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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Philippine rice stocks grow 14% in May

By Dexter Barro II

Published Jun 9, 2025 12:22 pm

(Dexter Barro II/MANILA BULLETIN)

The country's rice inventory jumped by 14 percent to over two million metric tons (MT) in May, aligning with the government's ongoing efforts to ensure food sufficiency and stabilize prices.

In its latest report, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said rice stocks stood at 2.37 million MT as of May 1, up from 2.08 million MT in the same month last year.

Month-on-month, the volume of rice stocks inched up by one percent from the 2.34 million MT recorded in April.

PSA data showed that 49.4 percent of the total rice stocks were from households, 33.9 percent were from the commercial sector, and 16.8 percent from the warehouses of the National Food Authority (NFA).

As of May 1, rice stocks in households increased by 35 percent to 1.17 million MT compared to 863,770 MT in the same month last year.

Meanwhile, rice inventory in the commercial sector slumped by 30 percent to 803,440 MT versus last year's 1.14 million MT.

NFA stocks, on the other hand, saw a massive jump from 69,350 MT last year to 397,210 MT—a staggering 472-percent hike.

Compared to April data, rice stocks from NFA depositories surged by 15 percent. Rice inventory in the commercial sector and households, however, fell by two percent and 0.3 percent, respectively.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has been strengthening its efforts to secure a strong rice supply to help lower prices of the staple, which is seen as integral in slowing down inflation.

In a statement last week, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said it is the clear directive of the Marcos administration to ensure that food is “sufficient and affordable.”

This year, the DA has been implementing programs such as the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) on rice and the ₱20-per-kilo rice initiative, which empowers the NFA to significantly ramp up purchases of rice from local farmers, alongside its aim to lower prices.

Laurel attributed the steady decline in rice prices as a key driver in the slowdown of the headline inflation in May, which logged 1.3 percent—the lowest since the 1.2 percent in November 2019.

National Statistician Claire Dennis Mapa said the recent adjustments in retail rice prices are expected to influence inflation through at least August.

Based on PSA data, rice accounts for ₱9 of every ₱100 spent by the average Filipino. This figure doubles among the bottom 30-percent income households.

Further, the statistics agency said the country's corn stocks as of May 1 went down by six percent to 671,100 MT from 710,720 MT in the previous year.

On a monthly basis, corn inventory rose by three percent compared to April's 653,350 MT.

Of the total inventory, 84.5 percent of the corn were from the commercial sector, while the remaining 15.5 percent were from households.

Corn stocks in households recorded 104,090 MT, 82-percent higher than the 57,140 MT last year.

Commercial corn stocks, meanwhile, declined by 13 percent to 567,020 MT from 653,580 MT in 2024.

In comparison to the April data, corn stocks in the commercial sector went up seven percent. On the other hand, corn stocks in households dipped by 17 percent.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/06/09/philippine-rice-stocks-grow-14-in-may>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Over 840 hectares of Negros sugarcane fields hit by pests

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - Reporter / [@jordeenelagare](#)  
Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:13 AM June 10, 2025



Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr

The red-striped soft scale insects (RSSI) infestation on Negros Island continues to spread, impacting many other sugarcane plantations, according to the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

Data from the SRA showed that the pest disease has affected 841.70 hectares of sugarcane farms in Negros Occidental and neighboring areas as of June 6.

This was almost 10 times higher than the 87.04 hectares recorded by the agency on May 22.

About 465 farmers are affected by the RSSI spread, most of them based in Bago City, Murcia, Silay City and Manapla in Negros Occidental.

Last week, the Department of Agriculture (DA) announced it had released P10 billion for pesticide procurement to boost pest containment efforts.

## **Transport restriction**

On top of the DA initiative, the SRA said it is also planning to issue a board resolution requiring industry stakeholders to first seek its permission before transporting any planting materials for research facilities and commercial purposes.

It added that it will coordinate with the Bureau of Plant Industry to enforce the proposed policy.

“So whoever, whatever irresponsibly brought plants into Negros carrying RSSI, it’s okay. We don’t want to fingerpoint, but we need to find a solution,” SRA administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said during a public consultation held Monday.

“However, [Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.] has told me that we should implement controls from this day forward, moving into the future with or without a disease, with or without a pest. This cannot happen again,” he added.

The SRA previously said that the infestation may have originated from planting materials transported from Luzon.

The RSSI, scientifically known as *Pulvinaria tenuivalvata*, is usually found on the lower surfaces of the middle leaf portion of sugarcane, according to the National Crop Protection Center of the University of the Philippines in Los Baños.

The SRA said it was first observed in Luzon in 2022 although the spread was contained by the DA and SRA last year after chemical pesticides were used in affected areas. Although researchers at the SRA have identified a parasite to help control the infestation, they said it would take time to eliminate the pest disease.

The RSSI is believed to slash sugar production by as much as 50 percent, the SRA noted, citing studies. INQ

Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

<https://business.inquirer.net/529850/over-840-hectares-of-negros-sugarcane-fields-hit-by-pests>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Satellite-aided crop insurance system to be piloted among 1,000 rice farmers

June 9, 2025 | 9:28 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

THE Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) launched a satellite-aided crop insurance system for rice farmers, which will facilitate the issuance of insurance policies by doing away with the need for on-site assessments of farmland.

The new system initially targets 1,000 farmers in Isabela and Camarines Sur, according to a memorandum of agreement signed by the PCIC, IRRI, the PAGASA government weather service, and the Alliance of Bioversity International.

Initial beneficiaries are farmers from Isabela and Camarines Sur provinces, with expansion to proceed nationwide following a positive outcome from the pilot.

IRRI noted that traditional crop insurance has not fully addressed farmers' needs, citing slow claims processing, subjective damage assessments, and limited coverage.

"Crop insurance is seen as one of the mechanisms to cushion the impact of climate shocks on the already vulnerable agriculture sector," it said.

In 2024, agricultural losses due to natural disasters amounted to P57.8 billion. The Philippines is visited by an average of 20 typhoons every year.

The program will use an area-based yield index insurance developed by IRRI, PCIC, and the Philippine Rice Research Institute "to provide an evidence-based reference for the insurance package," instead of relying solely on on-site damage assessments.

"This type of crop insurance offers a comprehensive range of risks, including floods, droughts, saltwater intrusion, and pests and diseases," IRRI said. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/06/09/678129/satellite-aided-crop-insurance-system-to-be-piloted-among-1000-rice-farmers/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Restrictions imposed on movement of sugar planting materials in Negros Island

June 9, 2025 | 9:31 pm



REUTERS

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) on Monday said it will control the entry of planting materials into Negros Island in response to an infestation of red-striped soft scale insects (RSSI). Planting materials, whether for commercial or research purposes, must obtain a certification from the SRA, the regulator said via Viber.

“Research facilities and commercial users will have to seek clearance from SRA to transport materials,” it said.

The spread of RSSI, which could reduce sugar yields by nearly 50%, has hit 841 hectares as of June 6, from 546 hectares on June 2.

Some 42 hectares were classified as severely affected, 99.27 hectares moderately affected, and 667.33 mildly affected.

The SRA on June 2 said it sought emergency powers to fast-track procurement and distribution of pesticide “given the strict regulations of the Commission on Audit regarding procurement.”

An infestation was declared on May 22 in Negros, which accounts for 60% of Philippine sugar production.

The SRA said it will spend P1.5 million to buy pesticide pending assistance from the Department of Agriculture. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/06/09/678133/restrictions-imposed-on-movement-of-sugar-planting-materials-in-negros-island/>



**REMATE:**

# Mga lugar na may P20/kada kilong bigas dadagdagan pa ng DA

June 9, 2025 16:54



MANILA, Philippines – TINITINGNAN ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na magpalabas ng P20-per-kilo na bigas sa mas maraming lokasyon sa lalong madaling panahon, na may kaakibat na layunin nito para sa nationwide release sa January 1, 2026.

Sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na may 80 KADIWA o Katuwang sa Diwa at Gawa para sa Masaganang Ani at Mataas na Kita Centers ang kasalukuyang ang nagbebenta ng P20 kada kilo.

“Sa Cebu meron na, Bacolod, susunod is Siquijor tapos baka Bohol then CamSur (Camarines Sur) magkakaroon din. San Juan sa Metro Manila and Navotas, malapit na rin,” ayon kay Tiu Laurel.

Ito’y matapos na hangarin ng administrasyon na mas ibaba ang presyo ng commercial rice, na may P20-per-kilo rice — isang campaign promise ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. sa panahon ng presidential run noong 2022 — ibinebenta sa KADIWA Centers simula pa noong Mayo, na sinasabing tatagal hanggang Disyembre.

Nauna rito, sinabi ng DA na plano nito ang nationwide rollout sa January 1, 2026, subalit sa ngayon, ang P20-per-kilo rice ay magiging available sa KADIWA Centers at sa pamamagitan ng local government units.

Sa ilalim ng programa, nakatakdang bumili ang ghobyerno ng bigas mula sa National Food Authority (NFA) sa halagang P33 kada kilo. Ito ay mabibili naman ng publiko sa halagang P20 kada kilo, na may P13 kada kilo na subsidy na paghahatian ng national government at local government units kung saan tig- P6.50 kada isa.

Si Tiu Laurel nito lamang Enero ay nagpahayag na ang NFA ay nakatakdang bumili ng 300,000 metric tons ng bigas ngayong taon, kumpiyansa na tatamaan ng bansa ang record para sa palay production.



“Pasensya na ho sa mga mamamayan at kailangan lang namin ma-implement ito stage by stage dahil may mga kulang pa rin kaming logistics tulad ng truck, katulad ng driver, pero ‘yung bigas marami naman ho,” ang sinabi ni Tiu Laurel.

Makikita naman sa monitoring ng DA na ang presyo ng local commercial rice sa Metro Manila markets ay mula P38.17 kada kilo hanggang P57.73 kada kilo ‘as of June 4, 2025.’

Ani Laurel, makabubuti sa Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) na maamiyendahan para maibalik ang kapangyarihan sa NFA na magbenta ng bigas na direkta sa pamilihan, na posible na ngayon sa pamamagitan ng deklarasyon ng food security emergency sa bigas.

“Isa pang problema, kung ma-lift ‘yun, titigil ‘yung programa natin kaya kailangan talaga maamiyendahan ito,” ang sinabi ng Kalihim sabay sabing patulyo na pinag-aaralan ng DA ang mga patakaran at legalidad ng nasabing usapin.

Ang RTL, naging epektibo noong March 5, 2019, “allows unlimited importation of rice as long as private sector traders secure a phytosanitary permit from the Bureau of Plant Industry and pay the 35-percent tariff for shipments from neighbors in Southeast Asia.”

Nilagdaan upang maging ganap na batas ni dating Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, naglaan ang batas ng P10 billion para sa Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), kung saan, ang P5 billion ay ilalaan sa farm mechanization at P3 billion para sa seedlings.

“Kailangan ho nating maamiyendahan ‘yung RTL. Hindi namin sinasabi ‘yung RTL ay mali totally, hindi ganon ang posisyon ng DA. Kailangan maibalik ‘yung natanggal,” ang sinabi pa ni Tiu Laurel. *Kris Jose*

<https://remate.ph/mga-lugar-na-may-p20-kada-kilong-bigas-dadagdagan-pa-ng-da/>

**REMATE:**

# ASF vaccine target maipalabas sa Q3 ng 2025

June 9, 2025 18:25



MANILA, Philippines – KUMPIYANSA ang Department of Agriculture (DA) na maipalalabas ang bakuna laban sa African swine fever (ASF) sa third quarter ng taon, na may pinakabagong mga pagsusuri na naghihintay ng approval mula sa third-party experts.

Ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., ang bakuna ay dumaan sa genome sequencing at dinala sa third-party experts para sa approval.

“Kung pumasa na sa kanila ‘to, hopefully next month, magbigay na sila ng okay, then ifu-fully endorse na namin sa FDA (Food and Drug Administration) ‘to hopefully by July,” ang sinabi pa rin ng Kalihim. “Kung positive ho ‘yung answer or ang feedback ng mga dalubhasa na third party na ginamit natin, siguro before third quarter labas to,” aniya pa rin

Nauna rito, nagpulong ang mga opisyal ng DA, Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), at FDA noong May 19 upang pag-usapan ang updates hinggil sa ASF at avian influenza (AI) vaccine candidates, sa pagsisikap na protektahan ang ‘swine at poultry sectors.’

Nito lamang buwan ng Marso, sinabi ni Tiu Laurel na ang bansa ay mayroong 8 milyong baboy, kumpara sa halos 14 milyon bago pa ang ASF outbreak. Mula noon ay nanawagan na siya sa industry stakeholders na ibalik ang populasyon.

Samantala, nauna nang sinabi ni DA spokesperson at assistant secretary Arnel de Mesa na nakikita na departamento ang pagbangon ng local hog industry, iyon nga lamang ay aabot pa ito ng dalawa hanggang tatlong taon bago bumalik ang swine population ng bansa sa pre-ASF levels nito. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/asf-vaccine-target-maipalabas-sa-q3-ng-2025/>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

# PBBM assures public gov't won't run out of 'Benteng Bigas'



*People line up to avail of rice sold at P20 per kilo at the Kadiwa Center in Quezon City on May 28, 2025. (Photo by Manny Palmero)*

By Vince Lopez

June 9, 2025, 11:20 pm

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Sunday dispelled any doubts about the sustainability of his Benteng Bigas Meron Na program that offers quality rice at ₱20 per kilo to the country's vulnerable sectors.

"Many are still unsure about how this 20-peso rice will be sustained or extended. 'Do we have a stock of rice? Can the government pay for it?'" the President said in a video posted on his YouTube channel.

"We can sustain it if everyone works together. We will ensure that our people will not run out of affordable rice," he stressed in BBMVLOG #270: Mga Pagbabago, which ran for six minutes and 37 seconds.

The government has rolled out the Benteng Bigas Meron Na program nationwide, selling rice at ₱20 per kilo in Kadiwa ng Pangulo outlets to members of vulnerable sectors, including 4Ps beneficiaries, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and solo parents.

The program fulfills President Marcos' long-standing promise to make the staple food more affordable and ease the financial burden of the poor, while also supporting farmers in sustaining their rice production.

In the vlog, the President shared testimonials from beneficiaries who said the low-cost rice allowed them to better feed their families.

"This is a big deal, especially for our poor countrymen. ₱20 is a big deal. We are very happy," one woman said.

Another added: "I am very happy because many people have been waiting for it. It is a big deal."

Also in the same vlog, President Marcos ordered the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to ensure that all major canals and irrigation infrastructure across the country are well-maintained to support farmers and boost agricultural production.

"That's part of the National Irrigation Authority's mandate—to make sure the major canals and irrigation infrastructure are always in good order," he said.

The directive comes after the President oversaw the third tranche of NIA's re-fleeting program last week, which saw the distribution of 229 units of new agricultural machinery to field offices nationwide.

"These machines will ensure that our irrigation is always well-maintained. The flow of water is good," Marcos noted.

Under the President's directive, the re-fleeting program aims to modernize NIA's logistics and field operations. It includes the deployment of heavy equipment such as backhoes, dump trucks, service vehicles, and canal dredgers to regional offices.

The initiative is part of the broader Bagong Pilipinas agenda, which aims to raise agricultural output, reduce post-harvest losses, and ensure a stable and affordable food supply.

Farmers' groups and local government units have welcomed the additional support, saying it will help rehabilitate and maintain aging irrigation systems that have long been in need of upgrades.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314600927/pbbm-assures-public-govt-wont-run-out-of-benteng-bigas.html>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Garcia wants to expand corn program

**By Kaiser Jan Fuentes**

**June 10, 2025**

**CEBU CITY** — With barely a month remaining in her term as Cebu governor, Gwendolyn Garcia has urged mayors in northern Cebu to institutionalize the provincial capitol-led "Sugbo Maisan" (Cebu corn) program by passing local ordinances that would sustain and expand yellow corn production in the province.

Garcia met with mayors at the capitol to reaffirm support for the corn initiative, which was first implemented in Medellin in 2022 to encourage the cultivation of yellow corn amid rising market demand.

The meeting was attended by mayors Jojo Solante of Tudela, Al Arquillano of San Francisco, Winky Santiago of Pilar, Gary Rama of Poro, Carlo Martinez of Bogo City, Mariano Martinez of San Remigio and Allan Sesaldo of Argao.

Also present was Department of Agriculture-Central Visayas executive director Angel Enriquez.

During the meeting, the local officials committed to institutionalizing Sugbo Maisan in their respective towns through local ordinances and forming a unified organization to strengthen their bargaining power with institutional buyers.

The Sugbo Maisan program promotes inter-local government collaboration by providing farmers with seeds, fertilizers, technical assistance, and post-harvest facilities.

On Nov. 28, 2024, Garcia visited a 910-square-meter capitol-owned site in Barangay Mercedes, Poro, where a corn-drying facility is set to rise as part of the program.

Earlier on May 21, 2024, Garcia met with 450 landowners and farmers in Pilar and encouraged them to shift to yellow corn production.

The provincial capitol offered to facilitate loan applications with a two percent interest rate at Land Bank of the Philippines or zero interest through the Cooperative Bank of Cebu.

The provincial agriculture office said at least 20 institutional buyers have partnered with the provincial government, with a combined annual demand of 426,400 metric tons of yellow corn.

These include San Miguel Foods Corp., Prifoods Corp., Universal Feed Mill Corp., Vienovo Philippines Inc., General Milling Corp., Pilmico Feeds, and the Central Visayas Pork Producers Cooperative.

A corn-drying facility worth P5.9 million is currently under construction in Medellin. It features four 15-ton dryers and covers 428 square meters.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed Cebu produced 57,327 metric tons of corn in 2023, up from 49,124 metric tons in 2022.

Of that, 1,367 metric tons was yellow corn, an increase from 1,041 metric tons in 2022. White corn, largely consumed by people, dominated harvests at 55,960 metric tons.

Yellow corn, primarily used for animal feed and industrial products, was harvested from 376 hectares in 2023, while white corn was cultivated on 59,649 hectares.

The total harvested corn area slightly declined from 60,975 hectares in 2022 to 56,649 hectares in 2023.

Garcia, however, said that expanding the Sugbo Maisan program across the province would not only sustain local agriculture but also provide a stable market for farmers.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/06/10/regions/garcia-wants-to-expand-corn-program/2129815>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Farmed production of fish, seaweed soaring

**By Agence France-Presse**

**June 10, 2025**

**PARIS** — The amount of farmed seafood we consume — as opposed to that taken wild from our waters — is soaring every year, making aquaculture an ever-more important source for many diets, and a response to overfishing.

According to the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization, nearly 99 million tons of aquatic animals (fish, mollusks like oysters and mussels and crustaceans like prawns) were farmed around the world in 2023, five times more than three decades ago.

Since 2022, the farming of aquatic animals has been steadily overtaking fishing around the world — but with large disparities from species to species.

## **Fast-growing species**

The two biggest sellers on the market in 2023, carp and tilapia, mainly came from freshwater farming, while other widely-consumed fish, like herring, came just from deep sea fishing.

Thierry Laugier, a researcher at Ifremer, France's national institute for ocean science and technology, told Agence France-Presse (AFP) that fish farmers choose species that grow quickly and with simple requirements, to be able to control the life cycle.

Sales of the most widely farmed fish in Europe, Atlantic salmon, came to 1.9 million tons in 2023, 99 percent of which were farmed.

"We know how to control the ageing or how to launch a reproduction cycle, through injecting hormones," Laugier said.

## **Asia main producer**

Asia is by far the biggest producer of farmed fish, accounting for 92 percent of the 136 million tons — of both animal and plant species — produced under manmade conditions in 2023.

"For carp, it comes down to tradition, it has been farmed for thousands of years on the Asian continent," the Ifremer researcher said.

At the other end of the spectrum, sardines and herring are just fished in the oceans, mainly for profitability reasons as some fish grow very slowly.

"It takes around two years to get an adult-sized sardine," Laugier said.

He said farming of some fish has not yet been started as, "for a long time, we thought the ocean was an inexhaustible resource."

## **Seaweed production**

Little known in the West, seaweed nevertheless accounts for almost a third of world aquaculture production.

Almost exclusively from Asia, seaweed production increased by nearly 200 percent in two decades, to 38 million tons. It is mainly used in industry, in jellies, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, the expert said. He said seaweed also has the major advantage of absorbing not just carbon dioxide in the oceans, but also nitrogen and certain pollutants.

"And from an ecological point of view it is better to farm macroalgae than salmon," Laugier said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/06/10/business/foreign-business/farmed-production-of-fish-seaweed-soaring/2129920>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **ADB investing \$1.5 billion in program to sustain Asia Pacific rice farming**

Ada Pelonia

June 10, 2025

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) will invest up to \$1.5 billion in a program aimed at enhancing sustainable rice farming across Asia and the Pacific, including the Philippines.

The five-year program, which runs from 2025 until 2030, intends to improve productivity sustainably, adapt to harsher climate conditions, and reduce water and carbon footprints.

This would form part of ADB's broader \$40-billion commitment to food systems transformation by 2030, which was announced last month.

ADB Senior Director Qingfeng Zhang noted that a third, or \$500 million, would be earmarked for the Philippines to bolster irrigation, farming, and agricultural logistics development.

"The investment for digital agriculture [...] they automate the wet and also drying, we call it AWD technology, which is for reducing methane emissions and also to save water," Zhang told reporters in a press conference in Laguna on Monday.

"This new program will also support [...] not only just for rice production, but also help the farmers to capture the carbon credit through the system."

Furthermore, the initiative inked with the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR) also established a clearinghouse facility.

Co-financed with the Gates Foundation, this facility will drive the adoption of resilient, high-yield, and low-emission farming practices. It also includes sustainable water use, inclusive value chains, and improved nutrition for the region's poorest.

According to ADB Vice President for Sectors and Themes Fatima Yasmin, rice is essential to Asia's food security as it supplies over a quarter of the region's calorie intake, and half in Southeast Asia.

"For hundreds of millions of smallholder farmers, rice is not just food, it is their livelihood. Today, that livelihood is increasingly threatened by extreme weather and environmental degradation," Yasmin said.

For International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Director General Yvonne Pinto, this joint initiative would reinforce CGIAR's strategic collaboration with ADB and scale up the group's innovations in rice systems. IRRI is a member of the CGIAR network of research centers.

"Alongside partners such as ADB and Gates Foundation, we can drive sustainable and resilient transformation of the rice sector in Asia and transform the lives of millions of smallholder farmers now and in the future," Pinto said.

Initial projects are being developed in Bangladesh, Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, Pakistan, and the Philippines, according to the ADB.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/06/10/adb-investing-1-5-billion-in-program-to-sustain-asia-pacific-rice-farming/>



## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **SRA sets controls as RSSI infestation spreads**

Ada Pelonia  
June 10, 2025

THE red-striped soft scale insects (RSSI) infestation has spread to around 841 hectares of sugarcane fields in Visayas as of June 6, according to the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA). Based on SRA data, 841.7 hectares have been infested with RSSI as of June 6, significantly larger than the 87 hectares recorded on May 22.

It has also affected 465 farmers since its detection in Negros, which accounts for 65 percent of the country's sugar production.

With this, SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona noted that the agency will implement controls to prevent this from happening again.

"Secretary [Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.] has told me that we should implement controls from this day forward, moving into the future with or without a disease, with or without a pest. This cannot happen again," Azcona said during a forum on Monday.

The SRA will issue a resolution that would ban the entry and exit of plant materials to and from Negros, coordinating with the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) for enforcement.

This means planting materials for research facilities and commercial purposes will have to seek clearance from the SRA before transport.

"The BPI personally told me they've monitored the movements of plants from Luzon. However, since there is no policy, they cannot stop and intercept it. So, a policy is required," Azcona said.

Albeit an "inconvenience," the SRA chief noted that the movement of plants and planting materials and commercial or research purposes should be initially approved by the SRA and forwarded to the DA through BPI through the region.

"SRA has a principle [to] never ship any plants or any samples of diseases or pests to Negros. We always ship out of Negros because we totally understand that 65 to 68 percent of the industry is in Negros," Azcona said.

"If somebody makes a mistake somewhere, we just kill the industry right at its heart," he added.

The DA recently issued P10 million for pesticide procurement that would support pest containment efforts.

Currently, sugarcane fields in Bacolod City are undergoing pesticide spraying operations as part of efforts to curb the spread.

The agency's researchers have also identified a parasite that could naturally control the RSSI population. However, since the solution "will take time," the SRA is banking on chemical pesticides.

RSSI has been reported to cause significant damage to sugarcane, with high temperature being identified as a key factor in its rapid population increase, according to the agency's research center.'

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/06/10/sra-sets-controls-as-rssi-infestation-spreads/>

# **ADB to invest \$1.5B in AsiaPac rice farm improvement; PH to get \$500M aid**

*By Jed Macapagal*  
June 10, 2025

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR) and the Gates Foundation have launched an initiative to boost investment in sustainable and low-carbon rice production to improve the lives of vulnerable smallholder-farmers across Asia-Pacific, including the Philippines. The ADB said in a press briefing on Monday it will invest up to \$1.5 billion through the program from 2025 to 2030 to improve farm productivity, make it sustainable, help it adapt to harsher climate conditions, and reduce water and carbon footprints in the Asia-Pacific region.

Qingfeng Zhang, senior director at ADB's agriculture, food, nature and rural development sector office, told reporters in Los Baños, Laguna that out of the \$1.5 billion, up to \$500 million has been earmarked for the Philippines alone.

Program funds will also be used specifically for irrigation, farming and agricultural logistical development in the country, Zhang said.

"This new program will also support ... not only rice production but will also help the farmers to capture the carbon credit through the system," Zhang explained.

Carbon credits are tradable certificates for the right to emit an equivalent amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

The Seattle-based Gates Foundation is co-financing the Asia-Pacific project, a statement posted by the ADB on its official website on Monday indicated.

"Through the newly established ADB-CGIAR Clearinghouse Facility, cofinanced with the Gates Foundation, the initiative will drive the adoption of resilient, high-yield, and low-emission farming practices; sustainable water use; inclusive value chains; and improved nutrition for the region's poorest," the ADB said in the statement.

The \$1.5-billion project has been designed to reverse declines in rice farm productivity and the shrinking of water supplies amid the significant contribution of rice production to greenhouse gas emissions. Studies by the World Bank and the ADB have shown that rice farming causes greenhouse gas emissions when methane is released from flooded rice paddies, and nitrous oxide is emitted from nitrogen fertilizers and the burning of rice straw.

Greenhouse gases released through human activities trap heat in the atmosphere, leading to global warming and climate anomalies that worsen storms and droughts, cause oceans to warm and their levels to rise, and lead to the loss of species, food shortages, and increased health risks, studies from the United Nations show.

The ADB has warned that if left unaddressed, such challenges could threaten food security and the well-being of vulnerable farming communities.

The \$1.5-billion funding for the Asia-Pacific project has been set as part of the ADB's broader \$40-billion commitment to food-systems transformation by 2030, which was announced last May, the ADB said in its statement.

"This joint initiative will reinforce CGIAR's strategic collaboration with ADB and scale up CGIAR's innovations in rice systems and beyond... Alongside partners such as the ADB and Gates Foundation, we can drive sustainable and resilient transformation of the rice sector in Asia and transform the lives of millions of smallholder farmers now and in the future," said Yvonne Pinto, director general of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). IRRI is a member of the CGIAR network of research centers.

Apart from the Philippines, other countries set to initially benefit from the \$1.5-billion project are Bangladesh, Cambodia, China and Pakistan, the ADB said.

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/business-news/adb-to-invest-1-5b-in-asiapac-rice-farm-improvement-ph-to-get-500m-aid/>

# **IRRI, PH govt to pilot satellite-based crop insurance, agro-advisory services**

*By Jed Macapagal*

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Philippine government agencies have started working with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture of the Alliance of Biodiversity International (CIAT) to pilot-test satellite-based crop insurance and agro-advisory services for farmers.

The IRRI said in a statement on Monday its representatives and those of CIAT, the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC), the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PRRI), and the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), have just signed a memorandum of agreement in Los Baños, Laguna, to collaborate on the pilot program.

The pilot project will initially involve 1,000 farmers in Camarines Sur in Region 5 or the Bicol Region, and Isabela in Region 2 or the Cagayan Valley Region, the IRRI said.

A nationwide scaling would be implemented after a successful pilot to support the government's goals to make the rice production system resilient during natural calamities, said the IRRI. The agencies did not specify the amount to be utilized in the program.

IRRI said that under the partnership, an area-based yield index insurance (ARBY) using historical seasonal rice yield data from the Philippine Rice Information System has been developed.

The organization said that ARBY has been designed to eliminate the need for on-site damage assessments and offer a comprehensive range of risks including floods, droughts, saltwater intrusion, pests and diseases.

ARBY will also be paired with a complementary field-level, agro-advisory tool to provide timely and actionable information based on weather forecasts to further equip smallholder farmers with better tools and information, the IRRI explained.

IRRI said the findings in the pilot program would be crucial in setting up a nationwide system of satellite-based crop insurance advisory services to help farmers minimize losses from an average of 20 typhoons every year, along with a host of other natural disasters in the Philippines.

The Department of Agriculture reported that in 2024 alone, agricultural losses due to natural disasters such as floods, droughts, volcanic eruptions, pests and diseases, reached P57.8 billion.

While crop insurance has been cushioning the impact of climate change on farmers, it "has not always fully addressed farmers' needs," the IRRI said.

Slow claims processing, subjective damage assessments and limited coverage have hindered the effectiveness of traditional crop insurance products, IRRI said.

Earlier, the PCIC said it would seek a bigger budget for 2026, to increase the number of insured farmers in the country from 4.2 million, or 47 percent of all farmers in the country, as of the end of 2024, to at least 4.8 million and up to 5 million.

PCIC president Jovy Bernabe said in May that the agency's budget, which has been fixed at P4.5 billion in the last four years, should be increased by P1 billion in the General Appropriations Act, to give insurance to 600,000, up to 800,000 more farmers, and bring the number of the crop-insured to a range of 4.8 million to 5 million farmers by 2026.

Bernabe said the PCIC, which has maintained a 100-percent budget utilization rate through the years, would be eligible for a budget increase.

The PCIC, a government-owned and controlled corporation, is the implementing agency of the state agricultural insurance program. Its principal mandate is to provide insurance protection to farmers against losses arising from natural calamities, plant diseases and pest infestations of their palay, corn and other crops.

The PCIC also provides protection against damage or loss of non-crop agricultural assets including but not limited to machinery, equipment, transport facilities and other related infrastructures.

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/corporate/irri-ph-govt-to-pilot-satellite-based-crop-insurance-agro-advisory-services/>