

NFA targets palay procurement of 880,000 MT

THE National Food Authority (NFA) said on Sunday that it plans to procure around 880,000 metric tons (MT) of palay, or unmilled rice, this year.

The planned volume will allow the NFA to meet its commitment to maintain a minimum reserve requirement of 555,000 MT rice, which is equivalent to 15 days' consumption, the NFA said in a statement.

The NFA said it also plans to procure 90 new trucks in 2025, with an additional 150 trucks scheduled for 2026.

"These efforts will help address logistical challenges and ensure that farmers, including those in remote areas, have the opportunity to sell their produce to NFA."

As of February, NFA's total palay inventory stood at 399,701 MT or nearly 8 million bags. Its rice equivalent was good for eight days' supply.

Meanwhile, the NFA said it has optimized the movement of rice stocks to reduce logistical costs, saving an additional P172.3 million.

"These cost-cutting measures helped reduce NFA's deficit, which dropped from P6.097 billion in 2023 to P3.753 billion in 2024," the NFA said.

The NFA said it appointed 543 new personnel.

"These appointments aim to improve employee morale, productivity, and overall efficiency."

The NFA also cited the establishment of a fast-lane service for small farmers selling less than 50 bags of palay, and the

elimination of re-bagging covering 20% of its total palay procurement, which is expected to save around P215.4 million in operational costs in 2026.

The Department of Agriculture has been calling on Congress to provide funding that will allow the NFA to procure 20% of the harvest to better influence prices.

"We simply cannot fight these battles with one hand tied behind our backs. We need to restore NFA's powers to regulate rice retail and manage stocks more effectively," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. was quoted as saying in the NFA statement.

To bring down rice prices, the government has lowered tariffs and declared an emergency that triggered the release of rice stocks held by the NFA.

Inflation eased to 2.1% in February from 2.9% in January as rice inflation dropped to 4.9%, the sharpest decline since April 2020. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

Among the projects applied for by NGCP in 2021, those that are still pending approval are the P13.30-billion Nagsaag-Santiago 500-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project, the P18.96-billion Western Luzon 500-kV Backbone Project Stage 2, the P6.83-billion Cabanatuan-Sampaloc-Nagsaag 230-kV Transmission Line Project, and the P2.39-billion Buang-La Trinidad 230-kV Transmission Line Upgrading Project.

The ERC has yet to decide on the P3.57-billion Nivel Hills 230-kV Substation Project in the Visayas.

In Mindanao, approvals are still being sought for the P610-million Agus 6-Kiwalan-Lugait 69-kV Transmission Line Upgrading Project, the P1.03-billion Maco-Tagum 69-kV Transmission Line Project, the P5.89-billion Sultan Kudarat-Tacurong 230-kV Transmission Line Project, and the P885.40-million Opol Substation Bus-In Project.

"We just need some items verified and updated because this set is tied to other ongoing projects. Then, it will be submitted for deliberation again," ERC Chairperson Monalisa C. Dimalanta said when asked for further details on the deferral.

Metro Pacific Agro targets milk output of 10 million liters

METRO PACIFIC Agro Ventures, Inc. (MPAV), a subsidiary of Metro Pacific Investment Corp. (MPIC), said its dairy business is targeting to produce 10 million liters over the next two years.

Milk production of Metro Pacific Dairy Farms breached 1 million liters last year, MPAV President and CEO Jovy I. Hernandez told reporters.

The dairy business is expected to produce about two million liters of raw fresh milk this year, he noted.

"By 2027, we should be delivering 10 million liters," he said.

Mr. Hernandez said Metro Pacific Dairy Farms, which has partnered with Israel's LR Group on a P2-billion integrated dairy facility, is on track to be fully operational this year.

Currently, the dairy business has a herd of about 1,000 cows.

The dairy unit was producing 500,000 liters of raw fresh milk when it started.

Mr. Hernandez said the dairy business is awaiting the arrival of 220 dairy cattle from Australia by May.

"We're now moving some of the non-milking herd to become milking."

In 2022, MPIC bought a controlling stake in The Laguna Creamery, Inc., which sells products under the brand name Carmen's Best, for about P200 million.

The Philippines currently imports about 99% of its dairy requirements.

The government aims to boost local production to 80 million liters per year by 2028, to increase the share of domestic product to about 5% of demand. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

World Bank tapped to help design offshore wind green energy auction

By **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**
Reporter

THE Department of Energy (DoE) said it has engaged the World Bank to help design the fifth round of the green energy auction (GEA-5) this year, which will focus on offshore wind (OSW) power projects.

"To mitigate risks and uncertainties associated with offshore wind technology, the DoE is collaborating with the World Bank Group for expert guidance and support. This collaborative approach ensures a well-structured and investor-friendly auction," Energy Undersecretary Giovanni Carlo J. Bacordo said in an interview.

Mr. Bacordo said the department is finalizing the auction parameters including the specific OSW capacity and delivery commencement date.

"These details are being meticulously determined to align with the Philippine Energy Plan 2023-2050, and crucially, after thorough consultations with stakeholders regarding port and grid readiness," he said.

While the capacities to be offered are still not set, the DoE

is on track to launch GEA-5 by the third quarter, according to Energy Undersecretary Rowena Cristina L. Guevara.

"We are checking the transmission assets needed by the front runner OSW projects, as well as the potential port (to support) their construction," she said.

Ms. Guevara said that the terms of reference for GEA-5 will be different from those of the previous auctions.

The DoE is currently assisting 16 OSW proponents who are projected to deliver more than 16 gigawatts (GW) of new capacity from offshore wind power projects.

GEA-5 is expected to facilitate market access for OSW developers, ensuring long-term demand for their generation capacities and keep them on track to generate the first kilowatts by 2028.

To date, the government has awarded 92 OSW contracts with a potential capacity of around 69 GW.

Mr. Bacordo said that the DoE and the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) and the Department of Transportation (DoTr), are "actively progressing" on port repurposing.

He said that a memorandum of agreement is being finalized to

clarify that the DoE will handle developer queuing, while PPA will manage port upgrades and tariffs.

"The DoE's role in queuing OSW developers directly facilitates private sector participation in utilizing these soon to be developed ports," he said.

Meanwhile, the DoTr is supporting OSW initiative through the Asian Development Bank's Infrastructure Preparation and Innovation Facility (ADB-IPIF) for two ports.

"The Negros Occidental port is exploring ADB's Project Readiness Fund (PRF) for detailed engineering design, and Southern Mindoro port will proceed under a design-build approach within the IPIF," Mr. Bacordo said.

In other development, the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has deferred some of the transmission projects of the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) as further deliberations are needed.

"Given the pending issues that needed to be addressed, the resolution of the matter was deferred for further deliberation with instructions/directives issued to the relevant units," the ERC said in a notice.

Among the projects applied for by NGCP in 2021, those that are still pending approval are the P13.30-billion Nagsaag-Santiago 500-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project, the P18.96-billion Western Luzon 500-kV Backbone Project Stage 2, the P6.83-billion Cabanatuan-Sampaloc-Nagsaag 230-kV Transmission Line Project, and the P2.39-billion Buang-La Trinidad 230-kV Transmission Line Upgrading Project.

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An hour to make a difference: SM Cares Earth Hour 2025 unites communities to promote environmental awareness

For the 17th consecutive year, SM Supermalls reaffirmed its continued commitment to environmental sustainability by joining the 2025 Earth Hour movement, a global initiative led by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

On March 22, from 8:30 pm to 9:30 p.m., SM malls across the country participated in the symbolic lights-off event, encouraging customers, tenants, and employees to "Give an Hour for Earth" by taking simple yet impactful actions to protect the planet.



SM Seaside City Cebu and the 86 SM Supermalls nationwide give an hour for Earth by turning off non-essential lights during Earth Hour 2025.



SM Mall of Asia participate in the Global Lights Switch Off to raise awareness about climate change.

A COLLECTIVE EFFORT FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

SM Supermalls took part in the Global Lights Switch Off, reducing energy consumption and raising awareness about climate change. According to PwC Isla Lipana and Co., the total energy saved during the one-hour switch-off in 87 malls nationwide will be equivalent to 319,759 number of smartphones charged or 1.4 tons of waste recycled.

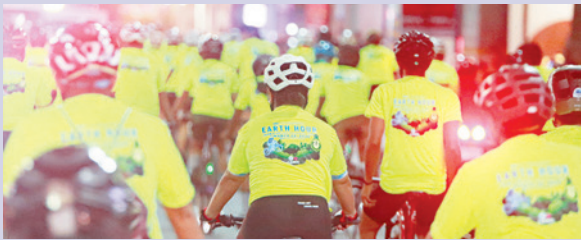
With this year's Earth Hour theme of "Creating the Biggest Hour for Earth," beyond turning off non-essential lights, SM Cares encouraged the public to spend their 60 minutes engaging in sustainable activities. From musical performances, arts and craft to fitness activities, shoppers experienced an hour away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and enjoyed a soulful night with live music, an enhanced well-being after a good run and other eco-friendly events for the environment.



An electrifying LED dance performance showing the 60+ Earth Hour symbol lights up SM City Clark, emphasizing a broader commitment to environmental protection.



SM Lanang takes part in the annual global initiative with live music, inspiring for change and adopt sustainable practices.



More than 200 cyclists in the Earth Hour: Go & Glow Bike Challenge 2025 pedal forward to SM City San Mateo, demonstrating a collective effort to promote energy conservation.



Grooving and glowing, customers in SM City Masinag dance to ignite the community for a greener future.



In partnership with UPB Astronomy Society and Baguio Astronomy Enthusiasts, students enjoy a magical cosmic experience in SM City Baguio during Earth Hour 2025.



Customers and advocates from Marikina Run Club take part in a meaningful activity as a symbolic gesture of solidarity and commitment for the planet.

BEYOND EARTH HOUR: SM CARES' COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

SM Supermalls' Earth Hour participation is just one of its many sustainability efforts. Through SM Cares, the company champions programs that encourage responsible waste management and environmental stewardship, such as the Trash to Cash recycling market, Plastic Waste Collection and E-Waste Collection initiatives. Mobilizing thousands of volunteers, the International Coastal Cleanup helps keep the Philippine shorelines free from waste pollution.

"Through Earth Hour and our year-round sustainability programs, SM remains committed to inspiring and enabling communities to take meaningful steps toward environmental conservation," said Engr. Liza B. Silerio, SM Supermalls Vice-President for Corporate Compliance Group and SM Cares Program Director for Environment and Sustainability.

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CLIMATE ADVOCATES

This year, SM also engaged students from National University and Asia Pacific College in creating a special social media campaign showcasing how they can "Give an Hour for Earth." The video highlights the importance of disconnecting online to reconnect with the environment and the community. Watch the Earth Hour videos via these links: <https://bit.ly/SMEarthHour2025-NUxSM> and <https://bit.ly/SMEarthHour2025-APCxSM>.



Young volunteers in SM City Butuan spend an hour away from their phones and reconnect with the community.



SM Center Ormoc and Earth Hour Ormoc join hands with students to perform a dance of lights to the song "Liwanag sa Dilim", strengthening their commitment to make a difference year-round.

SM Supermalls invites everyone to continue practicing sustainability beyond Earth Hour by making small yet impactful choices every day. For more updates on SM Cares' environmental programs, visit www.smsupermalls.com/smcares or follow @SMCaresOfficial on social media.