

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA building agriculture adaptation training center in Sagay City

BY GLAZYL MASCULINO

May 13, 2024 09:42 PM

BACOLOD CITY – Sagay City in Negros Occidental will soon have a training center for the livelihood projects of farmers association to ensure their economic resilience and mitigation of the effects of climate change to the local agriculture industry.



THE construction by the Department of Agriculture (DA)-Western Visayas of the P2-million Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) Training Center for Menakalaw Farmers Beneficiaries Association (MEFABA) in Barangay Rizal, Sagay City, Negros Occidental is underway. (Photo courtesy of Sagay PIO)

The Department of Agriculture (DA)-Western Visayas recently led the groundbreaking of the P2-million Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) Training Center for Menakalaw Farmers Beneficiaries Association (MEFABA) in Barangay Rizal.

DA-Western Visayas regional technical director for operations and extensions Engr. Jose Albert Barrogo said the construction of the training center aims to increase the production and income of farmers and food security in the community.

Barrogo said that he hopes the stakeholders will help sustain this program as he committed to put in a solar-powered irrigation system to address the lack of water supply in the area.

Aside from the training center, the DA-Western Visayas also turned over P450,000 to the Menakalaw Farmers Beneficiaries Association during the program.

In his speech, Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo D. Marañon III pledged to support the farmer association with water supply to sustain the needs specially with their farming activities.

He thanked DA-Western Visayas for the project.

MEFABA (AMIA Village Sagay) Chairman Jose Constantino thanked DA-Western Visayas and the city government for the continued support and projects received from the DA-AMIA program.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/13/da-building-agriculture-adaptation-training-center-in-sagay-city>

MANILA BULLETIN:

EF renews call for rice tariff reduction

BY BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT

May 13, 2024 05:36 PM

The Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) has cautioned Congress on plans to amend the provisions of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL or RA 11203 of 2019), particularly on the restoration of the National Food Authority's (NFA) power to import rice and engage in rice retail, and instead reiterated its earlier proposal to temporarily reduce the import duty on rice from 35 percent to 10 percent.

“If this measure is adopted, it would lower the landed cost of imported rice and exert downward pressure on its wholesale and retail prices,” said FEF in a press statement Monday, May 13.

FEF enumerated various benefits from the RTL calling as the most significant reform in the rice policy landscape since the 1970s.

According to the group, the law enabled the country to become fully compliant with the international commitment to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and eases the staggering debt that NFA incurred at more than P170 billion as its “buy high and sell low” strategy was a sure formula for bankruptcy. RTL also eliminated rent-seeking activities along the rice value chain from its procurement down to the logistics involved in handling and marketing rice and tamed rice inflation from the period 2019 up to the year 2022 when international rice prices were stable. In addition, FEF said that RTL generated around P80 billion in tariff duties during the years of RTL implementation, which were used to further enhance the productivity of our small rice farmers.

Aside from the temporary tariff reduction on imported rice, FEF said that if there is an urgent justification for importing rice, the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the RTL provided that another government entity, the Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC), which is under the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), can import all the necessary rice requirement of the country.

“This is a better option because the public perception of the Department of Agriculture (DA) is that it should promote the interest of the cultivators rather than the consumers. DTI is legally mandated to perform the latter function,” the FEEF said.

Another FEF recommendation is for NFA to ramp up procurement of palay from local producers to build the “buffer stock” for emergency situations, which RTL stipulates to be its integral function. Unfortunately, FEF said that NFA's previous performance in this role leaves much room for improvement. “No one is telling the public the real reason why, though the agency persistently claims that its price stabilization function should be restored by allowing it to import rice and regulate rice retail trading,” it added.

Finally, FEF appealed to legislators and policymakers to consider the results of evaluation studies on how the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) was implemented and how the National Rice Program (which is a much bigger rice productivity program)

performed vis-à-vis their task of raising overall the efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness of our rice farmers.

“They should be able to distill lessons and insights learned from these evaluation studies, which adopted rigorous methodologies in analyzing empirical data and evidence. Only then can we have a rationale and scientific approach to addressing the challenges hounding our rice sector,” said FEF.

On the perception that RTL has not arrested the rising rice prices, FEF said that the soaring rice prices were brought about by the exogenous factors, such as the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russian conflict which resulted in the upswing of fuel, fertilizer, and grain prices; the export ban of non-basmati (white) rice by the Indian government which supplies around 40 percent of total global rice export; and more recently, the spreading and intensifying conflict in the Middle East which has placed upward pressure on petrol prices. “Undoubtedly, these factors are beyond the control of RTL,” said FEF.

The proposal in Congress, FEF said, will only reverse all the beneficial reforms in the rice policy framework achieved by the RTL and will reinstate, for the wrong reason – the short-term adverse external events not related to the RTL, the previous framework, which was historically prone to governance vulnerabilities and fiscal unsustainability.

FEF further urged for prudence in distinguishing between the short-term impact of adverse external events not intrinsic to the RTL and the short-term weaknesses in implementation and execution versus the long-term beneficial outcomes of the structural reforms represented by the RTL.

The short-term issues due to external events and issues in execution should be addressed by short-term measures and not by amendments to the RTL.

“If the total rice supply deficit can be addressed in the short term by increased local production, we see no reason why restoring the power of NFA to import rice and to engage in rice retail needs to be permanently embedded in the law to tame the soaring rice prices. But if the rice supply shortage is indeed serious this year because of El Nino, other policy instruments can be applied to satisfactorily address, in a temporary manner, such an extremely urgent challenge,” FEF said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/13/fef-renews-call-for-rice-tariff-reduction>

SRA to study options for sugar imports

BY GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG

May 13, 2024 02:52 PM

As sugarcane producers urged the government to import sugar to avoid supply shortages in the country, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said that they agency is currently studying its importation plans.

In a briefing, SRA administrator Pablo Azcona said they must identify the sugar stock's trigger points before seeking imports, stating that they will be based on the study of the actual demand or withdrawals, as per historical data.

"We have a [buffer stock] figure of 185 thousand to 200 thousand that we should maintain... When we need to import at the moment is still undergoing a study, if the demand is maintained, dropping, or increasing" Azcona said.

According to the SRA, the spike in demand for refined sugar was attributed to the early off-milling season that caused consumers to stock up on sugar around January to August.

In case the three-month supply of buffer stock drops, Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr., along with the SRA decided that this would be the right time to begin sugar importation.

"It's our decision to make it three months because it takes about one month to ship [sugar] from Thailand to the Philippines and other countries and get it released from customs and then inspected." Azcona elaborated.

Additionally, the buffer stock being given 3 months would make way for the off-milling season which happens around June to August. In this instance, the sugar admin said that they are initially looking at bringing in refined imports, but there have been suggestions coming from the refiners to seek raw sugar as well.

The SRA admin hopes to evade another sugar crisis similar to the production decline in 2022. Sugar outputs dropped to an unusual low because of the damages caused by Typhoon Odette in Negros Occidental, the Philippines' largest sugar-producing zone.

Earlier, the United Sugar Producers Federation (UNIFED) urged the government to import around 200,000 metric tons (MT) supply because of the severe El Niño damage in Negros' sugarcane plantations.

"As of now, we have stable stock and price as well as retail. We're just maintaining this stability," he emphasized.

"We're preventing the drop in supply to a level that would insecure the retail market. We want to avoid the P120 to P130 retail price since our sugarcane farmers are retail consumers, [and] we buy sugar from the retail market... They all need stability so that farmgate and retail prices don't drop or hike. There is a need for balance."

He further explained that stabilizing the sugar supply is needed since the industrial sector must have a secure sugar stock to run their factories.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/13/sra-to-study-options-for-sugar-imports>

MANILA BULLETIN:

El Niño's damage to agri now at P6.35B; minimal adjustments may be expected—DA

BY JEL SANTOS

May 13, 2024 02:44 PM



The agricultural damage caused by the El Niño phenomenon has now reached P6.35 billion, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

But DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said they are expecting a minimal increase--if there is any-- in agricultural damage figure since the harvest season especially for palay in almost all parts of the country is already almost complete.

“Kung madagdagan man [ang damage to Agriculture due to El Niño] napaka kaunti na lang siguro sa mga lugar na mayroon pa (If there are any additional damages to agriculture due to El Niño, it would probably be very minimal, especially in areas that still have some),” Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, the spokesperson of the DA, said over the weekend.

“Kasi tapos na rin ‘yung harvest ng palay and we’re already preparing doon sa ating taniman pagdating ng wet season na nag-start din ngayong buwan ng Mayo (Because the rice harvest has concluded, and we’re now getting ready for planting as the wet season, which began this May),” he went on.

Based on the latest monitoring of the DA, a total of 121,389 farmers and fisherfolk have been affected by El Niño.

The agency said a total of 111,702 hectares of agricultural areas were affected in 12 affected regions, including Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, MIMAROPA, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Davao Region, and Soccsksargen.

According to the DA, the production losses in the affected agricultural regions amount to 134,828 metric tons (MT) for rice, a total of 105,896 MT for corn, 28,956 MT for high-value crops, and around 140 MT for cassava, totaling 269,416 MT.

“The increase in reported values include additional reports from CAR, Ilocos, Calabarzon, Bicol, and Soccsksargen regions,” the agriculture department stated.

The DA reported that the rice fields impacted, covering 60,772 hectares, represent 2.84 percent of the total target planting area of 2,137,046.77 hectares.

Meanwhile, the agency noted the loss of 134,828 MT in production equates to roughly 1.46 percent of the targeted output of 9,218,358.28 MT.

Assistance

El Niño-affected farmers and fishers have been provided with a total of P2.37 billion worth of interventions, the DA said.

According to the DA, it gave financial assistance totaling P1.26 billion through the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) in Regions II, IV-B and XII.

The DA Regional Field Offices have reportedly provided P658.22 M worth of assistance for production support (agri-inputs, fertilizers, planting materials, pumps and engines, HDPE hose, drugs and biologics).

In Mimaropa, the agriculture department said it has distributed various forms of assistance. Such includes P8 million worth of rice machinery and equipment provided by DA-PHilMech, P77.50 million worth of Survival and Recovery (SURE) Aid Loan facilitated by the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC), and P5.19 million worth of coconut seedlings distributed by the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA). Additionally, the DA Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) allocated P65.35 million for composting facilities, while the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) implemented irrigation projects valued at P294.46 million. Moreover, P8.99 million worth of marine machinery and equipment were also distributed within the same region to bolster agricultural activities.

Also, the DA said they are currently conducting ongoing cloud seeding operations in collaboration with DOST-PAGASA and DND-PAF. These operations are taking place in Southern Cagayan, Northern Isabela, the corn areas of Quirino, and the vicinity of Magat Reservoir in Region II.

In addition, the DA said it has undertaken significant efforts to improve water access and distribution across various regions, including the installation of 616 water pumps in Regions I, II, III, IV-B, VI, VII, and XI to enhance water supply.

The DA has also concreted 847.8 kilometers of irrigation canals nationwide, aimed at improving water distribution in agricultural areas.

Extensive desilting efforts have been conducted, covering a total of 3,167.9 kilometers of irrigation canals, contributing to enhanced water flow throughout the country, it added.

As part of its initiatives, the agency has dispersed 66,039 native animals to 367 groups and 604 individual farmers across the country via the Philippine Native Animal Development (PNAD) Program. Furthermore, to address potential setbacks, the DA has allocated 111 varied alternative livelihoods and technologies to fisherfolk in CAR, Regions V, VII, and IX.

Farmers in CAR, Region I, II, III, IV-A, IV-B, VI, VIII, IX, XI, and XII have received indemnification from the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC), amounting to P67.93 million, the DA stated.

Gearing for La Niña

With the looming arrival of the La Niña phenomenon, the agriculture department has instructed its field offices nationwide to brace for the adverse impacts of La Niña.

On May 9, DA Assistant Secretary for Operations U-Nichols Manalo said La Niña's agricultural damage is expected to be more massive than the damage caused by the dry spell.

“Mas malaki yung damage ng La Niña [kumpara sa damage ng El Niño] (The damage caused by La Niña is bigger compared to the damage caused by El Niño),” he said.

The DA, he said, has been coordinating with farmer groups for drainage water management for farms.

Manalo said the agency is now looking into areas that have been affected by La Niña in its past 16 episodes in the country.

In the Philippines, above-average rainfall is usually brought about by La Niña. This may result in an upsurge in flooding, landslides, and agricultural damage.

La Niña is not all bad as it replenishes water reserves and helps agriculture in areas where crops depend on regular rainfall.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/13/el-nino-s-damage-to-agri-now-at-p6-35-b-minimal-adjustments-may-be-expected-da>

MANILA BULLETIN:

What happens if Senate sits on Rice Tariffication Law amendments bill? Enverga answers

BY ELLSON QUISMORIO

May 13, 2024 05:30 PM

AT A GLANCE

- House Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairman, Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga admits that nothing much can be done if the Senate doesn't reciprocate the House of Representatives' efforts in passing the bill on Rice Tariffication Law amendments.
- The 300-plus strong House is banking on the RTL amendments to pull down the price of rice to P30 per kilo or lower.



Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga (Contributed photo)

The proposed bill amending the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) is moving swiftly in the House of Representatives and is expected to be approved on third and final reading before sine die adjournment on May 22.

But what happens if the other legislative chamber, the Senate, doesn't reciprocate the action of the House? The short answer is, nothing much.

"Well of course that is beyond us, we cannot compel our counterparts and just the same," House Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairman, Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga said in a press conference Monday, May 13.

"Hindi naman nila kami mako-compel duon sa kanilang actions (They cannot compel us with their actions either), but we hope that through dialogue, we could somehow thresh some of the disagreeing provisions," Enverga said.

Under Philippine Congress' bicameral set-up, the filing of a measure must be mirrored by the two chambers and then end in its approval. Otherwise, the measure can't be enacted.

Some members of the 24-member Senate are lukewarm to the House's proposed amendments to Republic Act (RA) No.11203 or the RTL, particularly the provisions to empower or restore old functions of the National Food Authority (NFA). They claimed that the agency is corruption magnet.

The 300-plus strong House is banking on the RTL amendments to pull down the price of rice to P30 per kilo or lower.

This apparent impasse notwithstanding, Enverga is hopeful that the House leadership could still broker a solution with the Senate.

"Of course we believe that through Speaker Martin Romualdez siguro alam namin na kakayanin naman po niya sigurong madaan sa magandang usapan (we know he can work out something through dialogue)," he said.

"We hope also that the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office (PLLO) will also help us out to

somehow get into an agreement. We're hopeful na ganuon po ang mangyayari (that will actually happen)."

The agriculture committee chairman assured the senators that the amendments bill includes sufficient safeguards in restoring the power of the NFA to stabilize rice prices and regulate the supply of the staple food.

The House began plenary debates on the RTL amendments bill on Monday afternoon.

Congress will adjourn the second regular session of the 19th Congress on May 22.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/13/what-happens-if-senate-sits-on-rice-tariffication-law-amendments-bill-enverga-answers>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Iloilo allocates P12.7 M for alternative livelihood of El Niño-affected farmers

BY TARA YAP

May 13, 2024 12:07 PM

ILOILO CITY – The Iloilo provincial government has allocated P12.7 million for the alternative livelihood of farmers affected by the El Niño climate phenomenon.



A FARM land in Tubungan town, Iloilo province is bone dry due to the El Niño phenomenon. (Tara Yap)

Gov. Arthur “Toto” Defensor Jr. announced that the alternative livelihood program in swine production enabled farmers to receive two piglets to raise.

Implemented under the Swine Dispersal Program of the Iloilo Provincial Agriculture Office, the alternative livelihood program is designed to ease the impact of the extreme dry season as farmers still cannot plant for the next cycle.

Eight-hundred fifty-two farmers in the towns of Cabatuan, Igaras, Leon, Miag-ao, Tigbauan, and Tubungan have received piglets.

Defensor said that the alternative livelihood program seeks to replenish local stock of pork, which was negatively impacted by the outbreak of African Swine Fever that started in 2022.

Swine population across the 42 towns and the component city of Passi is only approximately 83,000 as of April compared to September 2022 when the first ASF case was recorded with more than 277,000.

Meanwhile, the recommendation for a state of calamity by the Iloilo Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (Iloilo PDRRMC) awaits approval.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/13/iloilo-allocates-p12-7-m-for-alternative-livelihood-of-el-nino-affected-farmers>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

FEF bucks proposal to restore NFA power

[Louella Desiderio](#) - The Philippine Star

May 14, 2024 | 12:00am



Workers unload sacks of rice from a delivery truck along Dagupan Street in Tondo, Manila on January 22, 2024.

STAR / Ernie Penaredondo

MANILA, Philippines — The Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) is opposing the proposal to bring back the power of the National Food Authority (NFA) to import and sell rice to consumers, saying this would reverse the gains from the reforms in the country’s rice policy.

The group expressed concern over the pace at which Congress wants to amend the provisions of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), particularly the proposal to restore the power of the NFA to import rice and engage in rice retail to “buy high” from the palay farmers and “sell low” to the consumers.

“This proposal will reverse all the beneficial reforms in the rice policy framework achieved by the RTL and will reinstate, for the wrong reason – the short-term adverse external events not related to the RTL, the previous framework, which was historically prone to governance vulnerabilities and fiscal unsustainability,” FEF said in a statement.

The group consists of top economists, former and present Cabinet secretaries and undersecretaries, leading figures in the academe, opinion-makers and prominent members in the business and finance community seeking to advance economic and political liberty, good governance, secure and well-defined property rights, market-oriented reforms and consumer protection. It believes that the RTL is the most significant reform in the country’s rice policy landscape since the 1970s.

This, as the RTL has enabled the country to become fully compliant with its international commitment to the World Trade Organization, while easing the over P170 billion debt NFA incurred due to its “buy high and sell low” strategy.

In addition, the FEF said the law has eliminated rent-seeking activities along the rice value chain from its procurement down to the logistics involved in handling and marketing rice and helped tame rice inflation for the period of 2019 until 2022 when international rice prices were stable.

Through the RTL’s implementation, the country was also able to generate around P80 billion in tariff duties to support improved productivity of small rice farmers.

Earlier this month, the House of Representatives committee on agriculture and food approved a substitute bill that would restore the power of the NFA to buy and sell rice to consumers.

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

According to the FEF, the government’s move to amend the RTL is due to the perception the law has not arrested the increasing rice prices.

The group, however, said the soaring rice prices are due to factors beyond the control of the RTL such as the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the export ban of non-basmati rice by India, which supplies around 40 percent of total global rice export and the intensifying conflict in the Middle East.

“If the total rice supply deficit can be addressed in the short term by increased local production, we see no reason why restoring the power of NFA to import rice and to engage in rice retail needs to be permanently embedded in the law to tame the soaring rice prices,” FEF said.

Should the El Niño lead to a serious supply shortage, the group said other policy instruments could be used.

It cited a proposal it made earlier to temporarily reduce the import duty on rice to 10 percent from 35 to lower the landed cost of imported rice and exert downward pressure to wholesale and retail prices.

Should there be an urgent justification for importing rice, the FEF said the implementing rules and regulations of the RTL provides that the Philippine International Trading Corp., an attached agency of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), can import the country's rice requirements.

“This is a better option because the public perception of the Department of Agriculture is that it should promote the interest of the cultivators rather than the consumers. DTI is legally mandated to perform the latter function,” FEF said.

It also said NFA should ramp up procurement of palay from our local producers to build the “buffer stock” for emergency situations, which RTL stipulates to be its integral function.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/14/2354833/fef-bucks-proposal-restore-nfa-power>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘Safeguards in place in rice tariff amendments’

[Delon Porcalla](#) - The Philippine Star

May 14, 2024 | 12:00am



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

STAR / Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — An administration lawmaker said the proposed amendments on the Rice Tariffication Law would have “safeguards” in restoring the power of the National Food Authority to help stabilize the price of rice in the market.

“Before, the NFA had monopoly in terms of rice imports, they had monopoly in terms of regulation. I would like to assure our counterparts in the Senate that this is a different scenario,” Rep. Mark Enverga, chairman of the House committee on agriculture and food security, said.

“In fact, NFA will have a very limited presence here – only in case of emergency situations and importation is merely a last resort,” the Quezon congressman explained, assuaging fears raised by Sen. Cynthia Villar about the risks of giving back the power to NFA, which may be abused.

Villar, chair of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, had expressed opposition on moves reinstating the NFA’s authority to import and sell rice, citing concerns about corruption and questioning the agency’s commitment to safeguarding the welfare of rice farmers and consumers.

“I understand where Sen. Villar is coming from, but the NFA has the technical know-how and expertise on these that we tend to overlook. We are instilling their mandate in monitoring, registration of all rice warehouses as the rightful agency in price stabilization of rice prices.”

Enverga delivered his sponsorship speech in plenary yesterday, and released his Committee Report 1068 on House Bill 10381 that seeks to amend the five-year-old Rice Tariffication Law, by restoring the power of NFA to import and sell rice, for the purpose of bringing down the price of rice.

“I think the worry of our good senators is mostly on importations. As I’ve mentioned, importation would be the last resort. We put in stringent safeguard measures here and we know for a fact that the NFA Council is very powerful wherein they could stipulate also their own safeguard measures.”

In any case, Enverga stated his intention to brief the senators on the contents and objectives of the substitute bill amending RTL, which his committee approved last week.

House Bill 10381 not only restores the NFA’s price stabilization and supply regulation functions but also authorizes it to require registration of all grain warehouses, conduct inspections to ensure compliance with rice quality and supply standards, and mandates the maintenance of sufficient buffer stock requirements sourced from local farmers’ organizations and cooperatives.

Additionally, the measure will bolster the regulatory authority of the Bureau of Plant and Industry, ensuring warehouse compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

The core focus of the bill lies in the continuation of the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund (RCEF), aimed at providing a long-term solution to challenges within the rice industry.

The House plenary is expected to commence deliberations on the RTL amendment bill today, with approval on second reading expected tomorrow when President Marcos has certified the bill as urgent.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/14/2354845/safeguards-place-rice-tariff-amendments>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Sugar imports under study

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

May 14, 2024 | 12:00am



SRA administrator and CEO Pablo Luis Azcona made this disclosure after President Marcos endorsed the recommendation of the Private Sector Advisory Council-Agriculture Sector Group last week to allow the importation of sugar during the off-harvest and post-milling seasons.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is now studying the possibility of allowing sugar imports during the post-milling season to ensure that the country will have sufficient stocks and prevent skyrocketing prices like what happened two years ago.

SRA administrator and CEO Pablo Luis Azcona made this disclosure after President Marcos endorsed the recommendation of the Private Sector Advisory Council-Agriculture Sector Group (PSAC-ASG) last week to allow the importation of sugar during the off-harvest and post-milling seasons.

Marcos backed the sugar importation proposal between 185,000 metric tons and 200,000 MT. The PSAC-ASG argued that the proposed import volume is necessary to build up the country's sugar buffer stock.

The sugar industry is set to enter its post-milling season, with one last remaining mill winding up its operations this month.

Azcona said the import proposal being endorsed by the President is aimed at ensuring that the country would not have a shortfall in supply, particularly for refined sugar, once all sugar mills stop operating. Sugar refineries depend on the country's raw sugar supply to produce refined sugar.

Azcona said the country has produced 1.92 million MT of raw sugar so far in the current crop year, which is higher than the 1.8 million MT production level in the previous crop year.

However, Azcona noted that the production volume remains insufficient to meet the country's estimated demand of 2.2 million to 2.4 million MT on top of the need to maintain a healthy buffer stock level.

Azcona said there has been growing demand for sugar from industrial users who are already building up their buffer stocks as the current milling season is set to end a month earlier than usual.

The SRA has devised a mechanism that will allow it to determine if there is already a need to allow sugar imports in the country, Azcona said.

Under the mechanism, Azcona added, once sugar stocks hit a certain "trigger point" or fall below three months' worth of supply, the SRA may consider opening up a sugar import program.

The SRA estimates that monthly sugar demand is between 180,000 MT and 240,000 MT.

Under existing laws and regulations, the SRA regulates the importation of sugar as part of its mandate to secure the welfare of both sugarcane farmers and consumers.

"If we have three months (of sugar supply), we will not have a shortfall and we will prevent August 2022 from happening again," Azcona told reporters in a press briefing.

"We are preventing a drop in sugar supply to the level that the retail market would be insecure and cause a spike in prices like what happened in 2022 wherein retail prices reached as much as P130 per kilogram," he added.

Azcona was referring to the sugar crisis two years ago wherein retail sugar prices, both for raw and refined, skyrocketed to historic highs as the country suffered a shortage in supply caused by delayed import programs and anemic domestic production.

If approved, the sugar imports might arrive between July and early September, just before the milling season begins between Sept. 15 and Oct. 1, Azcona said.

Azcona noted that sugar refining in the next crop year would begin only around October.

He said the proposed sugar import program would still undergo stakeholders' consultation.

Azcona pointed out that sugarcane farmers stand to benefit as well from prospective sugar imports that could help in stabilizing market prices since farmers are also consumers who buy sugar at a retail level.

A stable sugar supply, Azcona said, would ensure that farmgate prices of sugarcane remain at a profitable level for farmers while guaranteeing that industrial users and manufacturers would have enough supply to run their factories.

The country's combined raw and refined sugar supply as of May 5 stood at 1.15 million MT, about 35 percent higher than the 851,370 MT recorded in the same period last year, based on latest SRA data.

Broken down, the country has 568,734 MT of raw sugar supply, about 26.5 percent higher than the 449,541 MT recorded stocks last year. Meanwhile, the country's refined sugar stocks stood at 583,694.1 MT versus the 401,829.25 MT recorded supply a year ago.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/14/2354859/sugar-imports-under-study>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Rep. Enverga assures public of NFA's limited role on importation

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)
INQUIRER.net / 02:53 PM May 13, 2024



IMPORTED RICE Workers unload sacks of rice from the Vietnam cargo ship at the port of Tabaco, Albay. The National Food Authority (NFA) imports 10,800 metric tons of rice from Vietnam due to shortage of supply from previous years. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO / EDWIN BACASMAS

MANILA, Philippines — Quezon 1st District Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga has assured the public, and their colleagues in the Senate, that while they seek to reinstate certain powers of the National Food Authority, the agency will have a limited role in terms of importation.

Enverga on Monday said that the substitute bill seeking amendments to Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) makes rice importation by the NFA a last resort — or in case of emergencies and when local rice supply is unavailable.

“The NFA, as it was before, before they had the full monopoly in terms of rice imports, they had monopoly in terms of regulation that’s why I would like to ensure our counterparts in the Senate that this is a different scenario,” Enverga, who chairs the House of Representatives’ committee on agriculture and food, said.

“In fact, they would have a very limited presence here in case of emergency situations and importation is merely a last resort here,” he added.

Enverga said that they also want to brief the Senators about their proposed amendments to the RTL, saying that he understands where Senator Cynthia Villar is coming from.

Villar, principal author of the RTL, is one of the several senators who have warned against amending R.A. No. 11203 as the law specifically barred NFA from importing and selling rice due to rampant corruption in the agency.

But Enverga said there are safeguards placed in the bill, noting that NFA’s role with their proposed amendments would now be more on monitoring the rice industry to ensure cheaper rice prices.

“We want to brief the Senators as to where we’re coming from with this matter. Me, I understand where Senator Cynthia Villar is coming from, it’s true that there are many issues. But again, we know that NFA has the technical know-how, the expertise, and maybe we have overlooked this, but it’s also important to instill monitoring, registration of all rice warehouses,” Enverga said.

“I think NFA is the rightful agency or administration that could handle this matter especially with the price stabilization function. So, importation is the worry they have mentioned, and as I’ve mentioned, importation would be the last resort so we put in stringent safeguard measures here,” he added.

Copies of Committee Report No. 1068 sent by sources showed that House Bill (HB) No. 10381 seeks to task NFA with the “authority to oversee and ensure compliance with all pertinent standards and regulations, leveraging its established expertise and

nationwide network to uphold the national interest, in rice buffer stocking and food security” by placing a new Section 5 in R.A. No. 8178.

R.A. 8178 is the Agricultural Tariffication Act, which was amended by the RTL.

If HB No. 10381 is enacted, the Agriculture Secretary, upon the recommendation of the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) or Local Price Coordinating Council (LPCC), may declare a food security emergency due to the following reasons:

- shortage in the supply of rice
- sustained increase in the price of rice
- extraordinary increase in the price of rice

If a food security emergency is declared, the NFA will only be allowed to import when there is “no available local stocks”.

The House leadership, including no less than Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, believes that the following amendments can bring down rice prices by P10 to P15 per kilogram.

“Highlights of the bill are authorizing NFA to require registration of all grain’s warehouses, allow NFA to inspect warehouses, to ensure compliance with standards of rice quality and supply,” Enverga said.

“It restores price stabilization and supply regulation functions of NFA, mandates NFA to maintain sufficient buffer stock requirements to be sourced from local and or farmer’s organizations and cooperatives,” he added.

Villar in previous statements countered proposals to allow the NFA to directly import and sell rice again, saying that the RTL was created for the purpose of ridding the agency of corruption.

“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.

Aside from Villar, several Senate members like Senator Sonny Angara urged the government to tread carefully, and study plans to reinstate NFA’s mandate.

According to Senator Sonny Angara, the NFA was hounded by corruption when it still had the power to sell rice supposedly at a cheaper price.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1940062/rep-enverga-assures-public-of-nfas-limited-role-on-importation>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

House members hope Senate will approve bill meant to cut rice price

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lulu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLuluINQ](#)

INQUIRER.net / 02:09 PM May 13, 2024



STILL THE SAME / FEBRUARY 15, 2024 Rice prices are displayed at a rice retail store in Marikina Public Market in Marikina City on Thursday, February 15, 2024. (INQUIRER file photo / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE)

MANILA, Philippines — Lawmakers from the House of Representatives have urged the Senate to consider their bill seeking to amend the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) as a way to decrease rice prices.

During a press briefing on Monday, Quezon 1st District Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga was asked about what the House would do if the Senate does not act on the proposed amendments — considering that there is an opposition to the bill.

Enverga, chairperson of the House committee on agriculture and food, admitted that they cannot compel senators to act on the measure, but he hopes it would be considered as it would address concerns about high rice prices.

“Well, of course, that is beyond us. We cannot compel our counterparts, and just the same, they cannot compel us to do what they want,” Enverga told reporters at the Batasang Pambansa.

“But we hope that through dialogue, we could somehow thresh some of the disagreeing provisions,” he added.

Enverga said a committee report on the proposed RTL amendments has been released, with the consolidated measure now being labeled as House Bill (HB) No. 10381.

The lawmaker said discussions at the plenary may start on Monday or Tuesday.

Under the proposal, the RTL’s Section 5 would be amended to allow the National Food Authority (NFA) to “exercise its authority to oversee and ensure compliance with all pertinent standards and regulations, leveraging its established expertise and nationwide network to uphold the national interest, in rice buffer stocking and food security”.

The House leadership believes the amendments can bring down rice prices by P10 to P15 per kilogram because the NFA can provide cheaper rice and increase competition.

Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Raul Angelo Bongalon and La Union 1st District Rep. Francisco Paolo Ortega, who were both present during the hearing, supported Enverga’s stand — hoping the Senate considers the measure.

Ortega said if senators want to make rice more affordable, this is a way to achieve that because NFA would again be allowed to monitor and stabilize rice prices, especially in emergencies.

“You guys are pretty much familiar po sa mga interviews then of the different senators. They ask why rice prices are high, what we can do to decrease prices [...] but we are already coming up with the solutions from the House,” Ortega said.

“If these are their sentiments, I think they would understand our proposed amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law,” he noted.

Bongalon, meanwhile, said it might be frustrating if the Senate does not act on the measure.

“Of course, for me, I guess (with) the effort of the administration and, of course, the efforts of the House, if there would be no amendment to the RTL — and (if) it will be enacted — of course, we’d be frustrated (if the Senate does not act) because our President himself said we need to lower the rice prices,” Bongalon said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1940051/house-members-hope-senate-will-approve-bill-meant-to-cut-rice-price>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Brosas bill removed from merged rice tariff proposals in House

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)
INQUIRER.net / 06:11 PM May 13, 2024



House of Representatives. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

MANILA, Philippines — Gabriela Party-list Rep. Arlene Brosas requested, and was granted, the exclusion of her bill — the proposed Rice Industry Development Act — from the merged list of proposals to amend the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

She explained that no provisions in her bill were used in the other bill on RTL.

She made the request as the House of Representatives started on Monday the plenary debates on rice tariffication amendment — the substitute version of the bills that seek to amend Republic Act No. 11203 or the RTL.

Brosas asked why her proposed measure was included in the consolidated bills.

Brosas and fellow members of the Makabayan bloc filed the measure on rice industry development last June 2022.

“I have an inquiry, Mr. Speaker, because they retained in the committee report our House Bill No. 405, Mr. Speaker, so I would like to manifest (na) before I interpellate, to remove the authorship because we have questions on this particular measure,” Brosas asked.

“Our (proposed) Rice Industry Development Act or HB No. 405 was included in the bills that were consolidated for this proposed measure,” the lawmaker said.

“Now, however, our bill was not thoroughly discussed by the committee, and none of the provisions were included in the committee report,” she pointed out.

According to Brosas, HB No. 405 intends to strengthen the local production of palay, and strengthen the National Food Authority (NFA) by increasing the volume of palay bought from farmers.

“The Rice Industry Development Act will strengthen local production and the provision of productions subsidy, so that we can achieve the sufficiency level, and it also seeks to strengthen the NFA by way of increasing the volume of palay that would be bought, not only for buffer stocking, but also for sale in markets,” Brosas explained.

“Mr. Speaker, we think there is a need for a more comprehensive discussion on this proposed measure, and it might be good to separate the Rice Industry Development Act from this bill,” she said.

Quezon 1st District Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga, chair of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food who is sponsoring HB No. 10381 on the floor, said that he was amenable to Brosas’ manifestation.

“Of course, with much respect to the wishes of the principal authors, we would accede to the request of the Honorable Arlene Brosas that House Bill No. 405 be tackled separately,” he responded.

HB No. 10381 seeks to amend the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) by restoring some of the functions of NFA, as a means of stabilizing rice prices.

Brosas and the Makabayan bloc have maintained that what they seek is a total repeal of the RTL.

They say the law has harmed the livelihood of farmers — as cheaper imports have flooded the market, with traders preferring imported grains over local varieties.

“Another concern, Mr. Speaker, is that House Bill No. 404, which is basically calling for the repeal. But that bill was not included here,” she said.

“We have another measure which is to repeal the Rice Tariffication Law, so it is really very different from the bill tackled. Anyway, I’ve seen that it was not included,” she noted.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1940128/house-excludes-measure-from-merged-bills-on-rice-tariffication-amendments>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Philippines, UAE set next round of free trade deal discussions for July

By: [Alden M. Monzon](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 08:22 AM May 13, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — Government negotiators from the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have set the next round of negotiations for the planned free trade agreement between the two countries for July.

Trade undersecretary Allan B. Gepty, who is leading the Philippine side in the negotiations for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE, on Saturday gave this timeline following the conclusion of the initial round of talks in Dubai last week.

“I can say we have (made) positive progress, and we are determined to conclude the negotiations this year,” Gepty said in a message sent to the Inquirer.

The Philippine official said the next round would be held in Manila in the first week of July.

Back in December, Gepty said the Philippines was targeting to enhance its market access for export halal-related products under the CEPA.

Other goods that the Philippines is hoping for better market access include its exports of tropical fruits, and garments, as well as high-end, finished consumer goods such as luxury watches, belts, and other leather products.

Opening trade opportunities

Gepty had also told the Inquirer earlier this month that an FTA with the UAE will open up trade opportunities to an estimated market of 10.06 million people, as well as to the second-largest Filipino population in the Middle East.

Two-way trade between the two countries totaled \$1.85 billion in 2022, with Philippine exports reaching \$315.21 million while imports amounted to \$1.53 billion, according to records from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The Philippines is also hoping for better access for its service exports, with Gepty noting the prospects in the fields of engineering, and healthcare, as well as legal and tax-related services.

“Professional services (are) a key interest of the Philippines. We want to create more opportunities for our people,” Gepty told the Inquirer earlier this month.

On the investment side of the planned FTA, the trade official said the Philippines wants to entice more investments from the UAE in transportation, logistics, innovation, and smart agriculture.

<https://business.inquirer.net/458487/philippines-uae-set-next-round-of-free-trade-deal-discussions-for-july>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Regulator mulls over sugar importation

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:09 AM May 14, 2024



INQUIRER PHOTO / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

MANILA, Philippines — The government is mulling over allowing the importation of sugar in case of a supply shortfall to ensure stable prices before the next milling season begins, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said on Monday.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said in a remote interview they are studying proposals to bring in imported sugar, however, initiating any importation plans at the moment is “not that urgent yet.”

“When we need to import is still undergoing a study to determine if the demand is maintained, decreasing or increasing,” he said in an interview with reporters via Zoom.

Azcona said an importation plan will be activated if the “trigger point” is hit, meaning if the country’s buffer stock is less than three months’ worth of supply.

Should the importation round push through, the SRA chief said the plan is to source 185,000 to 200,000 metric tons (MT) of sugar from abroad sometime between July and September or before the planting season begins so that the livelihood of sugar farmers will not be affected.

‘Trigger point’

When asked about the rationale behind setting this “trigger point,” Azcona said it would be based on the historical and actual demand figures and withdrawals—referring to the volume of sugar released from warehouses.

He said it takes about one month to bring in sugar from some countries such as Thailand and have the commodity released by the Bureau of Customs upon inspection.

Azcona said the proposal to procure imported sugar was meant to avoid a decline in local supply to a level that the retail market will be unstable. He recalled a spike in retail prices when sugar was sold for up to P130 per kilogram in 2022.

Azcona said as of now, the domestic sugar supply is stable and farmers are enjoying better mill site prices. At the same time, he said the sweetener’s selling price at the retail level decreased.

Citing data from the SRA, he said the country has 1.1 million MT in stock.

<https://business.inquirer.net/458598/regulator-mulls-over-sugar-importation>

BUSINESS WORLD:

DTI trading company backed to oversee rice imports

May 13, 2024 | 9:13 pm



AN AGENCY of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) should oversee rice imports to comply with the implementing rules and regulations of the Rice Tariffication Law of 2019, the Foundation for Economic Freedom, Inc. (FEF) said.

In a statement on Monday, FEF said the Philippine International Trading Corp. (PITC) has a mandate to import rice “if there is an urgent justification for importing rice.”

“This is a better option because the public perception of the Department of Agriculture is that it should promote the interests of the cultivators rather than the consumers, and DTI is legally mandated to perform the latter,” the organization said.

Congress is currently amending the law to restore the power of the National Food Authority (NFA) to import rice and engage in rice retailing.

The law, or Republic Act No. 11203, privatized the function of importing rice formerly carried out by the NFA. It allowed private traders to bring in their own shipments provided they pay a tariff of 35% on Southeast Asian grain. The rules have since been tweaked to allow such tariffs for rice from any source.

The NFA had been reduced to maintaining an emergency inventory from domestically grown rice.

“The law is being amended because of the perception among our selected policymakers and officials that it has not arrested rising prices,” said the FEF.

“What is not being said is that the soaring rice prices were brought about by exogenous factors that are ... beyond the control of the law,” it added.

The factors include the Ukraine-Russian conflict, which resulted in higher fuel, fertilizer, and grain prices; the export ban on non-basmati rice by the Indian government; and the conflict in the Middle East, which put pressure on fuel prices.

“Ironically, the law is being blamed as the culprit behind the rising rice prices. Some legislators and senior officials are offering the solution to bring (the NFA) back to its previous role by granting it again the power to import rice and regulate rice retail trading,” the FEF said.

“This proposal will reverse all the beneficial reforms in the rice policy framework and will reinstate, for the wrong reasons, the previous framework, which was historically prone to governance vulnerabilities and fiscal unsustainability,” it added.

Aside from giving importing duties to the PITC, the FEF said that the government should consider its proposal last year of temporarily reducing the rice import duty to 10% to lower the landed cost of imported rice, which may result in lower wholesale and retail prices.

It added that instead of giving back NFA’s other functions, the agency should instead ramp up its “integral function,” which is to procure palay and build a “buffer stock” for emergency situations.

“Unfortunately, NFA’s previous performance in this role leaves much room for improvement. No one is telling the reason why, though the agency persistently claims that its price stabilization function should be restored,” the FEF said.

The FEF also asked the Congress to look into the results of studies on how the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund was implemented and how the National Rice Program performed before proposing amendments to the law.

“They should be able to distill lessons and insights learned from these evaluation studies, adopting rigorous methodologies in analyzing empirical data and evidence,” the FEF said.

“Only then can we have a rational and scientific approach to addressing the challenges hounding our rice sector,” it added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/13/594781/dti-trading-company-backed-to-oversee-rice-imports/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Three months' supply set as sugar import trigger

May 13, 2024 | 9:16 pm



BOC -

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE DIVISION (BOC-PIAD)

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said on Monday that it has set the decline of sugar inventories to the equivalent of three months' demand as the trigger event for allowing sugar imports.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona told reporters: "When we need to import is actually at the moment still undergoing study. We are looking at it," he said.

"What the SRA and the Department of Agriculture (DA) did was identify a trigger point in stock levels, that if we hit that point that's when we will activate our importation plan," Mr. Azcona added.

He said that the three-month trigger point accounts for the shipping time of raw sugar imports and the time they take to clear from the Bureau of Customs.

"If we need to import it will need to arrive in the country in July, August up to the beginning of September before milling season (if the demand continues as is)," he added.

The increase in demand was due to the early end of the milling season, which caused large industrial consumers to stock up.

“If the current demand continues, we will need the sugar by sometimes September to October, which is the start of the milling season,” he said.

He added that President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. had recommended maintain stocks at 185 thousand metric tons (MT) to 200 thousand MT, equivalent to a two-month buffer.

Mr. Azcona said that despite an increase in production during the crop year, demand remained the same.

“We have a lot of stock on hand. So, that’s why regarding imports, we’re just waiting for trigger points. We’re studying it, but it’s not that urgent yet. If demand continues, we might need to import our buffer stock,” he added.

Raw sugar production hit 1.92 million MT as of May 5, 9% higher from a year earlier.

According to the SRA, the national raw sugar inventory was 568,734 MT, while demand was estimated at 1.3 million MT.

“As of now, there are a few mills still producing or harvesting,” he said.

Mr. Azcona said that the imports will help prevent a surge in prices and allow industrial users to build up ample stock.

“What we are preventing is a drop in supply to a level that the market will become insecure... Number two, our industrial or manufacturing market... needs to be secure knowing that their factories will always have a supply of sugar,” he added. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/13/594783/three-months-supply-set-as-sugar-import-trigger/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Rice imports seen undershooting US Agri dep't estimate for 2025

May 13, 2024 | 9:11 pm



REUTERS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said that it is expecting rice imports in 2025 to come in under the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) estimates of 4.2 million metric tons (MT).

"It's possible that the projections of the USDA would change... we are expecting them to change," Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa told reporters.

The USDA forecast Philippine rice imports for 2025 to exceed its revised estimate of 3.9 million MT for this year.

"Last year they projected 3.9 million MT, while we only imported 3.6 million MT. Early this year they projected 4.1 million MT, then they lowered it again to 3.9 million MT," he added.

As of May 2, the Philippines had imported 1.6 million MT of rice, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

The USDA said that the import forecast for 2025 was based on an assumption of continued growth in consumption.

“The Philippines is expected to again be the largest global rice importer,” it said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. has described the USDA estimate as a “worst case scenario,” as the DA expects domestic production to increase.

The DA is projecting that palay or unmilled rice production to exceed 0 million MT.

The DA is also expecting a “more destructive” La Niña, which will follow an El Niño, which is thought to be weakening.

PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), the government weather service, said that there is a 62% chance of La Niña occurring during June to August.

“It is possible that (La Niña) would occur towards the end of the year, where there will be stronger storms. By that time, we will have harvested for the wet season,” Mr. De Mesa said.

He added that once La Niña sets in later this year, the dry season planting for rice will be affected.

“It starts in October-November... So, it might have an impact later,” he said.

The La Niña phenomenon typically brings cooler average sea temperatures and above-normal rainfall.

He added that the average loss to agriculture during typhoons is about 500 to 600 thousand MT.

“Palay is typically affected by flooding, because losses are greater if flooding and typhoons are severe,” he said

The DA said it’s for La Niña focus on areas historically affected by the weather phenomenon. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/13/594779/rice-imports-seen-undershooting-us-agri-dept-estimate-for-2025/>

MANILA STANDARD

Task Force prepares for La Niña; House eyes flood control measures

By Vince Lopez & Maricel Cruz

May 14, 2024, 12:40 am

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, Jr. said on Monday that all government agencies involved in Task Force El Niño (TFEN) have begun preparations for the upcoming La Niña season on the instructions of President Marcos.

Teodoro said this development comes after the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) released its forecast that La Niña, or the cooling of surface-ocean waters, will develop during the months of June, July, and August.

Speaker Martin Romualdez, for his part, will convene a high-level meeting on Tuesday afternoon to discuss flood preparation and mitigation in Metro Manila and other flood-prone areas in the country.

The head of the 308-strong House of Representatives has asked the secretaries of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), as well as the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chairman to attend the conference.

“We are seriously preparing for the arrival of La Niña even before it affects our country. PAGASA has raised the alarm so our unity and immediate action is important to protect our communities from possible flooding,” he said.

“Through the cooperation of the DPWH, DENR, DILG, and MMDA, and of course our local government officials, we are strengthening our disaster preparedness and prevention measures to ensure the safety of every Filipino,” he added.

Romualdez said food security, sufficient water supply, energy availability, public health, public safety, mobility, and interconnectivity would be given priority in the preparations.

He said, “The relationship between the national government and local government units needs to be tight in order to implement the actions in the massive preparation that we will do.”

“The order given to us by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. will do everything necessary to ensure that the communities and every Filipino family are safe from harm,” he added.

The Defense chief, who chairs the presidential task force, also noted PAGASA’s report that the El Niño weather phenomenon was weakening, but hotter and drier conditions will persist.

“As El Niño diminishes in its intensity, we must now start preparing for the arrival of La Niña, which is expected to bring above normal rainfall in the country,” Teodoro said. “Let’s work to mitigate and minimize the damage it can cause to lives and properties,” he added.

PAGASA also announced that the transition to southwest monsoon may happen during May. Southwest monsoon, popularly known as Habagat, causes rains over the western portion of the Philippines from May to September.

The state weather bureau will continue to closely monitor the waning El Niño and the developing La Niña and its effect on the local climate.

On this note, Task Force El Niño spokesman Communications Assistant Secretary Joey Villarama said that despite the weakening of El Niño, the last few weeks of May are still very critical in terms of water, energy and food conservation.

“Even if we are at the tail end of El Niño, before the climate pattern shifts to neutral conditions and eventually La Niña, the lingering effects of El Niño in the remaining days of this month will still have an impact on our limited resources,” he said.

“We continue to enjoin everyone to be wise in using water, electricity and even food until El Niño has been officially terminated, and in preparation for La Niña,” Villarama advised.

President Marcos created the TFEN via an executive order in January to develop a comprehensive disaster preparedness and rehabilitation plan for El Niño and La Niña, as well as provide “systematic, holistic, and results-driven interventions” to help the public cope with their impact.

Science and Technology Secretary Renato Solidum co-chairs the task force with Secretaries Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga (Environment and Natural Resources),

Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. (Agriculture), Teodoro Herbosa (Health), and Arsenio Balisacan (National Economic and Development Authority) as members.

Romualdez also urged communities to join the national government and local government units in preparing for possible flooding.

The House leader said Tuesday's meeting aims to foster a unified strategy that not only addresses the immediate impacts of potential flooding but also fortifies long-term resilience in communities at risk.

“The dialogue will focus on integrating infrastructure development, environmental management, and community-based approaches to form a comprehensive flood mitigation framework. The insights and agreements from this meeting will be pivotal in shaping the national response to flood risks,” he added.

He assured the public that they would be informed of the results of the conference to better prepare them for the adverse effects of La Niña.

Editor's Note: This is an updated article. Originally posted with the headline Government preparations underway for La Niña season, says Teodoro

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314446396/government-preparations-underway-for-la-nina-season-says-teodoro.html>

PH rice imports to soar to 4.2-m MT in 2025

By Othel V. Campos

May 14, 2024, 12:25 am

Philippines rice imports are forecast to hit a record level of 4.2 million metric tons (MT) in 2025 on continued growth in consumption.

The Philippines is expected to again be the largest global rice importer, according to a recent grains report released by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) on May 10, 2024.

Rice importation forecast for 2025 is estimated to be 2.4 higher than 2024's estimated importation of 4.1 million MT.

Based on recent grains statistics released by the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) on May 8, 2024, the January to March 2024 seasonally adjusted palay production was recorded at 5.23 million metric tons (MT).

This is an indication of 5 percent increase from the previous quarter's seasonally adjusted estimate of production at 4.98 million MT.

Year-on-year, raw data from PSA showed a 2 percent decline in output to 4.69 million MT in the first quarter of 2024 from 4.78 million MT in the same quarter in 2023.

On the other hand, the seasonally adjusted farmgate price of palay in the first quarter of 2024 has been observed at P24.06 per kilogram (kg), representing an increase of 6.7 percent from P22.56 per kilogram recorded in the previous quarter.

Additionally, the country's total rice stocks inventory was estimated at 1.64 million MT as of April 1, 2024, down by 10.9 percent from 1.84 million MT inventory in the same period of the previous year.

Month-on-month, the volume of rice stocks inventory recorded an increment of 20.2 percent from the previous month's inventory of 1.37 million metric tons.

The April data showed rice stocks inventories registered annual decreases from the NFA depositories by 58 percent, from the commercial sector by 9.1 percent, and from the households by 7.6 percent.

In comparison to the March 2024 rice stocks levels, month-on-month increments were noted from the households by 35 percent, from the commercial sector by 5.1 percent, and from the NFA depositories by 0.7 percent.

Of this month's total rice stocks, 57.1 percent were from the households, 40.3 percent were from the commercial sector, and 2.5 percent were from the NFA depositories.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314446584/ph-rice-imports-to-soar-to-4-2-m-mt-in-2025.html>

Teodoro prepares for La Niña

By Francisco Tuyay

May 14, 2024

DEFENSE Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. on Monday mobilized all departments and agencies under Task Force El Niño to begin preparations for the La Niña phenomenon.

In a statement, Defense Information Officer Arsenio Andolong said Teodoro, chairman of the presidential task force on El Niño response, noted the bulletin from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration that La Niña will develop between June and August.

Teodoro also noted Pagasa's report that the El Niño was weakening, but hotter and drier conditions will persist.

"As El Niño diminishes in its intensity, we must now start preparing for the arrival of La Niña, which is expected to bring above normal rainfall in the country," he said. "Let's work to mitigate and minimize the damage it can cause to lives and properties. Let us do our best, as the task force has always been doing."

Meanwhile, Task Force El Niño (TFEN) spokesman Joey Villarama said that despite the weakening of El Niño, the last few weeks of May are still very critical in terms of water, energy and food conservation.

"Even if we are at the tail end of El Niño, before the climate pattern shifts to neutral conditions and eventually La Niña, the lingering effects of El Niño in the remaining days of this month will still have an impact on our limited resources," Villarama said.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Jan. 19, 2024 signed Executive Order (EO) 53 to streamline, reactivate, and reconstitute the old El

Niño task forces under EO 16 (s. 2001) and Memorandum Order 38 (s. 2019).

The President instructed the new task force to develop a comprehensive disaster preparedness and rehabilitation plan for El Niño and La Niña to provide "systematic, holistic, and results-driven interventions" to help the public cope and minimize their devastating effects.

Teodoro is the chairman of the presidential task force, with Secretary of Science and Technology Renato Solidum as co-chairman.

TFEN members are Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa, and National Economic and Development Authority chief Arsenio Balisacan.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/14/news/national/teodoro-prepares-for-la-nia/1946152>

SRA eyes sugar imports to avert supply shortage

By Janine Alexis Miguel

May 14, 2024

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said on Monday that it was planning to import raw sugar for buffer stocking and to prevent shortages and price spikes.

"We identified a trigger point on stock levels and when we hit that trigger point, that's when we will activate our importation plan," SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona told reporters.

The volume of sugar to be imported could range from 185,000 metric tons to 200,000 MT as endorsed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

"The importation is currently undergoing study," Azcona said. "We are assessing whether our demand is staying the same, decreasing, or increasing."

The arrival of the sugar imports could occur between August and September or before the start of the milling season.

As of May 5, sugar production for the current crop year stood at 1.918 million MT, up from 1.799 million MT a year earlier. Stocks, meanwhile, are about 1.1 million MT.

Azcona said the figures could improve further as there are still a few mills that are still producing.

The imports aim to prevent a repeat of the situation back in August 2022 when refined sugar stocks dropped to 27,000 metric tons and were only resolved through a significant amount of imports, he said.

"Because of that retail prices soared and our manufacturers became insecure," he noted. "The sugar situation was chaotic at the time."

"Currently, we have ample stock, stable prices ... so, we just need to maintain that," Azcona said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/14/business/top-business/sra-eyes-sugar-imports-to-avert-supply-shortage/1946127>

200K MT of sugar imports eyed

By **Jed Macapagal**

May 14, 2024

The government is considering the importation of sugar between July and August when buffer stock is predicted to fall below the ideal level of three months worth of supply.

Pablo Azcona, SRA administrator, told reporters in a virtual press conference yesterday the plan was raised by the Private Sector Advisory Council and agri sector leaders during a meeting last week.

If needed, the government is eyeing to bring in 185,000 to 200,000 metric tons (MT) of refined sugar.

Azcona said importation will prevent a drop in supply level that will cause price spikes. This will avoid a repeat of what happened in 2022 when refined sugar prices reached as high as P130 per kg.

Being off-milling season, July until early September is the most ideal period to allow imports.

Azcona said the three month- buffer stock takes into account the fact that it takes about a month to ship sugar from Thailand and other suppliers. This timeframe includes processes and inspections from the Bureau of Customs.

Azcona said as of May 5, sugar production has reached 1.918 million MT for the current crop year, an increase of 6.6 percent from the previous crop year's 1.799 million MT.

SRA added the country has a current available stock of 568,734 MT worth of sugar. Monthly demand is at around 200,000 MT.

Manuel Lamata, United Federation of Sugar Producers president, said imports should only serve the needs of the country during the off-milling season but agreed discussions on the plan as early as now would "clear out importation procedures to avoid issues. "

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/200k-mt-of-sugar-imports-eyed/

Indonesia considers extending rice handout program to year-end

By Reuters

May 14, 2024

JAKARTA- Indonesia may further extend its rice handout program by six months until December despite easing prices, outgoing President Joko Widodo said on Monday.

Southeast Asia's biggest economy, Indonesia has been giving 10 kilograms of rice monthly to more than 20 million low-income families since March 2023 to help them cope with high prices of the staple as the El Nino weather pattern-fueled drought hit output.

The program, which started in March-June last year, was due to end in June after multiple extensions.

The outgoing president, popularly known as Jokowi, said the program has been successful at curbing local prices of rice, a staple for most of Indonesia's 270 million population.

"All global food prices are rising. Some are rising very high, and ours are still low. We should be grateful that our increases are not drastic," he said in a statement.

The extension is subject to budget availability, he said without explaining the source of rice for the additional program.

Bulog, Indonesia's food procurement firm, had bought 472,279 metric tons of rice from domestic harvests as of May 8, while stocks stood at 1.8 million tons, a company official told a weekly inflation meeting that was live streamed.

Indonesia has imported 1.2 million tons of rice so far this year of the allotted 3.6 million tons, the company said late last month.

Bulog has issued another international tender to buy about 300,000 metric tons of rice, European traders said on Monday.

Rice prices have eased as stocks improve in the harvest season, a statistics bureau official told the inflation meeting.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/indonesia-considers-extending-rice-handout-program-to-year-end/

‘RTL amendment spells bigger debt, deficit’

Cai U. Ordinario

May 14, 2024

AMENDING the Rice Trade Liberalization (RTL) law could cause the government to incur more debts and prevent it from reducing the budget deficit, according to local economists.

They aired their views as Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez said the House of Representatives is committed to intensify efforts to expedite plenary debates and attain the approval of the bill to amend the RTL on second reading by Wednesday. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/13/house-racing-to-amend-rtl-to-cut-rice-prices/>).

However, some economists believe that geopolitics which encouraged trade protectionism through the imposition of embargoes necessitated a shift in the country’s rice policy.

“The risk [of amending the RTL] is to create enormous liability for the government, or enlarge the government budget deficit, when NFA [National Food Authority] tries to control the market price. This is based on pre-RTL historical precedent,” Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) Senior Research Fellow Rhoelano Briones told BusinessMirror.

Urgent need: Shield vs high prices

However, University of the Philippines Professor Emeritus Epictetus Patalinghug noted that what the country needs right now is a shield against high rice prices in the international market, which NFA could provide.

Currently, Patalinghug said the RTL is no longer effective in bringing down rice prices. He said the law “kills the domestic producers” and does not “restrain profit-driven firms from raising prices.”

The NFA's absence from the local rice market, he said, stymied the government's ability to address nutritional deficiencies such as hunger, malnutrition and starvation.

"Different times call for different solutions. NFA has become useful today as a last-resort rice supplier to the poor, weak, vulnerable, hungry, and malnourished," Patalinghug told this newspaper.

Briones said options open for the NFA to finance its rice purchases should it be allowed to intervene in the local rice market could come from supplemental budgets.

If this budget is not enough, the government or even NFA, which is a state-run corporation attached to the Department of Agriculture, could itself borrow from various sources.

Monetary Board Member V. Bruce J. Tolentino, who was a former Agriculture Undersecretary, recommended that the House carefully study first the debates at the Philippine Senate when the RTL was being deliberated.

The Senate, Tolentino said, was thorough and this led to an "extended analysis" of the RTL and, as such, could provide sufficient basis for decisions made on possible amendments of the law.

As to the impact, he said, there was no telling how soon or how much the amendment could impact the economy or the government coffers.

"It depends on the extent of intervention. NFA has a current budget that can only procure so much either from local farmers or via imports. In order to procure more, NFA has to be provided more budget or borrow from banks. Ask the bankers if they will lend to NFA and on what terms," Tolentino told BusinessMirror.

One thing that is certain, De La Salle University economist Maria Ella Oplas said, is that the RTL review would burden further farmers and even consumers.

Oplas said the aim of reducing rice prices to P30 per kilo would entail either lower payments to farmers or a higher buying price at the expense of the public.

Unfortunately, Oplas said the only “winners” in this arrangement would be rice intermediaries who can buy cheap from farmers and then sell high to the NFA.

“So in that case, small farmers will not benefit and taxpayers will now [shoulder] the difference. I would rather that the government increase our value of money, our purchasing power instead of artificially lowering the price,” Oplas told this newspaper.

Lack of understanding

Ateneo de Manila University economist Leonardo Lanzona said the whole issue of amending the RTL reflected the lack of understanding of competition in the law.

Lanzona said while the RTL was silent on provisions for a buffer stock system, it provided support such as through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), which provides financial support to farmers to increase productivity and competitiveness.

He said the RTL also provided for a Rice Farmers Financial Assistance Program for cash assistance to farmers during times of crises.

The law, Lanzona said, also created the Rice Crop Manager, an information and communications technology-based system to monitor rice production, supply and demand to detect shortages.

“But it is inconceivable for the traders to manipulate and raise prices because this will mean losing their consumers. Collusion in the form of cartels and monopolies is the only way that the traders can unilaterally increase prices,” Lanzona told BusinessMirror.

Given this, Lanzona said the problem is institutional in nature and thus would not be addressed by the creation of a state buffer stock system to regulate prices.

Lanzona cited a need to empower local traders to compete with presumed members of cartels in order to solve the problem.

This means it is not the law that should change but the implementation of the law such that “whatever the government can do will fail in comparison to what the markets can do.”

Cutting tariffs

In a statement on Monday, the Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) said there is no reason for restoring the NFA authority to import rice and go into retail sales of rice.

It would be better, in FEF’s view, to temporarily reduce rice tariffs to 10 percent from 35 percent in order to address the high rice prices.

In April 2024, rice price inflation slowed to 23.9 percent from the 24.4 percent posted in March 2024. However, it marked the fourth consecutive month that rice prices grew over 20 percent.

“FEF would like to reiterate its proposal last year to temporarily reduce the import duty on rice from 35 percent to 10 percent. If this measure is adopted, it would lower the landed cost of imported rice and exert downward pressure on its wholesale and retail prices,” FEF said in a statement.

Apart from this, FEF supported the RTL’s Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) which named the Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC)—under the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)—as the institution to import all the country’s rice requirements.

The group of economists also said the NFA should ramp up its palay procurement from local producers to create the country’s buffer stock. This is of greater importance than its previous role of stabilizing retail prices.

Any amendments to the RTL should focus on recommendations to improve the RCEF and the National Rice Program which have already undergone evaluation studies, said FEF.

“They [studies] should be able to distill lessons and insights learned from these evaluation studies, which adopted rigorous methodologies in analyzing empirical data and evidence. Only then can we have a rationale and scientific approach to addressing the challenges hounding our rice sector,” FEF said.

In 2019, lawyer Jose Manuel “Chel” Diokno noted an inordinate focus and priority to restructure the NFA through the RTL.

This, Diokno said, should have been the subject of a separate law. He then warned that the NFA provision in the RTL could jeopardize not only the livelihood of some 6,000 workers but also the country’s food security goals.

He said a law usually accompanies the government’s policy decision to restructure or abolish a certain department. This is especially crucial for workers who depend on these agencies for livelihood.

Diokno noted that the new law does not have provisions on what will be done to affected NFA workers and whether they will receive separation pay. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2019/02/21/focus-on-rice-import-rules-not-nfa-overhaul/>).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/14/rtl-amendment-spells-bigger-debt-deficit/>

House agri panel chief defends RTL changes

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

May 13, 2024

THE chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food assured the public on Monday that the bill amending the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) bears enough safeguards to restore the authority of the National Food Authority (NFA) in stabilizing rice prices and regulating the staple food's supply.

In a press conference, House Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairman Mark Enverga addressed Senator Cynthia Villar's apprehensions on granting the NFA the power to directly import and sell rice, clarifying that such actions would only be taken in emergency situations.

"Before the NFA had a monopoly in terms of rice imports, they had a monopoly in terms of regulation. I would like to assure our counterparts in the Senate that this is a different scenario. In fact, their presence would be very limited—only in emergency situations, and importation is merely a last resort," he said.

Villar, chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, had opposed reinstating the NFA's authority to import and sell rice, citing concerns about corruption and questioning the agency's commitment to safeguarding the welfare of rice farmers and consumers.

While acknowledging Villar's concerns about corruption and the NFA's commitment to safeguarding farmers and consumers, Enverga stressed the need to trust the NFA with its technical expertise and the critical function of price stabilization.

"I think NFA is the rightful agency or administration that could handle this matter, especially the price stabilization function," Enverga explained. "In terms of importation, their worry is usually about that. And as I've mentioned, importation would be the last resort, so we put in stringent safeguard measures here, and we know for a fact that the NFA Council is very powerful," Enverga explained.

Enverga said he will brief the senators on the contents and objectives of the substitute bill amending RTL.

The substitute measure—House Bill (HB) No. 10381—not only restores the NFA’s price stabilization and supply regulation functions but also authorizes it to require registration of all grain warehouses, conduct inspections to ensure compliance with rice quality and supply standards, and mandate the maintenance of sufficient buffer stock requirements sourced from local farmers’ organizations and cooperatives.

The bill will bolster the regulatory authority of the Bureau of Plant and Industry, ensuring warehouse compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

The bill’s core focus is the continuation of the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund (RCEF), aimed at providing a long-term solution to challenges within the rice industry.

The House plenary started deliberations on the RTL amendment bill on Monday, with approval on second reading expected by Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the amendments proposed in House Bill 10381 also aim to enhance the effectiveness of the RCEF, established under the RTL, by increasing its annual appropriation from P10 billion to P15 billion and extending its period for another six years.

The proposed fund allocation will now designate 53.5 percent for farm mechanization components, 29.7 percent for seed components, 3.3 percent for training, 6 percent for rice credit assistance, 4 percent for soil, 2 percent for pest management, and 1.5 percent for the Rice Industry Development Project Management Office (PMO).

According to Committee on Agriculture and Food Vice Chairperson Mikaela Angela Suansing, one of the bill’s authors, an average of P29 billion annually from tariff revenues is expected.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/13/house-agri-panel-chief-defends-rtl-changes/>

Rice millers group: Cost of palay production must be cut to P8/kilo

Ada Pelonia

May 13, 2024

LOCAL rice millers belonging to the Philippine Confederation of Grains Association (Philcongrains) said the cost of producing rice must decline by more than a third to make the staple more affordable.

“If the production cost of palay falls to P8 per kilogram, then the retail price of P30 per kg is possible. It could even go down to below P30 per kilo if production cost reaches P8 per kg,” Philcongrains President Herculano Co Jr. told the BusinessMirror in a phone interview.

“Reducing production cost is possible if fertilizer costs will go down and farmers will use high-yielding or hybrid seeds,” he added.

Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez said the House of Representatives is keen on amending the rice tariffication law (RTL) as this could cut rice prices to as low as P30 per kg.

“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,” he added.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), a government corporate entity attached to the Department of Agriculture (DA), said production cost dropped to P13.64 per kilo in 2023 from P15.24 per kilo in 2019.

Meanwhile, Co lauded the government’s focus on local rice production.

“Focusing on domestic rice production is essential, especially if the government wants to reduce the retail prices of the staple,” he said in a mix of English and Filipino.

Co added that the distribution of postharvest facilities such as dryers and enhancement of rice mills via the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) will further boost output.

“PhilMech’s initiative to improve rice mills would help increase the milling recovery rate,” he said.

According to the DA’s latest price watch report, the average weekly price of local commercial rice in the capital region is P49.81 per kilo for regular and P51.63 per kilo for well-milled. The imported commercial variant sells for P49.85 per kg (regular milled) and P52.66 per kg (well-milled).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/13/rice-millers-group-cost-of-palay-production-must-be-cut-to-p8-kilo/>

SRA kinakasa import pa more ng asukal

Pinag-aaralan ng Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) ang posibleng pag-angat ng asukal upang pigilan ang taas-presyo nito sa mga palengke.

Inihayag ito ni SRA Administrator Pablo Azcona sa isang Zoom interview nitong Lunes, Mayo 13, dahil ayaw na umano nila mangyari ang kahalintulad na sitwasyon sa mga produktong asukal noong nakaraang taon.

“Iyong pini-prevent po namin is iyong August 2022 situations where iyong stocks ng refined sugar natin is bumagsak to 27,000 MT. Because of that, lumipad iyong retail, naging insecure,” ani Azcona.

Matatandaang sumipa ang presyo ng asukal noong 2022 na pumalo hanggang P130 per kilo.

Inihayag pa ni Azcona na ang puntirya nilang import volume ay nasa 185,000 hanggang 200,000 metriko tonelada batay sa ipinag-utos ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.

“Iyon po iyong always niyang sinasabi na we should maintain a two-month buffer stock. When we need to import is actually, at the moment, still undergoing study,” ani Azcona.

Sa kabila nito, tiniyak ng SRA na sapat ang imbak na asukal ng bansa at panatag ang suplay at presyo nito sa mga palengke.

Nabatid nitong Biyernes na ang presyo ng refined sugar sa Metro Manila ay nasa P73 hanggang P100 per kilo. (PNA)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/05/13/sra-kinakasa-import-pa-more-ng-asukal/>

ABANTE TONITE

Task Force El Niño inalerto sa buhos ng La Niña

May 13, 2024

Ipinahayag kahapon ni Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. na pinaghahandaan na ng lahat ng ahensiya ng pamahalaan sa ilalim ng Task Force El Niño ang napipintong La Niña phenomenon sa susunod na buwan.

Ayon kay Teodoro, chairperson ng Presidential Task Force on El Niño, batay ito sa kautusan ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. kasunod ng anunsyo ng Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) na magsisimulang manalasa ang La Niña sa mga buwan ng Hunyo, Hulyo at Agosto ngayong taon.

Una nang inanunsyo ng Pagasa na ang transisyon sa southwest monsoon o habagat ay mangyayari ngayong Mayo. Ayon sa Pagasa, ang southwest monsoon ay magdudulot ng mga pag-ulan sa kanlurang bahagi ng Pilipinas mula Mayo hanggang Setyembre.

Idinagdag pa ng weather bureau na patuloy nilang minomonitor ang paghina ng El Niño kung saan ay mabubuo naman ang La Niña. (Dolly Cabreza)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/05/13/task-force-el-nino-inalerto-sa-buhos-ng-la-nina/>

‘El Niño’ humihina na, posibleng matapos sa Hunyo — PAGASA

Angie dela Cruz

May 14, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Tinaya ng PAGASA na matatapos na ang pag-iral ng El Niño Phenomenon sa bansa dahil sa patuloy na paghina nito sa ngayon.

Ayon kay Benison Estareja, weather specialist, oras na mawala na ang El Niño ay babalik na ulit sa normal o neutral ang temperatura ng bansa.

Gayunman, sinabi ni Estareja na ang epekto ng El Niño ay maaari pa ring makaapekto at maaari pa ring magtagal ang kakulangan ng ulan hanggang sa susunod na buwan.

Una nang sinabi ng PAGASA na may isa hanggang dalawang bagyo ang papasok sa bansa bago matapos ang Mayo pero hindi ito direktang makakaapekto sa bansa.

Binigyang diin din ni Estareja na ang nangyayari ngayon ay epekto ng global warming.

“So ibig sabihin possible na mas maging drastic ‘yung impact in terms of lakas ng mga bagyo, in terms of pagtaas ng sea level natin, and then ‘yung mga different effects pa like ‘yung mas madalas na heat wave, mas madalas na drought o tagtuyot in the coming decades,” dagdag ni Estareja.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/05/14/2354905/el-nio-humihina-na-posibleng-matapos-sa-hunyo-pagasa>

Pinas, nananatiling largest rice importer

Angie dela Cruz

May 14, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Nananatili ang Pilipinas na pinakamalaking rice importer sa buong mundo hanggang sa taong 2025, batay sa projection ng United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Sa inisyal na forecast ng USDA, ang Pilipinas ay may total rice imports na 4.2 million metric tons (MT) sa susunod na taon para punan ang tumataas na pangangailangan sa bigas ng lumalaking populasyon ng bansa at turismo.

Ang projected volume na 100,000 MT ng bansa ay mas mataas sa estimated 4.1 million MT na rice imports ngayong taon.

“The Philippines is expected to again be the largest global rice importer,” ayon sa USDA.

Batay sa data ng USDA, kung mag-materialize umano ang projection nila, ito na ang ikatlong taon na ang Pilipinas ay aangat ulit ng maraming bigas sa global market.

Una nang naitala ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) na papalo sa 113.63 milyon ang populasyon ng Pilipinas sa susunod na taon o may taas na 4.2 percent sa 109.035 milyong official population tally noong 2020.

Sa taya ng PSA, ang average annual growth rate ng populasyon ng bansa ay aabutin ng 0.84 percent para sa 2020-2025.

Tinaya naman ng USDA na ang Pilipinas ay may kabuuang total rice consumption at requirement na 17.1 milyong metric tons sa susunod na taon.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/05/14/2354899/pinas-nananatiling-largest-rice-importer>

REMATE:

Pilipinas mananatiling biggest importer ng bigas sa 2025 – USDA



MANILA, Philippines – Inaasahang mananatili bilang ‘biggest importer’ ng bigas ang Pilipinas pagsapit ng 2025.

Sa datos na inilabas ng United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) sa monthly global grains report nito ngayong Mayo, inaasahang tataas ang rice imports ng Pilipinas sa mga susunod na taon sa 4.1 milyong metriko tonelada.

“[T]he Philippines imports are forecast up to a record 4.2 million tons on continued growth in consumption. The Philippines is expected to again be the largest global rice importer,” saad sa report.

Binanggit ng USDA ang inaasahang paglago sa populasyon at turismo para taasan din ang imports. Sa pinakahuling datos ay nasa 109.03 milyon na ang populasyon noong Mayo 2020, at mahigit dalawang milyong dayuhang turista ang dumating sa bansa mula Enero hanggang Abril 2024.

Ngayong taon, inaasahan ng USDA na mag-aangkat ang Pilipinas ng 4.1 milyong MT, o upward revision mula sa 3.9 milyong MT noong Pebrero. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/pilipinas-mananating-biggest-importer-ng-bigas-sa-2025-usda/>

REMATE:

Mga magsasaka ng pinya sa Laguna, pinuri ni Bong Go

May 13, 2024 11:30



MANILA, Philippines- Matapos suriin ang Calauan Super Health Center sa Laguna, dumalo si Senator Christopher “Bong” Go, adopted son ng CALABARZON, sa masiglang Pinya Festival sa nasabing bayan noong Linggo.



Sa kanyang paglilibot sa festival grounds, sinamantala ng senador ang pagkakataon na saksihan ang sikat na pinya ng bayan, na kilala sa tamis at kalidad.

Dahil sa kasiyahan sa mga lokal na delicacy, pinuri ni Go ang pagsusumikap ng mga magsasaka ng pinya ng Calauan, na malaki ang naiambag sa pagmamalaki sa agrikultura at sigla ng ekonomiya ng bayan.

“Ang Pinya Festival ay hindi lamang isang pagdiriwang ng inyong masarap na produkto kundi pati na rin ng pagkakaisa bilang isang komunidad,” ani Go.

“Ito ay simbolo ng inyong pagsisikap at pagtutulungan upang mapalago pa ang ating lokal na industriya na siyang mag-aangat sa antas ng pamumuhay ng bawat mamamayan ng Calauan,” dagdag ng senador.

Ipinaabot din ni Go ang kanyang papuri kina Congressman Amben Amante, Gobernador Ramil Hernandez, Vice Governor Karen Agapay, Mayor Roseller “Osel” Caratihan, Vice Mayor Allan Jun “Dong” Sanchez, at mga konsehal ng bayan at sa event organizers sa paglikha ng isang napakasigla at nakaeengganyong pagdiriwang.

Pinagtibay ni Senator Go ang kanyang patuloy na suporta sa rehiyon, partikular sa Laguna at nangakong patuloy na tutulungan ang bayan sa abot ng kanyang makakaya.

Binigyang-diin niya ang kahalagahan ng sektor ng agrikultura ng bayan, lalo na ang kilalang produksyon ng pinya, na nagmumungkahi na ang pinahusay na suporta ng pamahalaan ay maaaring humantong sa mas mabungang ani.

“Nag uumapaw po ang aking kaligayahan at ang aking pasasalamat kay Senator Bong Go dahil kahit kailan ay hindi niya binigo ang ikatlong distrito ng ating lalawigan. Kaya naman alam niyo na kung sino ang tunay na tumutulong, kung sino ang tunay na dumadamay sa ating mga maalitang mga kababayan, walang iba (kundi) ang ating ipinagmamalaki, Senador Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go,” ang sabi naman ni Congressman Amante.

Sa pagtugon sa mga hamon na kinakaharap ng mga lokal na magsasaka, itinaguyod ni Senator Go ang dagdag na suporta sa agrikultura.

Nanawagan siya para sa pamamahagi ng mas mahahalagang mapagkukunan tulad ng mga pataba, pestisidyo, at mga binhing lumalaban sa tagtuyot.

Bukod pa rito, binigyang-diin niya ang kahalagahan ng pagbibigay ng mga libreng programa sa pagsasanay para sa mga magsasaka upang makatulong na mapabuti ang agrikultura.

Nanawagan din si Go sa ehekutibong sangay na isaalang-alang ang direktang pamamahagi ng tulong pinansyal sa mga magsasaka at iba pang nangangailangang sektor.

Ang pamamaraang ito, aniya, ay direktang susuportahan ang mga higit na nangangailangan at masisiguro ang inclusive economic recovery. **RNT**

<https://remate.ph/mga-magsasaka-ng-pinya-sa-laguna-pinuri-ni-bong-go/>

ABANTE:

Goodbye El Niño sa Hunyo

- [Abante News](#)
- [May 13, 2024](#)



PATULOY ang paghina ng El Niño kaya posibleng matapos na ang nakaririnding init na epekto nito sa susunod na buwan.

Ayon kay Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) chief Nathaniel Servando, magiging normal na ang temperatura sa bansa kaya asahang mababawasan na ang matinding init.

Gayunpaman, asahan pa rin ang epekto ng El Niño ngayong taon dahil sa tinatawag na 'lag effect'.

Sa kasalukuyan, ilang bahagi sa bansa tulad ng Pangasinan ang nakaranas na ng kalat-kalat na mga pag-uulan o mga localized thunderstorm.

Sa pinakahuling tala ng Department of Agriculture (DA), pumalo na sa higit P4 na bilyon ang danyos ng weather phenomenon sa mga pananim at sakahan sa bansa.

Samantala, pinaghahandaan na rin ng Pagasa at mga kaugnay na ahensiya ang parating na La Niña phenomenon o madalas na pagbuhos ng ulan sa bansa. (Natalia Antonio)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/05/13/goodbye-el-nino-sa-hunyo/>