

# Rice imports top 1 million MT in late March

PHILIPPINE rice imports have amounted to 1.07 million metric tons (MT) as of late March, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

Rice shipments during the period were up 33% from 2023's first quarter total.

Shipments between March 1 and 27 amounted to 304,407.18 MT.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has estimated that Philippine rice imports would increase to 4 million

MT this year. The estimate, if borne out, would be 11.7% higher than the 3.58 million MT imported in 2023.

However, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said that the imports are unlikely to hit USDA forecast levels due to better-than-expected domestic production. The DA is targeting a palay (unmilled rice) harvest at above 20 million MT.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that the estimated import

number was a "worst-case scenario" in the event that domestic rice output proves to be severely affected by El Niño.

The BPI reported that Vietnam remained the country's top supplier of rice as of late March, accounting for 59.6% of all imports or 638,989.35 MT.

In January, the Philippine and Vietnam signed a memorandum of understanding giving the Philippines a quota of 1.5 million to 2 million MT of rice annually for five years.

Thailand supplied 248,618.43 MT during the period, or 23.2% of the total, followed by Pakistan with 119,278.5 MT or 11.1% of the total.

Other top sources of rice were Myanmar and China which shipped 58,060 and 3,900 MT of rice imports, respectively.

The government has also expressed interest in coming to a similar supply arrangement with Cambodia.

Rice shipments from Cambodia amounted to 1,620 MT in the year to date.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. has said that such deals would improve supply at a time when the domestic crop is threatened by droughts and dry spells brought on by El Niño.

Agricultural damage and losses topped P2.63 billion with rice and corn as the most affected crops, the DA reported.

— **Adrian H. Halili**

## Second mango shipment due for delivery to Australia this month

THE PHILIPPINES is set to dispatch 3,000 kilograms of mangoes to Australia this month, the second such shipment sent under the terms of a strategic partnership, according to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

"(The) 3,000 kilograms will be sent to Perth and Sydney. An additional shipment will follow two or three weeks later, then possibly another shipment in June," the DTI said late Saturday.

"The last shipment for the year will be in August or September, which is before the mango season in Australia starts," it added.

Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said that an increase in trade could be expected with market access in Australia, which has strict quarantine rules that Philippine crops have fallen afoul of.

"Our challenge would be on the production side. We will check the status of our mango industry. For DTI, we would like to provide enhanced market access for our exporters to many countries, even non-traditional partners," Mr. Pascual said.

"For this year, we are working on a free trade agreement (FTA) with the European Union, United Arab Emirates, and Canada under the ASEAN-Canada FTA negotiations," he added.

Trade between the Philippines and Australia rose 20% to \$4.1 billion last year.

"The continued growth in our bilateral trade underscores the vast potential for our products in the Australian market," Mr. Pascual said.

"The successful export of our mangoes exemplifies the significant strides we're making in facilitating agricultural trade, which is pivotal for our economic agenda," he added.

In September 2023, the Philippines and Australia made a joint declaration that elevated their bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership.

FastboxPH, the logistics firm behind the shipment of mangoes, said that there is a surge in demand for Philippine mangoes in Australia, leading to plans for the company to expand its presence in Australia.

"The overwhelmingly positive response to our initial shipment last year has paved the way for a triumphant return of Philippine mangoes to Australian tables this April," said Miguel Ripoll, managing director of FastboxPH.

"We are steadfast in our commitment to making Philippine mangoes a household staple in Australia," he added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

## DENR streamlined-approval rules for exploration, processing due this year

NEW GUIDELINES that will reduce application processing time for exploration permits and mineral processing operations are due out this year, according to the Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs (OSAPIEA).

On the sidelines of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) General Membership Meeting on Friday, OSAPIEA Secretary Frederick D. Go said that the guidelines will be issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

"Many foreign investors are interested, of course, to look at the exploration opportunities in the Philippines ... because we have a lot of potential," Mr. Go said.

Asked when he expects the guidelines to come out, he said, "Within the year."

In a speech, Mr. Go named mining as one of the OSAPIEA's priority sectors for investment, along with electronics and semiconductors, steel, food and agriculture, and pharmaceuticals.

"For mining, we aim to encourage investments by reducing the processing time to get exploration permits going and to follow the roadmap Indonesia has taken for

downstream nickel processing," he said.

"The Philippines is actually the number one nickel ore exporter in the world," he added. "That means we are exporting the raw material without processing it. So our goal is to go downstream and start processing the nickel to enhance the value that we export."

Mr. Go said that the end goal is for the country to develop its electric vehicle industry by laying the foundations today.

"So in a perfect world, we go from nickel ore, nickel processing, copper processing, and electric batteries, to electric vehicles," he said.

"Again, in a perfect world, therefore, we will probably get to electric vehicles far beyond my term. But again, it's important that we lay the foundations now," he added.

Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Vice-President for Industry Affairs Ferdinand A. Ferrer said that the chamber is also working on improving foreign ties to find new markets and invite more investment.

"We're trying to look for new markets for our members, and we're working with different foreign partners to bring their technology here," Mr. Ferrer said.

## Funding approved for first quarter crop insurance

THE Department of Budget and Management said it has approved the release of first quarter funding for crop insurance to compensate for agricultural damage.

"In light of the escalating challenges posed by climate change, which heightens the risks to both our economy and food security, it becomes imperative to prioritize the provision of financial security and insurance to empower our farmers and fishermen," Budget Secretary Amenah F.

Pangandaman said in a statement on Sunday.

On March 19, Ms. Pangandaman affirmed the release of a Special Allotment Release Order amounting to P4.5 billion and a Notice of Cash Allocation worth P900 million for the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC).

"This assistance is intended to help them safeguard their means of living, ensuring they can continue their activities despite unforeseen events," Ms. Pangandaman said.

## PhilRice eyes inbred rice yields of 5 MT/ha

THE Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) said it is seeking to increase the average yield of the inbred rice seed handed out to farmers.

Flordeliza H. Bordey, PhilRice director for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Program Management Office, said the agency is planning to improve the yield of the rice seed variety to beyond 5 metric tons (MT) per hectare (/ha).

"We started with 3.6 (MT per hectare). So we have seen improvements over the years. *Pero medyo baka mabitin tayo dun sa 5* (MT per hectare) (But we might fall short of the stretch target of 5 MT)," Ms. Bordey said in an interview.

RCEF Seed and Rice Extension Services programs are components of Republic Act 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law, which sets aside P10 billion a year from rice import tariffs to make rice farmers more competitive.

The program's target is to increase yields to 5 MT per hectare by 2025.

"So that's what we'll try to do in the next phase... we'll definitely set a new target," she added.

PhilRice said that the average yield of inbred seeds provided by RCEF increased to 4.36 MT per hectare last year, from 3.63 MT per hectare in 2022.

Among the government's goals is to increase self-sufficiency for rice to 95% by 2028.

Ms. Bordey said that this could be attained through the distribution of both inbred and hybrid seed to production areas where they are best suited.

She added that under RCEF, inbred seed is distributed to 42 provinces with low to medium yields, while hybrid seed is given to 25 high-yielding areas.

The inbred seed is distributed to Negros Occidental, Leyte, Samar and Panay, while hybrid seed varieties are sent to 15 provinces, including Nueva Ecija, Isabela and Pangasinan.

"According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), rice harvest (is set to) increase slightly for the first quarter compared to the previous year... so prospects are good. We are hoping that the harvest would improve or at least not be lower than 2023," she said.

The PSA is projecting the palay or unmilled harvest to increase 1.1% to 4.83 million MT.

The Department of Agriculture is projecting a palay harvest of above 20 million MT this year. The harvest in 2023 was 20.05 million MT, equivalent to about 13 million MT in milled rice. — **Adrian H. Halili**



Republic of the Philippines  
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
(Kagawaran ng Enerhiya)



DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR NO. DC2024- 03-0010

### AMENDMENT TO DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR NO. DC2023-10-0029 PROVIDING SPECIFIC AUCTION POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR NON-FIT-ELIGIBLE RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES IN THE GREEN ENERGY AUCTION PROGRAM

**WHEREAS**, on 12 December 2023, the Department of Energy (DOE) issued Department Circular (DC) No. DC2023-10-0029 titled, "Providing Specific Auction Policy and Guidelines for Non-FIT-Eligible Renewable Energy Technologies in the Green Energy Auction Program";

**WHEREAS**, Section 5.1 of said Circular provides that the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) shall issue the approved parameters and criteria per type of Non-FIT-Eligible RE Facility to be used in evaluating Price Offers submitted by Bidders;

**WHEREAS**, Section 6 of said DC further provides that the Winning Bidders for each Auction Round of the Green Energy Auction (GEA) for Non-FIT-Eligible RE technology shall be those whose Price Offers were endorsed by the DOE to, and approved by, the ERC after evaluation based on the approved set of parameters and criteria;

**WHEREAS**, there is a need to clarify that, from the set of parameters and criteria, the ERC shall promulgate the rules on GEA for Non-FIT-Eligible RE technology auction pricing methodology;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, pursuant to its authority under Republic Act No. 9513, or the Renewable Energy Act of 2008, the DOE hereby adopts, issues, and promulgates the following amendments to DC No. DC2023-10-0029:

**Section 1.** Section 5.1, 2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph is hereby amended to read as follows:

#### "5.1 Pre-Auction Process and Price Offer.

xxx xxx xxx xxx

"Within sixty (60) calendar days from effectivity of this Circular, the ERC shall promulgate the rules on the Price Determination Methodology (PDM) for Non-FIT-Eligible RE Technologies in the GEAP taking into consideration the set of parameters and criteria based on, among others, cost range assumptions and weighted cost of capital of Project Internal Rate of Return (PIRR). These shall be used in its evaluation of Price Offers submitted by Bidders."

**Section 2.** Section 5.2, 2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph is hereby deleted.

**Section 3.** Section 5.4, 2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph is hereby amended to read as follows:

#### "Section 5.4. Evaluation of Offers.

xxx xxx xxx xxx

"After evaluation, the DOE shall endorse the respective Price Offers of legally and technically compliant bids to the ERC. The ERC shall, within sixty (60) days upon receipt of the DOE endorsement, evaluate the said Price Offers based on its approved PDM for Non-FIT-Eligible RE Technologies, which shall include indexation as may be determined by the Commission. After the ERC completes its evaluation and endorses the Price Offers to the DOE, the latter will confirm which bidders' Price Offers are deemed acceptable."

**Section 4.** Section 6 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"**Section 6. Winning Bidders.** The Winning Bidders for each auction round of Non-FIT-Eligible RE technology will be those whose Price Offers have been evaluated and found consistent by the ERC with its PDM for Non-FIT-Eligible RE Technologies."

**Section 5. Separability Clause.** If any section or provision of this Circular is declared invalid or unconstitutional, such parts not affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

**Section 6. Repealing Clause.** The provisions of other circulars, orders, issuances, rules, and regulations which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Circular, are hereby repealed, amended, modified, or superseded accordingly.

**Section 7. Effectivity.** This Circular shall take effect immediately after publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation. A copy of this DC shall be filed with the University of the Philippines Law Center – Office of National Administrative Register (UPLC-ONAR).

Issued this \_\_\_\_\_ at the DOE, Energy Center, Rizal Drive cor. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City.

RAPHAEL P.M. LOTILLA  
Secretary



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