

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Philippine Department of Agriculture Directed to Ease Agri-Food Importation Procedures

Country: Philippines

Post: Manila

Report Category: Trade Policy Monitoring, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety, Livestock and Products, Fishery Products, Sugar

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Report Highlights:

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has ordered the Department of Agriculture (DA) to further streamline administrative procedures and policies on the importation of agricultural products and remove non-tariff barriers to help ensure food security. Under Administrative Order (AO) No. 20, Marcos emphasized that administrative constraints and non-tariff barriers continue to persist, which have caused continued increase of domestic prices of agricultural commodities.

On April 18, on behalf of the President, Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin issued Administrative Order (AO) No. 20, “Further Streamlining Administrative Procedures and Policies and Removing Non-Tariff Barriers on the Importation of Agricultural Products.” President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. through AO 20 ordered the Department of Agriculture (DA) to further streamline administrative procedures and policies on the importation of agricultural products and remove non-tariff barriers to help ensure food security. The AO emphasized the importance of further streamlining administrative procedures to foster transparency and predictability in policies on the importation of agricultural products to help ensure food security, maintain sufficient supply of agricultural goods in the domestic market, and improve local production.

Marcos directed the DA, in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and/or the Department of Finance, to streamline procedures and requirements in the licensing of importers, minimize processing time of application for importation, and exempt licensed traders from submission of registration requirements. AO 13 (Removing Non-Tariff Barriers and Streamlining Administrative Procedure on the Importation of Agricultural Products), which was issued by President Rodrigo R. Duterte in 2018, focused on mainly on import conditions for rice and fishery products. AO 20 builds on and further expands the coverage of AO 13 to include import procedures for sugar, fishery, and other agricultural products.

The President ordered the DA to facilitate importation of certain agricultural products beyond the authorized Minimum Access Volume (MAV) or Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ). See GAIN Report [Philippine TRQ Administration Rules and Regulations](#) for more information on the MAV system. AO 20 requires the DA to streamline processing and releasing of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC) applications and formally notify the applicant of approval or rejection actions and the basis thereof. See GAIN Report [SPS Validity Periods and Key Conditions](#) for more information on the various requirements to apply for an import clearance. According to AO 20, all applications not acted upon within the prescribed periods shall be deemed automatically approved, similar to the conditions for the importation for rice. Refer to GAIN [Philippine Rice Import Regulations and Standards](#) for more on the legal requirements to import rice.

Within 30 days, SRA was directed to revise importation guidelines for sugar to reduce the uncertainty in the sugar import regime and to allow direct importation of sugar by industrial users. The DA was likewise tasked to review existing import regulations for frozen fish and aquatic products, particularly provisions that impose quantitative restrictions of fish imports, limit competition and participation in international trade. Refer to GAIN [Philippine Fishery Import Regulations and Standards](#) for more information on fishery laws.

The DA is directed to take concrete steps to improve logistics, transport, distribution, and storage of imported agricultural products. Meanwhile, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) is directed to prioritize the unloading and release of imported agricultural products, subject to the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations of the Bureau. Importers continue to raise concerns about clearance delays, overlapping and redundant documentary requirements, and the use of reference prices for meat, poultry, and other sensitive agricultural products.

President Marcos has also reconstituted a Surveillance Team (previously created under AO 13) composed of the DA, DTI, BOC, Philippine Competition Commission, Department of Justice, National Bureau of Investigations, and the Philippine National Police to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of AO 20.

Attachments:

[20180921-AO-13-RRD.pdf](#)

[20240418-AO-20-FRM.pdf](#)