

MANILA BULLETIN:

# Rice harvest declined by 100,000 MT in Q1 due to El Niño—DA

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

May 5, 2024 06:51 PM



The rice harvest in the first quarter of the year declined by 100,000 metric tons (MT) due to the wrath of the El Niño phenomenon, the Department of Agriculture (DA) bared on Sunday, May 5.

But the agriculture department said this is not bothersome as this is only less than one percent of the DA's 20.4 million MT target harvest this year, noting that importation can "easily" augment the loss.

"Bumaba nang bahagya 'yung ating harvest noong first quarter by 100,000 metric tons. Pero 'yun ay napakaliit, less than one percent. Kasi 'yung ating harvest is 20.06 million MT last year (Our harvest decreased slightly in the first quarter by 100,000 metric tons. But that is very small, less than one percent. Because our harvest was 20.06 million MT last year)," Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, the spokesperson of the DA, said in a radio interview.

"Inaasahan natin ngayong taon ay mga 20.4 million metric tons so 'yung nawala ay napakaliit na bahagi, mga one percent lamang and can be easily augmented by importation natin, 1.6 million metric tons na 'yung pumasok (We expect this year's harvest to be about 20.4 million metric tons so what was lost is a very small part, only about one percent and can be easily augmented by our importation, 1.6 million metric tons that came in)," he went on.

De Mesa assured the public that the supply of the country's primary staple is still enough.

"'Yung ating supply ng bigas ay sapat pa hanggang sa ngayon bagamat may mga lugar pa apektado ng El Niño (Our supply of rice is still sufficient although there are still areas affected

by El Nino),” he said.

Despite El Nino’s devastation to the country’s agriculture sector, De Mesa said the DA is expecting more harvest this year due to the distribution of more seed varieties and interventions from the government.

**Damage to PH agri**

On May 2, the agriculture department said El Niño damage to agriculture has swelled to P5.90 billion, affecting 113,585 farmers and fisherfolk.

The 12 regions affected are: Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, MIMAROPA, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Davao Region, and Soccsksargen.

Per the DA, the government has provided a total of P2.18 billion in interventions for devastated farmers and fisherfolk.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/5/rice-harvest-declined-by-100-000-mt-in-q1-due-to-el-nino-da-1>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# The trillion-peso Davao economy Part 2: Challenges

BY [JOHN TRIA](#)

May 6, 2024 06:40 AM

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#MINDANAO



In last week's column, we discussed that the Davao regional economy is now at achieved ₱1.02 trillion in value. This week I dive into what else can be done to boost this growth further. The significance of the Davao region's economy is that it is Mindanao's largest.

The previous week's column cited a general challenge besetting the Davao regional economy:

“We will need to broaden growth further by encouraging investments in key sectors that impact the lives of a good number of citizens. Offhand, this includes agriculture, fishery, forestry (AFF) where many Davao residents, particularly those living outside its urban centers are directly and indirectly engaged.”

The role of the AFF sector, currently at 14.5 percent of the Davao economy in both taming inflation and driving growth needs to be explored further.

Based on the Annual Regional Economic Situationer (ARES) of the NEDA Region 11 for 2023 and 2022, the Davao region's inflation rate hovered at around 6.3 percent, down from 2022's 7.4 percent. Inflation control measures can lower this further. This can, in turn, help raise and broaden growth, since it enables more residents, especially those in lower income brackets to purchase more of what they need since goods are cheaper. This, in turn, helps businesses, especially MSMEs to gain more income, expanding the economic multiplier that pushes overall growth up.

Inflation can be tamed partly by boosting the performance of the AFF sector, since this is where food, a big portion of what people spend for, is produced. More food can lower its price for consumers and can help lower inflation. At the same time, the AFF sector is where many residents especially from the provinces outside of Davao City derive their livelihood,

contributing about a third or a fourth of the GDP of these provinces. Improving productivity, increasing production volume, and more efficient farm to customer logistics will help improve farm incomes, and provide cheaper food for families living in the cities who are not engaged in agriculture.

The challenge, however, is that intermittent weather affects crop productivity. The 2023 NEDA ARES notes this to be the cause of the lowered performance of major crops such as mango, cacao, and cavendish banana, which is a major export crop of the region and contributes significantly to the overall national exports. The good news is that rice, corn, livestock and poultry all reported increases in production despite challenges such as the Asian Swine Flu.

Expanding production of these major crops and food commodities further will be vital for managing inflation and building economic resilience of the region well into the future.

How can we further strengthen AFF growth? For one, we can invest in climate-resilient agriculture to deal with climatic challenges. The second is to encourage investment in downstream agro-processing and manufacturing industries that absorb and encourage more production of the commodities that grow well in the region. This creates direct factory jobs and builds broader supply chains to create more opportunities for rural residents who farm.

These industries also create ancillary businesses such as canteen and transport concessions that employ locals. Around such factories, eateries, and bakeries often sprout to serve the food needs of employees. Uniform suppliers and other contractors all combine to multiply the opportunity. Local farms also supply food.

I believe the private sector, government agencies, and civil society groups can collaborate even further through bodies like the Regional Development Council (RDC) to meet these challenges and sustain and broaden inclusive economic growth in the region.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/6/the-trillion-peso-davao-economy-part-2-challenges>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Sugar production beats target despite El Niño

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

May 6, 2024 06:42 AM

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The Philippine Sugar Millers Association (PSMA) announced that sugar production exceeded the government's target despite the challenges posed by El Niño.

In a statement, the group of sugar millers said that the industry produced 1.86 million metric tons of raw sugar during crop year 2023-2024, surpassing the initial estimate of 1.85 million metric tons set by the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

This is also an increase of 3.6 percent compared to the 1.79 million metric tons recorded in the previous crop year.

Back in January, Pablo Azcona, SRA administrator, expressed concerns that El Niño's impact could potentially reduce sugar output by 10 percent to 15 percent.

SRA forecasted a potential decrease in sugar output to 1.75 million metric tons for crop year 2023-2024 from the initial estimate of 1.85 million metric tons.

While the output surpassed expectations, the PSMA said it would not adequately fulfill domestic demand, underscoring the ongoing requirement for importation.

"We have supported the import programs of the government through the SRA when it is determined that our country's supply is insufficient to meet demand," PSMA President Terence Uygongco said.

"All we ask is that the volume to be imported is the deficiency in production including buffer stocks for contingencies and scheduled arrival of imports so as not to coincide with sugar milling," he added.

Azcona believed that this was achieved because of President Marcos' effort to move the harvest cycle from August to September 1 to boost the sugar yield. He stated, "We will continue to push for the original October 1 start of milling to further improve our cane quality."

"We were lucky that El Niño only hit the tail end of the harvestable cane, and the effect was negated by the increase in planted area," the SRA chief added.

The sugar regulators also noted that the El Niño effect from November last year to the present has damaged plant canes that were supposed to be harvested this October.

"So far in Batangas, South Negros, and Mindanao, the October harvest has suffered," he elaborated.

Despite this, the SRA recorded a sugar hike of 3,000 hectares because of the good farmgate prices from the previous years, which encouraged farmer productivity.

“We are hoping for the rains to come soon so that the 2024 to 2025 season will be as good as well.”

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/6/sugar-production-beats-target-despite-el-nino>

# Ex-DA chief: El Niño damage to agriculture underreported

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 6, 2024 | 12:00am



Locals walk over the dry part of Intang Lake in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija on April 22, 2024.

STAR / Walter Bollozos

MANILA, Philippines — The damage caused by the El Niño phenomenon to the agriculture sector is underreported, according to former Department of Agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor, as he noted that the DA has reported total farm losses of only P5.9 billion.

In a message to The STAR yesterday, Montemayor said that former Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) chief Rafael Coscolluela had warned that sugar production in Negros is expected to drop by 30 percent amid the impact of El Niño on sugarcane plantations.

“In the case of sugar, former governor and SRA administrator Lito Coscolluela told me during my recent visit in Negros Occidental that sugarcane planters are expecting a 30-percent drop in the standing crop output,” Montemayor said.

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He noted that Negros Occidental supplies 60 to 65 percent of the country's local sugar consumption.

"I believe that there is underreporting in the damage of almost P6 billion. For sugar alone, we know that Negros is a sugar-producing province. We have yet to receive report from the DA on the damage of El Niño to our sugarcane plantations," Montemayor said.

For his part, Coscolluela said that late-milled sugar fields have not been replanted because of dry conditions.

"If ratooned, they do not grow well. Standing cane has not been fertilized and with limited irrigation, is mostly stunted. Some planters want to mill early-milled cane now instead of waiting for next milling season in September to October even if still immature and with low tonnage and then ratoon these fields rather than replant," he added.

A lot of cutting back of fields will be done when the rains fall in order to have planting materials for dried up, abandoned fields, causing further loss of millable tonnage, according to Coscolluela.

"The tonnage already lost on standing cane due to dry conditions cannot be recovered, however much you fertilize the stunted cane. All told, I see a 30-percent loss in tonnage in Negros. In other provinces, I don't know. I have to check on area and tonnage when I open my data files later," he said.

He added that the SRA has yet to issue a report on El Niño damage to sugar production.

Montemayor said that aside from sugarcane plantations, coconut farmers also reported that they were affected by El Niño.

"In some areas, coconut trees produce fewer or smaller nuts. Reports of proliferation of coconut scale insects (cocolisap) due to hot temperature in the Zamboanga Peninsula," he added.

While he cannot give a particular figure on the extent of damage of El Niño, Montemayor maintained that the DA's report was smaller compared to the actual losses in the agriculture sector.

"It is not only in the sugarcane, including fish, fishponds. We did not hear damage from the El Niño, the figures on affected animals were also underreported as when there is too much heat, the animals suffer stress. For chicken layers, it affects the eggs, so the production of eggs will be affected," he said.



The former agriculture chief stressed that a lot more should be done by the DA in getting the whole picture with respect to the impact of El Niño.

“The problem (brought by the impact of the El Niño) will still worsen until at least the end of May,” he said.

He added that no less than the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that palay production went down in the first three months of 2014.

“There will also be a delay in the planting (of palay) and therefore the harvest, which normally starts in October up to November could reach December. The months of April, May and June are very critical with respect to the crop production, especially for palay,” Montemayor said.

He warned that the country could experience tight rice supply especially during the lean months of July, August and September.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/06/2352979/ex-da-chief-el-nio-damage-agriculture-underreported>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# President Marcos forms body to create government lands master list

[Helen Flores](#) - The Philippine Star

May 6, 2024 | 12:00am



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr

Bongbong Marcos / Facebook Page

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**MANILA, Philippines** — President Marcos has formed an interagency body tasked to create a master list of all lands owned by the government to ensure efficient and effective utilization of land resources for the country's development.

Under Administrative Order 21, signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on April 30, the Inter-Agency Coordinating Council will be chaired by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development and co-chaired by the Department of Agrarian Reform.

Members of the council are the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Departments of the Interior and Local Government; Agriculture; Justice; and Information and Communications (DICT); Office of the Solicitor General; Land Registration Authority, and the Commission on Higher Education.

The DENR-Land Management Bureau will serve as the coordinating council's secretariat.

“To ensure the efficient and effective allocation and utilization of land resources for the country’s national development goals, it is necessary to consolidate a comprehensive list of all government lands,” Marcos said.

Within 60 days from the effectivity of implementing guidelines of the order, all national government agencies and instrumentalities, including government-owned or controlled corporations and existing government bodies with functions related to land identification and inventory, are to prepare and submit to the coordinating council a complete inventory of all lands or inventories in their possession, as may be applicable, AO 21 read.

In coordination with the DICT, the council will study, formulate and implement the digitalization of the master list, the order stated.

According to Marcos, the creation of a master list of all government lands will boost the administration’s Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028.

He said one of the key strategies identified in the PDP 2023-2028 to establish livable communities “is the creation of a database containing a complete inventory of idle government lands.”

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/06/2352936/president-marcos-forms-body-create-government-lands-master-list>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# P40/kilo rice not achievable – FFF

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 6, 2024 | 12:00am



The landed cost of imported rice averaged between P45 and P50 per kilo, Montemayor said in a radio interview.

Philstar.com / Jovannie Lambayan

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**MANILA, Philippines** — The retail price of rice will not return to its previous level of P40 per kilo as the prevailing cost in the market remains high, farmers' group Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) national manager Raul Montemayor said yesterday.

The landed cost of imported rice averaged between P45 and P50 per kilo, Montemayor said in a radio interview.

“The retail price of rice will not decrease that much, it will depend on the trading in the international market,” he noted.

Imported rice in the international market went down to \$570 per metric ton from the previous \$630 per MT, he added.

“We will depend on the rice importation but based on our computation with tax paid, it’s between P45 and P50 per kilo. It will depend on how much it will be sold by the traders,” he said.

“The government should determine who takes advantage most as the increase in the retail price of rice is caused by the middlemen and based on what we received retailers have the biggest profit, they are earning too much,” he added.

Local harvest will be delayed amid El Niño’s impact, he said.

“There is no rain, that’s why farmers cannot plant. The nearest harvest will be late September up to October. We will depend mostly on imported rice,” he explained.

The annual shortfall in rice supply is only pegged at two million MT but the country’s rice importation reaches as high as four million MT, Montemayor noted.

“Because of the flooding of imported rice, the farmgate price of palay drops. It discourages farmers from planting. We will be too dependent on importation if farmers will not plant,” he said.

In 2023, the country’s rice imports totaled 3.6 million MT.

## ‘Retail prices stable’

The retail prices of well-milled rice remain stable between P50 and P52 per kilo and no movement in its cost was observed in past months, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“We don’t see a spike (in the retail prices) as for the last how many months, the retail price of well-milled rice was between P50 and P52 and until now, it ranges from P50 to P52 (per kilo),” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa told The STAR.

Based on DA’s monitoring of Metro Manila markets, the retail price of local regular milled rice was at P50 per kilo; local well-milled rice, between P48 and P55 per kilo; local premium rice, between P51 and P58 per kilo; and local special rice, between P56 and P65 per kilo.

Imported regular milled rice, between P48 and P51 per kilo; imported well-milled rice, between P51 and P54 per kilo; imported premium rice, between P52 and P60 per kilo; and imported special rice, between P57 and P65 per kilo.

At least 1.6 million MT of imported rice arrived in the first four months of the year, De Mesa noted.

“The importation last year was 3.6 million MT so only two million MT is needed to reach the same level. It is possible that we can surpass (the volume of rice imports in 2023),” he added.

De Mesa attributed the increase in rice importation to the drop in world prices.

“We expect that the lower imported rice can influence the retail price in the markets,” he added.

The retail price of rice started going up last year when the cost in the international market reached as high as \$700 per MT from just \$350 to \$400 per MT.

“The good thing about imported rice is the election in India is about to end. We hope that it will remove the export ban as this will eliminate the stress on rice in the international market,” he said.

Damage to rice in terms of hectaraage was only 58,226 hectares compared to the worst El Niño in 1997 when 377,000 hectares of palay plantations were affected, De Mesa noted.

“This represents 2.7 percent of the total area planted today,” he said.

The palay production target of 20.448 MT this year is still achievable despite the damage brought by El Niño, he added.

“Our production last year was 20.06 million MT. Our projection despite the El Niño is at 20,448 million MT. Assuming our losses to El Niño are 100,000 to 200,000 MT and your losses to La Niña are 300,000 MT, you are still within the target,” De Mesa said.

The damage caused by El Niño to the agriculture sector reached P5.9 billion, he noted.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/06/2352983/p40kilo-rice-not-achievable-fff>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# CA ruling stops imports of Bt talong, golden rice

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

May 6, 2024 | 12:00am



This file photo shows the Court of Appeals in Manila.

File photo

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MANILA, Philippines — The importation of regulated genetically modified organisms (GMO) except for Bt talong and golden rice would continue as they are not covered by the recent decision of the Court of Appeals, according to the Department of Agriculture.

DA Undersecretary Asis Perez has issued a memorandum instructing Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) director Gerald Glenn Panganiban to stop issuing any sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) that would allow the entry of Bt talong and golden rice in the country following the ruling of the appellate court.

However, Perez ordered BPI to continue issuing SPSICs for all other commodities except for the two regulated products covered by the CA decision to protect the country's borders from SPS threats.

An SPSIC certifies that an imported product is safe to human, animal or plant life and health.

BPI, an attached agency of the DA, oversees the regulation of all plant materials, including GMOs, in the country.

Aside from Bt talong and golden rice, some of the other genetically modified crops regulated by the BPI are corn, oilseed rape, soybean, canola, alfalfa and potato.

Perez issued the memorandum more than a week after the CA granted a writ of kalikasan to the Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad Agrikultura, Greenpeace Southeast Asia-Philippines and other environmental groups, citing potential risks of the Bt talong and golden rice to the environment and public health.

The CA issued a cease and desist order directing the University of the Philippines-Los Baños and the Philippine Rice Research Institute to stop the commercial propagation of the two genetically modified crops.

“It is the view of this office that the case applies only to the two regulated articles, we believe that to think otherwise, is likely to constitute violation of due process with respect to individuals and entities who are likely to be affected but not parties to the case,” Perez said.

Furthermore, the memorandum asked the BPI to heed the CA ruling despite Perez’ office viewing the decision as “not yet final and executory” so that it won’t violate the court order.

Citing Rule 7, Section 16 of the Rules of Procedure for Environmental Cases, Perez, who is a lawyer, said the ruling could still be appealed.

“It is the view of this office that the same is not yet final and executory,” he said in the memorandum, a copy of which was obtained by The STAR.

“However, while this is our position, for practical and convenient reasons, this Office deemed it best to advise you not to proceed with any action that might violate the Order of the Court once the same becomes final and executory,” he added.

In an earlier statement, the DA said the CA ruling against Bt talong and golden rice would have “significant” implications on the country’s food security.

The department added that the government is already exploring regal remedies regarding the CA order.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/06/2352805/ca-ruling-stops-imports-bt-talong-golden-rice>



# oxic red tide detected in 4 areas — BFAR

[Kristine Daguno-Bersamina](#) - Philstar.com

May 5, 2024 | 10:01 am



Customers shop for fresh seafood at a wet market in Manila on March 5, 2009.

AFP / Jay Directo

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) reported that four areas have exceeded the permissible limit for Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP), commonly known as toxic red tide, as of May 3.

The following areas have been identified as the sites where toxic red tide has been detected:

- coastal waters of Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol;
- Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar;
- Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur; and
- coastal waters of San Benito in Surigao del Norte

"All types of shellfish and Acetes sp. or alamang gathered from the areas mentioned above are NOT SAFE for human consumption," BFAR said.

Other seafoods like fresh fish, squids, shrimps and crabs, can still be eaten if they are thoroughly washed and their internal organs are removed, the bureau added.

Toxic red tide is caused by harmful algal blooms, which can result to severe health problems when shellfish and other seafood are contaminated.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/05/2352770/toxic-red-tide-detected-4-areas-bfar>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Top Marcos projects face red tape, too

By: [Melvin Gascon](#) - Reporter / [@melvingasconINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:20 AM May 06, 2024



**TOP PRIORITY** President Marcos presides over a National Economic and Development Authority board meeting last February on flagship projects. **PHOTO FROM PCO WEBSITE**

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered government agencies to streamline the issuance of permits for infrastructure flagship projects (IFPs), showing that even top government projects are hindered by the red tape foreign investors are complaining about.

“There is a need to further streamline the process for issuance of required licenses, clearances, permits, certifications or authorizations to expedite the implementation of IFPs, consistent with [Republic Act No.] 9485, as amended,” Marcos said in Executive Order No. 59.

RA 9485, or the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007, was amended by RA 11032 which renamed the law as the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018.

EO 59, signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on April 30, emphasized the need to hasten the completion of 185 infrastructure flagship projects approved by the National Economic and Development Authority.

The 185 flagship projects all over the country are part of the Marcos administration's P9.14-trillion Build Better More Program, and the issuance of the EO is a tacit admission of the little progress in the fight against red tape, a persistent problem repeatedly cited by foreign investors as a deterrent to investing in the country.

### 185 plans delayed

Of the 185 flagship projects, 81 are financed through the official development assistance, 51 through the General Appropriations Act, 45 through public-private partnerships and seven through hybrid financing modalities.

The EO 59 takes effect immediately upon publication in the Official Gazette, or in a newspaper of general circulation.

The President also issued Administrative Order No. 21 on April 30, ordering the creation of an inter-agency council to consolidate a master list of all lands owned by the state.

The move will also boost the administration's Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, according to the President.

In AO 21, also signed by Bersamin, the President emphasized the need for "the creation of a database containing a complete inventory of idle government lands."

"To ensure the efficient and effective allocation and utilization of land resources for the country's national development goals, it is necessary to consolidate a comprehensive list of all government lands," Mr. Marcos said.

## List of properties

The Chief Executive thus created an Inter-Agency Coordinating Council tasked to create a “Master List” of all government lands.

The council will be composed of the heads of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development as cochairs while the Department of Agriculture will serve as vice chair.

The council will comprise of the Office of the Executive Secretary, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Office of the Solicitor General, Department of Justice, Land Registration Authority, Commission on Higher Education and the Department of Information and Communications Technology.

The DENR’s Land Management Bureau will serve as the council’s secretariat.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1937329/top-marcos-projects-face-red-tape-too>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Smooth timing sets up PH sugar sector for a sweet win over El Niño

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:05 AM May 06, 2024



INQUIRER PHOTO / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

Sugar production in the Philippines surpassed the initial estimate of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) for the current crop year despite the devastating damage of the El Niño-induced drought on major sugar-producing areas.

As of April 14, the volume of sugar produced totaled 1.86 million metric tons (MT) for crop year 2023-2024 that began in September last year, based on data from the Philippine Sugar Millers Association (PSMA).

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said the agency was “happy” that output surpassed 1.85 million MT, which was also a 3.57-percent increase from the 1.799 million MT recorded for crop year 2022-2023.

“Higher production helps allay uncertainties in the supply of sugar in the country,” PSMA president Terence Uygongco said in a statement.

Azcona said adjusting the harvest cycle to Sept. 1 from last year’s schedule of August to improve yield has proven beneficial. The SRA would maintain the original schedule of starting the milling season on Oct. 1 “to further improve our cane quality.”

According to Azcona, the developments came despite the loss of a planting area in Batangas province.

It can be recalled that Central Azucarera Don Pedro Inc., a unit of listed Roxas Holdings Inc., permanently ceased its sugar business in Nasugbu town on Feb. 28 due to serious business losses. It has since then hinted at reviving its operations if a viable business opportunity arises.

Azcona said the SRA recorded a 3,000-hectare increase in planted area as more farmers were encouraged to cultivate sugarcane “mainly because of the very good farmgate prices from past year’s crop.”

“We were also lucky that El Niño only hit the tail end of the harvestable cane, and the effect was negated by the increase in planted area,” he said.

“However, this El Niño hit from November 2023 to present has greatly damaged the planted cane for the October 2024 harvest, and so far in Batangas, South Negros, and Mindanao, the October 2024 harvestable cane is suffering,” he added.

Azcona expressed hope that rains would come soon to sustain improvements in local sugar production until the next milling season.

In light of President Marcos’ Administrative Order No. 20, the PSMA said it has always extended its support to the government’s importation programs with the caveat

that these should not affect local production. In AO 20, the Departments of Agriculture, Finance and Trade were instructed to streamline policies related to the importation of agriculture products and to remove non-tariff barriers.

“All we ask is that the volume to be imported is the deficiency in production including buffer stocks for contingencies and scheduled arrival of imports so as not to coincide with sugar milling,” Uygongco said.

The Sugar Council—an alliance of three sugar farmer federations accounting for 67 percent of the country’s output—called for “appropriate safety nets” and “effective competitiveness enhancement measures” to attain the directive’s objectives.

“The removal of the SRA’s existing importation rules and regulations, including its say on relevant fees and charges, would constitute a loss of SRA’s regulatory authority and revenues,” it said.

The group also urged the government to issue another order outlining the necessary safety nets to make the sugar industry and the agriculture sector competitive. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/457446/smooth-timing-sets-up-ph-sugar-sector-for-a-sweet-win-over-el-nino>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Lawmaker wants accurate data on El Niño damage

By: [Jeannette I. Andrade](#) - Reporter / [@jiandradeINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:25 AM May 06, 2024



**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**

MANILA, Philippines — A party-list lawmaker on Sunday called on the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) to provide accurate data on the extent of the damage to agriculture caused by El Niño, citing inconsistent information that could derail efforts to ease the impact of the climate phenomenon.

AGRI Party-List Rep. Wilbert Lee lamented the wide disparity in what he called the “confusing” and “inconsistent” data by the DA and the NDRMMC on the losses caused by El Niño.

He said the DA estimated agricultural damage as of April 30 at P5.9 billion, while the NDRRMC in its April 29 situation report pegged the damage at just P1.6 billion.

The DA also said El Niño has so far affected 113,585 farmers and fisherfolk in 12 regions and a total of 104,402 hectares of farm land.

### ‘Appropriate mitigation’

The NDRMMC data placed affected farmers and fisherfolk at a far lower 46,805 while affected agricultural lands were estimated at 44,437 hectares .

Given the data discrepancy among these front-line agencies, it would be difficult for the government to implement the “appropriate mitigation and response,” Lee said.

“How much will be given to how many is reliant on the reports being published so I hope the agencies, which assess and release the data, properly communicate,” he said.

Accurate data was “crucial” in delivering sufficient and effective services and assistance to adversely affected sectors, the lawmaker said.

### May to June forecast

According to the El Niño Southern Oscillation (Enso) Advisory No. 9, issued in March by weather bureau Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), “mature El Niño is expected to continue” yet it was also showing signs of weakening.

The latest advisory also said majority of global climate models suggest that El Niño will likely persist until May, with the transition to “Enso-neutral” — wherein there is neither El Niño nor its opposite, La Niña, marked by increased rainfall — expected by June at the latest. —***WITH A REPORT FROM INQUIRER RESEARCH***

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1937336/lawmaker-wants-accurate-data-on-el-nino-damage>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Farmers' group decries rice tariffication law, claims P44B lost

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:10 AM May 06, 2024



**INQUIRER PHOTO/GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE**

MANILA, Philippines — A farmers' group has called for the complete repeal of the rice tariffication law, or Republic Act No. 11203, despite the efforts by the House of Representatives to amend it, asserting it won't resolve the persistently high prices of rice in the country and instead demanded for the enactment of a "new pro-farmer, pro-people rice development program."

"Congress created the problem that is the rice tariffication law. Lawmakers cannot simply undo the problem by tweaking parts and provisions of the despicable law," Danilo Ramos, chair of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), said in a statement on Sunday.

According to KMP, the law has led to more than P344 billion in economic losses for rice farmers by clipping the powers of the National Food Authority (NFA) and

allowing the private sector to dominate rice production, supply and distribution. The group said this resulted in record-high price inflation of 22.6 percent for rice.

“To address the Marcos government’s epic failure in lowering rice prices, Congress is now turning to RA 11203 amendments, even if they knew that it would do nothing in resolving the rice crisis,” Ramos said.

The RA 11203, which liberalized the rice importation, exportation and trading and lifted tariffs, itself amended RA 8178, or the agricultural tariffication act of 1996, which was meant to make the country compliant with commitments to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

He said allowing the NFA to sell rice again and funding for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund are insufficient measures. Instead, KMP urged the rehabilitation of the rice production sector through support programs for production, farm inputs and protection of rice lands and the local industry.

“[President] Marcos has no real and serious intentions of resolving the rice crisis. He is a major contributor to the problem as he allows massive rice importation and the proliferation of corruption within the Department of Agriculture and NFA,” Ramos stated.

The group claims the government protects big traders, importers, smugglers, hoarders and the rice cartel while undermining food self-sufficiency.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1937330/farmers-group-decries-rice-tariffication-law-claims-p44b-lost>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Gov't told: Genetically modified crops to feed population

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:06 AM May 06, 2024



Golden Rice is unique because it contains beta carotene, which gives it a golden color. (IRRI PHOTO)

Five major business groups urged the government to prioritize support for biotech crops amid a recent court ruling stopping the commercial propagation of genetically modified rice and eggplant.

“Biotechnology in food and agriculture has played a major role in facilitating the feeding of the growing world population in more recent decades while providing improved livelihoods for those engaged in the farming of these crops,” read the joint statement.

The organizations are: Foundation for Economic Freedom, Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines Inc., American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc., Makati Business Club and Management Association of the Philippines.

They said biotechnology has improved the livelihoods of people, citing the benefits of higher productivity, reduced losses due to plant diseases, and improved health through reduced dependence on pesticides and herbicides.

These groups said many food products today rely on genetic engineering, with 576,000 hectares of agricultural lands in the Philippines planted with genetically engineered corn as of February last year.

“The inability to tend to or sell these planted crops will mean thousands of tons of potentially wasted products. Particularly in the case of rice, our country cannot afford any wastage as a net importer of this household staple,” they said.

Last month, the Court of Appeals issued a halt order on the commercial propagation of Golden Rice and Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) eggplant, citing the lack of “full scientific certainty” on the impact of these food products.

The groups warned that the extremely hot weather that has scorched thousands of hectares of rice farms may reduce local yield and productivity.

“It is also notable that the country relies on the importation of various biotech commodities, such as corn and soybean, which are critical macro-ingredients for the local livestock and poultry industry. Halting the importation of these commodities would materially affect these vital sectors providing a major part of Filipinos’ daily protein requirements,” they said.

They added it could dent the credibility of the country in the international trading system should shipments be canceled for lack of permits. Transaction costs are seen to rise along with insurance premiums due to the growing risk of trading with the Philippines.

“Ultimately, this will drive food inflation higher at a time when we have been trying to avoid a repeat of the elevated food prices we have experienced over the past two years,” the groups said.

“Urgent times require urgent action. We need a whole-of-government approach—the executive, the legislative, and most crucial of all, the judiciary [branches]—to work together in supporting biotechnology crops to solve food security that is causing malnutrition and child stunting across the country, thus endangering our future generation.” INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/457451/govt-told-genetically-modified-crops-to-feed-population>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# **PCCI: Decarbonization bill to affect food security the most**

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:02 AM May 06, 2024

The Philippines' largest business organization on Saturday called on the country's leaders to adopt a balanced and rational approach to its policies on decarbonization as it cautioned on the harmful impact of overly stringent measures on the economy.

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) raised anew its concerns over a bill aimed at putting a cap on the greenhouse gas emissions of certain sectors, among others.

“This legislation represents a bold step toward sustainability and responsibility. But it should not come at a cost to businesses and to the economy as a whole,” PCCI chair and director for energy and power George Barcelon said in a statement.

The PCCI said House Bill No. 7705's cost was most pronounced in the food supply chain since the agriculture and food industries would be required to have decarbonization targets.

“This will eventually affect the food production sector and threaten further the country's already fragile food security situation,” said PCCI, which cited Philippine Chamber of Food Manufacturers director Joseph Fabul's position.

The cement and construction industries also shared the same apprehension, according to the PCCI.

The Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (Cemap) relies heavily on energy and power, which the bill also covered. Cemap said these two make up 40 percent of their production and logistics costs.



“Compliance options will come at a heavy price. Even now, the cement industry is already suffering from cement imports from Vietnam, where production and cost of power are subsidized by their government,” Cemap executive director Cirilo Pestaño said in the same statement.

PCCI’s energy committee officers David Chua and Carlos Aboitiz noted the standards set in the bill were for first world countries and not aligned with the realities in third world economies.

Chua and Aboitiz said the Philippines was a small country consuming small amounts of energy and produced little amounts of greenhouse gas emissions. They said the country’s output was three times less than the global average in carbon dioxide emissions per capita.

The PCCI said decarbonization targets needed to be anchored on actual data gathered from various industries and that policies must go through cost-benefit analysis and benchmarking. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/457449/pcci-decarbonization-bill-to-affect-food-security-the-most>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Sugar output hits 1.86 million MT for crop year, surpassing SRA estimate

May 6, 2024 | 12:04 am



REUTERS

SUGAR production during the 2023-2024 crop year amounted to 1.86 million metric tons (MT), millers said, exceeding estimates issued by the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

In a statement, the Philippine Sugar Millers Association (PSMA) said raw sugar production was also 3.57% higher than the 1.79 million MT reported the previous crop year.

PSMA President Terence S. Uygongco said higher production during the crop year will help reduce uncertainty in the supply of sugar.

“The government’s decision to move the harvest cycle to Sept. 1 from last year’s August to improve yields has proven its worth, and we will continue to push for the original Oct. 1 start of milling, to further improve our cane quality,” SRA Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona said in a Viber message.

The regulator had projected raw sugar production of 1.85 million MT, with a possible 10-15% decline depending on the severity of El Niño.

PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), the government weather service, said that El Niño is currently at a weakening state, though its effects are projected to last until August.

“We were also lucky that El Niño only hit the tail end of the harvest, and the effect was negated by the increase in planted area,” Mr. Azcona added.

He said that the SRA recorded a 3,000 hectare increase in planted area amid a rise in farmgate prices for sugarcane, encouraging more farmers to plant crops.

The government had earlier allocated P5 billion to directly purchase domestic sugar to arrest the drop in farmgate prices.

However, El Niño has affected the sugarcane planted for the next harvest season.

“This El Niño hit from November 2023 to present has greatly damaged the planted cane for the October 2024 harvest, and so far in Batangas, south Negros, and Mindanao, the October 2024 harvestable cane is suffering,” he said.

“We are hoping for the rains to come soon, so that the 2024 to 2025 season will be as good as well,” Mr. Azcona added.

Meanwhile, the PSMA is calling for sugar imports, citing production deficits.

“All we ask is that the volume to be imported is the deficiency in production including a contingency stock, with the arrival of imports timed not to coincide with sugar milling,” Mr. Uygongco said.

Administrative Order No. 20 (AO 20) instructed the Departments of Agriculture, Finance, and Trade and Industry to simplify the procedures for agricultural imports, while removing non-tariff barriers.

Under AO 20, the SRA was instructed to streamline and standardize sugar import rules. It was also ordered to admit more traders into the sugar import program.

“As sugar producers, we look forward to the stakeholders’ consultations that have to be undertaken by SRA to accomplish this directive,” he added. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/05/06/592804/sugar-output-hits-1-86-million-mt-for-crop-year-surpassing-sra-estimate/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Rice tariffication law amendment effort seen best focused on RCEF

May 6, 2024 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

AMENDMENTS to the law that liberalized rice imports should focus on the system of allocating the funds generated by import tariffs to modernize the industry, a legislator said.

The Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) is expiring in 2025 and any amendments need to address how the funds are distributed, Albay Rep. Jose Maria Clemente S. Salceda told *BusinessWorld* via Viber.

“The most obvious change that needs to be done with the Rice Tariffication Law is the allocation of the RCEF,” he said. “The fund is expiring in 2025, so we need to anticipate whether to extend it or to reallocate it to better suit the needs of farmers and consumers.”

The RCEF receives P10 billion a year from rice tariffs. It is a component of the Rice Tariffication Law of 2019, which privatized rice importing but required importers to pay a tariff of 35% on Southeast Asian grain, though this geographical restrictions were later eased to include rice from all sources.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) described RCEF’s fund disbursement as rigid, and called for flexibility to better address the needs of rice farmers.

“The current RCEF distribution scheme prohibits the fund’s use outside the prescribed menu of services,” according to an FFF paper outlining proposed amendments to the law said.

“It also disallows the realignment of funds across the four major program components, even if priorities change... over time,” it added.

Proceeds of the P10-billion rice fund must go to mechanization (50%), rice seed development (30%), credit assistance (10%), and farmer training (10%).

The FFF said “a certain percentage of RCEF, say 25%, could be reserved for other critical interventions.”

Amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law should also look to restoring the National Food Authority’s (NFA) regulatory powers, the FFF said.

The law removed the monitoring, supervisory, and regulatory functions of the NFA, a move seen by FFF as detrimental to the rice industry. “This prevents (the) government from anticipating supply shortages or gluts and controlling erratic movements in prices.”

“Reinstating these powers to the NFA will enable (the) government to detect and apprehend market manipulators and discourage hoarding, price fixing, and collusion among traders,” the FFF said.

Speaker and Leyte Rep. Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez last week directed the House of Representatives to prioritize amending the law, including the proposal reinstating NFA’s regulatory power.

“The NFA clearly has had a role in making cheaper rice available during past rice trade crises,” Mr. Salceda said.

The NFA should be allowed to build up rice reserves by directly dealing with producers, the FFF said. “In these instances, the (NFA) should be allowed to secure any buffer stock shortfall through bidding or other supply arrangements, but only with domestic farmers and their accredited organizations,” FFF said. — **Kenneth Christiane L. Basilio**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/05/06/592803/rice-tariffication-law-amendment-effort-seen-best-focused-on-rcef/>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# World food prices up in April for 2<sup>nd</sup> month, says UN agency

May 6, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

PARIS — The United Nations (UN) food agency's world price index rose for a second consecutive month in April as higher meat prices and small increases in vegetable oils and cereals outweighed declines in sugar and dairy products.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 119.1 points in April, up from a revised 118.8 points for March, the agency said on Friday.

The FAO's April reading was nonetheless 7.4% below the level a year earlier. The indicator hit a three-year low in February as food prices continued to move back from a record peak in March 2022 at the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of fellow crop exporter Ukraine.

In April, meat showed the strongest gain in prices, rising 1.6% from the prior month. Higher prices for poultry, beef and sheep meat offset a small fall for pork, which was affected by slow demand in Western Europe and from leading importers, especially China, the FAO said.

The FAO's cereal index inched up to end a three-month decline, supported by stronger export prices for maize (corn). Vegetable oil prices also ticked higher, extending previous gains to reach a 13-month high due to strength in sunflower and rapeseed oil.

The sugar index dropped sharply, shedding 4.4% from March to stand 14.7% below its year-earlier level amid improving global supply prospects.

Dairy prices edged down, ending a run of six consecutive monthly gains.

In separate cereal supply and demand data, the FAO nudged up its estimate of world cereal production in 2023/24 to 2.846 billion metric tons from 2.841 billion projected last month, up 1.2% from the previous year, notably due to updated figures for Myanmar and Pakistan.

For upcoming crops, the agency lowered its forecast for 2024 global wheat output to 791 million tons from 796 million last month, reflecting a larger drop in wheat planting in the European Union than previously expected.

The revised 2024 wheat output outlook was nonetheless about 0.5% above the previous year's level.  
— **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/05/06/592802/world-food-prices-up-in-april-for-2nd-month-says-un-agency/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# South Korea to slap fines on food manufacturers for ‘shrinkflation’

May 6, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

SEOUL — South Korea’s antitrust regulator said food makers and suppliers will be required to notify shoppers if they reduce the size of their products or face fines of up to 10 million won (\$7,300).

The Fair Trade Commission (FTC) said it has designated the practice of some businesses to cut product portions while keeping the price the same, or so-called shrinkflation, as an unfair transaction subject to penalties.

Most processed food makers and manufacturers of household supplies such as toilet paper, shampoo and detergents will have to display labels for three months if they downsize their products in a way that prompts the unit price to go up.

The rule will take effect in August after a three-month grace period, and violators will be fined 5 million won for their first offense and 10 million won for a second.

“The change was aimed at preventing a situation where companies reduce the size, standard, weight or quantity of their products without sufficient notice so that consumers unknowingly bear a substantial price increase,” the FTC said in a statement.



Shrinkflation has become a headache for consumers and governments around the world as households grapple with dwindling purchasing power in the face of soaring inflation over the past few years, despite some recent signs of easing price pressures.

Surging food prices and living costs were a major issue in the run up to last month's parliamentary elections in which President Yoon Suk Yeol's ruling party suffered a stinging defeat.

Mr. Yoon's government has taken various steps in a bid to tame price rises, including cutting tariffs on food imports and putting pressure on companies to limit price hikes. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/05/06/592805/south-korea-to-slap-fines-on-food-manufacturers-for-shrinkflation/>

# NFA backs House move on rice tariffication law

By Manila Standard

May 6, 2024, 12:20 am

The proposal to restore the National Food Authority's (NFA's) mandate to purchase and sell rice at affordable prices is supported by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

House Speaker Martin Romualdez on Tuesday said that the House of Representatives will pass a bill amending the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), which would allow NFA to buy and sell rice at lower prices. Romualdez gave the statement shortly after the first hearing on proposed bills amending the RTL were deliberated before the House agriculture and food panel.

The DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa remarked in an interview on Super Radyo dzBB that their support of the proposal comes in the heels of the government's lack of response to situations when the price of rice gets really high.

The DA's latest data shows that local regular milled rice now costs P50 per kilo, and P48 to P55 per kilo for local well-milled rice.

On the other hand, regular milled imported commercial rice costs P48 to P51 per kilo, while regular-milled at P51 to P54.

"These amendments to RTL—we are pounding on this because the President [Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr.] told us that we have to find ways on how to bring down rice prices," Romualdez told reporters in an interview.

Even if Romualdez's plans push through, de Mesa stressed that the NFA should not think of selling rice at bargain-basement prices. If the current price is P50 per kilo, the DA officials said the NFA should price it at around P40 per kilo.

He added that "The selling price should not be too low, like around P25 per kilo because the NFA will lose too much. That is also one of the reasons why the RTL was passed because the NFA incurred too much loss."

Even with unlimited entry of imported rice because of the RTL, a law which will supposedly bring down the price of rice in the market due to increased supply, apparently, the plan hardly worked. The cost of rice continued to spike within the six years since the law was enacted.

Even as the same law bans the NFA from purchasing and selling rice, restricting its mandate to manage buffer rice stocks, the latest government data seems to show otherwise: the rice inflation rate still rose to up to 24.4% in March when matched with 23.7% in February.

De Mesa said that having a kilo of rice at P25 will depend on the possibility of decreasing the cost to produce the staple.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/national/314443658/nfa-backs-house-move-on-rice-tarrification-law.html>

# BFAR, Buguey boost seaweed industry

By Leander C. Domingo

May 6, 2024

BUGUEY, Cagayan: The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in Region 2 has collaborated with the local government unit (LGU) to boost the production of seaweeds (Gracilaria), also locally known as "guraman."

Mayor Licerio Antiporda III said their fishing community during the second Buguey Agri-Fiesta conducted in April harvested around 100 metric tons or an equivalent of 14 MT of dried guraman.

Antiporda noted that their bountiful harvest showcased the commercial production of guraman in the Buguey Lagoon where farming technology was enhanced.



**MONEY FROM SEaweeds** Two workers attend to their seaweed (Gracilaria), locally known as 'guraman,' in their backyard which is their primary source of income in Buguey, Cagayan. The local government unit headed by Mayor Licerio Antiporda III has collaborated with the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Region 2 to boost the seaweed industry and help fisherfolk improve their income. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

He said seaweed farming remains one of the major sources of income in the municipality as its cultivation is year-round.

The BFAR explained that seaweeds is a raw material for gulaman bar production, wherein agar is used as an emulsifier for commercial products, or processed as chips, noodles or pickles.

It said this is also locally consumed in fresh form and is used as supplemental feeds for siganids culture.

"Due to the promising economic returns from seaweed farming in the municipality, more farmers are encouraged to engage in such livelihood," Antiporda said.

Thus, the need for interventions on culture and post-harvest management to sustain the industry in the municipality, he added.

Meanwhile, BFAR Region 2 director Angel Encarnacion said the bureau has been supporting the LGU in its efforts to develop and manage its various aquatic resources uniquely found in the municipality such as gracilaria, siganids, mud crabs and oysters, among others.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/06/regions/bfar-buguey-boost-seaweed-industry/1944870>

# **IN FACE OF P1.5B FARM DAMAGE**

## **State of calamity eyed in Isabela**

By Vince Jacob Visaya

May 6, 2024

**CITY OF CAUAYAN:** The Isabela Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) has recommended to Gov. Rodolfo Albano III and the provincial board to declare a state of calamity in the province due to the growing damage on agriculture which reached more than P1 billion.

In its second regular quarterly meeting on Thursday, May 2, assistant provincial agriculturist Arlene Castillo said that at least 30,000 hectares of farmland planted with palay, corn, vegetables and other crops have been destroyed due to the El Niño phenomenon.

Data showed that at least P1.5 billion farm damage had been recorded, affecting more than 26,000 farmers in the province's 34 towns and three cities, including independent Santiago City.

Chief meteorologist Ramil Tuppil of the Agrometeorology Division of Pagasa-Northern Luzon in Echague town in Isabela predicted that the extreme heat will persist until May this year based on the El Niño-Southern Oscillation alert system status.

As this developed, the Cagayan farm schools have been teaching farmers to plant drought-resistant alternative crops such as sweet potatoes and vegetables in Anquiray, Amulung, Cagayan.

Provincial agriculturist Pearlita Mabasa said sweet potatoes can be sold at Department of Agriculture-administered Kadiwa ng Pangulo program kiosks at the Cagayan capitol every Tuesday.

Vegetable seedling production has also been intensified with Cagayan National High School teachers as among the recipients, she added.

Youth farmers belonging to the 4-H Club have also been under training for organic fertilizer, mushroom production, aquaponics and hydroponics production.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/06/regions/state-of-calamity-eyed-in-isabela/1944864>

# Climate change burns Chad's cotton farmers

By Agence France-Presse  
May 6, 2024

**KAGTAOU, Chad:** Declador Rimleldeoudje waded through his field between thousands of stalks he hopes will become a bumper crop of cotton — knowing that Chad's white gold has a future as unpredictable as the rains.

For decades, cotton has sustained his region of southern Chad. But the prized crop is now under threat.

At the entrance to his village of Kagtaou, around 60 kilometers (40 miles) from Moundou, the main city in the south, stands a huge container overflowing with cotton.



Chadian farmer Declador Rimleldeoudje clears land with a machete before planting seeds in Kagtaou village, some sixty kilometres away from Moundou, on April 26, 2024. In southern Chad, cotton farmers are hit hard by climate change and the conflict between herders and farmers, some of whom feel "abandoned" by the N'Djamena government and are now pinning their hopes on opposition leader and presidential candidate Succes Masra in the Chadian presidential election on May 6, 2024. (Photo by Yasmine CANGA-VALLES / AFP)



CotonTchad, the semiprivate company that was supposed to purchase it, still has not honored its pledge and growers fear the unpredictable rains will destroy their harvest before it's sold.

"We like cotton, but it's too difficult... the climate isn't stable and that's a real drawback. It effects the tonnage," Rimleldeoudje explained, shading his eyes from the scorching sun.

The 24-year-old's profits have tumbled to a third of what they were last harvest.

Nearly everyone in Kagtaou makes their living from cotton.

But more and more people are becoming discouraged because of the damage wrought by climate change and long-running conflicts between farmers and herders.

"Evidence of climate change — irregular rainfall which sometimes causes drought and other times sporadic floods — leads to huge drops in production," explained Laohote Baohoutou, a climatologist at N'Djamena University.

It also exacerbates ancestral conflicts, he said.

## **Climate change**

Nomadic herders from the arid Sahel areas of the north drive their animals through fields belonging to growers in the south, or let the animals graze there. There are disputes about who owns some land.

At least 23 people died in a week of fighting in March. Women and children are often the victims of these frequent conflicts.

Intense rains are a new threat. The United Nations says floods in 2022 destroyed more than 350,000 hectares (1,350 square miles) of crops and killed 20,000 livestock in the central African country.

The south was the worst hit.

"It's so disheartening," sighed Rimleldeoudje. "I get the feeling the south doesn't even figure on the map of Chad anymore... We don't get any financial support."

Since April, Africa has seen more extreme climate events.

The west has sweltered in heat waves of more than 48 degrees Celsius (118 degrees Fahrenheit).

The east has been battered by torrential rains that have caused fatal floods in Kenya and Tanzania.

### **'Forgotten'**

Once one of Chad's most flourishing agricultural sectors, cotton has plummeted as a share of gross domestic product and exports shrank from 2.15 percent in 2015 to 0.7 percent in 2020, according to World Bank figures.

The prospects for Chad's white gold will weigh on the minds of southern voters when the country of 18 million votes for a new president on Monday.

Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, who was made head of state by the army three years ago after he led a military coup, is competing with the prime minister he appointed in January as his main opponent.

Some believe that Succes Masra, a fierce opponent-turned-ally of Deby, has been put up as a sham candidate to offer a veneer of democracy to an election Deby will easily win.

Others say that Masra, 40, who has attracted large crowds, is a genuine opponent and could push Deby into a second-round runoff.

Jean Benaudji, head of the cotton growers' association in Kagtaou, plans to vote for Masra.

"He's the only one who can provide support for the cotton growers, who've been abandoned and forgotten by the rest of the country," he said.

Masra, who hails from the south, has made promises of "justice and fairness" that have struck a nerve with many out-of-work cotton growers, who get nothing when their crops are destroyed by livestock or rains.

"His slogan is justice, equality and peace. That's what I'm looking for, and that's why he'll get my vote," said Rimleldeoudje.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/06/business/foreign-business/climate-change-burns-chads-cotton-farmers/1944841>

# **PHL's salt roadmap: Plug local demand, then export**

- Ada Pelonia
- May 6, 2024
- THE Philippines is looking to fill the domestic shortage of salt and remove the need for imports in the next five years, eventually competing with global suppliers of salt, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).
- Imelda Calixto, BFAR officer-in-charge for Fisheries Post-Harvest Technology Division, said government's primary goal is to fill the domestic shortfall, pegged at around 600,000 metric tons (MT), in five years.
- "Once we're salt secure, our next goal toward salt sufficiency would be exportation," said Calixto, speaking partly in Filipino, in an interview with BusinessMirror.
- Data from the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) showed locally produced salt accounts for only 7 percent of the country's annual demand of 683,000 MT, while the remaining 93 percent is imported from countries such as Australia and China.
- Calixto said she found the discrepancy between locally produced and imported salt alarming, and it's exactly the factor that prompted the recent enactment of Republic Act (RA) 11985 or the Philippine Salt Industry Development Act.
- Among the priority areas listed as suitable for salt production are Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Pangasinan, Zambales, Bataan, Quezon Province, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, Antique, and Misamis Oriental.
- The selection criteria for suitability, according to NFRDI documents, were physical land variables (slope, land cover, distance from coastline, distance from rivers, soil type), meteorological factors (rainfall, air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed), and supplementary factors (land classification, comprehensive land use plans, hazard susceptibility maps).
- "Areas with land covers of mangroves, forests, and built-up areas are automatically classified as not suitable for salt production," NFRDI said.
- The agency, however, stressed that close coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), local government units (LGUs), and BFAR is needed to further narrow down the most suitable areas for salt production since tenurial instruments of land, and land use and hazard susceptibility maps are not yet incorporated.

- Meanwhile, the environmental group Oceana is seeking amendments to the salt roadmap.
- Rose-Liza Eisma-Osorio, Oceana campaigns, legal and policy senior director, said some key provisions in RA 11985 may run counter to the Constitution.
- Under Section 12 of RA 11985, “the already issued Fishpond Lease Agreement [FLA] shall be amended accordingly to reflect salt production; Provided, That the period in the amended FLA for salt production shall state the full twenty-five [25]-year period.”
- “If that FLA holder is already managing the fishponds for about 40 years and if it’s amended, he’s given an additional 25 years. That’s beyond 50 years already, the maximum provided under our Constitution,” Eisma-Osorio said.
- Article 12 Section 3 of the 1987 Charter states that “private corporations or associations may not hold such alienable lands of the public domain except by lease, for a period not exceeding twenty-five years, renewable for not more than twenty-five years.”
- Eisma-Osorio also noted the broad powers granted to BFAR to oversee implementation and allocation of public lands, including portions of municipal waters, as salt production areas despite the jurisdiction of local government units LGUs over municipal waters.
- “The Philippine Salt Roadmap must provide safeguards, such as requirement of environmental impact assessments,” Eisma-Osorio said.
- “Transparent, participatory processes and accountability mechanisms must be in place,” she added.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/06/phls-salt-roadmap-plug-local-demand-then-export/>

# Loan products for agri sector expanded in 2022—report

- VG Cabuag
- May 6, 2024
- The share of agriculture loans and services rose to 18.1 percent in 2022 from 17.6 percent in 2021, according to the 2022 Countryside Bank Survey report released by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).
- The increase was mainly observed in rural and cooperative banks, or RCBs.
- “It reflects an expansion in loan products related to various agricultural needs, such as seeds, fertilizer, working capital, and farm equipment, sustainable projects, digitalization of farming activities, and agri-tourism activities,” the report read.
- The 2022 CBS Report is a collaboration between the Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Credit Policy Council and the BSP.
- The report aims to examine lending trends and policy implications concerning agricultural financing by leveraging branch-level data.

It evaluates banking units’ agricultural lending activities in 2022 compared to 2021 and covers aspects such as loan demand, borrower profiles, interest rates, repayment dynamics, profitability, risk management, challenges, and future plans. Administered electronically nationwide, survey respondents came from universal and commercial banks (UKBs), thrift banks (TBs), RCBs, government-owned banks (GBs) and digital banks (DBs).

Demand for agricultural loans varies among different banking groups, with at least 40 percent of RCBs and 74 percent of GBs underscoring their lending support for small-scale agricultural borrowers.

“Distribution of loan borrowers across banking groups illustrates that RCBs maintained a strong commitment to supporting agricultural borrowers, including small-scale farmers and fisherfolk,” the report read.

In 2022, there was a 36.7-percent increase in the total value of agricultural loans compared to 2021. Survey responses attribute this rise to growing demand for agricultural loans.

In 2022, the average interest rates on agricultural loans ranged from 12 percent to 18 percent, higher than those on non-agricultural loans, which ranged from 7.5 percent to 16 percent. RCBs within Metro Manila reported the highest rates, ranging from 16 percent to 21 percent. RCBs outside the Metro Manila and TBs showed a slightly broader range of rates, from 13 percent to 20 percent.

In contrast, UKBs and GBs had lower interest rates on agricultural loans, ranging between 4.6 percent and 7.2 percent, and 3.3 percent and 6.6 percent, respectively.

Most respondent banking units still require traditional loan securities from agricultural borrowers, mainly favoring real estate mortgages, it said.

To encourage increased lending to the agriculture sector, two-thirds of respondent banks stressed the importance of implementing credit support mechanisms, including credit guarantee/loan insurance, access to borrower information, and agricultural/crop insurance, the report said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/06/loan-products-for-agri-sector-expanded-in-2022-report/>

# **SRA: El Niño scorches sugarcane farms in PHL**

- Ada Pelonia
- May 6, 2024
- The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said El Niño damaged sugarcane crops in top sugar-producing areas like Negros and Batangas.
- SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said the current El Niño episode affected sugarcane that will be harvested in October, or a month after the start of crop year 2024-2025.
- “This El Niño hit from November 2023 to present has greatly damaged the planted cane for the October 2024 harvest, and so far in Batangas, South Negros, and Mindanao, the October 2024 harvestable cane is suffering,” Azcona said in a statement.
- “We are hoping for the rains to come soon, so that the 2024 to 2025 season will be as good as well.”
- The Philippine Sugar Millers Association said the country’s raw sugar output as of April 14 reached 1.863 million metric tons (MMT), 3.57 percent higher than last year’s 1.799 MMT. The figure is also higher than the SRA’s production estimate of 1.85 MMT.

■ The [Marcos] Administration’s effort to move the harvest cycle to September 1 from last year’s August to improve yield has proven its worth and we will continue to push for the original October 1 start of milling to further improve our cane quality,” said Azcona.■

Despite the loss of area in Batangas, the SRA recorded a 3,000-hectare (ha) increase in planted area due to good farmgate prices from the past year’s crop, which he said encouraged more farmers to plant sugarcane.

“We were also lucky that El Niño only hit the tail end of the harvestable cane and the effect was negated by the increase in planted area,” said Azcona.

Meanwhile, PSMA asked the government to ensure that sugar imports would only fill the shortfall in domestic output and beef up buffer stocks.



“All we ask is that the volume to be imported is the deficiency in production including buffer stocks for contingencies and scheduled arrival of imports so as not to coincide with sugar milling,” PSMA President Terence Uygongco said in a statement.

The Inter-Agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook (IAC-IMO) said local production of key commodities, including sugar would fail to meet domestic demand this year following the decline of sugarcane production in 2022.

Uygongco said he expects that through Administrative Order (AO) 20, the SRA will carry out “a more predictable, simplified, transparent, and need-based import program.”

AO 20 is set to streamline administrative procedures and remove non-tariff barriers for agricultural commodities.

According to the Department of Agriculture’s latest price watch report, the average weekly price of sugar in the capital region is P84.59 per kilogram for refined; P76.60 per kg for washed; and P75.07 per kg for brown.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/06/sra-el-nino-scorches-sugarcane-farms-in-ph/>

# **COUNTRYSIDE BANK SURVEY 2022:**

## **Agri loans, services up 18%**

May 6, 2024

The share of agriculture loans and services increased to 18.1 percent in 2022 from 17.6 percent in 2021, according to the 2022 Countryside Bank Survey (CBS) report released by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

The increase was mainly observed in rural and cooperative banks (RCBs). It reflects an expansion in loan products related to various agricultural needs, such as seeds, fertilizer, working capital, and farm equipment, sustainable projects, digitalization of farming activities, and agri-tourism activities.

The CBS Report also noted that demand for agricultural loans varies among different banking groups, with at least 40 percent of rural bank and cooperatives and 74 percent of government banks underscoring their lending support for small-scale agricultural borrowers.

Distribution of loan borrowers across banking groups illustrates that RCBs maintained a strong commitment to supporting agricultural borrowers, including small-scale farmers and fisherfolk.

The report also said regional distribution of agricultural borrowers reveals that UKBs have a higher concentration in Luzon. RCBs exhibit a similar trend but with notably fewer borrowers in the NCR. TBs have a higher number of borrowers in Mindanao. GBs show similar borrower numbers outside the NCR, with slightly more borrowers in Mindanao.

In 2022, there was a significant 36.7 percent increase in the total value of agricultural loans compared to 2021. Survey responses attribute this rise to growing demand for agricultural loans, potentially influenced by the implementation of RA No. 11901, along with intensified marketing efforts by banking units to attract new borrowers.

In 2022, the average interest rates on agricultural loans ranged from 12 percent to 18 percent, higher than those on non-agricultural loans, which ranged from 7.5 percent to 16 percent. RCBs within the NCR (NCRRCBs) reported the highest rates, ranging from 16 percent to 21 percent. RCBs outside the NCR and TBs showed a slightly broader range of rates, from 13 percent to 20 percent. In contrast, UKBs and GBs had lower interest rates on agricultural loans, ranging between 4.6 percent and 7.2 percent, and 3.3 percent and 6.6 percent, respectively.

Respondent banking units reported an average overall repayment loan rate of 67 percent, with GBs recording a higher rate of 70 percent. Some banking units attributed lower repayment rates in 2022 to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall non-performing loan (NPL) ratios for agricultural loans slightly declined from 7.3 percent in 2021 to 7.2 percent in 2022, with NCRRCBs experiencing significant decreases in their NPL ratios for agricultural loans in 2022.

The 2022 CBS showed strong financial performance and strategic capabilities of the respondent banking units. Operating income has notably increased and net income shows a collective growth trend, underscoring overall profitability gains.

Most respondent banking units still require traditional loan securities from agricultural borrowers, mainly favoring real estate mortgages. To encourage increased lending to the agriculture sector, two-thirds of respondent banks stressed the importance of implementing credit support mechanisms, including credit guarantee/loan insurance, access to borrower information, and agricultural/crop insurance.

Banking units often face challenges when lending to the agricultural sector due to inherent risks like exposure to natural disasters, uncertain crop yields, fluctuating borrower incomes, and an aging population. They see it crucial to adopt measures that address information gaps in agricultural lending to boost confidence in extending credit to this sector.

Looking ahead, respondent banks are optimistic about the next twelve months. They anticipate favorable lending conditions for agricultural borrowers. Specifically, they foresee improvements in loan volumes and quality, aiming to enhance profitability.

The 2022 CBS Report is a collaborative effort between the Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Credit Policy Council (DA-ACPC) and the BSP.

The report aims to examine lending trends and policy implications concerning agricultural financing by leveraging branch-level data. It evaluates banking units' agricultural lending activities in 2022 compared to 2021 and covers aspects such as loan demand, borrower profiles, interest rates, repayment dynamics, profitability, risk management, challenges, and future plans.

Administered electronically nationwide, survey respondents came from universal and commercial banks (UKBs), thrift banks (TBs), RCBs, government-owned banks (GBs), and digital banks (DBs).

The conduct of the 2022 CBS also coincided with the start of implementation of Republic Act (RA) No. 11901 also known as the Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Financing Enhancement Act of 2022.

The survey establishes baseline data to monitor banks' compliance with said law and includes questions about specific agricultural loan products and services offered in 2021 and 2022 that are consistent with RA No. 11901 guidelines.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_special\\_feature/countryside-bank-survey-2022-agri-loans-services-up-18/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_special_feature/countryside-bank-survey-2022-agri-loans-services-up-18/)

# 206 areas under state of calamity

By **Victor Reyes**

May 6, 2024

## El Niño effects to persist this month – PAGASA

THE National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) yesterday said 206 cities and municipalities throughout the country are under a state of calamity due to the continuing effects of El Niño, a weather phenomenon that increases the likelihood of dry spells and droughts due to below-normal rainfall conditions.

There are 148 cities and 1,486 municipalities nationwide, according to data from the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

The NDRRMC said 119 of the local government units (LGUs) under state of calamity are in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), 30 in Western Visayas, 29 in Soccsksargen, 16 in Mimaropa; three each in Central Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula and Northern Mindanao; and one each in Ilocos region, Eastern Visayas and Cordillera Administrative Region.

It also said that the provinces of Antique, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, Basilan, Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Lanao del Sur, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu have declared province-wide state of calamity.

In the same report, the NDRRMC also said that as of May 4, some 2.46 million individuals have been affected by the phenomenon, including more than 29,000 farmers and fisherfolks.

However, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has a higher figure of more than 3.295 million individuals or 796,407 families affected by the El Niño in 13 regions in the country.

The NDRRMC said the El Niño has affected 577,775 families or 2,464,388 individuals in 3,109 barangays within 11 regions.

Western Visayas and BARRM are the two regions with the most number of affected population, with 231,724 families (900,013 individuals) and 126,368 families (623,231 individuals), respectively.

It also said the livelihood of 29,409 farmers and fisherfolks have been hit by the dry spell, with 26,731.4 hectares of crops, worth P1.23 billion, already damaged.

Affected families and individuals have been provided P908.7 million worth of assistance, including P808.41 million in financial aid.

On the other hand, data from the DSWD- Disaster Response Management said that as of 6 p.m. of May 4, 4, 366 barangays in regions I (Ilocos), II (Cagayan Valley), III (Central Luzon), IV-B (Mimaropa), V (Bicol), VI (Western Visayas), VII (Central Visayas), VIII (Eastern Visayas), IX (Zamboanga Peninsula), XI (Davao), XII (Soccsksargen), Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) are affected by the El Niño.

It said more than P106.64 million worth of food packs have been distributed by the DSWD to those affected by the phenomenon.

It said it still has P3.239 billion worth of cash (P794.92 million) and food packs (P2.44 billion) on standby and ready to be distributed.

The PAGASA has said in March that while El Niño is already weakening, its effect will persist until this month.

It said there is a 55 percent chance that La Niña, a climate pattern that characterizes above average rains, will onset during the June-July-August period.

The weather bureau said hot temperatures will continue to be felt throughout the country, with 26 areas forecast to have danger level heat index today.

Dagupan City in Pangasinan and Aparri town in Cagayan will be hottest with a projected 48 degree heat index.

Pasay City in Metro Manila will have a dangerous heat index of 42 degrees, while the forecast heat index in the following areas will range between 42 to 46 degrees: Sinait town in Ilocos Sur, Laoag City and Batac town in Ilocos Norte, Bacnotan town in La Union, Tuguegarao City in Cagayan, Echague town in Isabela, Iba town in Zambales, Baler and Casiguran towns in Aurora, Olongapo City in Zambales, Sangley Point in Cavite, Tanauan City in Batangas, Infanta and Alabat towns in Quezon, Puerto Princesa City and Cuyo town in Palawan, Daet town in Camarines Norte, Virac town in Catanduanes, Masbate City in Masbate, Pili town in Camarines Sur, Dumangas town in Iloilo, Catbalogan City in Samar, and Zamboanga City in Zamboanga del Sur. – **With Jocelyn Montemayor**

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_news/206-areas-under-state-of-calamity/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_news/206-areas-under-state-of-calamity/)

# Sugar production climbs

By **Jed Macapagal**

May 6, 2024

As harvest season nears its end, sugar production for crop year 2023 to 2024 has reached 1.86 million metric tons (MT) as of April 14, breaching by 3.57 percent the 1.79 million MT actual production last crop year, according to the Philippine Sugar Millers Association (PSMA).

PSMA said with this, government should be more cautious in allowing sugar imports following the issuance of Administrative Order (AO) 20 that streamlines administrative procedures and policies and eliminate non-tariff barriers to importing agricultural products.

Terence Uygongco, PSMA president, in a statement, said current sugar production has also surpassed the 1.85 million MT production estimate of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) for the current crop year.

“Higher production helps allay uncertainties in the supply of sugar in the country.

Consistently, even prior to AO 20, the PSMA has supported the import programs of government through the SRA, when it is determined that our country’s supply is not sufficient to meet demand,” Uygongco said.

“All we ask is that the volume to be imported is the deficiency in production including buffer stocks for contingencies and scheduled arrival of imports so as not to coincide with sugar milling. With AO 20, a more predictable, simplified, transparent and need-based import program is ordered to be carried out by SRA subject to laws and regulations including its mandate,” Uygongco added.

Pablo Azcona, SRA administrator, said in a separate statement moving the harvest cycle to September 1 from last year’s August to improve yield “has proven its worth.”

Azcona said SRA will continue to push for the original October 1 start of milling to further improve sugarcane quality.

“Despite the loss of area in Batangas, we recorded a 3,000-hectare increase in planted area, mainly because of the very good farm gate prices from past year’s crop, which encouraged more farmers to plant sugarcane,” Azcona added.

SRA also said since El Niño only hit the tailend of the harvestable cane, its negative effects were countered by the increase in planted area.

“El Niño (that) hit from November 2023 to present has greatly damaged the planted cane for the October 2024 harvest. In Batangas, south Negros, and Mindanao, the October 2024 harvestable cane is suffering. We are hoping for the rains to come soon so that the 2024 to 2025 season will be as good as well,” Azcona said.

In another statement, the Sugar Council said while it agrees there is a need to reduce red tape and further streamline importation procedures to help stabilize prices of basic necessities, AO 20 without “appropriate safety nets and effective competitiveness enhancement measures” cannot “ensure food security, maintain sufficient supply of agricultural products in the domestic market and improve local production.”

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_business/sugar-production-climbs/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/sugar-production-climbs/)

**ABANTE TONITE**

# **`Presyo ng bigas binalahura sa imported' – Marcos**

May 5, 2024

Mayroong “mas mahusay na garantiya” para bumaba ang presyo ng bigas sa halip na payagan ang National Food Authority (NFA) na direktang dalhin ang bigas sa mga palengke, ayon kay Senador Imee Marcos.

“Alisin ang mga middlemen at buhayin ang matagal nang pinabayaan na NFA-FTI-KADIWA system,” sabi ni Marcos.

Binanggit ng senador ang national food security program noong dekada '70 kung saan direktang binibili ng NFA ang mga lokal na produktong agrikultura at ang ahensiya rin ang nangangasiwa sa sentralisadong koleksyon at distribusyon ng mga ito sa pamamagitan ng Food Terminal Inc. at ang pagbebenta nang may diskuwento sa mga Kadiwa retail store.

“Hindi na kailangang maglaro ng taguan ang mga price monitor ng gobyerno sa mga nagtitinda sa palengke, `yan ang mas mahusay na garantiya para sa pinakamababang presyo ng bigas,” paliwanag ni Marcos.

Ayon sa senador, ang mga sakahan ng bigas na tinamaan ng tagtuyot dahil sa El Niño ay pinangangambahang magkakaroon ng mas mababang ani, mas kaunting NFA rice buffer stock, at mas mataas na presyo sa tingi-tinging bentahan ng bigas na napakahalaga sa hapag-kainan ng mga Pilipino.

Habang isinusulong ng Kamara de Representantes na amiyendahan ang Rice Tariffication Law, kinilala ni Marcos ang naturang batas dahil sa pagpapababa ng presyo ng bigas sa unang taon ng implementasyon nito.

“Ngunit ito ay labis na binalahura ng malawakang importasyon ng bigas na sanhi ng pagbaba ng farmgate price ng palay habang tumaas ang gastos sa pagtanim,” ani Marcos.

“Maraming magsasakang napilitang iwanan ang kanilang kabuhayan. Maaari tayong magdagdag ng ilang mga magpapalakas sa batas nang hindi ito lubusang binabago, upang mas makakatugon ito sa kasalukuyang sitwasyon,” dagdag pa niya.



Kasabay nito, nanawagan si Marcos na suportahan ang kanyang mga amiyenda sa Republic Act No. 8178, o ang Agricultural Tariffication Act, na nakasaad sa Senate Bill No. 642.

Sa kanyang panukala, magbibigay ng tulong pinansiyal sa mga magsasaka na nawalan ng hanapbuhay dahil sa wholesale importation.

Nakasaad din sa panukala na kapag ang labis na suplay ng imported o lokal na bigas ay nagdudulot ng pagbagsak sa presyo, bibigyan ng kapangyarihan ang Pangulo na itigil ang importasyon hanggang sa maging matatag ang suplay at presyo.

“Hindi natin dapat kalimutan ang kapakanan ng mga magsasaka kapag ang mga mamimili ay humihirit ng mas mababang presyo,” diin pa ni Marcos. (Dindo Matining)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/05/05/presyo-ng-bigas-binalahura-sa-imported-marcos/>

# Tag-ulan mapupurnada sa El Niño – PAGASA

[Angie dela Cruz](#)

May 6, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Posibleng maantala ang pasok ng tag-ulan sa bansa dahil sa epekto ng El Niño phenomenon o panahon ng tagtuyot.

Ayon sa PAGASA, karaniwang pumapasok ang tag-ulan sa huling linggo ng buwan ng Mayo o unang linggo ng Hunyo pero dahil sa epekto ng El Niño, made-delay ito.

Tinaya rin ng PAGASA na oras na maglaho ang panahon ng El Niño ay haharap naman ang bansa sa pagpasok ng La Niña na magdadala ng maulang panahon sa bansa.

Tinagubilinan ni Dra. Ana Solis, hepe ng Climatology department ng PAGASA, ang publiko na paghandaan ang anumang kundisyon ng panahon na mararanasan sa bansa upang makaiwas sa anumang pinsala na hatid nito sa mamamayan at kapaligiran.

Samantala, aabot sa 16 lugar ang nagtala ng pinaka mataas na heat index o matinding ramdam na init sa katawan

Kabilang dito ang Aparri Cagayan na pumalo sa 48°C; Dagupan, Pangasinan 47°C; Virac, Catanduanes 45°C; Laoag, Ilocos Norte at Bocnotan, La Union 44°C habang 43°C sa Masbate City at Tuguegarao City.

Nagtala naman ang Pasay City ng 41°C at 40°C sa Quezon City.

Una nang sinabi ng PAGASA na mainam na alam ng publiko ang heat index sa kanilang mga lugar at ang mga sintomas na epekto sa katawan ng mataas na heat indices upang maiwasang maitala ang heat cramps, heat exhaustion, at heat stroke dulot ng matagal na pagkababad sa init ng araw.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/05/06/2352877/tag-ulan-mapupurnada-sa-el-nio-pagasa>

# Gobyerno, patuloy sa paghahanap ng paraan na mapagaan buhay ng Pinoy

[Doris Franche-Borja](#)

May 6, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Hindi tumitigil ang administrasyong Marcos sa paghahanap ng paraan para mapagaan ang buhay ng mga Filipino.

Ayon kay House Speaker Martin Romualdez, ang pamimigay ng mga ayuda, scholarship at pangkabuhayan sa mga mahihirap ay ilan lamang sa ginagawa na ng pamahalaan.

Ang pamamahagi ng mga bigas at cash sa iba't ibang lalawigan, sa pamamagitan ng 'Cash and Rice Distribution' (CARD) ng Kongreso ay isang programa para sa mahihirap.

Aniya, "pero siyempre hindi lang ang mahihirap ang kailangang tulong ng gobyerno tulad ng mga may trabaho nga pero minimum or below minimum wage lang ang kinikita."

"Yung AKAP o Ayuda sa mga Kapos ang Kita Program ng DSWD ay para sa mga below middle class na tulong ng pamahalaan," ayon kay Romualdez.

Binanggit din niya ang pagtataas sa grocery discount ng mga senior at PWD to P500 per month ay tulong sa mga senior citizen at PWD sector.

Ang mga libreng pa-check-up ng PhilHealth sa ilalim ng 'Konsulta' package ng ahensiya ay isa pang ayuda para sa kalusugan ng mga miyembro ng PhilHealth.

Paliwanag pa ng lider ng Kongreso, ang mga ito raw ay panandaliang tugon lang sa agarang pangangailangan ng mga Pilipino.

Kaya naman daw ang pagrerebyu ng ilang batas tulad ng Rice Tarrification Law para payagan muling magbenta ang National Food Authority (NFA) ng murang bigas sa mga palengke.

Paalala pa ni Romualdez, "We will make sure na hahanapan ng administrasyong ito ng solusyon ang mga problema na kinakaharap nating lahat bago matapos ang termino ni PBBM."

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/05/06/2352872/gobyerno-patuloy-sa-paghahanap-ng-paraan-na-mapagaan-buhay-ng-pinoy>

**ABANTE:**

# Agri, NDRRMC ‘minadyik’ danyos ng El Niño

- Abante News
- May 5, 2024



Hindi umano magkatugma ang mga datos na inilabas ng Department of Agriculture (DA) at National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) kaugnay ng pinsalang dulot ng El Niño phenomenon sa bansa.

Sinabi ni AGRI party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee na mahalaga na magkaroon ng tamang impormasyon upang makagawa ng angkop na solusyon ang gobyerno.

“Nakakalito ang mga lumalabas na datos mula sa DA at NDRRMC. Bukod sa hindi nagtutugma, napakalaki ng diperensya ng inilalabas nilang mga numero,” sabi ni Lee.

“Ayon sa DA, umabot na sa halos P6 billion ang pinsala sa agrikultura sa bansa dulot ng El Niño noong April 30. Sa inilabas naman na situation report ng NDRRMC noong April 29, nasa mahigit P1.6 billion ang tinatayang pinsala sa agrikultura. Dapat linawin kung bakit magkaiba at alin ang dapat sundin dito,” dagdag ng solon.

Batay sa datos ng DA, umabot na sa P5.9 bil-yon ang pinsala ng El Niño phenomenon na nakaapekto sa 113,585 mag-sasaka at mangingisda sa 12 rehiyon. Umabot na umano sa 104,402 hektarya ng agricultural area ang apektado.

Sa ulat naman ng NDRRMC, nakasaad dito na 46,805 magsasaka at mangingisda ang apek-tado ng sobrang init na sumira sa 44,437 hektarya ng taniman na nagkakahalaga ng mahigit P1.6 bilyon.

“The appropriate mitigation and response to El Niño is dependent on accurate data, especially since this is the basis for the assistance being given by the government to those affected by the phenomenon. How much will be given to how many is reliant on the reports being published kaya sana po ay magkaroon ng maayos na komunikasyon sa pagitan ng mga ahensiya ng gobyerno na nag-a-assess at naglalabas ng mga ganitong datos,” punto ni Lee. (Billy Begas)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/05/05/agri-ndrrmc-minadyik-danyos-ng-el-nino/>