

# Provinces with active cases of ASF rise at end of 2025

THE number of provinces with active African Swine Fever (ASF) cases increased towards the end of December, the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) said in a report on Monday.

As of Dec. 31, the BAI reported active ASF cases in 11 provinces across nine regions. These provinces are Benguet, La Union, Aurora, Quezon, Marinduque, Oriental Mindoro, Romblon, Camarines Norte, Bohol, Eastern Samar, and Agusan del Sur.

Near the end of November the tally of provinces with active cases was seven, across six regions.

Active ASF cases were reported in 91 barangays nationwide, up from 31 a month earlier. Of the total at the close of the year, 57 barangays were in Bohol.

ASF, which continues to affect the domestic and global hog industries, is a contagious viral disease lethal to swine and wild boars.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has said it plans to distribute more than 230,000 breeder sows by 2028 to rebuild the country's hog herd.

The repopulation program will begin in 2026 with the distribution of 32,000 breeder sows, followed by 100,000 breeders each year in 2027 and 2028.

As of the end of December, the DA said it administered around 260,000 of the 500,000 ASF vaccines.

The DA estimates that since the first ASF outbreak in 2019, the swine population has fallen from 13 million to around 8 million head. — **Vonn Andrei E. Villamiel**

# Industry group seeks zonal value review after expulsion of POGOs

THE Federation of Philippine Industries, Inc. (FPI) said the government needs to review property zonal values which had been artificially inflated by the now-banned Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs).

"Property prices were artificially driven up during the previous administration when POGOs were actively encouraged to operate in the country, triggering a surge in demand for residential and commercial spaces," FPI Chairman Emeritus Jesus L. Arranza said in a statement on Monday.

"Developers, both large and small, capitalized on the influx of foreign workers and gaming firms by raising selling and rental prices, creating a distorted real estate market," he added.

He said that the economic managers and tax authorities should

conduct an "immediate, transparent review of zonal valuations" especially in areas that were heavily affected by the POGO boom, to ensure that property taxes are equitable and aligned with present-day market conditions.

He said POGO-driven property price increases were "not organic" but rather "fueled by government policy that allowed POGOs to flourish."

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. banned all offshore gaming operations in his State of the Nation Address in 2024.



The zonal value determines how much property owners have to pay in various national and local taxes, including capital gains tax, documentary stamp tax, value-added tax, donor's tax, and registration fees, real property tax, special education fund tax, and ad valorem tax on idle land.

"Ordinary citizens are burdened with disproportionately high taxes even when market conditions have already shifted downward following the departure of POGOs," he said.

"We, the citizens, are being made to suffer because we continue to pay higher taxes and fees related to property ownership, including estate tax for those who have lost a family member," he added.

He said that the government should immediately recalibrate the zonal value to reflect current market realities as the resulting excessive tax obligations may discourage investments, weaken the real estate industry, and strain household finances.

"The exit of POGOs has clearly changed the landscape ... The government must recognize this shift and act accordingly," he said.

"Adjusting zonal values is... about fairness, accuracy, and protecting citizens from the unintended consequences of past policies," he added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**



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