

# Vietnam rice waste levels set as benchmark for PHL

By Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza  
Reporter

POST-HARVEST RICE losses are expected to decline by at least nine percentage points following a P10-billion investment in upgrades to rice storage facilities, the Department of Agriculture said.

About 17% of the rice harvest is lost annually, against 8% for Vietnam, Agriculture Assistant Undersecretary Arnel V. de Mesa told *BusinessWorld*.

"Reaching Vietnam's 8% benchmark — the difference would be 9 percentage points — would be a big achievement," he said.

Fitch Solutions BMI said in a recent report that rice yields in the Philippines are lower than those in Vietnam but are

very close to those in the largest exporter, India, and higher than those in Thailand.

BMI called it a "significant concern" that the Philippines is importing so much rice, and will account for 9.7% of global rice imports in 2024/25 based on US Department of Agriculture forecasts, given that 19.5% of the population had insufficient food consumption as of September 2024.

The National Food Authority (NFA) earlier this month said it is undertaking a P10-billion modernization program aimed at enhancing rice storage, building new rice mills, and upgrading drying facilities to improve the rice harvest recovery rate.

The program is funded through government allocations, with half of the budget granted late last year and the remaining P5 billion earmarked

for rice mills, drying facilities, and other infrastructure projects included in the 2025 national budget.

The NFA said P1.5 billion will be allocated for repairing existing warehouses, while the remaining P3.5 billion will be used to add 800,000 metric tons of storage capacity by next year, doubling the NFA's current capacity of 1 million metric tons.

NFA procurement is hindered by variations in rice quality and age of the inventory.

The main problem with the current warehouse network is congestion, due to the inability to manage stocks, according to retired agriculture professor Roy S. Kempis, currently director of the Center for Business Innovation at Angeles University Foundation.

The congestion is worsened by inability to correctly time the

release of stocks to ensure supply stability and minimal price disruption.

"In the meantime, decisions to bring in imports and the timing of such shipments are very tentative. They also affect the amount of rice that needs to be stored in the warehouses," he added.

Mr. Kempis noted that domestic production and supply varies by the season.

"In view of these problems, decision makers are faced with the dilemma of what predictive formula to set up and follow," he said.

"Once there is congestion, the ambient temperature required to store rice becomes difficult to maintain," he added.

Mr. Kempis said as warehouse temperatures and humidity rise, the risk of contamination from fungi also rises.

Raul Q. Montemayor, national manager of the Federation of Free

Farmers, said dry palay can last from six to eight months.

He noted that palay is usually milled into rice within four months to make room for the next harvest. Milled rice, meanwhile, can last up to three months.

Mr. Kempis said milled rice, which is packed in sacks and stored in air-ventilated warehouses, can be stored for maximum of two years, "provided there is no congestion inside the warehouses."

Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food, Inc. President Danilo V. Fausto said the NFA's modernization program will boost its ability to buy more palay from farmers at a better price.

"Palay will have a longer shelf life than rice since rice is at risk of spoilage after two months and/or weevil infestation," he said.

Rice growers are currently facing low farmgate prices as traders opt to deal in imported rice.

The farmgate price has fallen to as low as P15-16 per kilo for freshly harvested grain, according to industry reports earlier this month.

On March 18, Malacañang urged farmers to work with local government units in bringing their palay harvests to NFA buying stations to bypass traders, who often seek to influence prices.

The NFA's modernization projects are expected to be operational by the end of next year, in time for the dry season harvest of 2027.

The full upgrade program will include silos in major rice-producing areas such as the Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon, allowing the NFA to store rice for up to two years, far longer than the usual six months to one year for bagged rice.

## Japan zero-tariff deals eroding PHL banana competitiveness

THE zero-tariff arrangements enjoyed by other banana suppliers to Japan are eroding the competitiveness of Philippine growers, whose rates were set in 2006, officials said.

The Philippines' banana tariff rates in Japan were set in a 2006 bilateral economic agreement at 18% between April and September, and 8% between October and March, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said in a statement on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Japan imposes zero or preferential tariffs on bananas from Cambodia, Laos, Mexico, Vietnam, it noted.

"A major challenge for Philippine banana exporters is the high tariff under

the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA), which was signed in 2006," the DA said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. and a delegation of industry met with Japanese importers recently, part of a broader Philippine effort to lobby for tariff cuts.

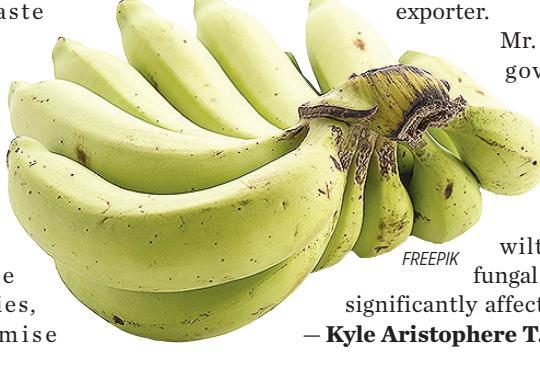
Though the Philippines still holds the largest share of the Japanese market, supplying three out of every four bananas consumed, "this figure has declined from a peak of nine in every 10," the DA said.

Mr. Laurel also met with Japan's State Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, Hirofumi Takinami, and Liberal Democratic Party Secretary-

General Hiroshi Moriyama to discuss a potential review of JPEPA "in light of shifting global economic conditions."

Citing the Japan Banana Importers Association, the DA said Philippine bananas enjoy a freshness and taste advantage.

The DA said the Philippines is optimistic about ongoing trade negotiations between the two countries, which promise



more advantageous market access for Philippine banana exports.

Philippine banana exports declined 2.97% to 2.28 million metric tons in 2024, with the industry losing its position as the third-leading banana exporter.

Mr. Laurel said the government will continue to support banana growers battling Fusarium wilt, a soil-borne fungal disease that has significantly affected production.

— Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza

## BIR calls 2025 targets achievable, sees CREATE MORE downside risks

THE Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) remains confident that it will meet its collection goal for major tax categories in 2025.

However, the new law lowering corporate income tax rates for certain foreign enterprises poses a negative risk to collections, it added.

This year's collection goal is set at P3.232 trillion, up 13.36% compared to the P2.85 trillion in actual collections in 2024, according to Revenue Memorandum Order (RMO) No. 14-2025 released on March 20.

Some 52.95% or P1.71 trillion is expected to come from taxes on net income and profits. This was followed by value-added tax (VAT) of P710.04 billion, excise taxes (P343.10 billion), other taxes (P298.11 billion), and percentage taxes (P178.46 billion).

"Official stance is that targets are achievable, with reservations owing to the CREATE MORE (Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises



to Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy) law which gave away a lot of taxes to encourage investments," BIR Assistant Commissioner Jethro M. Sabariaga told *BusinessWorld* via Viber over the weekend.

Mr. Sabariaga had been asked whether the BIR expects to meet or surpass the targets for major tax categories.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. in December signed the CREATE MORE Act to attract more investment.

"Lower income tax rates, accelerated/doubled deductions for certain costs, more value-added tax input allowed," Mr. Sabariaga said in elaborating on the downward risks to the target.

The law further reduces the corporate income tax to 20% from 25% for registered business enterprises.

In the same RMO, the Bureau said it expects new tax measures to generate P21.98 billion including the VAT on digital service providers, windfall tax on mining, royalty on mining, the taxes on single-use plastics, passive income, financial intermediaries, and transactions.

The VAT on digital services, which imposes a 12% value-added tax on digital services on both resident and non-resident providers, is the only tax measure apart from CREATE MORE to have been signed. — Aubrey Rose A. Inosante

## PPA to cancel Camarines Norte port auction

THE Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) will recommend the cancellation of the Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte port improvement project auction, citing a possible change of location and project design.

In a notice signed by PPA General Manager Jay Daniel R. Santiago, the regulator said it is postponing the auction until further notice.

"There is a need to cancel the bidding and other procurement activities of the proposed project because of the ongoing evaluation of a potential new location for the project, possible changes in the plans, design and cost of the project," the PPA said.

In January, the PPA allocated P2.11 billion to improve Jose Panganiban port to make it suitable for servicing the offshore wind industry.

The Department of Energy (DoE) designated Jose Panganiban port as one of three ports scheduled for repurposing for the offshore wind industry.

Situated close to 14 offshore wind energy service contracts, Jose Panganiban is expected to service wind farms with an estimated capacity of 8,150 megawatts (MW). Two projects in the area are in the advanced pre-development phase.

Jose Panganiban is also among PPA's 14 flagship projects valued at P16 billion, scheduled for completion by 2028.

To date, the Department of Energy (DoE) has awarded 92 offshore wind energy service contracts to 38 renewable energy developers with a total potential capacity of 69.06 gigawatts (GW).

According to the Philippine Offshore Wind Roadmap, the Philippines has a potential capacity of about 63 GW if it taps offshore wind resources.

Also identified as priorities for redevelopment as offshore wind service bases are Currimao, Ilocos Norte and Sta. Clara, Batangas City.

Last year, the PPA awarded the P839.18-million Currimao Port expansion project to Davao-based construction company Khan Kon Chi Construction and Development Corp. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

## Lazada sees double-digit growth continuing

E-COMMERCE platform Lazada Philippines said it is expecting to sustain double-digit sales growth this year as it pursues a strategy of tailored deals for a growing customer base.

"We continue to enjoy double-digit growth, and the aim is (to sustain that). Our proposition: we say to the buyers, we are trying to deliver always better, but even internally that is what we are pushing for," according to Alvin Michael L. Ching, head of seller operations at Lazada.

"While I can't detail exactly what we are doing in terms of the operation, there is a lot of work that will probably be very invisible, but it is meant really to be able to push better deals and better assortment to the buyers," he added.

He said that the goal is to push the right deals and make smarter recommendations.

"We expect those to help us sustain the growth because it is hard to sustain growth if it is just about discounts and promotions," he said.

"At some point it is going to be a price war, which at some point is not going to be sustainable. So we are going towards a different path of improving how we respond to the needs of customers," he added.

He said that Lazada's strategy involves influencing the algorithm to respond better to users, which the company expects to translate into more sales and buyers.

According to Mr. Ching, the platform posted growth in electronics, especially for high average selling price items.

"We also have beauty, fashion, groceries, and the mother and baby categories. And if you think about those, these are women's categories," he said.

"There is a big push towards categories because we are betting on that part of our demographic to be able to drive the sales, not just now but in the future," he added.

This year, he said the growth drivers will also include product assortment and artificial intelligence (AI).

"We are very deliberate in terms of bringing in quality assortment. We want to be able to have everything under the sun in Lazada while being very specific in terms of the quality of this assortment," he said.

"What we want to be able to do is actually have sellers who bring in things that we don't have in the platform," he added.

He said that Lazada has also invested in AI to recommend items to the buyers via search or via LazzieChat.

"There are a lot of resources that are going into it (AI). And I am not just talking about Lazada Philippines but, in general, the Lazada group. This involves, I guess, millions of dollars of investment in trying to make this happen," he added.

He said that there is a push to focus on LazMall.

"LazMall has always been a strength of Lazada, and it is very driven by two main things: electronics and branded fashion. These ones do drive the sales," he said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

## Career Opportunity in American Power Conversion Corporation (A.P.C.) B.V.

1 Vacancy  
Company Name: American Power Conversion Corporation (A.P.C.) B.V.  
Address: Lot 1 Block 5 Phase 2, Cavite Economic Zone, Peza, Rosario Cavite  
Nature of Business: Information and Communication

Contact details of the Company: Ann Virgil ARANEL | annvirgil.aranel@se.com  
Job Position: Printed Circuit Board Assembly (PCBA) Quality Assurance Manager

Job Description:  
• Act as the Customer Experience advocate for cases related to PCBA  
• Drive Customer Centricity in entities  
• Ensure the Customer Experience is measured according to the Business priorities  
• Define and follow-up the improvement action and plan and priorities with the Business stakeholders  
• Ensures that Customer dissatisfaction are solved quickly and effectively through containment, correction, and prevention steps  
• Supports New Products Development Activities  
• Reviews Yield and Defect per unit (DPU) improvement actions and monitors effectiveness  
• Prepare weekly accomplishment reports and other quality-related report as needed  
• Support Assembly and SOE (Supplier Quality Engineering) team in evaluating parts/vendor-related issues and monitoring vendor corrective action effectiveness  
• Support other company initiatives and projects with direct or indirect impact on quality (i.e. FMEA, SPC, CIP, and others)

Basic Qualifications for the Position:  
• Min 5 years of Quality and Process related experience in PCBA managing a group of Engineer and QA that drives improvement  
• Relevant experience in PCBA handling Quality and Process in terms of continuous improvement and handling Customer (Internal and External) complaints and defect management  
• Knowledgeable in IPC-610, ESD and JEDEC standards in terms of EE components and PCBA process  
• Deploy Quality improvement programs and drive continuous improvement  
• Generates and maintains PCBA FMEA and Control Plan  
• Lead the manufacturing support cross-functional team (ME, PE, Mfg., AI, TE) in analyzing, conducting Failure Analysis, and formulating containment and corrective action reports for all complaints pertaining to how to improve the PCBA Process  
• Aids in reviews of Supplier 8D review relating to PCBA materials  
• Review weekly quality summary reports  
• Leads and drives weekly Quality meetings in terms of PCBA for continuous improvement  
• Preparation of Monthly and Quarterly Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Report  
• Conduct regular quality and process improvement audits  
• Knowledgeable in international standards, Like ISO, ANSI, JIS, MILITARY, ASTM, UL, CSA  
• Evaluate the effectiveness of all corrective actions at PCBA to monitor the consistency of implementation  
• Train subordinates and peers at PCBA

Monthly Salary Range: PHP 175,000

Workplace Address: Rosario, Cavite

Name of Foreign National: Ajay Poonia

City of Residence: Rosario, Cavite

Nationality: Indian

Duration of Employment: 2 years

The foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the service for which her employment is desired.

American Power Conversion Corporation (A.P.C.) B.V. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment – Regional Office No. IVA located at 3rd and 4th Floors Andeson Building II, Parian, Calamba City, Laguna 4027, Philippines.