

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# All hands on deck to enable ship of state to sail on an even keel

BY [MANILA BULLETIN](#)

May 13, 2024 04:45 AM

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Updates on gross domestic product (GDP) growth, inflation and jobs released last week by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reflected the outcome of the efforts of the country's economic managers to steer the ship of state on an even keel in the face of continuing challenges.

First-quarter GDP grew 5.7 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2024. Even while this is outside their 6.0 to 7.0 percent growth forecast for 2023 — and lower than the 6.5 to 7.5 percent target for 2024 — our economic managers point out that the country fared better than the rest of its neighbors last year. Hence, there is room for optimism on better performance ahead.

Yet, the inflation and jobs figures also bear watching.

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Overall inflation moved up to 3.8 percent in April 2024 from 3.7 percent in March; in April 2023, inflation rate was higher at 6.6 percent. More detailed analysis by the PSA shows that the top three commodity groups accounted for nearly 80 percent of the inflation rate increase.

These are: “a) Food and non-alcoholic beverages with 59.7 percent share or 2.3 percentage points; b) Restaurants and accommodation services with 13.7 percent share or 0.5 percentage point; and c) Transport with 6.2 percent share or 0.2 percentage point.”

Further analysis points to rice price inflation as the most significant contributor to overall inflation. In a press briefing last month, National Statistician Claire Dennis Mapa reported that rice inflation was at 24.4 percent in March 2024, inching toward the record-high of 24.6 percent in February 2009. He said further that rice prices will continue on an upward spiral ‘until July because of the base effect unless there is some intervention.’”

President Marcos traveled to the provinces over the weekend, with Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel and Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian to distribute financial assistance to farmers in communities and farms hard-hit by drought brought on by El Niño that has hampered rice production.

According to National Irrigation Administration (NIA) chief Eduardo Guillen, a collaborative effort has been launched to bring down rice production cost to stem the tide of rice price inflation. The agencies involved are the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (Philmech), the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), and the National Rice Program (NRP).

The prolonged heat wave throughout the country due to El Niño has “discouraged many job seekers, especially in the agriculture sector, leading to an increase in the number of unemployed Filipinos,” according to the PSA. Most of the decline in agricultural workers came from those who grow corn, which decreased by 360,000, followed by paddy rice growers, which dropped to 204,000. The number of workers in the fisheries and aquaculture sector also dropped by 449,000, wherein 285,000 were from marine fishing and 216,000 from seaweed gatherers.

On a bright note, the underemployment rate, or the measurement of individuals forced to work in low-paying or low-skill jobs, declined to 5.39 million or 11 percent from 6.8 million a month ago.

Indeed, government faces tough challenges in attaining growth targets that will enable most Filipinos to live decently and comfortably — and all concerned sectors must pitch in their share.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/13/all-hands-on-deck-to-enable-ship-of-state-to-sail-on-an-even-keel>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# A thoughtful look at Northern Mindanao's growth

BY [JOHN TRIA](#)

May 13, 2024 04:44 AM

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#MINDANAO



In my last two columns, I focused on the Davao region's economy. This week we turn our attention to Northern Mindanao, the administrative region that includes the provinces of Misamis Oriental and Occidental, Lanao del Norte, Bukidnon, and Camiguin. Its regional capital is the bustling city of Cagayan de Oro. Its economy is now at P985 billion in terms of value, a close second to the Davao Region's P1.02 trillion economy. It grew at 5.3 percent last year, down from the high 7.2 percent growth the year earlier. It has the highest per capita Gross Regional Domestic Product at about ₱227,807 per year, slightly higher than the country's second highest, the Davao Region.

Northern Mindanao exports pineapples and can produce a lot of food which can easily be supplied to other regions. It hosts a variety of manufacturing companies in industrial hubs such as the PHIVIDEC Industrial Estate and the industrial city of Iligan.

The statement of the NEDA region 10 cites the slowdown in the growth of the Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Sector by 0.2 percent to the current 0.3 percent growth and the contraction of the manufacturing sector by -1.3 percent, leaving the industry sector at 12 percent of the total economy. What will account for the manufacturing contraction will need to be studied further. This sector needs to expand to create jobs and products we use.

These realities notwithstanding, Northern Mindanao's economy is still a fast-growing economy. Over the coming years, I will expect it to grow faster as major infrastructure developments may prove to be game changers that can boost this growth. The Panguil Bay bridge that will be completed soon will connect Misamis Occidental and Lanao del Norte. This will increase transport between the two provinces and may also provide an alternative for travelers headed to Iligan City from Manila, since airlines land at the Ozamis airport.

In all, the bridge creates economic activities and consolidates a long economic corridor along Misamis Occidental, Lanao del Norte, and Misamis Oriental. This includes the cities of Cagayan de Oro, Oroquieta, Ozamis, Tangub, Gingoog, and Iligan. This will bring opportunity

to the region's 5,022,768 residents and further growth to the economy. This will increase logistics efficiencies and create more opportunities for many towns and provinces along the route.

### **Boosting UP Mindanao's offerings**

As an alumna of the University of the Philippines, I am happy to see my alma mater making deeper inroads into the local population of Mindanao. A doctor of medicine program, a civil engineering program, and graduate programs in quantitative modeling are set to begin at the UP Mindanao campus in Davao City.

With a Mindanaoan at the helm of the UP System in the person of Angelo Jimenez the focus on making the university reach out to more Filipinos is clear. As Mindanao's different economies keep growing, some challenges threaten inclusive growth and development. A pandemic and shifting climate are but some of them. To face these bumps on the road to continuous growth and development we need strong hearts and new skills to help everyone weather the storms and build the opportunities that will create a positive future that can amplify the gains of growth for a greater number. Of interest to me is the MS in Quantitative Modeling, a field that will develop professionals who can help crunch the economic numbers I have been featuring on regional economies such as the one mentioned above. We wish the university the best.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/13/a-thoughtful-look-at-northern-mindanao-s-growth>

## The skidding peso again?



[DEMAND AND SUPPLY](#) - [Boo Chanco](#) - The Philippine Star

May 13, 2024 | 12:00am

The peso is skidding again and no one is paying attention anymore. That's probably the only reasonable reaction because we can't do anything about it anyway. The peso's value against the dollar is largely dependent on the US Federal Reserve and how it moves on its interest rate policy. Because many fear the US has not licked inflation just yet, any relaxation of interest rates may not happen before the US elections in November.

So, the peso is bound to get weaker than its current 57.46 exchange rate vs the US dollar. Back in May 2021, the peso was trading at P47.95. Then it went as low as 58.82 in October 2022. Last week, it was reported that the BSP had been quietly propping up the peso after it breached the 57 level. But it was explained by BSP Governor Eli Remolona Jr. that "We were active in small amounts – not to affect the value but to maintain orderly markets... We all know this is a case of a strong dollar as many other currencies have also weakened. So not very strong grounds for significant intervention."

The peso has fallen to 17-month lows in recent weeks and there are implications on our inflation because of our high dependence on imported food, notably rice. More than a fourth of the country's foodstuffs are now imported to include chicken, pork, onions, beef, milk.

But because our OFWs are fueling our strong consumer-driven economy, their families back home will be getting more pesos for every dollar remitted. A good part of that will be spent to cover rising food prices.

As for the BPO industry, the other leg of our economy, the strong dollar is good news. A Bloomberg article noted that "The Philippine peso has weakened nearly

four percent this year and emerged as Asia's worst performer since the start of the second quarter. That's burnished the appeal of the Southeast Asian nation as a cost-effective destination for business process outsourcing... placing the industry on course to become the nation's top foreign exchange earner by 2026."

BMI, a unit of Fitch Solutions, is forecasting "the Philippine peso to depreciate only by one percent against the US dollar, from an average of 55.63/USD in 2023 to 56.00/USD in 2024. It is a relatively stable outcome compared with a depreciation of 11 percent in 2022 and two percent in 2023."

They also have "a positive outlook for consumer spending in the Philippines in 2024." But cautioned that "the key risks to this outlook include prolonged inflation; decrease in remittances, which fluctuate as a result of external market conditions including depreciation of the peso; weakening of the domestic economy; and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East (the Israel-Iran conflict) which can create oil price shocks that can result in higher overall inflation and potential rise in interest rates."

BMI also noted that "consumer confidence in the Philippines remains sluggish, although there has been some upward momentum as the market continues to recover from the pandemic years, when consumer confidence sank to a low of -54.5. In Q1 2024 (latest data available), consumer confidence stood at -10.9 vs Q4 2023 reading of -19.0, which was the lowest reading since Q4 2021."

BMI thinks foodgrain inflation will subside by the end of Q2 2024 as the El Niño weather pattern responsible for deficit supply will end by that time. But that may be unlikely since the Department of Agriculture has yet to implement reforms in the food logistics system now in the hands of traders who take advantage of problematic situations like what we have now.

How will our consumer driven economy react to all these? BMI thinks that "consumers still need to get acclimatized to higher than usual inflation in the short term. Additionally, if nominal income growth doesn't keep pace with inflation, purchasing power of consumers will deteriorate which would be a drag to their spending. Prolonged inflation, particularly in foodgrains, will mean that consumers will have to increasingly allocate more of their disposable income toward meeting basic necessities...Risks to our consumer spending forecasts stem from the possibility that inflation remains elevated for longer than we currently forecast, potentially eroding purchasing power..."

In other words, BMI is optimistic but very cautiously so.

Goodbye Sofitel Philippine Plaza

My wife won a gift certificate for an overnight stay at Sofitel Philippine Plaza during a raffle at their STC high school homecoming. The gift certificate was expiring in a week so we checked-in last Thursday. Little did I know it was the hotel that was expiring. I saw the news as soon as I switched on the hotel WiFi on my iPhone. Apparently, my son who was on a business trip in NYC read that too, especially the part about the hotel's structural damage and told my grandson. When we called my grandson in Singapore, he was worried about the danger to us being there.

My friend Stella Arnaldo of Business Mirror went beyond the press release to tell us the hotel's closure is a business decision after failing to get a lease extension. The hotel owners apparently want to do a major rehab to, among others, fix the structural problem in the over 50-year-old hotel that was constructed in a hurry on freshly reclaimed land by Imelda. But they want a longer period for the lease, beyond the 17 years remaining, to recoup an estimated P8.6-billion rehab cost. They have to close down now for safety reasons as they experienced bursting water pipes, gas leaks and other problems.

So, what will GSIS do with an empty hotel that has lost value after Sofitel leaves? The hotel looked fully booked during our stay. So many people at the pool area and the breakfast buffet. We experienced excellent service from the staff. Other hotels should start hiring them now.

Boo Chanco's email address is [bchanco@gmail.com](mailto:bchanco@gmail.com). Follow him on X [@boochanco](https://twitter.com/boochanco)

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/13/2354569/skidding-peso-again>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# 86 percent of P5.768 trillion national budget released as of April

[Louise Maureen Simeon](#) - The Philippine Star

May 13, 2024 | 12:00am



Latest data from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) showed that it has issued P4.96 trillion of the 2024 budget as of end-April.

Businessworld / File

MANILA, Philippines — The government has released P5 trillion or about 86 percent of the record P5.768 trillion allocation this year as state agencies move to implement their respective projects.

Latest data from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) showed that it has issued P4.96 trillion of the 2024 budget as of end-April.

This represents 86 percent of the national budget allocated for the year, a slight improvement from the 85.8 percent in April 2023.

Based on data, the DBM released P3.65 trillion under the 2024 General Appropriations Act (GAA). This is 91.1 percent of the total P4 trillion financing.

Under the 2024 GAA, the DBM said it has distributed 97.2 percent or P3.4 trillion of the P3.5 trillion for departments.

In terms of special purpose funds, releases increased to 49 percent which means that P248.66 billion has been handed out from the P507.48 billion allocation.

On the other hand, automatic appropriations are already at 71.3 percent or about P1.25 trillion of the P1.76 trillion aggregate funding.



As of the end-April, the DBM has fully released allocation for the national tax allotment (P871.36 billion), block grants (P70.51 billion) and pensions of former presidents or their widows (P480,000).

Apart from these, the government jacked up releases for the tax expenditure fund at P14.06 billion or 97 percent of the P14.5 billion allocation as of end-April.

The government also released more funds for interest payments, which is now at P193 billion or 28.8 percent of the P670.47 billion total funding for 2024.

For the first time this year, the DBM disbursed P7.18 billion for net lending, which is 25 percent of the P28.7 billion earmarked for the year.

The DBM also freed up the entire P65.79 billion in retirement and life insurance premiums (RLIP) of state workers as early as January and added some P231.34 million in extra funds as of end-April.

Last month, the DBM did not issue additional releases to the special account in the general fund which remained at 87.3 percent or P31.85 billion of the P36.48 billion allocation.

Meanwhile, the DBM recorded P51.02 billion in other releases as of April, a little over half of which at P27.46 billion went to unprogrammed appropriations.

Unprogrammed appropriations provide standby authority to incur additional agency obligations for priority programs or projects when revenue collection exceeds targets or when additional grants or foreign funds are generated.

Of the unprogrammed funds, P17.3 billion was earmarked to support the foreign-assisted projects of the departments of Agriculture, Finance, Health, Public Works and Highways and Social Welfare and Development.

The remaining P10.16 billion served as budgetary support to state-run firms particularly the National Food Authority and the Light Rail Transit Authority.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/13/2354578/86-percent-p5768-trillion-national-budget-released-april>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Philippines to remain as world's top rice importer in 2025

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

May 13, 2024 | 12:00am



Tons of imported rice are hauled at a port in Manila.

## For 3rd straight year

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines will remain as the world's largest rice importer in 2025 for the third consecutive year as the country turns to foreign supplies to feed its growing population.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) made this projection in its monthly global grains market report, making its first forecast for calendar year 2025.

The USDA's initial forecast pegs the Philippines' total rice imports next year at 4.2 million metric tons (MT) to meet the "continued" increase in consumption that is driven by both growth in population and tourism.

The projected volume is 100,000 MT higher than the country's estimated 4.1 million MT of rice imports for this year, according to the USDA.

"The Philippines is expected to again be the largest global rice importer," the international agency said recently.

If the projection materializes, then it would be the third consecutive year that the country would import the most rice in the global market, based on USDA data.

The USDA takes into account all forms of rice – from rough, brown to milled and broken – in its projection estimates. The USDA converts everything into a milled-equivalent basis to come up with its projections.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) earlier projected that the country's population next year would hit at least 113.63 million, about 4.2 percent higher than the 109.035 million official population tally in 2020.

Based on its estimates, the PSA said the average annual growth rate of the country's population would be 0.84 percent for the period 2020 to 2025.

The USDA projects that the Philippines would have a total rice consumption and requirement of 17.1 million MT next year, three percent higher than this year's 16.6 million MT estimate. The Philippines would remain as the world's sixth largest rice consumer.

“Global consumption is expected to rise to a new record, primarily from strong growth in India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines,” the USDA said while estimating that total rice consumption next year at 526.401 million MT.

The Philippines, however, may see another record rice harvest next year of about 12.7 million MT, 200,000 MT higher than this year's estimate of 12.5 million MT, according to the USDA. The country is the seventh largest rice producer in the world behind Thailand and Vietnam.

Rice imports account for about a fifth of the country's annual supply, excluding beginning stocks, based on government data, since the country liberalized and deregulated its rice trade regime in 2019.

The USDA raised its rice import forecast for the Philippines this year to 4.1 million MT from 3.9 million MT because of stronger buying from Vietnam.

The Philippines has imported over 1.6 million MT of rice from January to May 2, based on latest Bureau of Plant Industry data.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/13/2354582/philippines-remain-worlds-top-rice-importer-2025>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Agencies work to include eggs in relief packs

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 13, 2024 | 12:00am



Store workers arrange trays of eggs at Blumentritt Market in Manila on September 29, 2023.

Ernie Penaredondo / The Philippine STAR

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture is eyeing a collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to include eggs in its disaster relief packs as a way of helping producers and promoting nutrition, a ranking DA official revealed.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said the Batangas Egg Producers Multipurpose Cooperative or BEPCO has been producing roasted eggs that can last up to six months.

“We want to promote eggs as the number one source of protein. It is very cheap and we have roasted eggs produced by BEPCO... It can be used by the DSWD (because) it can last up to six months. You can distribute it and it is really good for the health, instead of noodles, canned goods. We can distribute pakbet, instant chopsuey, eggs and even chicken and pork,” De Mesa said. He added that the department is currently promoting instant chopsuey and instant pinakbet.

“We will schedule a meeting with (DSWD) Undersecretary (Edu) Punay to promote this and very importantly, the number one protein source is egg as we have good production in the Philippines,” De Mesa said.

He cited a survey of the Philippine Statistics Authority showing that the good production of poultry and eggs helped in the overall growth of the agriculture sector in the first quarter of 2024.

To address malnutrition in the country, De Mesa said Filipino children should be encouraged to eat more eggs. A medium-sized egg, based on the DA monitoring of Metro Manila markets, costs between P5 and P9 a piece.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/13/2354638/agencies-work-include-eggs-relief-packs>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Pinoy farmers' income up by 20 percent – World Bank

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 13, 2024 | 12:00am



Despite scorching heat, farmers are busy putting their harvested rice inside the sacks in Calatagan, Batangas on March 30, 2024.

STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — Filipino farmers' income has increased by 20 percent as a result of World Bank-funded projects under the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP), with the country receiving a satisfactory rating on the implementation of the \$600 million loan project.

In a chance interview with reporters, World Bank task team leader Mio Takada said the Department of Agriculture (DA) has achieved more than its target in PRDP's implementation.

“The overall performance is very good. We have the opportunity to visit Mindanao and the Visayas. We have seen very strong commitment from farmers, enterprises and local government units and we saw that there was a tremendous success really in achieving more than the targets,” Takada said.

The \$600-million World Bank loan entered its 10th year of implementation, starting in 2014 and ending on July 31, 2025.

“They achieved an increase in the farmer income, almost 20 percent already. We have seen cases where their market value has increased more than doubled,” Takada added.

The DA linked agricultural commodities to markets and raised the market value of farm products, she noted.

Increasing private sector participation is among the World Bank’s recommendations, Takada said.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary for operations U-Nichols Manalo welcomed the “satisfactory positive rating for this 17th mission and the second PRDP scale-up mission.”

PRDP projects cover infrastructure subprojects and farm-to-market roads that lead to key agricultural production areas, Manalo noted.

[https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/13/2354643/pinoy-farmers-income-20-percent-world-bank#goog\\_rewarded](https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/13/2354643/pinoy-farmers-income-20-percent-world-bank#goog_rewarded)

# Pagasa: Temperatures dropping amid rains

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 13, 2024 | 12:00am



Motorists and pedestrians are stranded due to a gutter-deep flood along the corner of Taft and UN Avenues in Manila following sudden downpour on May 9, 2024 afternoon.

Edd Gumban / The Philippine STAR

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) yesterday reported a drop in the maximum temperatures in the country amid the thunderstorms experienced in many areas.

In a radio interview, PAGASA weather specialist Daniel James Villamil said that rains are expected in certain parts of Visayas brought by the easterlies or wind from the Pacific Ocean.

“If we compare the maximum temperature today and the past week, we can see that there was a drop (in the temperature) brought by the rains in the afternoon or the thunderstorm activities,” Villamil said.

He added that the maximum actual temperature in Metro Manila could reach 33 degrees Celsius.

“We can still expect a high heat index in Metro Manila between 42 and 43 degrees Celsius. We should still expect humid weather except for sudden downpours of rains brought by localized thunderstorms. Danger level heat index will still be experienced



in certain areas,” Villamil pointed out. PAGASA, he said, expects one or two typhoons to enter the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) this month.

“Historically, there is a chance of one to two typhoons. But in the next three to five days, there is still less chance for typhoons as we have yet to monitor weather systems outside PAR,” Villamil said.

Once a typhoon enters PAR, it will be named Aghon.

Based on the PAGASA forecast, Laoag City in Ilocos Norte could experience a heat index of at least 46 degrees Celsius today. At the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), the heat index could reach 43 degrees.

Last Saturday, the highest heat index was recorded in Aparri, Cagayan at 46 degrees Celsius. The heat index at NAIA in Pasay City was at 42 degrees.

Ana Liza Solis, PAGASA climate monitoring and prediction section chief, has said the worst is over in terms of the record-high temperatures and searing heat, with many areas in the country possibly experiencing thunderstorms in the second half of May.

Solis said the hottest temperature for this year has been recorded after an actual temperature of 40.3 degrees Celsius was observed in Tarlac on April 27.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary U-Nichols Manalo said that the Department of Agriculture is preparing for a “more destructive” La Niña, even as El Niño continues to affect the agriculture sector. Manalo added that the DA has started its La Niña preparations by looking into areas severely affected by La Niña in the past.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/13/2354648/pagasa-temperatures-dropping-amid-rains>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# House starts plenary debates on rice tariff amendment

[Delon Porcalla](#) - The Philippine Star

May 13, 2024 | 12:00am



Workers unload sacks of rice at a warehouse in Tondo, Manila on May 7, 2024

STAR / Ryan Baldemor

**MANILA, Philippines** — The House of Representatives will start plenary deliberations today on the committee approved measure amending certain provisions of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) for purposes of bringing down the price of rice in the retail market.

In a statement, Speaker Martin Romualdez gave assurances that the legislative chamber would double the effort to hasten the plenary debates and secure the bill's approval on second reading by Wednesday.

President Marcos promised to certify the bill as urgent, which he may do so anytime this week.

“We recognize the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by consumers due to high rice prices. Through these plenary debates, we are taking decisive action to bring about meaningful change and ease the financial strain on Filipino households,” Romualdez said.

Plenary debates will commence once the RTL amendment bill is sponsored by the House committee on agriculture and food, chaired by Quezon first district Rep. Mark Enverga, whose panel approved last week the substitute measure for House Bills 212, 405, 1562, 9030 and 9547.

The substitute bill aims to bolster the competitiveness and resilience of the rice industry while ensuring affordable access to the essential staple for all Filipinos. The approval came a day after Marcos expressed his intention to certify the bill amending RTL as urgent.

Romualdez said the intention was to have the RTL amended by July, aiming to lower rice prices to less than P30 and thereby making rice more affordable for every Filipino family. Currently, rice retails between P40-45 and sometimes exceeds P50.

“By amending the RTL, we aim to bring about tangible reductions in rice prices, ensuring that Filipino consumers are not unduly burdened by high food costs,” he said. “Lowering rice prices to less than P30 is a crucial step towards ensuring food security and economic stability for all.”

## Managing inflation

Meanwhile, the main resident-economist in the House underscored the need for the national government to bring down substantially the price of rice so that all other basic commodities in the market will also be affordable to consumers.

“It’s still all about rice. The inflation rates of all major commodities are in the single digits, except rice, and rice alone. The management of this rate – within our inflation targets, but still painful for the poorest households – must be centered primarily on rice,” Rep. Joey Salceda said.

According to the chairman of the House committee on ways and means, efforts spearheaded by Romualdez to amend certain provisions in the five-year-old RTL will also help.

“The Rice Tariffication Law amendments... will improve the way we manage the massive P29 billion tariff revenues from rice imports so that it helps local farmers and consumers in a more direct way,” the second district congressman from Albay said.

## President Marcos, not NFA

For Sen. Cynthia Villar, it is President Marcos who must have the special power to import rice during emergency situations and not the National Food Authority (NFA), which she said has no sincerity in serving Filipino rice farmers.

Villar said she has been the chairperson of the Senate committee on agriculture for 11 years and she does not see the NFA's concern for the rice farmers.

"I don't want to give it (special power to import rice) to the NFA. If they want, just give special power to the President," she said yesterday in an interview over dzBB.

Villar lamented that the NFA has not proven itself to be taking care of the welfare of rice farmers and consumers as she reiterated her call for the passage of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Law to control the middlemen and traders.

Villar recalled that in 2019, the NFA was the only agency allowed to import rice without tariff and the price of rice was also high. — **Cecille Suerte Felipe**

[https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/13/2354635/house-starts-plenary-debates-rice-tariff-amendment#goog\\_rewarded](https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/13/2354635/house-starts-plenary-debates-rice-tariff-amendment#goog_rewarded)

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

## 200,000-MT sugar importation needed to prevent shortage – group

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 13, 2024 | 12:00am



Workers repack different types of sugar at a store in Visayas Avenue Wet and Dry Public Market in Quezon City on February 16, 2023.

STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — A producers' group yesterday underscored the need to import 200,000 metric tons (MT) of sugar to prevent shortage in supply as it confirmed that sugarcane plantations in Negros have been severely damaged by El Niño.

In a radio interview, United Sugar Producers Federation (UNIFED) president Manuel Lamata said that the local sugar production would be affected as many sugarcane farms would not be able to recover.

“This (El Niño) is different). I have been engaged in farming for so long and this is the first time I (have) experienced this. When you go out, you cannot endure the heat. I never experienced this. As early as 7 a.m., I returned inside the house because of the heat,” Lamata added.

Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor has said that the damage caused by the current El Niño episode to the agriculture sector is underreported, adding that former Sugar Regulatory Administration chief Rafael Coscolluela had warned that sugar production in Negros is expected to drop by 30 percent amid the impact of drought on sugarcane plantations.

“(Sugar plantations) did not only dry up, even the cows will not eat the charred (sugarcanes),” Lamata said.

He added that the local milling would be delayed as the farmers need to plant sugarcane again.

“Once the rains start coming in, we will plant again. What will happen vis-à-vis the supply, the (local) supply will be delayed. There will be a gap. That’s where the imported sugar will come in. We need to import,” Lamata said.

He added that the importation of 185,000 MT to 200,000 MT of sugar is necessary to prevent the possible shortage in supply.

“We need to import to bridge the gap. The (volume of) 185,000 metric tons to 200,000 metric tons is just enough. It should not be more than that so that once the milling season starts, we can protect the mill gate prices of the farmers,” Lamata added.

The UNIFED head asked the provincial government to procure its own airplane that can be used for cloud seeding operations.

“I am pushing for the local government units especially the provincial government as sugar producers are here in Negros, it should prepare for clouding seeding plane in the province as the income of the province comes from agriculture,” he said.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/13/2354640/200000-mt-sugar-importation-needed-prevent-shortage-group>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Isabela farmers dump unsold mangoes, cite oversupply

By: [Villamor Visaya Jr.](#) - Correspondent / [@VillVisayaJrINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:30 AM May 13, 2024



SAN MATEO, ISABELA, Philippines — Mango farmers in this town in Isabela province were experiencing a glut in harvest with not enough buyers, forcing some of them to dump more than 3,000 kilos of unsold mangoes on the roadside as prices dropped due to oversupply.

“Almost all mango farmers flock to [public] markets to sell mangoes. There are even more sellers than buyers, literally,” Frederick Cayaban, 44, a resident of Barangay Villa Magat here, told the Inquirer on Sunday.

Cayaban bewailed the P5 to P7 a kilo buying price being offered to farmers by middlemen and wholesalers.

“We spend for labor, food, transport delivery, among others. How can we survive with the very low prices? Hence, we just leave them rotting,” he added. He also gave free mangoes to his neighbors rather than let these rot.

The dumping of the unsold mangoes along the roadside in San Mateo town was caught on video on May 10 and went viral after it was posted on social media.

Cayaban, who operates his 2,500-tree farms in Isabela and in nearby Alfonso Lista town in Ifugao province, said he would usually pay his workers P5 for every kilo of

harvested mango and also spent for their food, on top of the cost of gasoline, transportation and other expenses incurred during harvest season.

“I usually spend more than P14,000 per truck trip aside from food, diesel, among others,” he said.

### Available help

Rosario Paccarangan, the agribusiness and marketing division chief of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Cagayan Valley, said they offered the free use of a truck to Cayaban and other mango farmers in delivering goods to Kadiwa stores in Isabela province and other outlets “to help them lessen expenses.”

“The mango farmers should contact us in advance so that we can make a schedule for them,” Paccarangan told Inquirer in an interview on Sunday.

She said that mango farmers could also receive help from the DA in the processing of mangoes into products like pickled mangoes, dried mango chips, mango jam and others.

However, Paccarangan also noted that some farmers would sometimes use “kalburow” (calcium carbide) to prematurely ripen their produce, leading to an excess in production.

Calcium carbide ( $\text{CaC}_2$ ) is a chemical mainly used to make fertilizers and in welding for the production of acetylene.

Although banned in many countries due to its harmful effects when ingested in large quantities,  $\text{CaC}_2$  is still used in the Philippines to artificially ripen fruits.

“It is also normal that there are some rotten and soft mangoes that the wholesalers will not buy, so it may be part of what the farmers throw away,” she added.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1939852/isabela-farmers-dump-unsold-mangoes-cite-oversupply>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# President orders inventory of idle gov't lands

By: [Russel Loreto](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:20 AM May 13, 2024



DHSUD Sec. Jose Rizalino Acuzar **PHOTO FROM DHSUD FB PAGE**

MANILA, Philippines — The human settlements agency welcomed a new presidential order that aims to consolidate a comprehensive list of government lands, calling it “another huge push for the ongoing nationwide rollout of the flagship Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino (4PH) Program.”

Human Settlements Secretary Jose Rizalino Acuzar on Saturday said that with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s issuance of Administrative Order No. 21 on April 30, “our housing will become more affordable because of the allocation of government lands for the 4PH.”

The order establishes an Inter-Agency Coordinating Council which would be “tasked to create a Master List of all government lands.”

The council is co-chaired by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources

(DENR), with the secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) serving as vice chair.

The member-agencies of the council are the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Agriculture, Department of Justice, Department of Information and Communications Technology, and the Office of the Executive Secretary, Office of the Solicitor General, Land Registration Authority and Commission on Higher Education.

### LGUs also tapped

“Within 60 days from the effectivity of the implementing guidelines, all national government agencies and instrumentalities are directed to prepare and submit to the council through the DENR-LMB (Land Management Bureau) a complete inventory of lands in their possession,” DHSUD said in a statement on Saturday.

The DHSUD and DENR-LMB will also coordinate with the local government units (LGUs) regarding the inventory of lands, in accordance with Republic Act No. 7279, or the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992.

AO 21 is also based on RA 11201 (the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Act of 2019) mandating the DHSUD, DENR and DAR to jointly identify government lands suitable for housing and rural development.

“We are giving our full attention to come up with the master list the soonest so that we can identify the areas suitable for housing and immediately consider it [for the 4PH Program],” Acuzar said.

“This order is a big deal for our poor countrymen who are always on the mind of our beloved President,” he also said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1939899/president-orders-inventory-of-idle-govt-lands>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Villar opposes restoring NFA power to trade rice

By: [Tina G. Santos](#) - Reporter / [@santostinaINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:00 AM May 13, 2024



Sen. Cynthia Villar **SENATE PRIB PHOTOS**

MANILA, Philippines — Sen. Cynthia Villar on Sunday opposed the proposal of the House of Representatives to restore the power of the National Food Authority (NFA) to directly import and sell rice.

“I don’t want to give it to the NFA. If the President wants it, he should just be given a special power. [The mandate] should just be placed under the Office of the President,” said Villar, chair of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, in a radio interview

“I’m worried about giving [the mandate] back to the NFA. I’ve not seen its sincerity. It has not proven itself to be taking care of the welfare of the rice farmers and the consumers,” she added.

Villar also recalled how she and other senators have tried buying rice from the NFA for calamity victims in Mindanao and they were told the NFA has no stocks only to find out the agency sold the rice stocks to traders.

Two panels of the House of Representatives on Tuesday approved a substitute bill amending Republic Act No. 11203, or the rice tariffication law (RTL), particularly on restoring the role of the NFA in stabilizing rice prices, a day after President Marcos certified the measure as urgent.

Key provisions in the bill include the reinstatement of the NFA's price stabilization and supply regulation functions; authorizing the agency to buy locally milled rice and directly import rice, as necessary, to ensure sufficient rice buffer stock and regulate grains warehouses in the country; and extending the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund for another five years.

Instead of amending the RTL, Villar said it would be better if lawmakers would move for the passage of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Law, as provided in Senate Bill No. 2432, which was already approved by th

On March 20, 2024, lawmakers from both chambers of Congress went to a prebicameral conference for the bill.

“[But] they don't want to approve it in the bicam level. They were not saying anything. They were not approving it, when it was actually certified as urgent,” Villar lamented, referring to the House of Representatives.

NFA acting Administrator Larry Lacson earlier bared his plan to install closed-circuit television cameras in their warehouses and to subject NFA personnel holding sensitive positions to regular rotation.

“But he's just alone,” Villar said, referring to Lacson. “[The problem] runs in the whole department.”

“In 2019, there was a plan to abolish the NFA but there were 4,000 employees who would lose their jobs, so I did not agree. The government then offered early retirement packages and half of them availed of it. I hope the government offers another early retirement package for the rest of the employees,” Villar said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1939891/villar-opposes-restoring-nfa-power-to-trade-rice>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# House to begin plenary debates on Rice Tariff Law amendments this week

By: [Faith Argosino](#) - Reporter / [@FArgosinoINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 06:35 PM May 12, 2024



PRICEWATCH Rice prices in this stall at the Marikina City public market on Feb. 15 range from P45 a kilo, the cheapest variety of well-milled rice, to P70 a kilo for the “fancy” red rice. Keeping food, especially rice, affordable to ordinary wage earners is among the major challenges faced by the Marcos administration. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives is scheduled to start its plenary debates on a bill amending the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) — a measure geared at substantially reducing rice prices — this week, according to Speaker Martin Romualdez.

In a statement on Sunday, Romualdez said that the lower chamber aims to secure the bill’s approval on second reading by Wednesday (May 15).

“We recognize the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by consumers due to high rice prices. Through these plenary debates, we are taking decisive action to bring about meaningful change and ease the financial strain on Filipino households,” the lawmaker said.

He added that plenary debates for the RTL amendment bill will begin once sponsored by the agriculture and food committee, headed by Quezon 1st District Rep. Mark Enverga.

Enverga's panel approved the substitute measure for House Bill (HB) Nos. 212, 405, 1562, 9030, 9547, and in consideration of House Resolution (HR) No. 1614 last Tuesday. The committee approval came a day after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. revealed his plan to certify the bill as urgent.

Romualdez disclosed that their goal is to amend RTL by July "to lower rice prices to less than P30" since its rice price ranges from P40 to P45 and sometimes exceeds P50.

"By amending the RTL, we aim to bring about tangible reductions in rice prices, ensuring Filipino consumers are not unduly burdened by high food costs. Lowering rice prices to less than P30 is a crucial step towards ensuring food security and economic stability for all," the lawmaker said.

According to the House leader, the substitute bill seeks to restore the National Food Authority's (NFA) role in managing the country's rice supply chain under the proposed amended RTL.

"Key to the measure is maintaining a rice buffer stock, empowering the NFA to buy local milled rice as needed. In cases of insufficient domestic supply, the NFA can procure rice from accredited importers at a set percentage of CIF (cost, insurance, and freight) landed price," his statement said.

It added that the agency may directly import rice "with explicit authorization from the President solely to stabilize the national rice supply."

Aside from NFA, the bill also strengthens the Bureau of Plant Industry to ensure warehouse compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1939830/house-to-begin-plenary-debates-on-rice-tariffication-law-amendment-bill-this-week>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# PH still top rice importer

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:08 AM May 13, 2024



Imported rice from Vietnam being unloaded in Surigao City port. —FILE PHOTO

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) expects the Philippines to keep its title as the world's leading importer of rice, with shipments this year expected to increase to 4.1 million metric tons, 5.1 percent more than the 3.9 million brought in last year.

The USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service said in a report that the volume of imports would reach this record high on the back of the anticipated "growth in population and increased tourism," with shipments mainly coming from Vietnam.

On the other hand, India is projected to remain the world's leading rice exporter despite trade restrictions, with exports pegged to hit 18 million MT, equivalent to about a third of the total global export volume.

"Exports are expected to increase, driven by a larger crop and ample stocks. Despite trade-restrictive measures for a portion of rice exports, volumes are set to remain robust," the USDA said. Rebounding exports from India will partially offset declines from other major exporters Vietnam, Thailand, Pakistan and Myanmar. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/458440/ph-still-top-rice-importer>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Solon calls on DOF, DTI to assist Marcos with efforts vs tobacco, vape smuggling

By: [Faith Argosino](#) - Reporter / [@FArgosinoINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:20 PM May 12, 2024



INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

MANILA, Philippines — Zambales 1st District Rep. Jay Khonghun expressed his support for President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s order to intensify efforts against the smuggling of tobacco and vape products, as he called on concerned government agencies to help address the matter.

In a statement, Khonghun stressed the importance of protecting public health and upholding the rule of law as he urged the Departments of Finance (DOF) and Trade and Industry (DTI) “point out” the effect of smuggling the government’s economic gains.

“It is crucial that we address and end the rampant smuggling of tobacco and vape products, which not only poses health hazards to our citizens but also undermines the efforts of legitimate businesses and deprives the government of much-needed revenue,” the lawmaker, a member of the so-called House Young Guns, said.



“Smuggling in general is not only economic issues but also forms of subversion that encourage lawlessness, promote syndicated crimes, and erode economic gains,” he added.

Khonghun made the call as he emphasized “the need for a comprehensive approach that involves close cooperation between government agencies, law enforcement, and other stakeholders.”

Last Wednesday, Marcos highlighted the need to boost the enforcement against anti-smuggling, during the 6th Private Sector Advisory Council-Agriculture Sector Group (PSAC-ASG) meeting in Malacañang.

Following his directive, Special Assistant to the President on Economic and Economic Affairs Frederick Go said, “the DTI Consumer Protection Group has assured him that they will assign a significant number of people to monitor the vape industry.”

Under the directive, the advisory body is seeking the release of funds from the Department of Budget and Management pursuant to the Republic Act No. 4155 for the National Tobacco Authority Sustainable Tobacco Enhancement Program (STEP).

The body also sought amendments to the Anti-Agri Smuggling Act of 2016 to include tobacco products and wants provisions on minimum retail price and penalties for distributing and selling smuggled products.

Moreover, it also urged the DTI to impose a deadline for importers and manufacturers to register and the BIR to impose taxes and requirements on the said products.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1939813/solon-calling-on-dof-dti-to-assist-marcos-with-efforts-vs-tobacco-and-vape-product-smuggling>

# BSP expected to keep rates steady

May 13, 2024 | 12:34 am



The

Philippine central bank is widely expected to keep policy rates at a 17-year high of 6.5% at its meeting this week. — PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

By **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**, *Reporter*

THE BANGKO SENTRAL ng Pilipinas (BSP) is widely expected to extend its policy pause for a fifth straight meeting this week as inflation risks remain.

A *BusinessWorld* poll of 19 analysts conducted last week showed 17 analysts expect the Monetary Board to maintain its target reverse repurchase rate at a 17-year high of 6.5% at its policy review on Thursday.

On the other hand, one analyst expects the BSP to cut rates by 25 basis points (bps), while another sees the central bank raising rates amid persistent inflation.

The central bank has raised borrowing costs by a cumulative 450 bps from May 2022 to October 2023 to tame inflation.

“The Philippine central bank’s May 16<sup>th</sup> meeting is likely to see a hold on interest rates. This aligns with their recent cautious approach and the need to balance inflation control with economic growth,” Security Bank Corp. Chief Economist Robert Dan J. Roces said in an e-mail.

Headline inflation quickened for a third straight month to 3.8% in April from 3.7% in March. April marked the fifth straight month that inflation fell within the BSP's 2-4% target range.

Inflation averaged 3.4% in the first four months, still below the central bank's 3.8% full-year forecast.

Bank of the Philippine Islands Lead Economist Emilio S. Neri, Jr. said that the central bank will keep its benchmark rate unchanged as "inflation remains uncertain just as growth indicators generally continue to show resilience."

In a note, Chinabank Research said the BSP would likely maintain its hawkish stance this week, given the risks to inflation and weaker-than-expected gross domestic product (GDP) expansion in the first quarter.

"The country's GDP growth came in weaker than expected at 5.7% in the first quarter but was still a solid print, outperforming some of our regional peers.

This should provide the BSP room to keep monetary settings unchanged (this) week," Chinabank Research added.

The Philippine economy grew by 5.7% in the first quarter, faster than 5.5% in the fourth quarter but slower than 6.4% in the year-ago period.

This fell short of the government's 6-7% full-year target for 2024 and was below the 5.9% median forecast in a *BusinessWorld* poll of 20 economists.

"The BSP will be careful not to cut rates prematurely as it is anticipating a pickup in forthcoming monthly inflation prints just as risk of inflation reacceleration remains somewhat elevated amid trade, climate and geopolitical uncertainties from August 2024 onwards," Mr. Neri said.

The BSP has said that inflation could temporarily accelerate to above the 2-4% target range in the next two quarters due to base effects and the impact of weather conditions on agricultural production.

"Our baseline forecasts still point to a breach of the inflation target from May to August due to the continuation of unfavorable base effects amid a challenged supply environment," Philippine National Bank economist Alvin Joseph A. Arogo said in an e-mail.

Sarah Tan, an economist from Moody's Analytics, said that inflation may "bump around the upper limit" over the coming months due to the El Niño dry spell.

As of April 30, agricultural damage from El Niño had reached P5.9 billion. Rice was the most affected crop, accounting for 53.21% or P3.14 billion of the total damage.

"We still expect inflation to breach the upper bound of the BSP's target range in the short term in May, but this should be temporary and we're hoping that the (Monetary) Board will see past this at next month's meeting," Pantheon Chief Emerging Asia Economist Miguel Chanco said.

Union Bank of the Philippines, Inc. Chief Economist Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion also cited other risks to the inflation outlook, such as a potential adjustment to daily minimum wages.

"President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. has ordered a review of the daily wage rates through the regional tripartite wage boards that will be treated as a looming risk to the inflation outlook," he said.

In June 2023, the wage board in the National Capital Region approved a P40 increase, bringing the minimum wage to P610 from P570 for workers in the non-agricultural sector.

Senators have approved a bill on second reading increasing the daily minimum wage in the private sector by P100.

## **PESO**

## **WEAKNESS**

Analysts said that the BSP is likely to keep rates steady amid the recent peso weakness.

“We expect the BSP to remain on hold at the next meeting given the still elevated inflation rate and high pressures on the peso from the stronger US dollar,” Makoto Tsuchiya, an economist from Oxford Economics, said in an e-mail.

The local unit closed at P57.42 against the dollar on Friday, weaker by four centavos from its P57.38 finish on Thursday. The peso returned to the P57-level in April amid the escalating conflict in the Middle East.

“Moreover, the Fed is unlikely to cut rates soon and a reduction in the Philippine-US interest rate differential will put more pressure on the exchange rate to weaken,” Mr. Arogo said.

The central bank is also unlikely to cut rates ahead of the US Federal Reserve, analysts said.

“With the Fed likely cutting rates in September or possibly even later, BSP’s first rate cut will likely follow the Fed action,” ING Bank N.V. Manila Senior Economist Nicholas Antonio T. Mapa said in an e-mail.

Mr. Asuncion said the BSP will likely wait to cut rates “until El Niño effects have receded, local food supply has normalized, and rice inflation has materially narrowed.”

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. has said that while the central bank monitors the Fed, its decisions are independent of the Fed’s own moves.

The US central bank kept its Fed funds rate steady at 5.25-5.5% at its latest meeting.

“The latest inflation data is still within the BSP’s inflation target of 2-4% for the fifth straight month that could still support possible local policy rate cuts later in 2024, especially if the Fed starts cutting rates,” Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said.

Capital Economics Senior Asia Economist Gareth Leather sees the BSP cutting rates starting as early as August.

Meanwhile, Moody’s Analytics Ms. Tan said that the odds of a rate hike at Thursday’s meeting are low.

“With inflation surprising to the downside, there is no pressure for the BSP to hike its policy rate further in the Monetary Board meeting (this) week. There is also no need to hike to support the peso and prevent any forex-induced inflation with the peso strengthening against the US dollar after the US jobs data came in weaker than expected,” HSBC economist for ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Aris D. Dacanay said.

On the other hand, De La Salle University School of Economics professor Jesus Felipe said that the BSP may possibly raise rates by 25 bps.

“The situation is complicated. On the one hand, inflation uncertainty remains plus the peso depreciation,” he said in an e-mail.

“Our models indicate that the currency will stay at the current level and that inflation will stay in the upper part of BSP’s target, between 3.5% and 4%. This leads us to think that BSP may increase its policy rate,” he added.

Meanwhile, Ser Percival Peña-Reyes, director of the Ateneo de Manila University Center for Economic Research and Development, said that the central bank may consider easing rates as inflation is still within target.

“The BSP might go for a rate cut this time due to weaker-than-expected economic growth. Its decision to do so might be influenced by the fact that inflation came within its target,” he said.

Mr. Remolona earlier said they may consider cutting rates if inflation can settle firmly at around 3% for consecutive months.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/05/13/594397/bsp-expected-to-keep-rates-steady/>

## **BUSINESS WORLD:**

# **Subsidies to GOCCs drop by 36% in March**

May 13, 2024 | 12:31 am



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE HANDOUT  
SUBSIDIES provided to government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs) fell by 36.3% in March, the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) said.

Data from the BTr showed that budgetary support to GOCCs declined to P6.872 billion in March from P10.795 billion a year earlier.

Month on month, subsidies dropped by 46% from P12.715 billion in February.

The government provides subsidies to GOCCs to help cover operational expenses not covered by their revenue.

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) was the top recipient in March, receiving P3.224 billion. This accounted for nearly half or 46.9% of overall subsidies.

This was followed by the National Electrification Administration (NEA) with P2.088 billion in subsidies and the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority with P382 million in subsidies. The two agencies did not receive any subsidies in the previous month.

Other top recipients were the Cultural Center of the Philippines (P156 million), Philippine Heart Center (P152 million), Small Business Corp. (P125 million), Philippine Children's Medical Center (P118 million), and the National Kidney and Transplant Institute (P104 million).

Other GOCCs that received more than P50 million during the month were the Tourism Promotions Board (P83 million), Light Rail Transit Authority (P72 million), Lung Center of the Philippines (P53 million), and the Philippine Coconut Authority (P50 million).

Meanwhile, the Local Water Utilities Administration, National Food Authority (NFA), National Power Corp., Philippine National Railways, Philippine Postal Corp. and Social Housing Finance Corp. did not receive any subsidies in March.

#### **FIRST-QUARTER**

#### **SUBSIDIES**

In the first three months, subsidies to GOCCs stood at P19.587 billion, 8% lower than P21.308 billion in the same period a year ago.

The NIA received the bulk of subsidies in the first quarter, taking in P10.317 billion. This accounted for more than half (52.7%) of the total subsidies released during the period.

This was followed by the NFA with P2.25 billion and the NEA at P2.088 billion.

Last year, subsidies to GOCCs amounted to P163.54 billion. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/05/13/594394/subsidies-to-goccs-drop-by-36-in-march/>

# Extended RCEF needs to be less rigid — analysts

May 13, 2024 | 12:03 am



PHILSTAR

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

ANY EXTENSION of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) should make the farm modernization fund more flexible, analysts said.

“The current design of RCEF is too rigid and may not address the actual or changing needs of farmers in particular localities,” Raul Q. Montemayor, national manager of the Federation of Free Farmers said in a Viber message.

The House of Representatives is seeking to amend the Rice Tariffication Law of 2019 to extend RCEF beyond its original term. The amendments also include and the expansion of the National Food Authority’s regulatory powers. Last week its agriculture and food committee approved an extension for another six years and an increased annual take from rice import tariffs of P15 billion from P10 billion originally.

“We need to track whether RCEF and the whole (Department of Agriculture) rice program is achieving its targets (if there are) in terms of farmer productivity, profitability and competitiveness, and not just how many machines or bags of seed have been doled out,” Mr. Montemayor added.



The Rice Tariffication Law, or (Republic Act No. 11203) funds RCEF from rice import tariffs. It liberalized rice imports but made traders pay a 35% tariff on the grain.

Under the proposed amendments, 53% of RCEF will go to mechanization, 28% to rice seed, and the rest to farm credit, and extension services.

“The increased budgets for crucial public goods necessary to improve the productivity of rice farming and agriculture more generally are welcome and crucial,” Monetary Board member V. Bruce J. Tolentino said in a Viber message.

“However, such increased support will be for naught if trade restrictions are not eased to ensure that Philippine agriculture is made more competitive for the benefit of both farmers as well as consumers,” he added.

The US Department of Agriculture projects Philippine rice imports of 3.9 million metric tons (MT) this year, downgrading its initial 4.1 million MT estimate.

Rice imports have hit 1.6 million MT as of early May, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

Leonardo A. Lanzona, Jr., economics professor at the Ateneo de Manila, said that the RCEF extension was initially implemented to address a “market failure” due to the divergence between farmer and social interests caused by the imports.

“This additional P15 billion seems to have no underlying rationale. Unless the government can identify what exact market failure it is addressing, there is no reason for this added expense, especially as other programs are already correcting these other market failures,” Mr. Lanzona said in a Facebook messenger chat.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/05/13/594341/extended-rcef-needs-to-be-less-rigid-analysts/>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# US to provide nearly \$200 million to contain bird flu spread on dairy farms

May 13, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration said it will provide nearly \$200 million to fight the spread of avian flu among dairy cows, in the government’s latest bid to contain outbreaks that have fueled concerns about human infections with the H5N1 virus.

The virus has been detected among dairy cattle in nine states since late March. Scientists have said they believe the outbreak is more widespread based on US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) findings of H5N1 particles in about 20% of retail milk samples.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) will make \$98 million available to provide up to \$28,000 per dairy farm for efforts to contain the spread of the virus between animals and humans and for testing milk and animals for the virus, the agency.

“USDA is doing the work to track and eliminate H5N1 in the dairy cattle herd,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on a call with reporters.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said it will provide \$101 million through the FDA and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to protect public health and the nation’s food supply.

“The risk to the public from this outbreak remains low,” HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said on the call.

ADVERTISING

The money includes \$34 million through the CDC for testing efforts and supporting public health labs, \$8 million for vaccines, and \$3 million for wastewater surveillance.

While the CDC has said the public health risk is low, scientists are closely watching for changes in the virus that could make it spread more easily among humans.

The FDA also will provide \$8 million to ensure the safety of the commercial milk supply. “At this stage there’s no concern about the safety of the commercial milk supply or beef supply,” Mr. Vilsack said on the call.

Health experts have cautioned against the consumption of raw milk but said pasteurization appears to kill the virus.

One dairy farm worker in Texas tested positive for the virus and reported conjunctivitis, commonly known as pink eye.

To limit transmission in cattle, the USDA on April 29 started requiring lactating dairy cows to test negative before being shipped across state lines.

In the first week of the order, USDA laboratories reported 905 tests, of which 112 were presumptive positives, said an agency spokesperson.

The figure could include samples that were tested more than once or those collected for other purposes like research studies, the spokesperson said. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/05/13/594340/us-to-provide-nearly-200-million-to-contain-bird-flu-spread-on-dairy-farms/>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# Greece to bring in Egyptian farm workers amid labor shortage

May 13, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

ATHENS — Greece will start bringing in workers from Egypt this summer to take on temporary farming jobs under a deal between the countries to tackle a labor shortage, the migration ministry said.

After a decade of pain, the Greek economy is forecast to grow nearly 3% this year, far outpacing the euro zone average of 0.8%. But an exodus of workers during Greece's economic crisis, a shrinking population and strict migration rules have left the country struggling to find tens of thousands of workers to fill vacancies in farming, tourism, construction and other sectors.

Greece will take in around 5,000 seasonal farm workers under the 2022 deal signed with Egypt. The countries have discussed expanding the "mutually beneficial" scheme to the Greek construction and tourism sectors, the Greek Migration Ministry said in a statement.

Migration has long been a divisive issue in Europe, but the plan had won broad support from employers groups keen to find workers.

Greek Migration Minister Dimitris Kairidis met Egyptian Labor Minister Hassan Shehata in Cairo this week and said the countries should also step up cooperation to fend off illegal migration flows in the region.

Egyptian officials have said their country deserves recognition for largely stopping migrants setting off from its northern coast across the Mediterranean to Europe since 2016.

The European Union this year announced a multi-billion euro funding package and an upgraded relationship with Egypt, part of a push to cut down on the number of migrants crossing over from North Africa.

Rights groups have criticized Western support for Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who came to power a decade ago after leading the overthrow of Egypt's first democratically elected leader. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/05/13/594342/greece-to-bring-in-egyptian-farm-workers-amid-labor-shortage/>

# House to begin plenary debates on rice law amendments

By Rio N. Araja

May 13, 2024, 12:35 am

The House of Representatives will begin plenary debates this week on a bill amending the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), a critical measure aimed at substantially reducing rice prices to ease the financial stress of millions of ordinary Filipino consumers.

Speaker Martin Romualdez said the legislative chamber would double its effort to hasten the plenary discussions and secure the bill's approval on second reading by Wednesday, May 15.

“We recognize the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by consumers due to high rice prices. Through these plenary debates, we are taking decisive action to bring about meaningful change and ease the financial strain on Filipino households,” he said.

Plenary debates will commence once the RTL amendment bill is sponsored by the committee on agriculture and food, chaired by Quezon District Rep. Mark Enverga.

Last Tuesday, the panel approved the substitute measure for the consolidated bills filed in the House of Representatives. The proposal aims to bolster the competitiveness and resilience of the rice industry while ensuring affordable access to the essential staple for all Filipinos.

The committee approval came a day after President Marcos expressed his intention to certify the bill amending RTL as urgent.

Romualdez said the intention was to have the RTL amended by July in a bid to lower rice prices to less than P30 to make rice more affordable for every Filipino family. Currently, rice retails between P40-45 and sometimes exceeds P50.

The substitute bill seeks to restore the National Food Authority's (NFA) role in managing the country's rice supply chain under the proposed amended RTL.

Enacted in 2019, the RTL replaced quantitative restrictions on imported rice with tariffs, establishing the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund (RCEF). It removed the NFA's market intervention powers, affecting public access to affordable rice varieties.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is advocating for amendments to the RTL. One of its recommendations is to adjust the RCEF from P10-billion to P15-billion, according to information released by Malacañang.

The DA also seeks to enhance the NFA's role in stabilizing rice prices, regulating supply, and supporting agricultural modernization initiatives through increased funding and strategic interventions.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314446284/house-to-begin-plenary-debates-on-rice-law-amendments.html>

# House tackles bill to lower rice prices

By Ma. Reina Leanne Tolentino

May 13, 2024

THE House of Representatives will begin plenary debates this week on a bill that aims to lower the price of rice to below P30 a kilo.

Speaker Martin Romualdez said on Sunday that they would expedite debates on amendments to the Rice Tarrification Law (RTL) and have it passed on a second reading by May 15.

"We recognize the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by consumers due to high rice prices. Through these plenary debates, we are taking decisive action to bring about meaningful change and ease the financial strain on Filipino households," Romualdez said.

A statement from the House said the plenary debates will start once the measure is sponsored by the House Committee on Agriculture and Food, chaired by Quezon 1st District Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga.

The committee on May 7 approved the bill, a substitute for five others, subject to style and amendments.

"The substitute bill aims to bolster the competitiveness and resilience of the rice industry while ensuring affordable access to the essential staple for all Filipinos," Romualdez said in a statement.

He said the aim was to have the RTL amended by July to lower rice prices to under P30 a kilo, thereby making rice more affordable for every Filipino family.

"By amending the RTL, we aim to bring about tangible reductions in rice prices, ensuring that Filipino consumers are not unduly burdened by high food costs," he said.



"Lowering rice prices to less than P30 is a crucial step towards ensuring food security and economic stability for all," he added.

On May 6, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said he would certify the amendment of the RTL as urgent.

The RTL was signed into law in 2019, replacing quantitative restrictions on imported rice with tariffs and establishing the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund or RCEF.

However, the law also removed the National Food Authority's (NFA) power to intervene in the market.

The substitute bill seeks to restore the NFA's role in managing the country's rice supply chain under the proposed amended RTL.

The bill also grants temporary powers to the NFA in cases of price spikes or acute shortages.

The amended RTL will strengthen the Bureau of Plant Industry to ensure warehouses comply with sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/13/news/house-tackles-bill-to-lower-rice-prices/1945955>

# Resilient coated seeds introduced to farmers

By Frederick Silverio  
May 13, 2024

AN advanced seed coating technology that provides nutrition to help boost growth and protection from harmful fungi and insects was introduced to farmers.



**RESILIENT SEEDS** Gerlie de la Cruz (right), assistant seed tech manager of East-West Seed, explains to vegetable farmers the benefit of using with NutriShield+ coated seeds, which survive the germination period without being attacked by harmful fungi. PHOTO BY FREDERICK SILVERIO

This new technology was developed to continuously improve seed quality and ensure successful seedling establishment in agricultural fields.

"Vegetable farmers across the whole country help ensure food security and nutrition for everyone," says Jay Lopez, general manager of East-West Seed Philippines which introduced the advanced coating called NutriShield+.

The company introduced technology to vegetable farmers in Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Pampanga and Batangas during the product launch at Hacienda Angelita, San Rafael, Bulacan on May 10.

This NutriShield+ ensures an improved seedling vigor and better protection against early-season pests, helping vegetable farmers across the country improve their livelihood.

With NutriShield+, East-West Seed is helping farmers reach more people and provide better seedling nutrition and protection

"Faster emergence, bigger seedlings and more uniformity — this technology not only helps farmers thrive but also consumers live healthier lives with more nutritious vegetables," Lopez said.

During the launch, farmers learned about the technology from the company. One of them, Johnny Gatuz, whose farm is located in Bulacan, emphasized the growth-boosting qualities of the NutriShield+ technology that he experienced with East-West Seed's eggplant varieties fortunier and calixto.

"The seedlings exhibit remarkable qualities. Right from the outset, their uniformity and vibrant color are striking. Even after the transplanting process, discernible vigor improvements including wider leaves, increased branching, and robustness in growth become apparent," Gatuz said.

Edmundo Miranda, a Bulacan corn farmer, is underlining the seedling protection using East-West Seed's sweet pearl variety: "The growing corn plants are not immediately affected by the fall armyworm. We can save on three to four sprays for corn. That's where our savings come from."

Seedling protection against fungi is the main criterion for Jun Susie, a bitter gourd farmer from Pampanga who grows the East-West Seed variety mestisa which, according to him, is resilient to fungi and mold.

"They are not easily affected by fungus. That's the difference. These seeds are of high quality; they're resilient," he said.

There are 18 varieties across eight crops with NutriShield+ including waxy corn, sweet corn, cucumber, bitter gourd, eggplant, pumpkin, tomato, and watermelon. East-West Seed is continuously improving its varieties through innovation to improve the livelihood of vegetable farmers.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/13/regions/resilient-coated-seeds-introduced-to-farmers/1945975>

# ‘Majority of senators not keen on allowing NFA to import rice’

By **Raymond Africa**

May 13, 2024

MAJORITY of senators are not keen on approving the proposal to allow the National Food Authority (NFA) to import rice, Sen. Cynthia Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform, said yesterday.

Villar said the primary mandate of the NFA is to buy rice from local farmers to ensure the availability of rice stocks across the country. She said the agency has a P9 billion budget for this purpose.

“Bakit hindi nila bilingin sa local farmers? P9 billion a year [ang budget nila]. Palagi silang out of stock kapag ang bibili ay yung mga gustong tumulong sa mga nasalanta ng disaster etc (Why don't they buy [rice] from local farmers? They have a yearly budget of P9 billion. They are always out of stock when agencies want to buy from the NFA for distribution to victims of disasters),” Villar said.

Villar said that like her, majority of her colleagues in the Senate are against giving back to the NFA the power to import rice but did not identify them.

“Ako, ayaw ko ibigay sa NFA. Kung gusto ng Presidente, siya [magbigay]. Kung gusto nila, ibigay na lang ang special power ng Presidente (For me, I am against giving it back to the NFA. If the President wants it, they can give his special power to the NFA),” she added.

Giving the NFA to import rice is not the solution to the high prices of rice, Villar said, pointing out that the reason why the price of rice is high is due to scheming activities of rice cartels which remain unpunished.

Villar said this problem can be addressed with the enactment of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, which the Senate passed in December last year but is still pending at the bicameral conference committee level. The bill has been certified as urgent by President Marcos Jr.

She said the members of the House of Representatives to the bicameral panel have been the cause of delay for the measure's passage. She did not elaborate.

The Senate version of the proposed measure seeks to impose severe sanctions against the nefarious acts of smugglers, hoarders, profiteers and cartels of agricultural and fishery products.

It shall serve as a self-preservation measure against the manipulative schemes of economic saboteurs, protect the livelihood of farmers, and plug leakages in tax and duty collection.

The bill also protects the State from tax evaders and those who do not pay duties, ensures the well-being of the country's agricultural producers, and the welfare of consumers, and the economy as a whole.

"Nasa bicam na 'yan nung December pa. Certified as urgent 'yan ng Pangulo pero bakit ayaw nilang ipasa? Ayaw nilang aprubahan. Wala naman silang sinasabi sa akin kung meron silang gustong baguhin basta ayaw lang nilang ipasa (It is already in the bicam since December. It was certified as urgent by the President and I am wondering why they [HOR bicam contingent] are not acting on it. They are also not saying if they want some changes to the measure. They just don't want to approve it)," Villar said.

President Marcos has earlier said that he will certify as urgent the proposed amendments to RA 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law to lower rice prices in the country.

Marcos has said the government can influence or control rice prices if amendments to the RTL are introduced, particularly in buying palay and selling rice to the public.

House Speaker Martin Romualdez has been pushing for amendments to the RTL to allow the NFA to again sell rice in the markets.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_news/majority-of-senators-not-keen-on-allowing-nfa-to-import-rice/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_news/majority-of-senators-not-keen-on-allowing-nfa-to-import-rice/)

# **PhilRice to planters: Test heat-tolerant rice varieties**

May 13, 2024

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) is urging farmers to test the adaptability of rice varieties that can withstand high temperatures in their locality.

Career scientist Norvie L. Manigbas pointed said data spanning 50 years suggests a temperature increase of 1 degree Celsius to 2 degrees Celsius in the future. This, he said, highlights the need to use NSIC Rc 600 and 602 to the fullest as these varieties can endure temperatures up to 38 degrees Celsius.

“The country’s first high-temperature-tolerant rice seeds, NSIC Rc 600 and 602, display exceptional traits crucial for resilience in high-temperature conditions. These can withstand temperatures up to 37 degrees Celsius and even up to 38 degrees Celsius in controlled environments like glasshouses,” he said in a statement.

NSIC Rc 600, under heat stress, yields 6.3 tons per hectare (t/ha) and in normal conditions, it yields between 6.5-7t/ha. It matures in 110 days and exhibits resistance to both deadheart and whitehead.

NSIC Rc 602 yields 6.2t/ha, matures in 109 days, and shows resistance to whitehead. These varieties demonstrate intermediate resistance to blast, bacterial leaf blight, sheath blight, brown planthopper, and green leafhopper.

Farmers interested in testing the varieties can inquire and access them through PhilRice’s Business Development Division.

Manigbas said heat stress during the vegetative phase can cause leaf discoloration and accelerated growth, potentially reducing the yield potential of heat-sensitive rice varieties.

“Temperatures exceeding 35 degrees Celsius during the reproductive stage can lead to yield reductions starting at 14 percent, escalating to 14-20 percent as temperatures rise further.”

To increase adoption of these varieties, Manigbas advocates for intensified promotion and deployment of these varieties.

With the challenges of climate change, Manigbas said PhilRice, with the backing of the Institute for Agro-Environmental Sciences of the National Agriculture and Food Research Organization in Tsukuba, Japan, is continuously developing rice varieties that can tolerate high temperatures.

Currently, the attached agency of the Department of Agriculture is testing more breeding materials for high-temperature tolerance. The flowering stage of these materials is planned between April 15 and May 15, a period typically experiencing the highest temperatures during the dry season based on 15 years of weather data.

“The development of high-temperature-tolerant seed varieties is a meticulous process involving years of breeding and testing. Researchers evaluate various characteristics, including grain filling, fertility, and resistance to pests and diseases, to ensure the viability and effectiveness of the selected varieties,” Manigbas said.

Varieties including NSIC Rc 600, NSIC Rc 480, and IR 64 are being studied in flooded and controlled irrigation using the Micrometeorological Instrument for Near-Canopy Environment of Rice (MINCER), which records temperature and humidity data every two minutes and calculates the heat index once flowering begins.

“We have advanced materials in observational nursery trials, some nominated for national cooperative tests in high-temperature ecosystems. We aim to acquire new varieties within two years, but for now, let’s encourage more farmers to adopt NSIC Rc 600 and 602 in areas with high temperatures.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/13/philrice-to-planters-test-heat-tolerant-rice-varieties/>



# House racing to amend RTL to cut rice prices

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

May 13, 2024

The House of Representatives is set to commence plenary debates this week on the bill that seeks to amend the rice tariffication law (RTL), which lawmakers view as crucial for reducing rice prices.

Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez said the lower chamber is committed to intensify efforts to expedite plenary debates and attain the bill's approval on second reading by Wednesday.

“We recognize the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by consumers due to high rice prices. Through these plenary debates, we are taking decisive action to bring about meaningful change and ease the financial strain on Filipino households,” Romualdez said.

Plenary debates will commence once the RTL amendment bill is sponsored by the Committee on Agriculture and Food, chaired by Quezon 1st District Rep. Mark Enverga.

Last Tuesday, the committee approved the substitute measure for House Bills (HB) 212, 405, 1562, 9030, 9547, and in consideration of House Resolution (HR) 1614.

The substitute bill aims to bolster the competitiveness and resilience of the rice industry while ensuring affordable access to the essential staple for all Filipinos.

The committee's approval followed President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s expression of intent to certify the RTL amendment bill as urgent.

Romualdez said the intention was to have the RTL amended by July, aiming to lower rice prices to less than P30 and make rice more affordable.

Currently, rice retails between P40 and 45 per kilo. Some areas sell the staple for more than P50 a kilo.

“By amending the RTL, we aim to bring about tangible reductions in rice prices, ensuring that Filipino consumers are not unduly burdened by high food costs,” Romualdez said.

“Lowering rice prices to less than P30 is a crucial step towards ensuring food security and economic stability for all.”

The substitute bill proposes restoring the National Food Authority’s (NFA) role in managing the country’s rice supply chain under the amended RTL.

Key to the measure is maintaining a rice buffer stock, empowering the NFA to buy local milled rice as needed.

In cases of insufficient domestic supply, the NFA can procure rice from accredited importers at a set percentage of CIF (cost, insurance and freight) landed price.

As a last resort, the NFA can directly import rice with explicit authorization from the President, solely to stabilize the national rice supply.

The bill also grants temporary powers to the NFA in cases of price spikes or acute shortages.

It likewise strengthens the Bureau of Plant Industry to ensure warehouse compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

The bill suggests adjustments to fund allocations and the establishment of a Rice Industry Development Program Management Office.

Enacted in 2019, the RTL replaced quantitative restrictions on imported rice with tariffs, establishing the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund or RCEF.

However, it removed the NFA’s market intervention powers. Lawmakers said this affected public access to affordable rice varieties.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/13/house-racing-to-amend-rtl-to-cut-rice-prices/>

# **‘PHL must fight pests, diseases to boost cacao output’**

Ada Pelonia

May 13, 2024

Pests and diseases destroy as much as 40 percent of the country’s output of cacao, a high-value crop used for making chocolates, according to an expert.

Dr. Tamie Solpot, associate professor at the University of Southern Mindanao, said during a recent webinar that the government and planters must prioritize pest and diseases management if the country wants to raise cacao output.

Citing data from the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO), Solpot said an estimated 30 percent to 40 percent of cacao crops are destroyed by pests and diseases.

“Ganoon po kataas ‘yung possible na losses kapag napabayaang po natin yung ating cacao plantation at hindi po natin na-manage at nagkaroon ng interventions [That’s the possible losses cacao plantations could incur if proper management and interventions are not rolled out],” he said.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the country produced 10,759.12 metric tons (MT) of cacao last year. This was harvested from 32,945.08 hectares, a level that hardly expanded based on figures from the agency.

While the Philippines has a competitive advantage in cacao production given its location and climatic condition, Solpot said the country’s cocoa production accounts for less than 1 percent of global output.

So far, (the Philippines) contributes only about 0.1 percent to global production, but we have many areas that may be planted with cacao,” he said.

Citing PSA data, an industry roadmap prepared by the Department of Agriculture (DA) indicated that Philippine cacao production is increasing, albeit at a slow pace. However, output continues to fall short of domestic demand.

Among the factors that hinder cacao production in the country are low productivity, unsustainable cacao farms, competing crops, changing weather conditions, and pests and diseases.

“Pests and diseases would determine the quality of our beans and our cacao is being challenged with not only one but many kinds of pests and diseases,” Solpot said.

He said one of the major cacao diseases that strikes plantations is the vascular streak dieback (VSD) which hits young and adult cacao crops.

A study published in Coffee and Cocoa Research Journal revealed that in Indonesia—the world’s third largest producer of cacao—VSD leads to a drop in plant productivity and death of susceptible plants.

“What we can do is practice regular pruning...it can also promote good air circulation which may make the environment less favorable for the development of the disease,” Solpot said.

He added that the cacao pod borer, an insect that attacks cacao, could result in the total damage of plants if it is left uncontrolled.

“Kapag hinayaan natin mas lalo silang nag-multiply kasi wala tayong ginawang employment ng management strategies. Pwedeng hindi tayo makapag-harvest totally [Without employing management strategies, the pest would multiply and totally destroy crops],” he said.

Solpot said pesticides could remedy infestations but warned against its improper usage, saying it should be used “as a last resort.”

“When we constantly use pesticides, the chances of pesticide resistance is high especially kapag same na active ingredient ‘yung ginamit natin.”

According to the DA’s cacao roadmap, the country’s annual cacao production averages only 10,000 MT to 12,000 MT.

Under the roadmap, the government's goal is to produce 50,000 MT of quality fermented beans by 2025.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/13/phl-must-fight-pests-diseases-to-boost-cacao-output/>

**REMATE:**

# Water allocation para sa mga sakahan tinapyasan

May 12, 2024 16:24



MANILA, Philippines- Tiniyak ng pamahalaan sa publiko, partikular sa mga naninirahan sa Metro Manila, na hindi babawasan ang supply sa pagtapyas nito sa alokasyon para sa irigasyon bilang paghahanda sa domestic consumption needs.

Sinabi ni Environment Undersecretary Carlos Primo David na babawasan ng 1 cubic meter per second (cms) ang matatanggap ng National Irrigation Administration (NIA) para sa irigasyon.

“Nevertheless, even if we cut it by 1 cubic meter per second, there will still be no interruptions because we are now working with NIA in terms of how much water it needs on a particular day or week,” pahayag ni David nitong Biyernes.

Ani David, magpupulong sila sa May 15 upang matukoy kung pananatilihin ang 50-cms allocation sa Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) o babawasan ang raw water na kinukuha sa Angat Dam.

Nagdesisyon ang National Water Resources Board (NWRB) na huwag baguhin ang 50-cms allotment para sa MWSS mula May 1 hanggang May 15 upang tugunan ang tumataas na demand para sa tubig sa gitna ng matinding init.

Upang mapanatili ang alokasyon, ipinaliwanag ni David na kinailangang tapyasan ang irrigation allocation, subalit inaasahang mangangailangan ang NIA ng higit na tubig mula sa Angat Dam sa susunod na buwan para sa contract-growing schemes ng mga magsasaka.

“I have to allocate some water also for them even until June when the dry season is expected to end. They will be given water from Angat Dam until June, for some areas that they contracted for the farmers to grow,” anang opisyal. RNT/SA

<https://remate.ph/water-allocation-para-sa-mga-sakahan-tinapyasan/>