 billion high-speed railway that links to railways in southwest China's Yunnan province and eventually will be connected with a line running to Bangkok and the Gulf of Thailand. The downside: debts that are a heavy drain on the country's resources.

Along with regional financial leaders, senior officials of major international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank, along with delegates from Japan, China, the U.S. and other major economies, are attending the talks in Luang Prabang.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is not attending the talks, but traveling to China this week, where she will meet with American business leaders and Chinese officials in south China's Guangzhou and in Beijing.

Also in Beijing this week were Indonesia's President-elect Prabowo Subianto and the foreign ministers of Vietnam, Laos and East-Timor, which is aspiring to become an ASEAN member. The flurry of visits highlights rivalries for influence in the region.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/25/southeast-asian-countries-consider-ways-to-boost-green-financing-as-region-chokes-on-smog/>

In Vietnam, farmers reduce methane emissions by changing how they grow rice

- Aniruddha Ghosal / The Associated Press
- April 25, 2024
- LONG AN, Vietnam — There is one thing that distinguishes 60-year-old Vo Van Van's rice fields from a mosaic of thousands of other emerald fields across Long An province in southern Vietnam's Mekong Delta: It isn't entirely flooded.
- That and the giant drone, its wingspan similar to that of an eagle, chuffing high above as it rains organic fertilizer onto the knee-high rice seedlings billowing below.
- Using less water and using a drone to fertilize are new techniques that Van is trying and Vietnam hopes will help solve a paradox at the heart of growing rice: The finicky crop isn't just vulnerable to climate change but also contributes uniquely to it.
- Rice must be grown separately from other crops and seedlings have to be individually planted in flooded fields; backbreaking, dirty work requiring a lot of labor and water that generates a lot of methane, a potent planet-warming gas that can trap more than 80-times more heat in the atmosphere in the short term than carbon dioxide.
- It's a problem unique to growing rice, as inundated fields stop oxygen from entering the soil, creating the conditions for methane-producing bacteria. Rice paddies contribute 8% of all human-made methane in the atmosphere, according to a 2023 Food and Agriculture Organization report.
- Vietnam is the world's third-largest rice exporter, and the staple importance to Vietnamese culture is palpable in the Mekong Delta. The fertile patchwork of green fields crisscrossed by silvery waterways has helped stave off famine since the Vietnam War ended in 1975. Rice isn't just the mainstay of most meals, it is considered a gift from the gods and continues to be venerated.
- It is molded into noodles and sheets and fermented into wine. In busy markets, motorcyclists lug 10-kilogram (22-pound) bags to their homes. Barges haul mountains of the grain up and down the Mekong River. Rice kernels are then dried and hulled by machines before they're packed for sale in factories, lined from floor to ceiling with sacks of rice.
- Van has been working with one of Vietnam's largest rice exporters, the Loc Troi Group, for the past two years and is using a different method of irrigation known as alternate wetting and drying, or AWD. This requires less water than

traditional farming since his paddy fields aren't continuously submerged. They also produce less methane.

- Using the drone to fertilize the crops saves on labor costs. With climate shocks pushing a migration to cities, Van said that it's harder to find people to work the farms. It also ensures precise amounts of fertilizers are applied. Too much fertilizer causes the soil to release Earth-warming nitrogen gases.
- Once crops are harvested, Van no longer burns the rice stubble — a major cause of air pollution in Vietnam and in its neighbors, as well as Thailand and India. Instead, it's collected by the Loc Troi Group for sale to other companies that use it as livestock feed and for growing straw mushrooms, a popular addition to stir-fries.
- Van benefits in various ways. His costs are down while his farm yield is the same. Using organic fertilizer enables him to sell to European markets where customers are willing to pay a premium for organic rice. Best of all, he has time to tend to his own garden.
- "I am growing jackfruit and coconut," he said.
- Loc Troi Group CEO Nguyen Duy Thuan said that those methods enable farmers to use 40% less rice seed and 30% less water. Costs for pesticides, fertilizer and labor also are lower. Thuan said Loc Troi — which exports to more than 40 countries including in Europe, Africa, the United States and Japan — is working with farmers to expand acreage using its methods from the current 100 hectares to 300,000 hectares.
- That's a long way from Vietnam's own target of growing "high quality, low emission rice" on 1 million hectares of farmland, an area more than six times the size of London, by 2030. Vietnamese officials estimate that would reduce production costs by a fifth and increase farmers' profits by more than \$600 million, according to the state media outlet Vietnam News.
- Vietnam recognized early on that it had to reconfigure its rice sector. It was the largest rice exporter, ahead of both India and Thailand, to sign a 2021 pledge to reduce methane emissions at the annual United Nations climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland.
- Each year, the industry suffers losses of over \$400 million, according to recent research by Vietnam's Water Resources Science Institute. This is worrying, not just for the country but for the world.
- The Mekong Delta, where 90% of Vietnam's exported rice is farmed, is one of the world's regions most vulnerable to climate change. A U.N. climate change report in 2022 warned of heavier flooding in the wet season and droughts in the dry season. Scores of dams built upstream in China and Laos have reduced the river's flow and the amount of sediment that it carries downriver to the sea. The sea level is rising and turning the river's lower reaches salty. And unsustainable levels of groundwater pumping and sand mining for construction have added to the problems.
- Changing centuries-old forms of rice farming is expensive, and even though methane is a more potent cause of global warming than carbon dioxide, it only

receives 2% of climate financing, Ajay Banga, the World Bank's president, told the U.N. climate summit in Dubai last year.

- Combating methane emissions is the “one rare, clear area” where low-cost, effective and replicable solutions exist, Banga said. The World Bank is supporting Vietnam's efforts and has begun helping the Indonesian government to expand climate resilient farming as a part of more than a dozen projects to reduce methane worldwide.
- The hope is that more countries will follow, though there is no “one-size-fits-all,” said Lewis H. Ziska, a professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia University. “The one commonality is that water is needed,” he said, adding that different methods of planting and irrigation can help manage water better.
- Growing more genetically diverse rice varieties would also help because some are more resilient to excess heat or require less water, while others might even emit less methane, he said.
- Nguyen Van Nhut, director of the rice export company Hoang Minh Nhat, said its suppliers are using varieties of rice that can thrive even when the water is briny and the heat is extreme.
- Now, the business is adapting to the unseasonal rains that make it harder to dry the rice, adding to risks from mold or insect damage. Typically, rice is dried in the sun immediately after harvest, but Nhut said his company has drying facilities in their packaging factory and also will install machinery to dry the grains closer to the fields.
- “We don't know which month is the rainy season, like we did before,” he said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/25/in-vietnam-farmers-reduce-methane-emissions-by-changing-how-they-grow-rice/>

‘AO 20 necessary for food security’

April 26, 2024

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has reassured the public the recently issued administrative order (AO) easing the importation process of agricultural products is a strategic and necessary measure to ensure food security and improve the overall welfare of Filipinos.

In a statement yesterday, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said NEDA recognizes the concerns of various sectors regarding AO No. 20, which aims to streamline administrative procedures and policies and eliminate non-tariff barriers to importing agricultural products.

AO 20 signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on April 18 drew mixed reactions from various groups and individuals.

Balisacan said AO 20 seeks to enhance the country’s agricultural importation policy regime by streamlining administrative processes and removing non-tariff barriers, thereby facilitating the sufficiency and timeliness of imports, especially during periods where domestic supply is inadequate to meet demand at affordable prices.

“Failing to augment local production during shortages exacerbates food insecurity and perpetuates poverty. The consequences of insufficient supply extend beyond economic strain, affecting overall price stability and the well-being of Filipino children,” Balisacan said.

“In conjunction with other initiatives and programs, AO 20 is deployed as a tool that considers the welfare of our farmers and fisherfolk and the vibrancy and potential of our agricultural sector as a growth driver of the economy. It contributes to the administration’s efforts to shield and protect the poor, the vulnerable and the youth from hunger, malnutrition and stunting,” he added.

The NEDA chief said AO 20 supports the overall economic stability and long-term prospects of the Philippines as one of Asia’s fastest-growing economies.

“It is crucial to emphasize that neither NEDA nor the government is biased toward importation. Rather, the government bears the responsibility of utilizing various instruments in its arsenal of policy tools to stabilize prices while performing a delicate balancing act,” Balisacan said.

“By streamlining administrative procedures and removing non-tariff barriers, we aim to create a regulatory environment that enables — rather than hinders — the delivery of goods and services that our people need while safeguarding the welfare of our citizens,” he added.

Balisacan said it would be “irresponsible” not to augment local supply during periods of acute shortages.

“Failing to do so would lead to highly elevated prices, adversely affecting everyone — even farmers who are also consumers of agricultural products and fall victim to higher food prices themselves,” he said.

Meanwhile, Jesus Cham, president of the Meat Importers and Traders Association economic managers should also consider to extend the low tariff on pork for the duration of the Marcos administration or at least two years.

Cham said the government should also increase the minimum access volume on pork and poultry.

Cham said additional supply and window of “certainty and predictability will allow more opportunity for meaningful interventions” against inflation. – *Angela Celis and Jed Macapagal*

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https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/ao-20-necessary-for-food-security/

ABANTE TONITE

NEDA Chief Arsenio Balisacan pumiyok sa bigas, asukal shortage

Abante Tonite
April 25, 2024

Nagpahayag ng suporta si National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan sa kautusan ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na pabilisin at luwagan pa ang pagbibigay ng importation permit para sa mga produktong agrikultura.

Inamin ni Balisacan na may shortage ng bigas ngayong taon, gayundin sa asukal, at hindi pa nakababalik ang produksyon ng baboy sa antas bago tumama ang African Swine Fever (ASF) sa bansa.

Sabi ni Balisacan, hindi mapupunan ng lokal na produksyon ng bigas ang 15% ng pangangailangan ng bansa.

Ayon sa Department of Agriculture, nasa 37,000 toneladang bigas ang kinakain sa bansa kada araw na aabot sa 13.5 milyong tonelada ngayong taon. Ang 15% nito ay katumbas ng mahigit dalawang milyong tonelada.

“Despite the expected 0.7 percent increase in rice production in 2024, domestic output will still fall 15 percent below demand,” sabi ni Balisacan.

Dagdag niya, hindi maasahan ang lokal na produksyon ng puting asukal para punan ang pangangailangan ng bansa. Nabawasan ang produksyon ng tubo noong 2022 dahil lumiit ang lugar na pinagtataniman nito. Kaunti pa ang paggamit ng abono at binagyo pa ang ilan.

“Relying mainly on the country’s production of refined sugar is insufficient to meet the domestic demand requirements,” sabi ni Balisacan.

Aniya, banta pa rin ang ASF sa mga babuyan. Ang ASF ang dahilan kaya bumagsak ang produksyon ng baboy noong 2020 hanggang 2022.

Dagdag ni Balisacan, mas maliit pa rin ng 20% ang magiging produksyon ng baboy sa bansa kung ikukumpara sa produksyon bago nagkaroon ng ASF sa Pilipinas.

Paliwanag ni Balisacan, inirekomenda ng Interagency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook ng Economic Development Group ang Administrative Order No. 20, series of 2024 para mapadali ang importasyon ng mga produktong agrikultura sa pamamagitan ng pagluwag sa pagpasok ng mga ito.

Babala ni Balisacan, kapag hindi nadagdagan ang lokal na produksyon, palalalain nito ang food insecurity at lalo lamang maghihirap ang mga tao.

“Failing to augment local production during shortages exacerbates food insecurity and perpetuates poverty,” sabi ni Balisacan. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/04/25/neda-chief-arsenio-balisacan-pumiyok-sa-bigas-asukal-shortage/>

Agri chief nilimitahan imported galunggong sa closed fishing season

- **Abante Tonite**
- **April 25, 2024**

Babawasan ng Department of Agriculture ng 10,000 tonelada ang pag-angkat ng mga galunggong at iba pang isda na ibebenta sa mga palengke sa darating na closed fishing season.

Ayon sa Memorandum Order No. 17 na pinirmahan ngayong linggo ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., nasa 25,000 tonelada lamang ang iisyuhan ng sanitary phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) para sa pag-angkat ng galunggong at iba pang mga isda mula Oktubre 1 hanggang Disyembre 31, 2024 na para sa mga palengke.

Noong 2023, nasa 35,000 toneladang galunggong at iba pang mga isda ang binigyan ng import permit para ipasok sa bansa at ibenta sa mga palengke upang mapunan ang suplay habang closed fishing season.

Nagkakaroon ng tinatawag na closed fishing season sa iba't ibang bahagi ng bansa mula Oktubre hanggang Enero at ipinagbabawal munang pumalaot at manghuli para magkaroon ng panahon ang mga isda na mangitlog at nang dumami pa sila.

Base sa kautusan ni Laurel, 80% o 20,000 tonelada ang papayagang importasyon ng commercial fishing sector at 20% o 5,000 tonelada naman sa fisheries associations at mga kooperatiba. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/04/25/agri-chief-nilimitahan-imported-galunggong-sa-closed-fishing-season/>