

## CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY MAY 21, 2024

### A. MANILA BULLETIN:

**Farmers' group asks: Where is DA getting subsidy for P29/kilo rice at Kadiwa stores?**

**DA plans to extend ban on onion imports until July**

**Attracting large scale mining enterprises**

**Marcos distributes land titles and support services to Dumaguete farmers**

### B. THE PHILIPPINE STAR

**Ban on onion imports extended until July**

**DA defends decision to sell P29/kilo rice**

**Higher biofuel blend takes effect in October**

**DTI to intensify price monitoring amid anticipated La Niña**

**Chicken prices up by P10 per kilo – DA**

**NFA in the spotlight anew**

### C. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

**Cordillera seeks climate change tech as El Niño crop damage hits P768M**

**Dying lands: Desertification taking another form in PH**

**Marcos: Farm-to-market roads will be built in Central Visayas**

**DA: Onion import ban extended to July**

**DTI, DA ramp up price watch as La Niña nears**

**Marcos vows to fix flood control system as La Niña looms**

**Rice: Lessons not learned**

**Senate urged to adopt House version of rice tariff law amendments**

#### **D. BUSINESS WORLD:**

**Onion import ban extended until July**

**More local price councils set for reactivation — DTI**

**Metro Pacific's P2-billion Laguna dairy farm secures BoI approval**

#### **E. REMATE:**

**Importation ban sa sibuyas pinalawig ng DA chief**

**29/kilo bigas mabibili sa Kadiwa stores sa NCR**

**Mga mangingisdang Pinoy 'di matitinag sa paghuli ng Tsina sa 'trespassers' sa WPS**

**Ex-agri chief Arthur Yap abswelto ng SC**

#### **F. ABANTE:**

**Mga magsasaka, mangingisda swak sa Gcash, Farm Konekt**

#### **G. MANILA STANDARD**

**Senators urged to approve House bill on rice stock**

**Rice stall cleaned out**

**SC clears ex-Agriculture Secretary Yap of graft**

#### **H. THE MANILA TIMES**

**Onion imports to stay suspended**

**Whose interest does Cynthia Villar serve?**

**Some last thoughts on food import machinations**

**Pangasinan to supply salt as coconut fertilizers**

#### **I. MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT**

**Supply, Prices Of Food, Commodities: Govt Steps Up Preparations On La Niña**

**DA to extend ban on onion importation until July**

#### **J. BUSINESS MIRROR**

**Onions' ample supply prompts DA to eye extension to importation ban**

**K. ABANTE TONITE**

**Tulong pinansiyal, bigas pinamudmod ng ACT-Agri Kaagapay sa Bukidnoon**

**L. PILIPINO STAR NGAYON**

**Ex-DA Sec. Yap, inabsuwelto ng SC sa kasong PDAF**

**Suporta ni BBM sa farmers at fisherfolks sa Iligan City, namadyik!**

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

## **Farmers' group asks: Where is DA getting subsidy for P29/kilo rice at Kadiwa stores?**

**BY**

May 20, 2024 06:28 PM



(Mark Balmores | MB Photo)

Farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) on Monday, May 20, questioned the source of the Department of Agriculture's (DA) budget for subsidizing the P29 per kilogram rice being sold at Kadiwa stores.

Based on the group's estimate, the government is covering P21 of the cost per kilogram to sell rice at P29 in Kadiwa stores.

The group noted that the current farmgate price of rice is P30 per kilo.

“So saang program/budget kinuha ang P21 per kilo rice subsidy (So, from which program or budget is the PHP 21 per kilogram rice subsidy being taken)?” Jayson Cainglet, the executive director of SINAG, said in an interview.

Asked about the source of funds of the DA to subsidize the cheap rice they are selling at Kadiwa stores, DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said he cannot comment on the matter as he is still not made aware of the operational details.

“Sa ngayon, I cannot comment on that kasi hindi ko alam ‘yung operational details nung kung saan galing ang bigas (Right now, I cannot comment on that because I do not know the operational details of where the rice is coming from),” he told Manila Bulletin in an interview.

“Iyong ginagawa kasi ngayon is ano pa lang, nasa phase one pa lang kami. We’re checking on the several operational issues nitong P29, chine-check namin ‘yung mga lugar, mga detalye, magiging issues on a very limited quantities ( What we are doing now is still in phase one. We are checking on several operational issues of the PHP 29 rice, including inspecting locations, details, and potential issues with very limited quantities),” he went on.

According to Cainglet, selling P29 per kilo of rice has no direct gain for local farmers.

“Hopefully ang makinabang sa gov’t subsidies are the sectors most vulnerable sa mataas na price ng bigas (Hopefully, those who benefit from the government subsidies are the sectors most vulnerable to the high price of rice),” he said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tou Laurel Jr. Is prioritizing the poor in the P29 per kilo rice sold at Kadiwa stores, said De Mesa.

“We want it to be targeted. So, we will be coordinating with all agencies and local government units,” he said.

“The poor are the priority, PWDs (persons with disabilities), seniors, etc. So, there are lists. We’ll prioritize them.”

Since the DA is still testing the waters, De Mesa said the selling of cheap rice at Kadiwa stores in Metro Manila on Monday is still not a rollout.

“We’re also checking the legal and fiduciary implications and remedies that will be available to us. Sa ngayon nasa testing stage pa lang (It is currently at the testing stage),” the spokesperson said.

De Mesa noted that the quantity of the cheap rice they are selling is “very, very, very limited.”

“I cannot provide an estimate. Pero limited quantity siya (It is limited),” he said when pressed for an estimate.

Per the DA’s latest price monitoring, the cheapest rice in the metropolis is retailed for P48 a kilo. Meanwhile, the priciest rice is sold for P66.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/20/farmers-group-asks-where-is-da-getting-subsidy-for-p29-kilo-rice-at-kadiwa-stores>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# DA plans to extend ban on onion imports until July

**BY GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG**

May 20, 2024 03:11 PM

---

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is planning to extend the ban on onion imports amid the prevailing low market prices.

After conducting thorough daily monitoring, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. said there is no urgency to allow the importation of any onion products into the Philippines until July.

“Cold storage in onion-producing areas is already full now, and the market prices are low, so there’s no reason to import,” Tiu Laurel said on Monday, May 20.

ADVERTISEMENT

"Right now, onion prices are fair. In Balintawak, red onions are selling for P60 to P70, and white onions for P60. When I started at the DA, prices were much higher at P140 or P120. Thankfully, prices have stabilized now," he added.

The DA chief added that he also monitors the prices of other food items in wet markets nationwide to determine any spikes or unnatural price drops.

“I monitor them personally in case of any spike in prices which would either mean lack of supply or unscrupulous trader, then we will active importation if needed.”

## **Condemning any imported products**

When asked if there have been reports on illegal imports of commodities, Laurel said that all products have gone through the necessary condemnation efforts and are watched by the enforcement unit.

According to the agriculture chief, it is better that the DA condemns any illegal products caught by the pier, which have either been contraband or infested. This is an action to minimize any illicit trading.

Meanwhile, the agriculture sector has been test-selling P29 onions to study cost naming, marketing, and distribution for their project which is said to be released in July.

“We started selling last week, but the problem is, it’s easily sold out. Of course, when people know about the cheaper options, they flock to buy. Right now we’re identifying our practical limits; like how we’re many we’re going to sell or distribute. This is all in its testing phase,” Laurel said.

The testing period for selling the P29 onions is sold in selected outlets only, as the DA chief said, “After a month or two if we don’t see any issues and operational challenges, hopefully, we can increase our product and help the less fortunate to buy.”

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/20/da-plans-to-extend-ban-on-onion-imports-until-july>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Attracting large scale mining enterprises

Part 1

**BY [DR. BERNARDO VILLEGAS](#)**

May 21, 2024 07:18 AM

---

Last April 24, I witnessed an event in Puerto Princesa, Palawan that could be a major game changer in the continuing pursuit of Philippine society for a reasonable balance between benefiting the present generation of Filipinos, especially the poorest of the poor in the rural areas, and protecting the physical environment for future generations. The provincial officials of Palawan should be complimented for their daring, leadership and prudence in holding a three-day Stakeholders' Congress on Mining and Environment. Despite ominous warning of "opening a pandora's box and stirring a hornet's nest" the Palawan government officials led by Governor Dennis Socrates decided that it was for the common good of the people of Palawan to put together the most disparate views from various sectors about the desirability of mining, especially large-scale mining, in what is popularly known as the Philippines' Last Ecological Frontier.

Among the close to 200 people who participated in the Congress were officers of NGOs who stand for an absolute "No Mining in Palawan" position, ideologues who believe that "Sustainable Mining" is an oxymoron, local government officials who represent some of the most beautiful tourism sites in the province like El Nido, Coron and San Vicente and others from the south of Palawan whose municipalities benefit significantly from the employment generated by large-scale mining as well the taxes paid by the mining enterprises. There were top officials from the regulatory bodies of government such as the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB). The Church was well represented by Bishops who explained the principles of the stewardship of creation and environmental sustainability contained in papal documents such as Pope Francis' encyclical on the physical environment entitled "Laudato Si." There were representatives from the academe in such as fields as economics, mining engineering, geology, law, philosophy and theology. Leaders of communities of indigenous tribes, that abound in the province and whose ancestral lands are often threatened by the presence of mining, were also in attendance.

As an economist, I felt very much at home in such an environment of opposing views and contrasting vested interests. I told the audience that the very core of economics is the study of how scarce resources can be efficiently and effectively allocated among the multiple goals of a family, a community, an enterprise, a province or an entire nation, while taking into account that these goals more often than not are in conflict with one another. I told them also that as a management professor, I am involved in guiding CEOs and other top executives in the very important responsibility of a leader to achieve a just balance among the various interests of the so-called stakeholders of an organization. In the case of the business enterprise, these stakeholders are the rank-and-file workers, the managers, the funds providers (stockholders and creditors), suppliers, immediate community in which the enterprise is located physically and the nation at large. In the case of a province like Palawan, a very important stakeholder is the entire Philippine nation represented today by the BBM Administration that had made very clear its top priorities as food security and promoting

investments, especially foreign direct investments, in the light of the untenable debt-to-GDP ratio that resulted from the pandemic and the paucity of local long-term capital because of the very low savings rate of the Philippines. And to top it all, there is the primordial national goal of reducing the very high poverty incidence which at 22 % is the highest in the entire East Asian region, in which the average poverty incidence is at single-digit levels of 0 to 9%.

The topic assigned to me coincided with a major research project that economists at the Center for Research and Communication (CRC) has initiated in partnership with the various stakeholders of the mining industry. I reminded the audience that the mining sector is a major component of what is termed “industry” in the national economy, together with manufacturing, construction, and public utilities. When we refer to a country going through the process of an industrial revolution (as happened in England during the last years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early decades of the nineteenth century, 1790 to 1830) we refer to that stage in its economic development in which the share of GDP shifts from agriculture and fisheries to industry. For example, today agriculture, forestry and fisheries account for some 10 % of GDP, industry for about 30 % and services for the remaining 60 %.

The mineral mining industry is a primary sector which provides the raw materials needed by numerous industries in equally numerous countries, such as metallic ores and minerals that are processed as critical components for various broad industrial use. It is difficult to imagine economies, both highly developed and developing, to run without such raw and processed mineral ores. The so-called Industrial Revolution 4.0 (e.g. Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, the Internet of Things, Data Analytics, etc.) that is deeply entrenched in the highly developed countries will be made impossible without the nickel, copper, and other mineral ores that are indispensable in the production of the hardware necessary for IR 4.0 such as computers, lap tops, tablets, smart phones, drones, robots, etc. In fact, since the Philippines has hardly completed IR 1.0. (mechanical revolution), IR 2.0 (the electrical revolution and the electronic revolution (3.0), it is even more dependent on other products of mining such as iron ore, aggregates and coal.

Speaking of coal, all countries, developed and developing, are exerting a great deal of effort to transition to renewable energy such as solar and wind in order to precisely attain sustainable development and addressing climate change. In this very important transformation in the energy sector away from fossil fuels, solar power plants, wind turbines and electric vehicles have to be manufactured. All these products require nickel and copper. In this sense, sustainable development is impossible without mining. Those who mouth the slogan that “sustainable mining is an oxymoron” have a very narrow concept of sustainable development. In fact in the Stakeholder Congress I attended in Palawan, I found it amusing that some of the most vocal critics of mining were very visibly making use of lap tops, tablets, cell phones and other digital devices manufactured from the products of mining. They also are the most vocal in championing renewable sources of energy such as solar, wind and geothermal which would be rendered impossible without the products of mining.

It was a coincidence that at the very same time the Palawan Congress was being held, our national leaders were considering joining the US-Japan Critical Minerals Agreement. As reported in this paper on April 24,2024, BW columnist and president of Stratbase, ADR Institute Victor C. Manhit agreed that it was advisable for the Philippines to enter into such a trilateral agreement: “The abundance of critical minerals like nickel and copper is an opportunity to position the country as a major player in the emerging supply chain for digital technologies, electric vehicles, and innovations in clean energy...The challenge is for the Government and mining industry to develop our capacity to produce and serve what experts



see as sustained demand for these metallic minerals as the world shifts to green transportation and clean energy generation.” The 2024 Palawan Stakeholders’ Congress on Mining and the Environment could not have been held at a more opportune time. Again, congratulations to Governor Dennis Socrates and his fellow officials. You have set an example that should be emulated by many other Philippine provinces rich in mineral resources. To be continued.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/21/attracting-large-scale-mining-enterprises>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Marcos distributes land titles and support services to Dumaguete farmers

**BY**

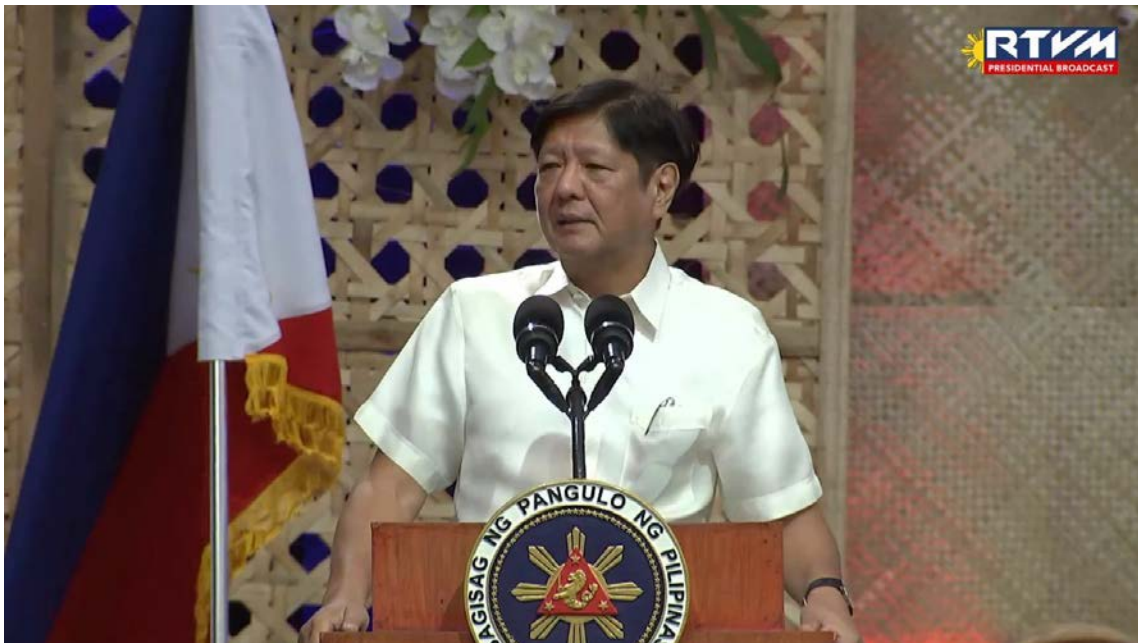
May 20, 2024 11:46 AM

---

## AT A GLANCE

---

In recognition of the farmers' vital contribution to ensure the country's food supply, President Marcos led the distribution of 2,867 hectares of agricultural lands to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) in the Central Visayas Region in a ceremony in Dumaguete City in Negros Oriental on Monday, May 20.



*President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. (RTVM screenshot)*

In his speech, the President said the event was a testament to the government's commitment to distribute government-owned lands to farmers.

"Ito ay patunay ng ating patuloy at walang-humpay na pagsisikap na tuparin ang aming pangako na kokompletuhin namin ang programang agrarya dito sa ating minamahal na Pilipinas (This is proof of our never-ending efforts to fulfill our promise of completing the agrarian reform program in our beloved Philippines)," he said.

The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) - Region VII said 3,855 ARBs received Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOAs) under the Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling Project (Project SPLIT) for agricultural lands located in Bohol, Cebu, and Negros Oriental.

During the event, Marcos also turned over P7.3 million worth of farm machinery and equipment valued to six ARB organizations (ARBOs) under the Climate Resilient Farm Productivity and Support Program (CRFPSP). This machinery, consisting of five units of four-wheel tractors and a food dehydrator, is targeted to benefit 1,940 beneficiaries in Negros Oriental.

"Mas mapapabilis po nito ang inyong mga gawain at mas mapapaunlad natin ang inyong lupang sinasaka (This will speed up your tasks and we can improve the land you are tilling)," he said.

Meanwhile, President Marcos lauded the construction of seven new farm-to-market roads (FMRs) worth P100 million funded under the Agrarian Reform Fund in Negros Oriental. According to the President, these FMRs will connect farmers to markets, schools, government offices, and different cities and municipalities.

"Lalawak din ang inyong mga mamimili dahil mas malayo na ang mararating ng inyong mga produkto (You will have more customers because your products now cover more areas)," he said.

"Hindi lang natin mapapalaki ang kita at mapapabuti ang kabuhayan ng ating mga magsasaka, mapapaunlad din natin ang ating mga komunidad (We're not only increasing the sales and improving the livelihood of our farmers, we're also improving our communities)," he added.

According to Malacañang, these initiatives are part of Marcos' directives to extend the necessary support services to farmers to revitalize the country's agriculture sector by improving the flow of food supply.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/20/marcos-distributes-land-titles-and-support-services-to-dumaguete-farmers>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Ban on onion imports extended until July

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

May 21, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. announced the extended import ban yesterday, pointing out that there is “no reason to import” in the immediate future since cold storages are overflowing with onions.

[Philstar.com](#) / Irra Lising

**MANILA, Philippines** — The Philippines has extended the ban on the importation of onions until July to prevent a glut in local supplies following historic production levels, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. announced the extended import ban yesterday, pointing out that there is “no reason to import” in the immediate future since cold storages are overflowing with onions.

Onion retail prices are expected to remain stable or even decline this year due to better supply situation of the country.

In January, the DA chief temporarily suspended onion importation until this month as the government and industry stakeholders anticipate better output as farmers were encouraged to expand planted areas by the high prices last year.

Back then, Tiu Laurel floated the possibility of extending the import ban depending on the domestic harvest of the high value crop.

The STAR broke the story that the country’s onion production in the first half is en route to an unprecedented level driven by expansion in planted areas by farmers encouraged by high prices last year.

Tiu Laurel noted that prevailing market prices of onion have been stable this year and are even lower compared to last year's levels.

“Onion prices have been good this year. The latest price of red onion in Balintawak is between P60 and P70 per kilogram while white onion is about P60 per kg,” he said.

Red onion prices in Metro Manila markets ranged between P70 and P160 per kg as of May 17, while white onions retailed from P60 to P130 per kg, according to the latest price monitoring report of the DA.

Current onion prices have declined by 70 percent compared to the recorded price level of P160 to P200 per kg in the same period of last year, based on DA monitoring reports.

The DA high value crops program is projecting an onion harvest of over 170,000 metric tons (MT) in the second quarter following an expansion in planted areas. The country already produced 201,000 MT of onions in the first quarter, the highest ever in that given period.

If the projections materialize, then it will raise total onion output in the first half alone to at least 370,000 MT – the highest in history – which is more than enough the country's estimated annual onion requirement.

The country consumes anywhere between 270,000 MT and 300,000 MT of onions, which already takes into account the wastage.

The Philippines harvests bulk of its onion output during the first semester with minimal production during the second half of the year due to climatic conditions.

The total local onion production in the first half usually serves as the basis for the government in determining the amount of imports that would be allowed in a given year.

As of May 10, the country has 180,680.47 MT of red onions, 33,282 MT of yellow onions and 72.5 MT of shallots in cold storages nationwide.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/21/2356625/ban-onion-imports-extended-until-july>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA defends decision to sell P29/kilo rice

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 21, 2024 | 12:00am



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

STAR / Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) defended yesterday the decision of the government to sell rice at P29 per kilo at Kadiwa outlets, saying it aims to benefit the poor.

In an interview, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said it is the testing stage as the DA targets to roll out the program nationwide in July.

“We are checking on the logistics and operational challenges. So the quantity of rice at the Kadiwa centers is limited. Hopefully by July, we will be able to start the nationwide rollout,” he said.

According to De Mesa, the initiative targets to benefit at least 25 percent of the country’s poor population.

He admitted that the DA will need to provide heavy subsidies to sell rice at P29 per kilo. Rice retail prices currently range from P50 to P52 per kilo.

“The subsidy will be shouldered by both the national and local government units as the difference (between the actual prevailing retail price and the P29 per kilo) is big,” De Mesa said.

“The testing that we are conducting is important to make sure all the bottlenecks and challenges will be addressed,” De Mesa said.

Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor said the P29 per kilo could only be sustained if the government is willing to subsidize.

“You need around 1.5 kilos of palay to produce a kilo of rice. If palay costs P30 per kilo when sold to the NFA (National Food Authority), the cost of one kilo of rice is P45, not including costs for freight, storage, handling and transport,” Montemayor said. “The P29 per kilo of rice is definitely subsidized and this can be sustained only for as long as the government is willing to subsidize. If there is no subsidy, the palay buying price will have to go down to P15 per kilo, which could mean losses for farmers.”

Farmers’ group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura executive director Jayson Cainglet said that P29 per kilo rice sold at the Kadiwa centers is not sustainable.

Cainglet said the “poorest of the poor” do not benefit from the five kilos of rice that can be bought by each consumer at Kadiwa stores.

“The five kilos of rice maximum that can be bought at Kadiwa outlets does not benefit the poor as they can only buy two kilos. So those who can buy five kilos are not the intended beneficiaries,” he said.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/05/21/2356669/da-defends-decision-sell-p29kilo-rice>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Higher biofuel blend takes effect in October

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

May 21, 2024 | 12:00am



Motorists get their tanks filled at a gas station along Commonwealth Avenue on February 19, 2024.

STAR / Michael Varcas

**MANILA, Philippines** — The government is raising the country's biofuel blend – more than a decade after it last adjusted the mix rates – to reduce the prices of various fuel products in the market.

The Department of Energy (DOE) yesterday issued the necessary guidelines for the implementation of the higher biodiesel blend in diesel and bioethanol mix in gasoline.

Citing the National Biofuels Board (NBB), the DOE said increasing the biofuel blend would reduce the pump prices of both diesel and gasoline, thus alleviating the burden of rising fuel prices on consumers amid disruptions in the global oil market.



Under the guidelines, the DOE ordered the mandatory increase of biodiesel blend in all diesel products sold in the country to three percent (B3) from the current mix of two percent starting Oct. 1.

Subsequently, the biodiesel blend will increase to four percent by October 2025 and to five percent starting October 2026, according to the guidelines.

The increase from B2 to B5 in 2020 was delayed due to lack of assurances on the sufficiency of biodiesel supply and logistical limitations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The last time that the biodiesel blend increased was in 2007 when it was adjusted to two percent. It has remained at such rate since then.

Furthermore, the DOE has allowed downstream oil industry participants to voluntarily sell gasoline containing 20 percent bioethanol, double the present blend of 10 percent.

The ethanol blend in gasoline has stayed at 10 percent or E10 since 2012.

The United States Department of Agriculture-Foreign Agricultural Service in Manila earlier said hiking the bioethanol blend to 20 percent could cut fuel prices by as much as four percent, resulting in as much as P16 billion in annual savings for Filipino vehicle owners.

For the week beginning May 14 until May 20, gasoline prices in Metro Manila ranged from P55.50 to P85.72 per liter while diesel prices were between P51.49 and P80 a liter, based on DOE monitoring.

The NBB endorsed in November the mandatory increase in biodiesel blend as well as the voluntary increase in bioethanol blend, according to the DOE.

Under the Biofuels Act of 2006, all liquid fuels for motors and engines sold in the country must be blended with biofuels.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/21/2356627/higher-biofuel-blend-takes-effect-october>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DTI to intensify price monitoring amid anticipated La Niña

[Louella Desiderio](#) - The Philippine Star

May 21, 2024 | 12:00am



In a statement, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual said the agency is intensifying its efforts “to ensure even more effective oversight, particularly as we brace for the impacts of La Niña.”

PNA file photo by Yancy Lim

**MANILA, Philippines** — The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is stepping up its price monitoring efforts in anticipation of the La Niña weather phenomenon.

In a statement, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual said the agency is intensifying its efforts “to ensure even more effective oversight, particularly as we brace for the impacts of La Niña.”

Pascual said an automatic price control would be in effect in areas that would be declared under a state of calamity due to La Niña, which brings unusually heavy rains.

“The DTI is steadfast in enforcing these regulations and any individuals caught engaging in illegal price manipulation will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” he said.

The DTI, he added, is working with the Department of the Interior and Local Government to reactivate the Local Price Coordinating Councils or LPCCs, which serve as crucial partners in price monitoring efforts.

Based on a DILG report, 78 percent or 1,335 of the country's 1,716 local government units have already reactivated their LPCCs.

Pascual also welcomed the support of Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. in efforts to combat price manipulators and protect consumers during the anticipated La Niña weather phenomenon. He said this collaboration shows the government's unified approach to safeguarding the public against exploitative practices.

Meanwhile, Presidential Communications Office Assistant Secretary Joey Villarama, El Niño Task Force spokesman, said at least 321 cities and towns declared a state of calamity amid the ongoing impact of El Niño in the country.

"My list is 321 (cities and municipalities, including Cebu City, Toledo and Tudela, both in Cebu province) have declared (a state of calamity)," Villarama told The STAR, adding that the list is as of May 17.

He expressed confidence that the number will not go up significantly since "we are already at the tail end of the El Niño."

Still, he asked the public to continue to conserve water as the El Niño is not yet over.

"Just the same, we continue to remind our fellow Filipinos that until we are out of the woods, we still need to conserve and remain vigilant," Villarama said.

He said the bulk of damage to the agriculture sector, pegged at P6.35 billion, is mostly from palay, corn and vegetables.

Villarama gave assurance that the Department of Budget and Management released P15 billion to provide assistance to areas affected by the drought. — **Bella Cariaso**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/21/2356683/dti-intensify-price-monitoring-amid-anticipated-la-nia>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Chicken prices up by P10 per kilo – DA

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 20, 2024 | 12:00am



Based on the DA's latest monitoring of Metro Manila markets, the retail price of chicken ranged between P170 and P230 per kilo.

MANILA, Philippines — The retail price of chicken has increased by P10 per kilo as it is being sold for as high as P230 per kilo compared to the previous P220 per kilo, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Based on the DA's latest monitoring of Metro Manila markets, the retail price of chicken ranged between P170 and P230 per kilo.

On Thursday, it ranged between P170 and P220 per kilo.

Gregorio San Diego, chairman emeritus of the United Broiler Raisers Association (UBRA) and Philippine Egg Board, bewailed the disparity between the farmgate price and the retail cost of chickens.

“The retail price of agricultural products is always far from the farmgate price. Prices of live broilers in the farms ranged from P120 to P127 per kilo,” San Diego told The STAR.

Based on UBRA's monitoring of the farmgate price of chicken in Luzon, it is P119 per kilo in Tarlac, P125 per kilo in Batangas, Pampanga, P125 per kilo; Cavite, P125 per kilo and Bulacan, P121 per kilo.

"The broiler farmers decided to lessen their production as they are not earning. They are suffering losses for the last eight months," San Diego said.

Meanwhile, the DA's decision to add eggs in relief packs of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is a win-win solution amid oversupply and the continued drop in the farmgate price, San Diego said.

In 2010, egg producers proposed to former agriculture secretary Proceso Alcala to add eggs in DSWD's relief packs, San Diego recalled.

They recently proposed this to Agriculture Undersecretary for livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano, he noted.

The DA is eyeing a collaboration with DSWD to add eggs in disaster relief packs, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

"During typhoons and disasters, it is important that the food that we distribute is not only food. Noodles, sardines and canned goods are easy to pack but we need to ensure that there is dignity in the food that we distribute to our fellow Filipinos during disasters so this is a win-win solution. You will be able to help the farmers and provide nutrition to those affected by calamities," he said.

"Once we determine the number of eggs needed by the DSWD, the (Department of Education), we can easily connect them with egg producers," he added.

The Batangas Egg Producers Multipurpose Cooperative has been producing roasted eggs that can last up to six months, De Mesa noted.

"It will cost more compared to raw eggs but efforts are being made to reduce the cost of producing roasted eggs so that it will be sustainable in the long run. It can be restored up to six months as it is already cooked," he said.

## Crop insurance

Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor yesterday lauded President Marcos' decision to return to the DA the supervision of the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC), saying former president Rodrigo Duterte's decision to transfer it to the Department of Finance (DOF) was illegal.

Executive Order 60 issued by Marcos declared the PCIC an attached agency of the DA.

Montemayor recalled being the principal author of the House version of Republic Act 8175 in 1995, which amended 1978's Presidential Decree 1467 that created the PCIC.

RA 8175 provided three representatives of small farmers in the PCIC board, he noted.

“Unfortunately, EO 148 issued by Duterte in 2021 transferred PCIC from DA to DOF and reduced farmers’ representatives to one (which), in my view, (is) illegal because an EO cannot amend a law,” he said.

## EO 60 restored PD 1467

“Placing PCIC under DA makes better sense because DOF is more concerned with reducing subsidies for programs like insurance, while DA’s objective is to maximize support for farmers so that they can cope with damages caused by El Niño and other severe climate change events,” he explained.

“We are pleased that the PCIC is back under the wings of the DA. This gives us the scope to assure farmers, livestock and poultry raisers, aquaculturists and others in production so we could shield them from losses that may be caused by disasters, pests and diseases,” said Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/20/2356473/chicken-prices-p10-kilo-da>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

## **NFA in the spotlight anew**

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

May 21, 2024 | 12:00am



File photo shows a store selling NFA rice at P27 per kilo.

STAR / File

### **As government moves forward with liberalized trade (First of two parts)**

MANILA, Philippines — “Pabili nga po ng bente siyete.”

If you understand what this means, then you are familiar with NFA rice. NFA, which stands for National Food Authority, has been a staple – like rice itself – in Filipino households for a long time.

The NFA used to sell rice at P27 per kilogram and P32 per kg, way lower than prevailing market prices of roughly P40 to P50 per kg. However, it was selling at a loss.

As part of its previous mandate, the agency buys palay or unmilled rice from local farmers at a so-called support price, which allows the latter to earn a profit.

The NFA mills the palay and sells the rice below production costs to provide consumers with “affordable” staple in the market.

In simple terms, the NFA buys at a high price and sells it at a low cost.

And at times that it was unable to procure palay from local harvest, the agency turns to imports to fulfill its price stabilization role. Still, it buys high then sells low.

Over the years, the agency accumulated debt in fulfilling its mandate, which it once noted was a result of the government’s “commitment” and “policy” of making affordable rice available to the public.

At the end of 2018, the NFA had a debt of about P140 billion. The following year, its powers to import rice and sell commercially in the market were clipped by Republic Act 11203 or Rice Trade Liberalization (RTL) law.

Today, that debt is down to about P106 billion.

The debt incurred by the NFA because of its buy-high-sell-low policy was considered a burden to Filipino taxpayers, particularly for the poor who were deprived of social services, according to the Philippine Rice Research Institute.

It should be noted that it is taxpayers’ money that is used to subsidize the NFA rice, allowing it to be sold as low as P27 per kilogram.

The liberalization

The economic managers of the Duterte administration worked its way in liberalizing the country’s rice industry following a spike in rice prices in 2018. Rice prices surged past P50 per kilogram due to supply shortages caused by lackluster harvest and delayed imports by the NFA.

The crisis coincided with mounting pressure from trade partners on the Philippines to fulfill its commitment to convert its quantitative restriction (QR) on rice imports into tariffs. QR refers to the limited amount of imports that is being allowed to enter by a country.

Back then, the NFA had the sole authority to regulate and oversee rice imports in the country.

The NFA regularly allows the importation of a minimum volume of rice as part of the country’s trade commitments. Anything beyond that minimum volume would be subject to the approval of the NFA Council, the highest policy-making body of the interagency.



In fact, Sen. Cynthia Villar herself admitted that the economic managers went to her and sought for the abolition of the NFA. Villar said she opposed that idea, fearing the backlash she would receive.

Back then, economic managers promised that liberalizing the rice industry would result in cheaper staple for Filipinos.

They said that opening up the domestic rice market to foreign competition through easier and freer import rules would slash retail prices by seven pesos a kilo.

More so, removing the power of the NFA to sell rice would lessen government intervention in the market, resulting in better competition among private players. And in doing so, the NFA slashes its debt.

Under the RTL law, the NFA has been reduced to a rice buffer stocking agency. It means that the agency would still buy and mill palay at a support price and keep the rice as the government's stocks for emergency and calamity use. No more selling at a loss. No more NFA rice in the market.

*(To be continued)*

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/21/2356628/nfa-spotlight-anew>

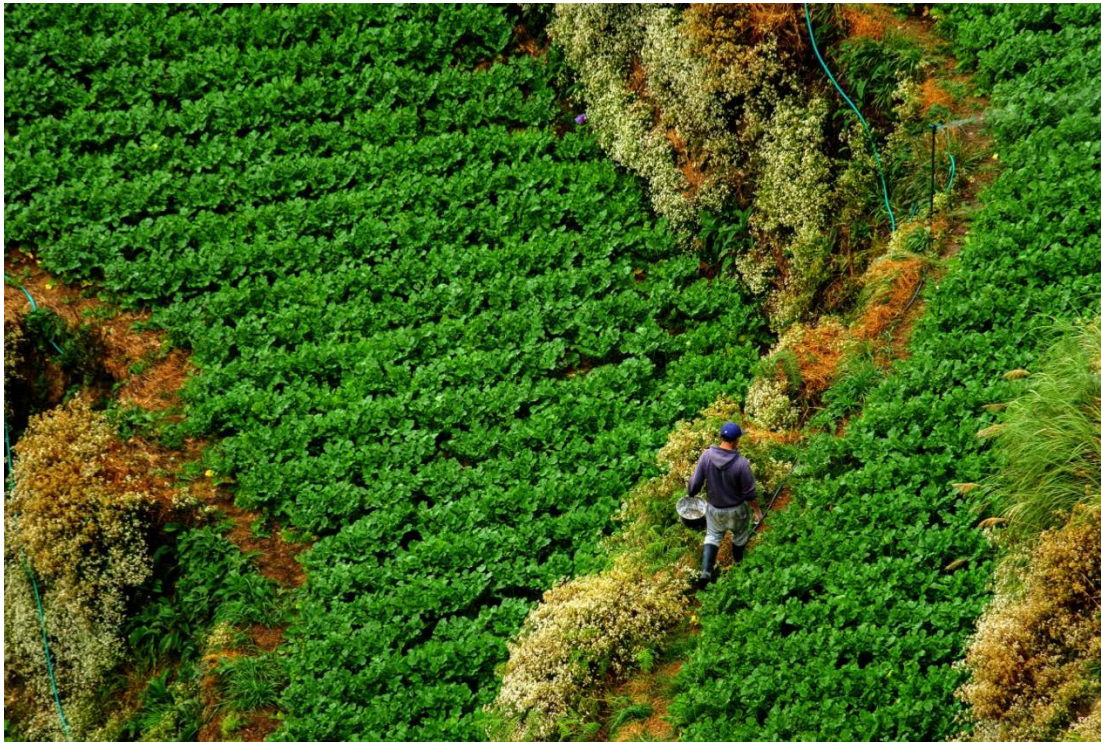
**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Cordillera seeks climate change tech as El Niño crop damage hits P768M

With La Niña's expected heavy rains, DA looks into specialized greenhouses that can withstand strong typhoons

By: [Vincent Cabreza](#) - Reporter / [@Inquirer\\_Baguio](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:15 AM May 21, 2024



**HIGHLAND FARM** The farming industry in the Cordillera is exploring new technologies that will help upland vegetable gardens survive extreme weather like the drought in the first months of the year and a high probability of strong rains in the last half of 2024. Many highland farms are carved from mountainsides, such as this garden in Atok, Benguet, shown in this February 2023 photo. —Neil Clark Ongchangco

**BAGUIO CITY, Philippines** — The Cordillera farming industry is seeking climate resilient technology to make geologically challenged farms more adaptable to extreme weather, after this year's El Niño dry spell left P768 million in crop losses and because of an anticipated La Niña which may bring prolonged and harsh rainfall, an agriculture official said.

Lawyer Jennilyn Dawayan, Cordillera director of the Department of Agriculture (DA), said on Monday that the government is looking into specialized greenhouses designed to withstand very strong typhoons, given how extreme rains devastated highland crops in recent years.

The agricultural sector's economic contraction of -1.3 percent (P27.8 billion) in 2023 was partly the result of climate disasters that struck mountain farms, Dawayan pointed out at a press briefing.

The region is also exploring genetically modified varieties as well as hybrid rice grains that are suited for droughts, or grains that could absorb excessive rainwater, said Danilo Daguio, DA Cordillera assistant director.

## Maps, research

But Daguio said hybrid grains need to be acceptable to highland farmers. Rice grown by Cordillera farmers is often tied to their culture and rituals.

The DA Cordillera office also uses the latest climate tools, including a map drawn up by Benguet State University detailing towns most vulnerable to droughts and to landslides and flooding during monsoons, as well as weather forecasting models, which the agency shares with agricultural communities.

Farmers like corn producer Marivic Raganit of Paracelis town in Mountain Province and coffee and livestock farmer Dick Evasco of Atok town in Benguet said they conducted their own research, and had learned to blend data on weather patterns with traditional Igorot farming knowledge.

Social media platforms, including YouTube, had also been accessed by farmers so they could adjust their planting schedules or seek out "do-it-yourself" food growing techniques such as bottle gardening, said 27-year-old Ryan Palunan, chair of the Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Council.

## Terrain

One of the concerns raised by DA was that some Cordillera farmers were “risk takers” who did not heed government alerts about El Niño, so a more aggressive information campaign would now be undertaken in light of a La Niña forecast.

Dawayan said farmlands in the Cordillera are vulnerable to climate change because of the terrain, since many vegetable and rice gardens were carved from the mountainsides.

Ifugao, for instance, is home to the four-century-old rice terraces, which grow heirloom rice called “tinawon” for household consumption.

As of April 29, the drought damaged or destroyed 40,712.24 metric tons (MT) of rice, corn and high-value crops, like Benguet’s salad vegetables, which had affected 11,671 farmers, according to the DA fact sheet.

Daguio said the biggest losses were recorded in Ifugao (17,811 MT or P311 million in Aguineldo town) and Kalinga (12,196 MT or P263.8 million in the towns of Balbalan, Pinukpuk, Rizal and Tanudan and in Tabuk City).

He said corn (with P638 million in losses) was the biggest casualty among upland commodities, although high-value crops (P1.533 million in losses) were the least affected crops. Damaged rice crops amounted to P127 million.

According to DA, the projected impact on this year’s targeted rice production of 355,774 MT would only be a 1.03-percent (3,653 MT) decline.

But the impact of the drought on the targeted corn production of 171,771 MT had been a 21-percent (36,864 MT) decrease as of April, the agency said.

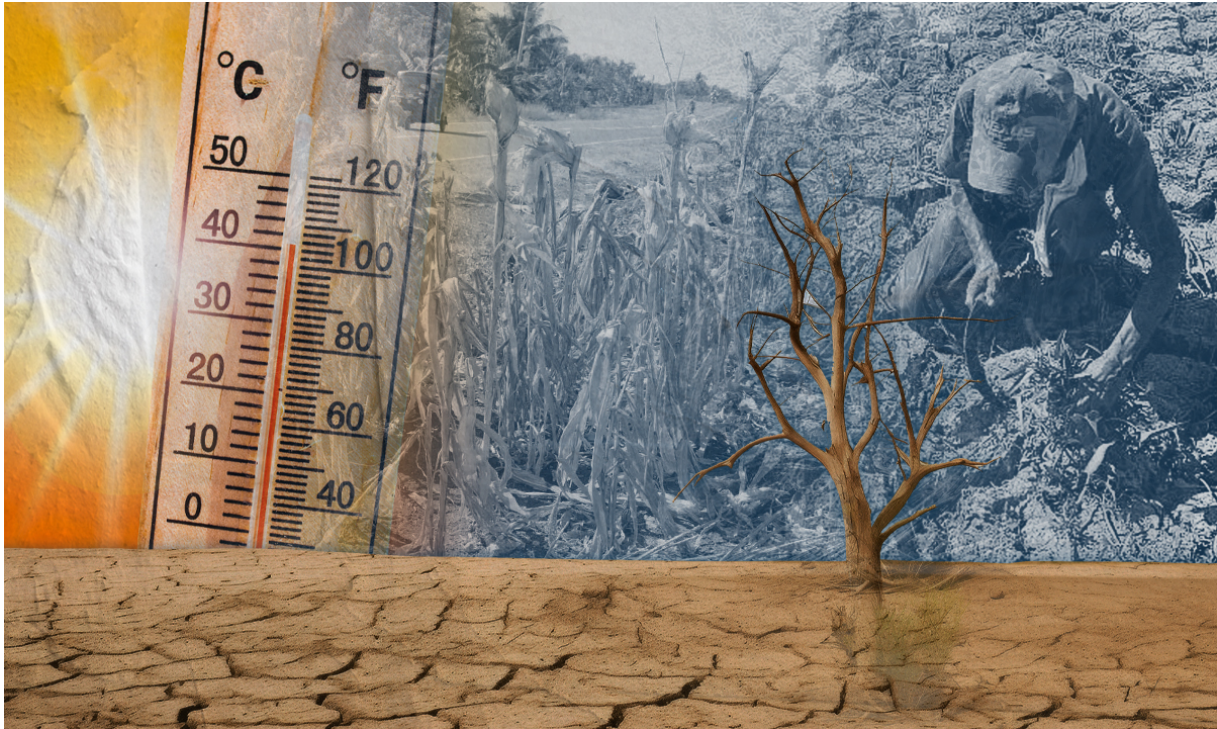
<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1942712/cordillera-seeks-climate-change-tech-as-el-nino-crop-damage-hits-p768m>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Dying lands: Desertification taking another form in PH

By: [Cristina Eloisa Baclig](#) - Content Researcher Writer / [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 12:43 PM May 20, 2024



Land degradation composite image from INQUIRER file and stock photos

MANILA, Philippines—Amid the various environmental challenges facing the Philippines, widespread land degradation poses a significant threat that could undermine the country's agricultural productivity and food security.

Land degradation, as defined by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), refers to the deterioration of land quality caused by human activities or natural phenomena.

This results in decreased productivity and usefulness of the land, which may involve vegetation loss, soil erosion, and depletion of soil fertility.

It has been noted that this environmental crisis could jeopardize the livelihood of millions and pose significant risks to the country's ecosystems and overall health.

## A global crisis

The UNCCD reported that globally, land degradation affects up to 40 percent of the planet's land, directly impacting half of humanity and threatening half of the global gross domestic product (GDP), approximately \$44 trillion.

The latest UN data showed that between 2015 and 2019, at least 100 million hectares of healthy and productive land were degraded every year. This is equivalent to 4.2 million square kilometers, which is slightly over the combined area of five Central Asian nations: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The yearly environmental decline caused by massive land degradation significantly affected global food and water security, directly impacting the lives of 1.3 billion people.



Graphic by ED LUSTAN / INQUIRER.net

If current trends continue, the UN agency warned that an additional area almost the size of South America will be degraded by 2050.

Ibrahim Thiaw, executive secretary of the UNCCD, emphasized the urgent need for large-scale land restoration, calling it a powerful, cost-effective tool to combat desertification, soil erosion, and loss of agricultural production.

“Investing in large-scale land restoration is a powerful, cost-effective tool to combat desertification, soil erosion, and loss of agricultural production. As a finite resource and our most valuable natural asset, we cannot afford to continue taking land for granted,” Thiaw stated.

The UNCCD further stressed that around 1.5 billion hectares of land globally — roughly 150 times the size of the Philippines — must be restored by 2030 to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world.

### Alarming PH situation

In the Philippines, the extent of land degradation is alarming.

As of 2019, an estimated 14.26 million hectares of land is degraded, representing 49.04 percent of the country’s total land area. This is equivalent to the entire regions of Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, and Central Luzon combined.

According to the UNCCD and the Department of Agriculture (DA), this degradation affects nearly 42.92 million people, which is about 41.54 percent of the country’s population, exposing them to the adverse effects of land degradation and drought.

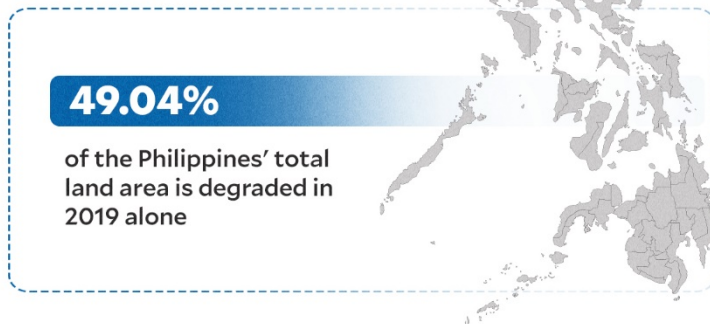
Among the primary drivers of land degradation in the Philippines are illegal logging, unsustainable agricultural practices, and conversion of forests into agricultural land.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has found that 75 percent of the country’s total cropland is vulnerable to erosion of varying degrees, leading to an annual loss of at least 457 million tons of soil for agriculture.

*Estimated total degraded land area  
in PH as of 2019:*

**14.26M hectare**

**less than half the total size  
of the Philippines**



*People and the proportion of the Philippine  
population exposed to land degradation  
and drought:*

**42.92 MILLION PEOPLE**  
**ARE EXPOSED TO LAND DEGRADATION**  
**(41.54% OF PH POPULATION)**

Graphic by ED LUSTAN / INQUIRER.net

The DENR noted that the conversion of lands for settlements and the annual loss of approximately 47,000 hectares of forest significantly contribute to soil degradation.

It added that 11 to 13 million hectares of land across the country are classified as degraded, while 2.2 million hectares face low soil fertility due to improper fertilizer and pesticide use, leading to soil pollution and increased acidity, exacerbating the problem.

The Bureau of Soils and Water Management of the DA explained that the manifestations of land degradation in the Philippines include:

- Loss of productive topsoil through water erosion.
- Loss of soil fertility due to over-cultivation.
- Loss of vegetation cover due to illegal logging and widespread tree-cutting.



- Expansion of slash-and-burn agriculture on critical slopes.

Other forms of degradation impacting the Philippine landscape encompass water logging due to poor drainage, soil salinization from over-harvesting of groundwater near coastal areas, and soil pollution from excessive pesticide application and contamination by industrial and household wastes.

How does it affect us?

The effects of land degradation extend beyond the immediate loss of arable land. It reduces food production, depletes water sources, and forces populations to migrate to more hospitable areas.

The World Health Organization (WHO) stressed that among the potential impacts of land degradation and desertification on health include:

- higher threats of malnutrition from reduced food and water supplies
- more water- and food-borne diseases that result from poor hygiene and a lack of clean water
- respiratory diseases caused by atmospheric dust from wind erosion and other air pollutants
- the spread of infectious diseases as populations migrate

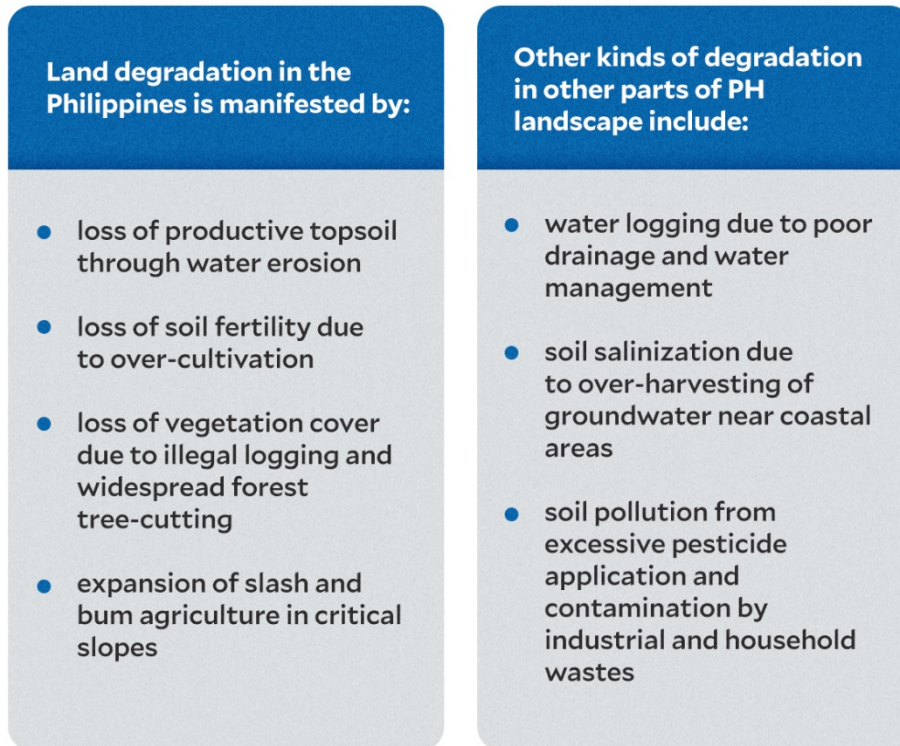
WHO added that as land is degraded and deserts expand in some places, food production declines, water sources dry up, and populations are pressured to relocate.

Desertification and heat

A specific type of land degradation, known as desertification, has been impacting various countries globally and is feared to affect the Philippines.

Desertification, according to UNCCD, is a specific type of land degradation that occurs in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas, resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities.

It transforms fertile land into desert-like conditions, significantly affecting ecosystems and human livelihoods.



INQ | SOURCES: UNCCD, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Graphic by ED LUSTAN / INQUIRER.net

Recent unprecedented high temperatures, with some areas experiencing extreme heat above 40 degrees Celsius in the first few months of 2024, have raised concerns. These conditions, studies showed, exacerbate the drying of soil and further aggravate degradation, impacting both agriculture and water resources critically.

Earlier this month, DA spokesperson Arnel De Mesa revealed that agricultural damage caused by El Niño has already reached P6.3 billion. The drought had affected 113,585 farmers and fishers in 12 of the country's 17 regions, with the volume of production losses amounting to 255,467 metric tons in 104,402 hectares (ha) of agricultural land.

According to a 2023 study, the Philippines does not experience desertification in the typical dry land context. However, the country faces severe land degradation that compromises soil health and agricultural output.

## Government promises




Last year, President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. vowed to take significant action to protect and rehabilitate the country’s threatened soils. He emphasized the need for modern agricultural practices and robust soil conservation measures.

Marcos then also served as the agriculture secretary.

“[O]ur soil is under threat, and to continue to neglect this vital agricultural component will lead to an even worse crisis in the future,” Marcos warned.

The President proposed a five-point agenda on soil and water management, which includes the National Soil Health Program and the implementation of sustainable land management.

When land is degraded, and deserts expand in some places, it can lead to:

-  reduced food production
-  dried-up water sources
-  populations are pressured to move to more hospitable areas

### Among the potential impacts of desertification on health:

- 1 higher threat of malnutrition from reduced food and water supplies
- 2 more water- and food-borne diseases that result from poor hygiene and a lack of clean water
- 3 respiratory diseases caused by atmospheric dust from wind erosion and other air pollutants
- 4 the spread of infectious diseases as populations migrate

INQ | SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Graphic by ED LUSTAN / INQUIRER.net

“This will ensure the proper use and management of soil resources, address land degradation, enhance crop productivity, and, hence, improve farmers’ income,” he said.

Marcos also said his administration is also investigating water security measures by implementing climate-resilient rainwater technologies and conducting cloud seeding operations.

He added that these initiatives aim to enhance water availability in agricultural production areas, critical watersheds, and reservoirs to mitigate the effects of the El Niño phenomenon.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1942429/dying-lands-desertification-taking-another-form-in-ph>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Marcos: Farm-to-market roads will be built in Central Visayas

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 11:53 AM May 20, 2024



FILE PHOTO: President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. tells farmer-beneficiaries during a land distribution ceremony in Negros Oriental on Monday, May 20, 2024, that the government plans to build farm-to-market roads amounting to nearly P3 billion in Central Visayas. Marcos, who used to head the Department of Agriculture concurrently, said building farm-to-market roads must be made a priority to address supply chain problems. | Photo from the Official Facebook page of Bongbong Marcos

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday announced that the government plans to build farm-to-market roads amounting to nearly P3 billion in Central Visayas.

Speaking to farmer-beneficiaries during a land distribution ceremony in Negros Oriental, Marcos said the government will dedicate P100 million for farm-to-market roads in the province.

“Marami pa po tayo napaplanong farm-to-market road na nakakahalaga ng halos P3 bilyon na gagawin sa Bohol, sa Cebu sa Siquijor at siyempre dito sa Negros Oriental,” said Marcos in his speech.

(We have a lot of planned farm-to-market roads that cost almost P3 billion that will be built in Bohol, Cebu, Siquijor, and of course, here in Negros Oriental.)

“Sa pagpapagawa ng kalsadang ito mas mapapadali ng pagdadala ninyo ng inyong ani sa mga pamilihan (In making these roads, you can more easily bring your harvest to the market),” said Marcos.

According to the Palace, P100 million will be dedicated to farm-to-market roads in Negros Oriental, which will be constructed in the municipalities of Amlan, Dauin, Ayungon, Tanjay, Tayasan, Bindoy, and Bais City.

Marcos, who used to head the Department of Agriculture concurrently, said building farm-to-market roads must be made a priority to address supply chain problems.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1942392/marcos-farm-to-market-roads-will-be-built-in-central-visayas>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

## **DA: Onion import ban extended to July**

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:44 AM May 21, 2024



**PRICED TO MAKE YOU CRY** The Inquirer went to Marikina Public Market on Tuesday and confirmed that red onions, like the ones sold at this stall, are being sold at P600 per kilo, as reported by the Department of Agriculture. —Grig C. Montegrando

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is extending the ban on onion importations “maybe until July” as the country is assured of a stable supply and prices, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said on Monday.

“We will extend the ban on onion importation. Cold storage facilities in onion-producing areas are full and prices in retail markets are low. There’s no reason to import,” Tiu Laurel said.

According to him, an importation round will only be done when necessary, particularly in case of a spike in prices and should domestic supply fall short due to “unscrupulous” traders.

Only if necessary

“Personally, I am monitoring the situation. If ever there is a spike in onion prices, that may mean there is probably a lack of supply, there are unscrupulous traders. Then, we will activate our importation only when necessary,” Tiu Laurel said.

In January, the DA temporary halted the entry of imported onions into the country until May—with a possible extension until July—to prevent further depressing retail prices due to a supply glut.

Tiu Laurel said at the time that the fresh harvest plus the late arrival of 99 tons of imported onions resulted in an oversupply of the produce.

Ordered in December 2023, the imported onions arrived in the country in the first two weeks of January this year.

But since then, onion prices have been good, Tiu Laurel said, citing the DA’s latest monitoring.

According to him, red onions are selling at P60 to P70 per kilogram in Balintawak Market in Quezon City while white onions are priced at P60 per kg.

On Jan. 19 this year after the DA announced the importation ban, local red onions were being sold at P110 to P200 per kg. Imported red onions, on the other hand, were cheaper at between P80 and P170 per kg.

Local white onions were priced at between P70 and P140 per kg while imported white onions retailed from P80 to P140 per kg.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1942780/da-onion-import-ban-extended-to-july>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# DTI, DA ramp up price watch as La Niña nears

By: [Alden M. Monzon](#), [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:32 AM May 21, 2024



Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual —official website of the Presidential Communications Office

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) are ramping up their price monitoring of basic necessities and prime commodities as the country prepares for the coming La Niña weather phenomenon marked by heavier rainfall and possibly more frequent and intense typhoons.

Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual issued the statement after welcoming the strong stance and support from Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. in their joint efforts to combat price manipulators and protect consumers during the upcoming season.

“We are intensifying our efforts to ensure even more effective oversight, particularly as we brace for the impacts of La Niña,” Pascual said.

He added that they were also working closely with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to reactivate the Local Price Coordinating Councils, which he said were crucial partners in their price monitoring initiatives.

Further, the trade chief reminded the public that automatic price control comes into effect in areas declared under a state of calamity due to La Niña.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration raised its La Niña Watch in the country on March 7.

### **Pagasa raises La Niña Watch as forecasts show early onset**

According to the state weather bureau, the transition from the current El Niño to La Niña is already happening, with a shift to a neutral condition— when there is neither El Niño nor La Niña—expected around June, and a switch to La Niña possibly by July.

### **Enforcing the law**

Meanwhile, Pascual said that his office was steadfast in enforcing the law, vowing that any individuals caught engaging in illegal price manipulation would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, echoing the warning Teodoro issued on Sunday.

Under the Price Act (Republic Act No. 7581), penalties for price manipulation include imprisonment of five to 15 years, with fines ranging from P5,000 to P2 million.

Aside from the Department of National Defense (DND) and the DILG, the DTI is also working with the DA to ensure fair prices and protect consumer welfare.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he was “personally monitoring” the prices of agricultural products such as rice and corn.

“Since I assumed the post as secretary of the Department of Agriculture, I am personally monitoring the prices of food items being sold in public markets in different parts of the country,” Tiu Laurel said in Filipino.

He was also responding to Teodoro’s warning that the government would not hesitate to go after hoarders and manipulators who will prey on consumers amid La Niña.

Teodoro, who chairs the government’s Task Force El Niño, said earlier that the DND was ready to provide support to agencies involved in the price monitoring of basic necessities and prime commodities.

“Whatever support is needed by the [DTI] and the [DA], rest assured we are here ready to assist them,” he said.

“Access to affordable basic commodities such as rice is exceptionally crucial to millions of Filipino consumers. Any sudden fluctuation in the price of rice resonates [in] the daily lives of Filipinos,” he added.

Executive Order No. 53 signed by President Marcos in January reactivated the El Niño task force, which is tasked to develop a comprehensive disaster preparedness and rehabilitation plan for El Niño and La Niña to help the public cope and minimize their devastating effects.

Aside from price monitoring, Tiu Laurel also activated the Climate Resilient Agriculture Steering Committee to provide strategic direction and oversee the mobilization of DA resources for climate change response.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1942751/dti-da-ramp-up-price-watch-as-la-nina-nears>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Marcos vows to fix flood control system as La Niña looms

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:06 PM May 20, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. promised to fix the country's flood control system amid threats of a looming La Niña phenomenon.

During a media interview in Tacloban, Marcos was asked what aid the government could provide as La Niña has been forecast to affect the country.



**ALL DRY** A farmer in Pagadian City in Zamboanga del Sur province visits her rice farm, now all dried up due to the absence of rain amid the El Niño weather phenomenon. The Zamboanga Peninsula is among the 11 regions in the country worst hit by the dry spell and drought. —PHOTO COURTESY OF PAGADIAN CITY AGRICULTURE OFFICE

“It is something that we have to learn to live with already. It is almost normal. So ready naman kami (So we are ready),” said Marcos.

“But of course, in the long-term, ang talagang solusyon diyan is ‘yung flood control. Aayusin natin ‘yung flood control. Gagawin natin irrigation. Magiipon tayo ng tubig para kapag naabutan tayo ng tagtuyo, kagaya ngayon, ay meron tayo pagkukuhaan ng tubig,” said Marcos.

(But of course, in the long term, the real solution to that is flood control. We will fix the flood control. We will do irrigation. We will save water so that when we are hit by drought, like now, we will have a water source.)

Due to the El Niño phenomenon, a severe dry season has been wreaking havoc on the agricultural sector, damaging more than P6 billion worth of crops, etc.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1942480/marcos-vows-to-fix-flood-control-system-as-la-nina-looms>

# **Rice: Lessons not learned**

By: [Cielito F. Habito](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:10 AM May 21, 2024

Moves to amend Republic Act No. 11203 or the rice tariffication law (RTL) of 2019 illustrate the “no free lunch” principle quite aptly. Politicians promise us that the amendments will bring down domestic rice prices by up to P30 per kilo. Is that possible? Well, yes. But it would mean putting money in our right pocket by taking it out of our left pocket. It’s we taxpayers who will end up paying more so that we rice eaters will pay less. And this subsidy would be done in a roundabout way with high administrative costs, and quite likely, leakages into wrong pockets—so in the end, we will take out from our left pocket more than what we get in our right pocket. In short, though not obvious to most, we ultimately pay even more for the “cheaper” rice!

Note, too, that studies have always shown our overall tax system to be regressive. Translation: it puts a heavier burden on the poor, who pay a higher percentage of their incomes in taxes than the rich (because most of the taxes we all pay are indirect taxes on goods and services we buy). That means it’s also the poor who the rice subsidy will hurt more. In the end, no one gets better off (and many get worse off)—except proponents who may win more votes by making people believe they did them a favor. Sadly, in the reality of Philippine politics and governance, that’s enough motivation for policymakers to support patently bad policies—and this has been the story of our laggard nation over decades.

The key amendment being pushed is to let the National Food Authority (NFA) trade in rice again, a function the RTL removed precisely because of the distortions and malpractices that it bred and perpetuated for decades. When I first joined government as an assistant secretary at the National Economic and Development Authority in 1990, NFA figured prominently in many meetings I attended. It was the second top contributor to the persistently huge public sector deficit at the time, next to the oil price stabilization fund that oil industry deregulation later abolished. This left NFA as the top drain on public coffers, with the agency’s debt running into triple digits of billion pesos; it was P158 billion by the time the RTL was enacted.

RTL turned the situation around. From one where rice, through NFA, was a sinkhole for taxpayer money, it raised tens of billions of pesos in revenues from import tariff collections on rice imports no longer done using taxpayer money, but rightly with the money of importers. These revenues are allocated to help rice farmers boost their productivity to lower costs, and in due time, prices. Before RTL, NFA would buy rice at high prices to help rice farmers and sell at low prices to help poor rice consumers. But buying high and selling low makes no business sense and amounts to commercial suicide, so we taxpayers were always the default recourse to pay for its persistent losses. And that means all of us, including those who may not even eat rice at all! Under RTL, instead of perennially losing money on NFA's rice trading, the new policy regime even raised substantial funds we could genuinely help farmers with. Proponents of the amendment want us to reverse all that. They want NFA to engage in rice trading again and compete with private importers in a lopsided playing field where NFA imports rice duty-free (government can't tax itself) while the rest pay a hefty 35-percent tariff. Knowing they can't afford to match NFA's duty-free prices and subsidized logistics, sensible importers won't bother and stay away from directly importing rice (unless they work illicitly with NFA to do so—and this is what historically bred the rice cartels we all love to hate). That would force a situation where all rice imports would have to be done all over again by NFA, whose historically faulty judgment on when and how much to import led us to where we were before RTL. The distortions and malpractices NFA's monopoly created are what ultimately led Filipinos to pay two to three times what our Southeast Asian neighbors pay for their rice.

What needs fixing is not the RTL, but the implementation of the rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF) that its import tariff collections made possible. The Asian Development Bank funded a midterm evaluation of the RCEF last year, which found that use of the fund for the four major purposes provided in the law—seeds, mechanization, credit, and training/extension—has been problematic. Farm machines couldn't be procured due to bureaucratic bottlenecks, and some of those procured “aren't suitable to local conditions”; credit's overall reach to rice farmers was “low and skewed to specific regions” and “small-holder farmers are being ruled out”; farmers were being trained repeatedly instead of more farmers being trained; and many more. Let's not bark at the wrong tree.

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/173850/rice-lessons-not-learned>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Senate urged to adopt House version of rice tariff law amendments

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:44 PM May 20, 2024



MANILA, Philippines – Taguig 2nd District Rep. Amparo Maria Zamora on Monday proposed that the Senate adopt the House of Representatives version of proposed amendments to Republic Act No. 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) so that Congress can pass the changes even if there are only a few session days left.

In a press briefing on Monday, Zamora said that if the Senate adopts House Bill (HB) No. 10381, a bicameral conference committee would no longer be needed to thresh out differences between the House and Senate versions.

Technically, the House and the Senate have until Friday to approve the amendments, as Congress will go on a sine die adjournment on May 24.

After this, the next time that plenary sessions would be held was on July 22, which coincided with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s third State of the Nation Address (Sona).

“Even if we have three days to go only, we are hoping that our Senate counterparts, our wish is they adopt the House version so that we would no longer need to go



through a bicam(eral conference committee),” Zamora told reporters in the Batasang Pambansa complex.

“And therefore, the passage of these amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law would be quicker,” she added.

On May 14, the [House approved the proposed RTL on second reading](#), which seeks to reinstate some of the National Food Authority (NFA) functions in a bid to lower rice prices.

A day later, it was [brought back to the plenary](#) for some minor changes.

With the approval on May 15, HB No. 10381 can be brought to the floor for third reading within the week, because it complies with the rule that three session days are required before bills approved on second reading can be considered for third reading. Zambales 1st District Rep. Jefferson Khonghun, who also attended the briefing, said that the bill’s goal is good. It seeks to give NFA back its power to buy and store rice and to make rice cheaper by inserting a power to monitor and regulate prices.

“The goal of the proposed measure is good because it seeks to strengthen the government’s power to store rice and create an intervention where rice is made cheaper during emergencies and when there is a supply shortage,” Khonghun said in Filipino.

“So, we are appealing to our counterparts in the Senate that I hope they can prioritize this to ensure rice security in the country,” he added.

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 in June, if the bill is signed into law.

But while the mood at the House regarding the proposed amendments was optimistic, [some senators have been lukewarm](#) to changing the RTL.

According to Senate members like Senator Cynthia Villar, giving back some of NFA’s mandates — like allowing it to directly import and sell rice again — might lead to corruption anew.

“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 said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1942569/fwd-solon-suggestion-on-senate-adopting-house-version-of-rice-tariff-law-amendments>

# Onion import ban extended until July

May 20, 2024 | 9:06 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it will extend the suspension of onion imports until July, following an increase in domestic production.

*“I-e-extend natin ’yung ban sa onion imports, puno ang mga cold storage sa onion producing areas, (We will extend the ban on onion imports, cold storage facilities in onion producing areas are full),”* Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters on Monday.

He added that the DA sees no need for more imports as onion prices have remained stable.

According to DA price monitors, the average retail price of domestically grown red onions was between P70 to P160 per kilogram, while white onions sold for between P60 and P130 per kilo as of May 17.

The national average retail price of red onions in early May was P123.75 per kilo, against the P125.76 per kilo in late April.

*“If there is a spike in price, and that means there is probably a lack of supply or there is an unscrupulous trader, then we will activate our imports whenever, but only when necessary,”* Mr. Laurel said.

In January, the agency ordered a temporary halt to onion imports to halt the decline in farmgate prices.

The DA has said that shipment delays resulted in the arrival of 99 metric tons (MT) of onions ordered in December between Jan. 1 and 15.

He had said that once the supply of onions softens, the DA will approve imports, particularly if El Niño affects onion production.

During the first quarter, onion production was 201.25 thousand MT, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. This was 36.8% higher from a year earlier.

The DA attributed the production growth to a 40% increase in the land planted to onions. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/20/596378/onion-import-ban-extended-until-july/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# More local price councils set for reactivation

## — DTI

May 20, 2024 | 9:06 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is working on the reactivation of more local price coordinating councils (LPCCs) to ensure effective oversight of the market during disruptive climate events such as La Niña.

“We are intensifying our efforts to ensure even more effective oversight, particularly as we brace for the impacts of La Niña,” Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said in a statement on Monday.

“In addition, we are working closely with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to reactivate the LPCCs, which are crucial partners in our price monitoring initiatives,” he added.

According to the DILG, 1,335 or 78% of the 1,716 local government units have reactivated their LPCCs.

LPCCs are tasked with coordinating and rationalizing programs to stabilize prices and supply, recommend suggested retail prices or ceiling prices for certain basic necessities, and conduct in-depth analyses of price fluctuations in their respective areas.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pascual said that the Department of National Defense has committed to supporting agencies involved in price monitoring of basic necessities and prime commodities at the recent Presidential task force meeting on El Niño response.

“This collaboration underscores the government’s unified approach to safeguarding the public against exploitative practices,” he said.

“We remind the public that in areas declared under a state of calamity due to La Niña, automatic price control comes into effect,” he added.

Under Republic Act 7581, or the Price Act, prices of basic necessities are automatically frozen at their prevailing levels for up to 60 days in areas declared under a state of calamity.

“The DTI is steadfast in enforcing these regulations, and any individuals caught engaging in illegal price manipulation will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” Mr. Pascual said.

PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), the government weather service, said there is a 60% change in La Niña occurring between June and August as El Niño weakens.

In 2024, the DA said that it is preparing for a “more destructive” La Niña, which it expects to affect crops late in the year. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/20/596377/more-local-price-councils-set-for-reactivation-dti/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Metro Pacific's P2-billion Laguna dairy farm secures BoI approval

May 20, 2024 | 9:03 pm



REUTERS

THE Board of Investments (BoI) said on Monday that it approved the application for registration of Metro Pacific Dairy Farms, Inc., which plans to start operations in March 2025 at a site in Laguna.

In a statement, the BoI said that the project, which will require an initial investment of P2 billion, will make dairy products and plant-based beverages. It is due to start operations in March 2025 in Laguna.

“We at the BoI are excited about the introduction of advanced dairy farming technology, which promises to deliver superior quality and production efficiency while significantly boosting local dairy and plant-based beverage production,” BoI Managing Head and Trade Undersecretary Ceferino S. Rodolfo said.

“This initiative is a crucial stride towards enhancing our food security and reducing our dependence on imported milk. Achieving greater self-sufficiency in our dairy supply likewise ensures that Filipino consumers have access to fresh, high-quality local products,” he added.

Metro Pacific’s facility will house a thousand cows producing up to 6.5 million liters of raw milk annually. It will use advanced dairy farming practices using Israeli technology.

“The project aims to address the gap in our local dairy production capacity while also catering to the rising interest in plant-based dairy alternatives,” the BoI said.

The National Dairy Authority estimates that the Philippines imports 99% of its dairy requirement of 2.93 billion liters.

Production capacity for plant-based milk is estimated at 24.4 million liters, according to the Rapid Industry Appraisal of the Philippine Plant-Based Foods Industry commissioned by the investment promotion agency.

“Metro Pacific’s project is expected to boost this capacity by 12%, reaching 27.4 million liters per year and enabling the local supply to meet 95% of the forecasted demand of 28.8 million liters by 2025,” the BoI said.

— **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/20/596372/metro-pacifics-p2-billion-laguna-dairy-farm-secures-boi-approval/>

**REMATE:**

# Importation ban sa sibuyas pinalawig ng DA chief

May 20, 2024 14:57



MANILA, Philippines – Nakatakdang palawigin ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ang umiiral na importation ban sa sibuyas kasabay ng pananatiling stable ng suplay ng naturang agricultural product.

Sa pagtaya ng DA, inaasahang aabot sa 89,384.99 metric tons (MT) ang projected onion harvest output mula Abril hanggang Hunyo, mas mataas sa naitalang 84,903.99 MT sa kaparehong panahon noong nakaraang taon.

“Ie-extend natin ‘yung ban sa onion importation. Puno ang mga cold storages sa onion producing areas. Mababa naman ang presyo sa merkado, so there’s no reason to import,” sinabi ni Laurel sa isang ambush interview nitong Lunes, Mayo 20.



Ani Laurel, ang suplay ng sibuyas ay magiging sapat hanggang Hulyo ngayong taon.

Mula nang maitalaga bilang DA chief, sinabi ni Laurel na minomonitor niya ang mga presyo ng agricultural products sa iba't ibang pamilihan sa bansa.

“Maayos naman ang presyo ng onion ngayon e. Sa Balintawak ang latest figures ko, PHP60, PHP70 (per kilo) ang pula, ang puti PHP60. Nung pumasok ako sa DA that time mga PHP140, PHP120, so stable naman,” sinabi pa ni Laurel.

Siniguro ng DA chief na paiiralin lamang nito ang onion importation “only if needed” o kung may mamonitor na pagtaas sa mga presyo nito.

Sa pinakahuling demand survey ng Philippine Statistics Authority, gumagamit ang isang Pinoy na 2.341 kilo ng sibuyas kada taon. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/importation-ban-sa-sibuyas-pinalawig-ng-da-chief/>

**REMATE:**

## **29/kilo bigas mabibili sa Kadiwa stores sa NCR**

May 20, 2024 07:52



MANILA, Philippines- Nagbebenta ang Department of Agriculture (DA) ng P29 kada kilo ng bigas sa limang Kadiwa stores sa Metro Manila, ayon sa Presidential Communications Office (PCO) nitong Linggo.

Kabilang sa Kadiwa stores na ito ang ADC Building ng Department of Agriculture – Central Office sa Quezon City; Kadiwa Center sa loob ng Bureau of Plant Industry sa Malate, Manila; Kadiwa Store sa kahabaan g Llano Road sa Barangay 167, Caloocan City; Kadiwa Store sa AMVA Housing, La Mesa Street sa Barangay Ugong, Valenzuela City; at Kadiwa Center sa PhilFIDA Compound, Talon Dos, Las Piñas City.

Ayon sa PCO, sinabi ng DA na maaaring bumili kada pamilya ng hanggang limang kilo ng bigas depende sa availability. Ibinebenta rin

ang iba pang biling tulad ng isda, itlog, sibuyas, bawang, gulany, at mga prutas sa Kadiwa stores.

“The sale of rice at P29 per kilo will continue as the government projects to produce more than 100 million kilos of rice by August this year through contract farming agreement with Farmers’ Cooperatives Associations,” pahayag ng DA.

Ang Kadiwa Program ay flagship program ng Marcos Administration, na nagbibigay-daan upang maibenta ng mga lokal na magsasaka ang kanilang produkto nang direkta sa consumers. Nilalayon nitong tulungan ang mga magsasaka na kumita ng mas malaki at makapaghatid ng abot-kayang biling sa mga mamimili. RNT/SA

<https://remate.ph/p29-kilo-bigas-mabibili-sa-kadiwa-stores-sa-ncr/>

**REMATE:**

# Mga mangingisdang Pinoy ‘di matitinag sa paghuli ng Tsina sa ‘trespassers’ sa WPS

May 20, 2024 08:18



MANILA, Philippines- Nanindigan ang New Masinloc Fishermen Association nitong Linggo na ipagpapatuloy nilang mangisda sa West Philippine Sea (WPS) sa kabila ng regulasyon ng China na ididitene ang mga dayuhang “manghihimasok” sa South China Sea.

Sa isang panayam, kinondena ni Leonardo Cuaresma, presidente ng Zambales-based association, ang banta ng China na huhulihin ang WPS trespassers, at sinabing alam ng mga Pilipinong nangingisda lamang sila sa teritoryo ng Pilipinas.

“Hindi nila dapat gawin ‘yan sapagkat kami po, alam namin ang ating batas. Wala naman tayong nilalabag ayon sa ating fishery law. Bukod diyan ay wala naman kaming anumang binu-bully o hina-harass na mga kalahi nila,” giit ni Cuaresma.

“Alam namin na ‘yan ay teritoryo natin at pag-aari ng Pilipinas. Kung kaya’t wala silang dapat gawin sa bagay na ‘yan,” dagdag niya.

Binibigyang-awtorisasyon ng kontrobersyal na regulasyon ng Beijing, na epektibo sa Hunyo, na iditene ng China Coast Guard ang “trespassers” hanggang 60 araw, batay sa ulat ng Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post.

Saklaw ng claim ng China sa halos kabuuan ng South China Sea ang West Philippine Sea, kasama ang Scarborough Shoal na matatagpuan 124 nautical miles sa kanluaran ng Zambales at saklaw ng 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) ng Pilipinas.

Sa kabila nito, iginiit ng New Masinloc Fishermen Association na ipagpapatuloy nila ang kanilang hanapbuhay at binalaan ang China na “maghanda” sakaling may maarestong mangingisdang Pinoy.

“Hangga’t alam namin na wala tayong nilalabag [na batas], ay patuloy pa rin ang aming pangingisda diyan. Dati naman nang lumalabas na para na pong magnanakaw ang ating mangingisda sa lugar na ‘yan,” ani Cuaresma.

Umapela rin siya sa pamahalaan ng Pilipinas na magtalaga ng karagdagang tauhan upang magpatrolya sa West Philippine Sea araw-araw.

“Kung kinakailangan siguro ay ibuhos natin ang ating buong lakas parang sa ganon ay makita nila na pinapakita natin na hindi nila teritoryo ang lugar na ‘yan,” patuloy niya.

Matatandaang tinuglisa ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. noong Sabado ang regulasyon ng China, kung saan inihayag niyang ang aksyong ito “would be completely unacceptable to the Philippines.”

“The position that we take is that that is unacceptable, and we will take whatever measures to always protect our citizens,” sabi ni Marcos. RNT/SA

<https://remate.ph/mga-mangingisdang-pinoy-di-matitinag-sa-paghuli-ng-tsina-sa-trespassers-sa-wps/>

**REMATE:**

# Ex-agri chief Arthur Yap abswelto ng SC

May 20, 2024 19:45



MANILA, Philippines – Pinawalang-sala ng Supreme Court si dating Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap sa kasong graft at malversation kaugnay sa ilegal na paggamit ng congressional pork barrel funds mula 2007 hanggang 2009.

Sa 29 pahinang decision ng Supreme Court Third Division, kinatigan nito ang petition for certiorari ni Yap at ibinasura ang apat na criminal cases na isinampa laban sa kanya sa Sandiganbayan Third Division.

Sa rekord ng kaso, taon 2017 sinampaham si Yap ng dalawang bilang ng kasong graft, malversation of public funds at malversation through falsification ng ito ay kalihim ng Department of Agriculture (DA).

Bunsod ito ng nilagdaan na memorandum of agreement (MOA) sa pagitan ng DA at National Agribusiness Corp. (Nabcor) at ang addendum sa paglalabas ng P8 million mula sa Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) ni dating Misamis Occidental Rep. Marina Clarete to Kabuhayan at Kalusugang Alay sa Masa Foundation (KKAMFI).

Bigo ang KKAMFI na ipatupad ang mga proyekto na pinondohan ng PDAF ni Clarete.

Sinabi ng SC na may ‘grave abuse of discretion’ ang Sandiganbayan ng ideklara nito na may sapat na basehan para hatulan si Yap sa mga kaso.

Ang kawalan ng mahahalagang impormasyon sa isinampang kaso laban kay Yap ay kapansin pansin. Hindi rin napatunayan kung bakit siya dapat managot.

Kinatigan ng SC ang argumento ni Yap na hindi maituturing na pagpapabaya sa kanyang parte ng pumirma ito sa MOA sa pagitan ng DA at Nabcor.

Binigyan-diin ng Supreme Court ang inilahad ng Office of the Solicitor General na ipinatupad ang MOA batay sa go signal ni dating Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. *Teresa Tavares*

<https://remate.ph/ex-agri-chief-arthur-yap-abswelto-ng-sc/>



**ABANTE:**

## Mga magsasaka, mangingisda swak sa Gcash, Farm Konekt

- Abante News
- May 20, 2024



Sanin-pwersa ang nangungunang finance wallet na GCash at Farm Konekt upang makapagbigay ng non-collateralized loans para sa mga Pilipinong magsasaka at mangingisda.

Ang naturang programa ay patatakbuin at pangungunahan ng Fuse Lending, ang lending o credit arm ng kompanya.

Ayon kay Fuse Lending president at chief executive Tony Isidro, ang naturang partnership ay nakahanay sa misyon ng GCash na makapagsilbi sa bawat isang Pilipino saan mang panig ng bansa.

Idinagdag pa niya na pinaiiigting ng programang ito ang kanilang dedikasyon na makapagsilbi sa mga Pilipinong magsasaka.

“Farm Konekt’s connections with the farmer groups make them a good on-ground arm for us to better understand the needs of our farmers, who form one of the most important sectors of our economy,” sabi niya.

Ang programa ay nakatakda ring makapagbigay ng akses sa mga magsasaka sa iba’t ibang serbisyo ng GCash app katulad ng GSave at GInsure na maaaring makatulong sa pagpapalago ng kanilang mga ipon at pagsisiguro na ligtas ang kanilang mga pondo.

Ang Farm Konekt ay isang community-based farm management enterprise platform na sumusuri at nagpopokus sa data-driven clustered production upang mapataas at masigurado ang demand ng mga produkto ng mga Pilipinong magsasaka.

Sa kasalukuyan, nakapagtala na ang GCash ng mahigit 11,800 lupa at 11,600 magsasakang kanilang naagapayan gamit ang suporta ng mga users mula sa kanilang in-app sustainability effort na “GForest.”

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/05/20/mga-magsasaka-mangingisda-swak-sa-gcash-farm-konekt/>

# Senators urged to approve House bill on rice stock

By Maricel Cruz

May 20, 2024, 10:35 pm

With only three session days remaining before adjournment, House leaders on Monday urged senators to consider a bill aimed at improving the country's rice buffer stock and reducing the price of the staple food.

House Bill (HB) 10381, which seeks to amend Republic Act (RA) 8178, also known as the Agricultural Tariffication Act, as previously amended by the Rice Tariffication Law, was slated for approval on the third and final reading by the House of Representatives on Tuesday.

In a press conference, Deputy Speaker David Suarez expressed hope senators can still allocate time and effort to pass the measure, which has the potential to significantly lower the price of rice by P15, thereby alleviating the financial strain on consumers.

Some senators opposed the bill due to concerns about the National Food Authority (NFA) regaining its power in rice sales and imports, citing past corruption issues.

Suarez, representative of Quezon's second district, argued that the proposed amendments, particularly regarding the NFA, are not about corruption but rather about ensuring food security and reducing rice prices.

"Kung maipasa po natin ito at maisabatas at ma-implement sa mabilis na panahon, mapapababa kaagad natin ang presyo ng bigas by almost P15," Suarez pointed out.

(If we can pass this and enact it and implement it quickly, we can immediately reduce the price of rice by almost P15)

He added, "I think that in itself is an objective we should all be united for. So I hope the Senate can act on that."

As the second regular session of the 19th Congress nears its end, House Assistant Majority Leader and Taguig 2nd District Rep. Amparo Maria Zamora urged senators to consider adopting the House version to expedite its passage.

“Kahit na three days to go na lang, umaasa po kami na ‘yung aming mga Senate counterparts, ang wish namin, i-adopt na lang sana nila ‘yung House version para hindi na po kailangang dumaan sa bicam, and therefore, mas mapabilis ang pagpasa nitong pag-amyenda sa Rice Tariffication Law,” Zamora said.

(Even if there are only three days to go, we hope that it will be ours Senate counterparts, we wish they would just adopt the House version so that they don’t have to go through bicam, and therefore, the passage of this amendment to the Rice Tariffication Law will be faster)

Congress is set to adjourn sine die on May 22.

For his part, Assistant Majority Leaders Jay Khonghun (Zambales, 1st District) and Francisco Paolo Ortega V (La Union, 1st District) emphasized the importance of the proposed legislation.

Khonghun praised the bill for aiming to help the government improve its ability to store rice and intervene in the market to keep rice prices affordable during emergencies and supply shortages.

“Nakikiusap tayo sa mga counterpart natin sa Senado na para din sa seguridad ng bigas sa bansa eh sana pag-isipan nilang mabuti at maipasa ang batas na ito,” Khonghun said.

(We are appealing to our counterparts in the Senate who are also for the stability of rice supply in the country, I hope they will think carefully and pass this law)

Ortega noted that several senators have voiced agreement with the House’s position on reducing rice prices.

However, he urged them to take action, as the bill is already considered an urgent measure.

“So, habang wala naman po silang sinasalang pa na alternatives or amendments, we are still hopeful that they will act on this kasi nga po it is already treated as an urgent measure,” Ortega said.

(So, while they are not giving any alternatives or amendments, we are still hopeful that they will act on this because it is already treated as an urgent measure)

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314449082/senators-urged-to-approve-house-bill-on-rice-stock.html>

# Rice stall cleaned out

By Manny Palmero

May 20, 2024, 11:00 pm



A Kadiwa Store at the Department of Agriculture in Quezon City sells out its one week supply of rice which it vended for P29 a kilo. The operator said they have to wait for the next supply of 400 sacks from the National Food Authority which lasts for only four days since they can dispose of 100 sacks a day.

<https://manilastandard.net/gallery/314449118/rice-stall-cleaned-out.html>

# SC clears ex-Agriculture Secretary Yap of graft

By Rey E. Requejo

May 21, 2024, 12:20 am

The Supreme Court (SC) has exonerated former Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap of graft and malversation charges in connection with his alleged involvement in the P8-million alleged ghost livelihood projects funded by the pork barrel of former Misamis Occidental Rep. Marina Clarete.

In a 29-page decision promulgated on April 15 but only made public on May 16, the SC's Third Division through Associate Justice Japar Dimaampao granted the petition filed by Yap, reversing and setting aside the resolutions issued by the Sandiganbayan that denied his motion for partial reconsideration with motion to quash information and another motion for reconsideration.

"It is crystal clear that the court a quo acted with grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction in successively denying Yap's bids for the quashal of the Informations filed against him and the reconsideration of the Sandiganbayan Resolution. With these considerations in mind, it strains credulity how the anti-graft court arrived at its conclusions, running roughshod over the basic tenets of due process, to the damage and prejudice of Yap," the decision stated.

Associate Justices Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa, Henri Jean Paul Inting, Samuel Gaerlan, and Maria Filomena Singh concurred with the ruling.

It can be recalled that Yap was charged before the anti-graft court with two counts of graft, one count of malversation of public funds, and another count of malversation through falsification for signing a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the National Agribusiness Corporation (NABCOR) on the implementation of projects funded by Clarete's pork barrel.

In his appeal to the SC, Yap argued that the anti-graft court abused its discretion when it ruled that the information against him was sufficient to cause his indictment.

Yap said that the only overt act attributed to him is his having represented the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the execution of the DA-NABCOR MOA.

However, he added that the prosecution failed to present evidence that he acted with manifest partiality, evident bad faith or gross inexcusable negligence, or evidence that he caused undue injury or gave unwarranted benefit to any private party in executing the DA-NABCOR agreement.

The former Agriculture Secretary said there is also no evidence that he committed the crime of malversation of public funds as he did not have custody over the subject PDAF funds.

Moreover, he said there is no evidence that he misappropriated or benefited from such funds or evidence that he allowed another person to appropriate the same through negligence or abandonment.

As to the case of malversation through falsification, Yap said it was not even included in the complaint, thereby violating his right to be informed of the charges against him.

He said he also did not have any participation in the preparation and submission by Kabuhayan at Kalusugan Alay sa Masa Foundation, Inc. of allegedly spurious documents to show that the livelihood projects were implemented.

In siding with Yap's arguments, the SC ruled that the anti-graft court committed grave abuse of discretion in holding that the information filed against him contained allegations sufficient to indict the former Agriculture chief for the offenses charged.

"Indeed, the mere signing of a MOA, which, in itself, does not present any iota of irregularity or illegality, does not prove that a person conspired with her co-accused public officials in violating Section 3 (e) of Republic Act 3019," the SC said.

As to Yap's purported malversation of public funds, the High Court said the prosecution failed to even establish how he could be considered an accountable officer who exercised effective control over the public funds or property suspected to have been appropriated or misappropriated.

The SC also accorded great weight and conviction to the contrary position taken by the Office of the Solicitor General as regards the Ombudsman's finding of probable cause against Yap in ruling in his favor.

Lastly, the High Tribunal said the inordinate delay in the proceedings of the Ombudsman is tantamount to a violation of Yap's right to speedy disposition of cases, adding that the complaint was filed in August 2014 while the preliminary investigation of the Ombudsman was only terminated in August 2017.

“To the mind of this Court, the Office of the Ombudsman failed to provide sufficient justification for the length of time it took to terminate its preliminary investigation,” the SC lamented.

Editor’s Note: This is an updated article. Originally posted with the headline SC clears ex-Agriculture Secretary Yap of graft

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314448952/sc-clears-ex-agriculture-secretary-yap-of-graft.html>



# Onion imports to stay suspended

By Janine Alexis Miguel

May 21, 2024

ONION imports will remain suspended up to July given sufficient domestic supplies and low market prices, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday.

"We will extend the ban on onion importation," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

"[C]old storage facilities in onion producing areas are full [and] prices in the market are low, so there's no reason to import," he added.

A temporary halt on onion imports up to May was ordered in January, with the DA citing a supply glut and plunging prices. At that time, it also said that the ban could be extended up to July should domestic production remain sufficient to meet demand.

First quarter output, the Philippine Statistics Authority recently reported, was 28.58 percent higher in terms of value at P8.098 billion.

Earlier this month, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said a 40-percent increase in the land area planted to onions had contributed.

Good weather was also a factor, he noted, with the only dampener to production being an armyworm infestation.

## ADVERTISEMENT

In March, the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. warned that the country might have to import onions as the armyworm infestation had been exacerbated by the El Niño weather pattern.

Tiu Laurel, however, said that local prices remained reasonable, with red onions selling between P60 and P70 per kilo and the white variety at P60 per kilo.

The situation is markedly different than in late 2022, when a supply shortage saw onion prices surge to over P700 per kilo.

"If prices spike, it likely means there is a supply shortage or an unscrupulous trader," Tiu Laurel said.

"In that case, we will activate our importation if necessary, but only if necessary."

He said the DA was constantly monitoring prices of all agricultural commodities nationwide and was also working to ensure that supplies remained sufficient to prevent price spikes.

Agriculture, Tiu Laurel noted, remains an important part of the Philippine economy, accounting for one in every four jobs and is a major contributor to the consumer price basket that determines the inflation rate.

"We need to ensure that future generations can rely on this sector by making agriculture sustainable through the promotion of environmental stewardship, enhancement of biodiversity, and mitigation of climate change impacts," he said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/21/business/top-business/onion-imports-to-stay-suspended/1947650>

# Whose interest does Cynthia Villar serve?

ON THE CONTRARY

By Antonio Contreras

May 21, 2024

THE most notorious moments of retiring and termed-out Sen. Cynthia Villar in the Senate were usually on occasions when she berates resource persons who had the misfortune of displeasing her. One of these was when she belittled the research being conducted by government agencies, boasting of her being an intelligent person, yet she could not understand the importance of such research activities.

Ironically, Villar takes pride in her authorship of the Rice Tariffication Law, or Republic Act 11203, and its component Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), where revenues collected from the imposition of tariffs on imported rice are spent on things that would require scientific research. Fifty percent of the RCEF is earmarked to the Philippine Center for Post-harvest Development and Modernization to provide farmers with rice farm machinery and equipment. Any intelligent person should know that research and development is an important requirement to perform this task.

Thirty percent of RCEF is to be spent by the Philippine Rice Research Institute for the development, propagation and promotion of inbred rice seeds to rice farmers. Again, this requires research. After all, Philrice, by its very name, is a rice research institute.

Recently, she berated the protected areas superintendent of the Chocolate Hills Natural Monument, a career forester, and accused her of incompetence for allowing private resorts to be established within what she thought were parts of the protected area. Had Villar

conducted her own research, she would not have missed the glaring fact that 97.5 percent of the areas she thinks are within the natural monument are already classified as alienable and disposable lands and that most of these resorts are in titled lands.

After being informed of this, Villar then pooh-poohed the landowners and dismissed their situation as merely unfortunate, perhaps as unfortunate as those being pressured to sell their lands to land developers who would like to convert them into malls and subdivisions. For someone in the real estate development industry and has converted agricultural land to malls, Villar must have, at the very least, understood and showed empathy for private landowners who would like to convert their titled lands that are marginally productive into resorts.

It is even more enraging that Villar, as chair of the Senate committee concerned, has consistently sat on the proposed National Land Use Act, a law that would have drawn the permanent boundaries of forest lands and protected areas. Such a law would have established the metes and bounds delimiting which areas are forest lands and protected areas and which are agricultural lands that can be constitutionally converted into alienable and disposable lands.

The 1987 Constitution is very clear. Section 4 of Article XII has provided that "The Congress shall, as soon as possible, determine by law the specific limits of forest lands and national parks, marking clearly their boundaries on the ground. Thereafter, such forest lands and national parks shall be conserved and may not be increased nor diminished, except by law." This was in 1987, and the framers used the phrase "as soon as possible" to indicate the urgency of the matter. However, and thanks to Villar, it is already 2024, thirty-seven years after the ratification of the Constitution, and yet the National Land Use Act has not been passed. The House approved the bill on third and final reading in 2021, but it died in Villar's committee, that it had to be refiled in the current Congress. Again, the House approved on third reading the proposed law in May 2023, but it is, again, still pending in Villar's committee in the Senate.

s if this dilatory tactic is not enough, Villar has also allowed every proposal to revise the 1975 Revised Forestry Reform Code, which was issued by then-president Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr. through Presidential Decree 705, to die in her committee. In 2021, during the last Congress, the Sustainable Forest Management bill was approved by the House on third and final reading but remained pending in Villar's committee, so it had to be refiled in the current Congress. In the face of emerging new problems, and of the wood shortage that is now being experienced in the country where almost seventy percent of our wood requirements are now imported, and of a forestry curriculum that appears to be heading toward multiple directions, effectively neglecting sustainable timber production in favor of climate change mitigation, the absence of an updated forest management law is potentially damaging to the interest of the sector, and of the country as a whole.

And now, Villar is reported to be opposing attempts to amend the Rice Tariffication Law, which will allow the government, through the National Food Authority (NFA), to intervene in the market in cases where rice prices increase excessively or acute rice shortages occur. The proposed amendment would allow NFA to procure locally milled rice and would have the option of purchasing a certain percentage of rice from accredited importers at cost, insurance and freight (CIF)-landed price, as declared by the importer. And if these measures are not enough, the NFA, after seeking permission from the president, would be allowed to directly import rice. These measures would help alleviate domestic supply gaps and stabilize the national rice supply, which will then help manage inflation in rice prices. To protect local farmers, the RCEF will be tweaked to rationalize the support package for agricultural modernization. All of these will continue under the same regime of allowing rice importation under a tariff system as originally prescribed in RA 11203, except that now the government's hands are no longer tied and can make moves to counter the inflationary effects of rice if solely sourced from traders and importers.

So, whose interest does Villar serve?

All of these proposed bills are attempts to serve the interest of the people. Villar has already allowed the land use and sustainable forest management bills to die in her committee. Let us all hope that she will not do the same to the proposed amendment to RA 11203.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/21/opinion/columns/whose-interest-does-cynthia-villar-serve/1947616>

# Some last thoughts on food import machinations

ROUGH TRADE

By Ben Kritz

May 21, 2024

FOOD imports are obviously a delicate subject here in the Philippines, and the issuance of Administrative Order (AO) 20 last month was, on its own, a huge leap in the wrong direction. The issuance of AO 23 last week, however, might fix the flaws in AO 20 and help to make it work as intended.

AO 20 sought to remove a number of perceived non-tariff barriers to imports based on the fundamental reasoning that any increase in the food supply, regardless of what the source of that supply is, results in lower food prices. Food prices have been the biggest driver of sticky price inflation for more than a year already, and that is something that politicians and economic nerds alike are understandably quite anxious to control.

AO 20 was primarily a creation of the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), which, for all its academic brainpower, looked at the problem in simplistic, short-armed terms. Importing food to make up for deficiencies in domestic production should reduce prices, but in practice that has not been the case; overall food supply has only increased by a modest amount, if at all, and prices remain elevated. That this has persisted in spite of a number of measures to enable increased imports in recent years (for example, the Rice Tariffication Law) should have been a clue that the problems causing constrained supply and higher prices are not related to importation at all, but that clue was missed or ignored in favor of the easier misinterpretation that, "if something's not working, it's because you're not doing it enough."

The main intended consequences of AO 20 are an increase in the number of registered importers, a loosening of import volume controls on key commodities such as sugar and fish, and streamlining import processing in various ways, including making Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSIC) subject to the Anti-Red Tape Act (Republic Act 9485), i.e., granting them automatic approval if not processed within a prescribed deadline. This particular provision is particularly alarming, as it is a health and safety issue, for a country that faces persistent threats of things like African swine fever, bird flu, and the fact that the phrase "food safety" doesn't exist in any Chinese language, enabling a situation where something deadly can slip through due to mere bureaucratic timing is stupid and irresponsible.

AO 23, on the other hand, was a welcome surprise. I was made aware several weeks ago that there had been an organized effort to get the government to adopt the system of pre-shipment inspections and electronic invoices from shippers, but that the proposal had been rejected on NEDA's concern that "it would be inflationary." Then AO 20 appeared, and that seemed to signal the end of legitimate efforts to enforce some control and regularity over imports until some faith was restored about a week ago.

The potential loophole concerning SPSICs contained in AO 20 still needs to be addressed, but some of the other troubling parts of that order will be kept in check by the provisions of AO 23. Would-be importers who are looking to game the system thanks to the looser requirements for accreditation under AO 20 will likely be discouraged by the new double layer of checks on import shipments. The electronic invoicing system also means that information about import shipments can be more easily shared between the Bureau of Customs (BoC) and other concerned agencies. Questionable shipments could even be halted before they leave their ports of origin in most cases, whereas ones that are especially critically needed can be safely expedited.



The biggest advantage of AO 23 is that it will greatly ease the workload of the BoC. Contrary to popular impressions, the BoC is not handicapped with corruption, at least not in the Marcos era; Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio has done a good job of weeding out the bad actors, partly because, unlike most of his predecessors, he seems to regard doing so as a normal, ongoing part of his job. Rather, the shortcomings of the BoC that have allowed smuggling to persist are largely due to the bureau simply being overwhelmed by having to manage a big volume of imports with an inefficient system. The new system means there are fewer steps for the BoC to complete for every shipment, and those fewer steps are each significantly more efficient and reliable than what they are replacing. That frees up BoC personnel to do other necessary things, such as conducting spot-checks and inspections of unusual shipments more thoroughly and quickly.

As for the new system leading to higher prices, there is probably something to that, but not much of something. The costs of pre-inspection shipments and preparing electronic invoices will be borne by the shippers, who will naturally adjust their prices upward to compensate for it, but the difference would only be a small fraction of a percent. And the adjustment would not necessarily be "inflationary," which implies a continuous increase, but rather a one-time increase. So, for example, the price of a kilogram of imported beef might increase by a peso or two for the first shipment under the new system, but it will stay that way; it won't increase by an additional peso or two with each subsequent shipment because of the system.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/21/opinion/columns/some-last-thoughts-on-food-import-machinations/1947598>

# Pangasinan to supply salt as coconut fertilizers

By Gabriel L. Cardinoza  
May 21, 2024

**LINGAYEN** – The provincial government of Pangasinan will soon supply agriculture grade salt to the Philippine Coconut Authority after the provincial board approved a resolution on May 20 authorizing Gov. Ramon Guico III to enter into an agreement with the PCA.

Vice Gov. Mark Ronald Lambino said that the provincial government will deliver some 4,180 bags of salt for the agency's coconut fertilization project this year.

The use of salt or sodium chloride as fertilizer is a practical means of increasing coconut production, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA) website.

Salt is the cheapest and best source of chlorine to increase copra yield, it added.

The DA said that a PCA survey conducted nationwide showed that at least 40 coconut producing provinces are severely chlorine deficient.

"So, like what I've said last week, the province is now slowly shifting from salt production to eventual sales and marketing," said Lambino.

"And we are expecting the PCA salt requirements to expand in the next few years," Lambino added.

In June last year, the provincial government took over the operations of a 473-hectare salt farm at Barangay Zaragoza in Bolinao town.

The salt farm, used to be run by the Pacific Farms Inc., was the largest contributor to the country's total salt production at 25,000 metric tons of salt a year. But the Department of Environment and Natural Resources closed the farm after the company's lease contract expired and was not renewed.

Since its first harvest on Dec. 21, 2023, the farm now boasts of a total harvest of 550 metric tons, said Nestor Batalla, assistant provincial agriculturist.

Batalla said that aside from the PCA, other business establishments from the different parts of province, especially food processors, have signified their desire to buy salt from the province.

"These are one of the first steps that we take to promote the salt that we produce," said Lambino.

The agreement will be signed by Guico and PCA chief Dexter Buted.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/21/regions/pangasinan-to-supply-salt-as-coconut-fertilizers/1947608>

# **SUPPLY, PRICES OF FOOD, COMMODITIES: Govt steps up preparations on La Niña**

By **Irma Isip**

-

May 21, 2024



A public market in Manila is shown on Oct. 21, 2022. The DND has called on the need to intensify price and supply monitoring on food and other commodities to protect consumers from profiteering. (Reuters Photo)

Government agencies are stepping up preparations in ensuring supply and prices of food and basic and prime commodities (BNPCs) as the country transitions from El Niño to La Niña weather phenomenon.

In a statement, Secretary Alfredo Pascual said the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has been working with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) in reactivating the Local Price Coordinating Councils (LPCCs) in price monitoring initiatives in their respective areas.

Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said Department of Agriculture (DA) has ordered the operationalization of the Climate Resilient Agriculture Steering Committee (CRASC) to

provide strategic direction and oversee the mobilization of DA resources for climate change response.

These measures by the DTI, DA and DILG are in response to the pronouncement of Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., chair of the presidential Task Force El Niño, that the Department of National Defense (DND) will run after hoarders and manipulators who would prey on consumers during this transition period.

DTI said the DILG has reported that 1,335 or 78 percent out of 1,716 LGUs have reactivated their LPCCs.

LPCCs are mandated to coordinate and rationalize the programs to stabilize prices and supply of member agencies in the respective provinces, municipalities, and cities;

These councils can recommend to the National Price Coordinating Council or to the Implementing Agencies suggested retail prices and/or the price ceilings for certain basic necessities and/or prime commodities in their respective areas.

The LPCCs can also recommend steps to correct unwarranted price increases and supply shortages.

Pascual said automatic price control comes into effect in areas declared under a state of calamity due to La Niña and any individuals caught engaging in illegal price manipulation will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Tiu Laurel for his part said the DA will monitor the impact of the transition on the agriculture sector.

He said since he became secretary in November he has been personally monitoring the movement of prices of rice, corn and other agricultural products to protect both farmers and consumers.

The extremely hot and dry weather condition due El Niño during the past several months has affected the agricultural sector. Meanwhile, the arrival of La Niña is expected to bring heavy rainfall which can cause flooding, impacting on agricultural lands.

The CRASC will be headed by undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Regulations Asis Perez, and co-chaired by undersecretary for Operations Roger Navarro and undersecretary for Special Concerns and for Official Development Assistance-Foreign Aid/Grants Jerome Oliveros.

Teodoro during the fifth meeting of the presidential task force on El Niño response recently, said the DND is ready to provide support to agencies involved in the price monitoring of basic necessities and prime commodities.

Teodoro said there is a need to intensify price and supply monitoring efforts in markets to protect consumers from profiteering amid the weather phenomenon.

Under President Marcos' Executive Order No. 53, select national government agencies have been directed to streamline, reactivate, and reconstitute the old El Niño task forces under EO No. 16 (s. 2001) and Memorandum Order No. 38 (s. 2019).

Signed on Jan. 19, 2024, President Marcos' executive order directs the 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.

The President also designated the following officials as task force members: Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga, Secretary of Agriculture Laurel, Secretary of Health Teodoro Herbosa, and Secretary of National Economic and Development Authority Arsenio Balisacan.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_business/supply-prices-of-food-commodities-govt-steps-up-preparations-on-la-nina/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/supply-prices-of-food-commodities-govt-steps-up-preparations-on-la-nina/)

# **DA to extend ban on onion importation until July**

By **Jed Macapagal**

May 21, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) eyes to extend the ban on the importation onions until July due to sufficient supply in cold storages.

“We will extend the ban on onion importation. Cold storages in onion- producing areas are filled and market prices are low so there’s no reason to import,” DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. told reporters in an interview yesterday.

Tiu Laurel said current market prices are stable, citing latest figures from Balintawak market, a major drop off point of agricultural goods in the National Capital Region.

The DA chief said in Balintawak market, red onions are priced between P60 and P70 per kg. while white onions are at P60 per kg.

Tiu Laurel said these levels are much lower than when he was new in the department in November last year. Onion prices were then at P120 to P140 per kg.

Last January, the DA ordered a temporary stop to onion imports until May to prevent further depressing onion prices due to supply glut.

Around 87 percent of areas planted to onion have red varieties while 13 percent are planted with white onions with the balance planted to shallots.

Based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, the country produced a total of 241,033.06 metric tons (MT) of mature onion bulb in 2022, up by 10.5 percent from 2021’s 218,047.33 MT.

Based on monitoring by the DA on public markets in the National Capital Region as of last Friday, the price of local red onion is at P70 to P160 per kg and local white onion at P60 to P130 per kg.

# Onions' ample supply prompts DA to eye extension to importation ban

Ada Pelonia

May 21, 2024

The ample supply of onion has prompted the Department of Agriculture (DA) to mull over an extension to the importation ban on the commodity up to July.

“I-e-extend natin ang ban sa onion importation. Puno ang mga cold storage [facilities] sa onion producing areas. Mababa naman ang presyo sa merkado, so there's no reason to import [We'll extend the onion importation ban since cold storages in onion producing areas are full. The prices in the market are low, so there's no reason to import],” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said on Monday.

“Maybe until July,” Tiu Laurel added.

He also said that stable onion prices in the market prompted the extension of the importation ban.

“Maayos naman ang presyo ng onion ngayon. Sa Balintawak ang latest figures ko, P60, P70 ang pula [per kilo], ang puti P60 [per kilo]. Noong pumasok ako sa DA that time mga P140, P120 so stable naman [The price of onion in the market is stable now. In Balintawak, the latest figures are P60, P70 per kilo for red onion and P60 per kilo for white onions. When I got in the DA that time, the prices were at P140, P120, so it's stable now.],” he said.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. earlier noted the need to boost price and supply monitoring in markets to shield consumers against hoarders and price manipulators who rig commodities' prices amid calamities, particularly from the anticipated onslaught of the La Niña phenomenon.

According to Laurel, he has been monitoring the prices of commodities in the market since becoming the DA chief.



“Personally ako mismo naka-monitor, kung sakali may mag-spike na presyo at ibig sabihin malamang kulang ang supply, may unscrupulous trader, then we will activate importation kung kinakailangan, only kapag kinakailangan. [I personally monitor if there would be a spike in prices, which would mean there’s short supply, unscrupulous trader. If there is, we will activate our importation but only if it’s necessary],” Laurel said.

The DA earlier ordered the suspension of onion importation until May, which could be extended to July, to prevent further depressing onion prices due to the surge in domestic supply.

“In principle, I agree with no onion importation until July. But that is on condition that if there is a sudden supply shortfall, we will have to import earlier,” he said.

“Hindi po natin alam ang mangyayari dahil may El Niño. [We don’t know what would happen because of El Nino].”

The DA projected that onions’ production output for 2024 would hit over 300,000 metric tons (MT).

Based on the DA’s latest price watch report, the average weekly price of onion in the capital region is P102.58 per kilo for red onion and P90.39 per kg for white onion. Only the imported white onion is priced at P100 per kilo.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/21/onions-ample-supply-prompts-da-to-eye-extension-to-importation-ban/>

**ABANTE TONITE**

# **Tulong pinansiyal, bigas pinamudmod ng ACT-Agri Kaagapay sa Bukidnoon**

May 20, 2024

Umabot sa 1,000 indigent families at mga magsasaka ang pinagkalooban ng bigas at tulong pinansiyal sa Oath Taking Ceremony at launching ng Rice Distribution program ng Act Agri-Kaagapay Organization sa Bukidnon noong Sabado.

Ang distribusyon ng bigas at financial assistance ay pinangunahan nina Act Agri-Kaagapay founder at president Virginia Ledesma Rodriguez at Valencia City, Bukidnon, Mayor Azucena Huervas upang makalikha ng programa na magbibigay sa mga mahihirap at vulnerable families ng saku-sakong bigas at cash na magagamit nila sa pagsisimula ng pagkukunan ng kabuhayan.

Ang aktibidad ay dinaluhan ng mga political leaders sa lalawigan ng Bukidnon at sinaksihan ng libu-libong residente ng Valencia City, Bukidnon.

Sa kanyang talumpati sa nasabing aktibidad, sinabi ni Rodriguez na mag-i-sponsor rin siya ng iba't ibang seminar kung paano gumawa ng organic fertilizers sa Valencia City.

Ani Rodriguez, makakatulong ito sa mga magsasaka na magkaroon ng masaganang ani sa lahat ng produktong agrikultural, sa pamamagitan nang paggamit ng organic materials na mula sa kanilang sariling bakuran.

“With the continuous development of modern agriculture, the role of organic fertilizers in agricultural production is becoming more and more important. Agricultural products grown with organic fertilizers have good taste and can effectively maintain the unique nutrition and flavor of fruits and vegetables, and also play a pivotal role in the protection and improvement of the soil environment. Therefore, it is necessary for us to apply and understand organic fertilizers,” pahayag ni Rodriguez.

Si Rodriguez, na siyang awtor ng librong “Leave Nobody Hungry,” ay advocate ng organic fertilizers sa bansa at may layuning matulungan ang mga magsasaka na magkaroon ng masaganang ani, sa pamamagitan ng mura at

ligtas na pataba, kumpara sa kemikal na fertilizers na maaari pang magdulot ng problemang pangkalusugan gaya ng kanser.

“We will strive to find a way to help ease the lives of our countrymen amid the rising prices of rice and other basic goods,” ani Rodriguez.

Aniya, prayoridad ng Act Agri-Kaagapay ang mga lugar sa Visayas at Mindanao at sa Luzon, kung saan hindi sapat ang suplay ng abot-kaya at de kalidad na bigas.

Samantala, lumahok si Mayor Huervas sa coalition party ni President Marcos, sa isang partnership na ang layunin at hangarin ay magkaroon ng tunay na pagkakaisa, lakas at patuloy na positibong pagbabago.

Ang iba pang aktibidad ng ACT-Agri Kaagapay Organization ay maaari ninyo makita at i-follow sa FB page na Queen Vi Rodriguez.

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/05/20/tulong-pinansiyal-bigas-pinamudmod-ng-act-agri-kaagapay-sa-bukidnoon/>

# Ex-DA Sec. Yap, inabsuwelto ng SC sa kasong PDAF

[Mer Layson](#)

May 21, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Bunsod ng umano'y "grave abuse of discretion", inatasan ng Supreme Court (SC) ang Sandiganbayan na ibasura ang lahat ng mga kasong kinakaharap ni dating Department of Agriculture secretary Arthur Yap, na may kinalaman sa Priority Development Assistance Funds (PDAF) scam.

Batay sa desisyon ng SC 3rd Division na iniakda ni Associate Justice Japar Dimaampao at na-promulgate noong Abril 15, pinaboran nito ang "petition for certiorari" na inihain ni Yap at ipinag-utos ang pagbasura sa mga kasong kinakaharap nito, kabilang na ang dalawang kaso ng graft, isang bilang ng kasong malversation of public funds, at kasong malversation through falsification of public documents.

Nabatid na sa impormasyong inihain ng Ombudsman sa Sandiganbayan noong 2017, sina Yap at dating Misamis Occidental 1st District Rep. Marina Clarete ay inakusahan ng maling paggamit o "misused" ng PDAF na nagkakahalaga ng P7.8 milyon noong 2009 para sa mga umano'y "ghost projects" gaya ng pamamahagi ng livelihood kits sa mga kuwalipikadong benepisyaryo.

Anang Korte Suprema, nakagawa ang Sandiganbayan ng "grave abuse of discretion" nang sabihin nitong ang impormasyon o formal charges, na inihain kay Yap ay nagtataglay ng mga alegasyon na sapat upang idiin siya sa mga kasong isinampa laban sa kanya.

Inihayag ng Kataas-taasang Hukuman na ang paglagda ni Yap ng isang memorandum of agreement sa pagitan ng DA at ng implementing agency na National Agribusiness Corporation, ay hindi nagpapakita ng partiality o kapabayaang o 'di kaya ay nagbibigay ng unwarranted benefits sa kanyang mga kapwa akusado.

Pinuna rin na kumilos ang Sandiganbayan nang may matinding pag-abuso, nang magpasya itong walang labis na pagkaantala ang dulot ng Ombudsman sa paunang imbestigasyon ng mga kaso.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/metro/2024/05/21/2356731/ex-da-sec-yap-inabsuwelto-ng-sc-sa-kasong-pdaf>

# Suporta ni BBM sa farmers at fisherfolks sa Iligan City, namadyik!

[DIPUGA](#) - [Non Alquitran](#)

May 21, 2024 | 12:00am

DISMAYADO ang 10,000 magsasaka at mangingisda sa Iligan City dahil namadyik ang tulong ni President Bongbong Marcos sa kanila. 'Ika nga mga kosa, kuwarta na, naging bato pa! Araguyyyyy! Kaya nag-iingay ang farmers at fishermen sa social media sa pagbabakasakali na makarating kay BBM ang kalufetang sinapit nila. Eh di wow!

Dapat paimbestigahan ni BBM ang pagligwak ng tulong niyang P10,000 sa mga pobrang magsasaka at mangingisda dahil sa sobrang hirap ng buhay sa ngayon ay malaking tulong na sana sa kabuhayan nila ang pítsa. Dipugaaaaa! At higit sa lahat, dapat panagutin ni BBM ang dapat managot para hindi na sila pamarisan pa. Sanamagan! Hehehe!

Imbes na umani ng pogi points si BBM sa tulong niya, eh natuligsa pa siya sa panahon na maraming intriga ang ibinabato sa kanya. Mismooooo!

Bumisita si BBM sa Cagayan de Oro City at Iligan City noong Abril 16 at nagbigay ng P10,000 financial support sa farmers at fisherfolks. Hindi naman masabi ng mga nag-rereklamo kung kanino iniabot ni BBM ang pítsa kaya lang siyempre inaasahan nila ito dahil malaking tulong ito sa hanapbuhay nila.

Kaya lang, maghapon na naghintay ang mga recipients ng tulong ni BBM subalit wala naman silang natanggap. Ang ibig sabihin mga kosa ay nganga sila. Nalusaw na parang bula ang pítsa? Ano ba 'yan! Parang ininsulto si BBM ah. Tsk tsk tsk! Sakit sa bangs nito!

Nagkalat ang mga posts ng mga apektadong farmers, fisherfolks at maging ng mga netizen's na sinisisi ang mga pulitikong sina Rep. Cello Regencia at Mayor Frederick Siao sa kamalasang sinapit nila. Araguyyyyy! Sila kaya ang tumanggap ng pítsa?

Binansagan ng mga kosa ko si Regencia na "pulahang" samantalang si Siao naman ay "blue." Kapag identified kang "pula" hindi ka bibigyan ng "blue", at kapag "blue" ka, wala ka ring mapapala sa "pula." Get's n'yo mga kosa?

Siguradong magkaaway sa pulitika sina Regencia at Siao dahil hindi magkatugma ang sistema nila, di ba mga kosa? Hehehe! Kailangan pa bang i-memorize 'yan?

Dahil umiiral ang pulitika sa Iligan, ang nakinabang sa financial support ni BBM ay ang mga supporters nila at hindi 'yung beneficiary talaga. May ilang pamilya pang doble

ang natanggap. Ang suwerte naman nila. Kasama sa sinisisi ng farmers at fisherfolks ay ang mga kapitan ng barangay na mukhang tando-tando rin sa kagustuhan ng mga pulitiko. Eh di wow!

Inamin naman ni Kap Niño Remo, ng Bgy. Sta. Elena ng Iligan City hindi sila makaporma dahil naiipit sila sa nag-uumpugang bato. Araguyyy! Sa isang interbyu, sinabi ni Remo na sina Regencia at Siao ay nagtayo ng kani-kanilang satellite offices sa mga barangay bilang registration at distribution points, hindi lang sa financial support ni BBM, kundi sa lahat ng transaction. Anyare? Na hokus-pokus ba? Hehehe! Ambot sa kanding nga may bangs!

Ang financial support ng gobyerno ay minsanan lang dumating sa buhay ng farmers at fisherfolks sa Iligan City, subalit minalas pa sila. Abot-kamay na nga, namadyik pa! Dipugaaaaaaa! Saan ang hustisya? Abangan!

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/opinyon/2024/05/21/2356681/suporta-ni-bbm-sa-farmers-fisherfolks-sa-iligan-city-namadyik>