

ISSUE 2025-01

# PHILIPPINE COMPETITION BULLETIN

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- 2 STATE OF COMPETITION IN PH AGRI TAKES SPOTLIGHT IN 2025 MANILA FORUM
- 3 INTERFACE OF DATA PRIVACY, COMPETITION POLICY TACKLED  
IN DIALOGUE BETWEEN REGULATORS
- 4 SPECIALIZED ACADEMIC PROGRAMS ON COMPETITION LAW LAUNCHED
- 5 PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PCC, PASIG LGU EYED IN DIALOGUE



*Ensuring businesses compete and consumers benefit*





PCC Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo (sixth from left), Commissioners Lolibeth Ramit-Medrano (ninth from right), Marah Victoria Queral (seventh from right), Ferdinand Negre (rightmost), and Executive Director Kenneth Tanate (second from right) join DEPDev Secretary Arsenio Balisacan (eighth from left), keynote speaker Professor William Kovacic (10th from right) and representatives from various competition agencies, international organizations, and academic institutions at the 2025 Manila Forum on Competition in Developing Countries, held on February 5-6.

# State of competition in PH agri takes spotlight in 2025 Manila Forum

By Davinci Maru

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) on February 5-6 hosted the 2025 Manila Forum on Competition in Developing Countries which brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from across the world to tackle competition challenges facing the agricultural sector.

Themed “From Farm to Table: The Role of Competition in Agricultural Development,” the seventh edition of the Manila Forum served as a platform for sharing valuable insights and best practices on fostering competition to drive growth and sustainability in the agricultural sector. The conference included five panel discussions featuring Philippine agriculture officials, competition authorities from Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Kenya, Australia, and Hong Kong, as well as competition experts from international organizations and foreign academic institutions.

In his welcome remarks, PCC Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo underscored the central issue of ensuring food security and the well-being of agricultural workers while simultaneously promoting market efficiency and consumer welfare. “How can we ensure that those continuing the vital work of our local agricultural industry, without which we would have great difficulty in feeding and clothing our people, remain protected, while also integrating the need for healthy competition?” he said.

In a message from the Philippine government, Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan, who was the inaugural PCC chairperson, emphasized the importance of a vibrant agricultural sector for food security and economic growth, particularly in developing economies.

George Washington University Law School Professor William Kovacic, former chairperson of the US Federal Trade Commission, delivered the keynote address, which focused on major competition concerns in the food supply chain. He outlined a range of policy tools that could be used to address these issues and enhance market efficiency.

Experts discussed the globalization of agriculture, the role of competition authorities in tackling anti-competitive behavior, and the importance of protecting consumers from rising food prices, as well as the need for robust merger control to prevent excessive market concentration and promote fair competition across the agricultural value chain.

Other panel discussions examined the effects of non-tariff barriers on competition in the livestock and poultry sectors, as well as strategies to improve competition and access in the Philippine fish market. The conference concluded with concrete policy recommendations aimed at strengthening the country’s agricultural competitiveness. ■

# Interface of data privacy, competition policy tackled in dialogue between regulators

By Amylyn Castro

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) and the National Privacy Commission (NPC) held a strategic policy dialogue on March 19 to explore the intersection of data privacy and competition policy in promoting fair competition in social media and search platforms.

Central to the discussion were the findings of a PCC market study that examined competition concerns linked to the market dominance of Big Tech firms, particularly Meta’s Facebook and Google, in the Philippines. The study outlined key concepts for understanding the markets in which these platforms operate and emphasized how data collection, network effects, and economies of scale can reinforce their dominance. These dynamics, in turn, may limit consumer choice and suppress competition.

Key issues emerged during the dialogue, such as lack of consumer control over data collection, with major platforms imposing privacy policies that leave users with limited

bargaining power. Participants also discussed the importance of data portability and interoperability in fostering competition and the potential regulatory hurdles posed by cross-border data flows. These mechanisms were viewed as tools for empowering consumers and enabling a more level playing field in digital services.

NPC Privacy Policy Office Director Franklin Anthony Tabaquin IV offered perspectives on the progress and challenges of enforcing data privacy laws in relation to dominant digital platforms.

The PCC and NPC exchanged best practices on managing data aggregation and supporting responsible cross-border data sharing. Both agencies expressed interest in further collaboration on policy initiatives that would strengthen the alignment of competition and data privacy objectives. The event formed part of the PCC’s broader initiative of collaborating with sector regulators to ensure a competitive and consumer-friendly digital market. ■



PCC Commissioner Marah Victoria Queral (sixth from left), Economics Office Acting Director IV Carlos Vega (second from left) and other PCC staff with NPC representatives Dir. Franklin Anthony Tabaquin IV (fifth from left), Atty. Ivy Grace Villasoto (fourth from left), and Atty. Mary Kate Clariz Marcelo (third from left) during the strategic policy dialogue held on March 19.



## ADVOCACY ROUNDUP



PCC Commissioner and TWG Co-Chair Lolibeth Ramit-Medrano and LEB Chairperson Jason Barlis lead the ceremonial signing of the Specialized Academic Track and Post-Graduate Certificate Program on Competition Law on March 14. They are joined by (back row, from left to right) Lenvic Ellicer Lesigues (representing Atty. Alyssa Carmelli Castillo of the PCC Enforcement Office), Atty. Mario Rosete III of the PCC Mergers and Acquisitions Office, Atty. Gwen Grecia de Vera of the UP CLPP, LEB Commissioners Lorenzo Reyes and Salex Alibogha, and Rodrigo Sagum of the LEB-Standards Development Regulatory Office. Photo courtesy of LEB.

## Specialized academic programs on competition law launched

■ ■ ■ By Amylyn Castro

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC), in partnership with the Legal Education Board (LEB) and the University of the Philippines College of Law Competition Law and Policy Program (UP CLPP), launched the Specialized Academic Track and Post-Graduate Certificate Program on Competition Law in a ceremonial signing event on March 14 at the LEB office.

PCC Commissioner Lolibeth Ramit-Medrano emphasized the importance of equipping future legal professionals to handle complex competition cases. "With globalization of trade investments and services, competition law is a powerful tool to provide safeguards designed to protect consumer welfare and foster a balanced, competitive and dynamic business environment," she explained.

LEB Chairperson Jason Barlis reaffirmed the agency's commitment to enhancing legal education by integrating competition law into academic curricula. He noted that the initiative aligns with efforts to equip future lawyers with knowledge in emerging

legal fields. The programs were developed through consultations with legal education institutions and are aligned with the Philippine Competition Act and international best practices.

The Specialized Academic Track under the Juris Doctor program offers a 12-unit curriculum on core competition law topics, including anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominance, merger control, and the impact of emerging technologies. The Post-Graduate Certificate Program is a 64-hour (16-week) intensive course for professionals such as lawyers, economists, and policymakers. It covers market monopolization, mergers, consumer protection, and regulatory enforcement, and uses a stackable credential system that allows participants to credit courses toward a Master of Laws degree.

Following the ceremonial launch, the Technical Working Group (TWG), comprising representatives of the PCC, LEB, and UP CLPP, discussed next steps, which include faculty training and integration of competition law principles into broader legal subjects. ■

## Partnership between PCC, Pasig LGU eyed in dialogue

■ ■ ■ By Amylyn Castro

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) met with the City Government of Pasig on January 9 to explore collaboration in promoting competition law and policy.

During the dialogue, PCC Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo stressed that all government entities, including local government units, are mandated under Administrative Order No. 44 to incorporate competition principles into their policies and regulations. He expressed hope for positive outcomes in working with the local government of Pasig City, such as improved communication, effective enforcement against anti-competitive practices, and more efficient policy reviews.

Pasig City Mayor Victor Ma. Regis Sotto welcomed the initiative, recognizing the importance of collaboration in ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth. He acknowledged the PCC's expertise and expressed interest in fostering a more competitive and fair business environment in the city.

Representatives from the PCC Enforcement Office, Mergers and Acquisitions Office, and Economics Office presented an overview of the Philippine Competition Act and the National Competition Policy to Pasig City officials, including city councilors and various department heads. PCC Commissioners Lolibeth Ramit-Medrano and Ferdinand Negre, along with Executive Director Kenneth Tanate, also participated in the dialogue.

This dialogue follows the Business Economy and Investment Forum held for Pasig-based business owners in December 2023 and a Capacity Improvement on Competition Advocacy for Legislative Staff (CICALS) session held for the local government unit of Pasig City in December 2020, both aimed at educating local officials and MSMEs on pro-competitive policies and supporting the development of a local competition code. ■



(From left to right) PCC Commissioner Lolibeth Ramit-Medrano, Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo, Pasig City Mayor Victor Ma. Regis Sotto, and Vice Mayor Robert Vincent Jude Jaworski Jr. during the January 9 dialogue at the Pasig City Hall.



# Discussion between PCC, DA yields action points for competition in agri sector

■ ■ ■ By Davinci Maru

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) convened on December 17 to explore collaborative activities to address critical concerns related to anti-competitive practices affecting the agriculture sector.

The discussion focused on issues such as price fixing, abuses of dominant market position, and the smuggling of agricultural products which harm competition and can lead to higher prices. The dialogue marked an important step in bringing the two agencies together to work towards safeguarding the interests of Filipino farmers, fisherfolk, and consumers.

Key areas of collaboration were identified, such as enhancing transparency and information exchange through data sharing to better understand market dynamics, establishing a specialized task force to tackle specific anti-competitive issues across various agricultural markets, case buildup against violators of competition laws, facilitating training and information sharing to strengthen overall enforcement capabilities, and engaging in

visits to monitor compliance and investigate potential infractions.

Attendees from the PCC included Commissioner Ferdinand Negre, Executive Director Kenneth Tanate, Competition Enforcement Office (CEO) Director Christian Loren De Los Santos and Asst. Director Genevieve Jusi, and Economics Office representatives. Representing DA were Undersecretary for Inspectorate and Enforcement and Chief of Staff Alvin John Balagbag, Undersecretary for Operations and Agri-Fisheries Mechanization and for Rural Credit Roger Navarro, Director for Inspectorate and Enforcement Felicisimo Madayag, Jr., and Atty. Charisma Aclan of the Office of the Secretary.

Through the dialogue, the PCC and DA aim to foster a competitive market environment that benefits all stakeholders in the agricultural sector. Both agencies remain committed to their shared goal of promoting fair competition and protecting the rights of the Filipino public. ■



PCC Commissioner Lolibeth Ramit-Medrano delivers opening remarks as co-presenter at the "Konektadong Pinoy" Policy Conference on March 28 in Quezon City.

# PCC co-presents policy conference in support of Konektadong Pinoy Bill

■ ■ ■ By Amylyn Castro

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) co-presented the "Konektadong Pinoy: A Pro-Filipino, Pro-Consumer, Pro-Competition Digital Connectivity Law" policy conference with the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development and the Department of Information and Communications Technology on March 28 at the University of the Philippines Law Center. The event gathered government agencies, industry players, and academics to discuss how the Konektadong Pinoy Act (KPA) can enhance digital connectivity and promote a more competitive telecommunications sector.

PCC Commissioner Lolibeth Ramit-Medrano, representing Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo, emphasized the role of the KPA in developing a competitive, affordable, and accessible telecommunications sector. She highlighted the importance of data in driving innovation and economic growth, and underscored the need for a strong legal framework to ensure fair access to telecom infrastructure.

"This bill articulates the state policy on data inclusivity, introduces key reforms in the approval process of telecommunications companies, and mainstreams competition principles in the national comprehensive data transmission and connectivity framework," Medrano said.

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and KPA co-author Senator Sherwin Gatchalian described the bill as a game-changer that enables digital access for all Filipinos regardless of location or economic status.

PCC Executive Director Kenneth Tanate, one of the event's reactors, emphasized the role of competition in lowering prices and improving services. He said dismantling market entry barriers is key and welcomed the additional responsibilities for PCC under the bill. ■



(From left to right) DA-Office of the Secretary staff Atty. Charisma Aclan, PCC CEO Director Christian Loren De Los Santos, PCC Commissioner Ferdinand Negre, DA Undersecretary for Operations and Agri-Fisheries Mechanization and for Rural Credit Roger Navarro, DA Undersecretary for Inspectorate and Enforcement and Chief of Staff Alvin John Balagbag, PCC Executive Director Kenneth Tanate, PCC CEO Asst. Director Genevieve Jusi, DA Director for Inspectorate and Enforcement Felicisimo Madayag, Jr., and PCC Office of the Executive Director staff John Hubert Guamos during the dialogue on anti-competitive practices in the agriculture sector.





(Seated, left to right) PCC Executive Director Kenneth Tanate, Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo, TCCT Chairperson Maitree Sutapakul, and Secretary-General Visanu Vongsinsirikul sign the memorandum of understanding between the two competition authorities at the PCC's office in Quezon City on February 4. (Standing, left to right) PCC Commissioners Lolibeth Ramit-Medrano, Michael Peloton, Marah Victoria Querol, and Ferdinand Negre.

## MoUs inked with competition authorities of Thailand, Cambodia

■ ■ ■ By Davinci Maru

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) recently signed bilateral memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with its counterparts from Thailand and Cambodia to enhance cross-border cooperation in enforcing competition laws and promoting fair markets.

On February 4, Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo and Trade Competition Commission of Thailand (TCCT) Chairperson Maitree Sutapakul led the ceremonial signing at the PCC office in Quezon City. The MoU with TCCT establishes a framework for cooperation through information sharing, notification of enforcement activities, coordination of investigations, and joint capacity-building efforts. Aguinaldo emphasized the importance of aligning enforcement approaches in increasingly integrated economies, while Sutapakul noted the long-standing relationship between the PCC and TCCT through ASEAN forums.

A week later, on February 11, Aguinaldo and Cambodia Competition Commission (CCC) Chairperson Cham Nimul formalized a similar agreement, presented during the official visit of Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet to the Philippines. Witnessed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the signing underscored both countries' commitment to promoting competition and economic cooperation. The MoU with CCC includes provisions for coordinated enforcement, data exchange, and technical collaboration.

President Marcos welcomed the exchange of best practices, highlighting its importance in boosting investments and bilateral economic activity.

The new agreements mark the PCC's fifth and sixth international MoUs, following earlier partnerships with China (2019), Hong Kong (2020), Singapore (2021), and Australia (2024). As the Philippines' primary antitrust authority, the PCC is mandated to enforce the Philippine Competition Act and represent the country in global competition matters. ■



(From left to right) CCC Chairperson Cham Nimul, Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., and PCC Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo during the presentation of the memorandum of understanding between the PCC and CCC at Malacañan Palace on February 11. Photo courtesy of Presidential Communications Office.

## Initiatives to foster innovation, fair competition shared in HK conference

■ ■ ■ By Davinci Maru

Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo shared the agency's strategies for promoting innovation and fair competition during a panel at the Hong Kong Competition Exchange 2025 held on February 25-26. Speaking on the panel "Harnessing Innovation for the Good of All and Mitigating Competition Risks: Perspectives from Enforcers," Aguinaldo joined counterparts from Japan, Singapore, China, and Egypt to emphasize innovation's role in economic development.

Aguinaldo outlined key PCC initiatives such as legislative advocacy through position papers, the Champions of Competition (COC) program, and the conduct of competition impact assessments (CIAs) on government policies to promote stakeholder understanding.

He also discussed the use of innovative tools in enforcement and education, including the Bid Rigging Screening Tool (BiRST) for detecting cartels and the iCLP: Online Learning Hub on Competition Law and Policy for stakeholder capacity-building.

Aguinaldo cited the PCC's partnerships with the National Bureau of Investigation for enforcement actions and ongoing coordination with international authorities on merger cases to highlight the importance of collaboration. He also noted the development of the ASEAN Merger Information Sharing Portal to support regional cooperation. "Sustained cooperation, innovation, and active engagement are crucial for building a more inclusive and competitive economy," he said. ■



PCC Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo (second from left) speaks at a panel discussing innovation and competition risks at the Hong Kong Competition Exchange 2025 on February 26. Photo courtesy of Hong Kong Competition Commission.

## IN THE NEWS

[PCC, DA join forces to combat anti-competitive agriculture practices](#)

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) have joined forces and discussed strategies for addressing anti-competitive practices that impact the agriculture sector.

(Ehda Dagooc, *The Freeman*, 10 January 2025)

[Competition policy to help promote resilience in agri sector: NEDA](#)

The 2025 Manila Forum, organized by the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC), is the PCC's flagship advocacy initiative. It brought together policymakers and experts to share insights and best practices for implementing competition policies in developing economies.

(Anna Leah Gonzales, *Philippine News Agency*, 6 February 2025)

[Philippines, Thailand partner for competition law enforcement](#)

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) has teamed up with the Trade Competition Commission of Thailand (TCCT) to step up competition law enforcement.

(Louella Desiderio, *Philippine Star*, 12 February 2025)

[PH, Cambodian Competition Commissions ink cooperation agreement](#)

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) and the Cambodia Competition Commission (CCC) have agreed to enhance collaboration in competition law enforcement to foster fair and competitive markets in both countries.

(Sun Star Davao Digital, 18 February 2025)





(From left to right) PCC Commissioner Ferdinand Negre, Chairperson Michael Aguinaldo, George Washington University Law Professor William Kovacic, and PCC Commissioners Marah Victoria Querol and Lolibeth Ramit-Medrano at the lecture on Relationships between Competition Agencies and Sectoral Regulators held at the PCC office on February 4.

## Competition experts hold lectures to boost PCC staff skills

■ ■ ■ By Davinci Maru and Amylyn Castro

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) hosted several lectures by global experts in February to enhance its personnel's understanding of competition law enforcement.

On February 4, PCC welcomed George Washington University Law School Professor and former US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Chairperson William Kovacic for a lecture titled "Bridging the Gap: Relationships between Competition Agencies and Sectoral Regulators." Kovacic discussed the challenges of coordination between competition agencies and sector regulators, emphasizing the need for effective collaboration and the use of mechanisms such as memoranda of understanding (MoU) and joint training programs to resolve conflicts.

On the same day, David Salisbury of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) delivered a lecture on handling agriculture-related competition cases. Salisbury shared his insights on managing

mandatory industry codes for agricultural markets, including dairy and horticulture, and the ACCC's strategies for ensuring fair trading through stakeholder engagement and enforcement actions.

University of Johannesburg Professor Simon Roberts lectured on pursuing cartels, which highlighted the role of leniency programs in encouraging firms to report collusive behavior. In the lecture held on February 7, Roberts addressed the impact of geographic factors and technological developments, such as artificial intelligence and algorithmic pricing, in facilitating anti-competitive conduct. He stressed the need for innovative regulatory approaches to combat these challenges and foster industry compliance.

These lectures contributed to strengthening the PCC's knowledge base and strategies for tackling complex competition issues in various sectors. ■



PCC's Philline Kate Dugayo (middle row, fifth from right) and Efren Lyndon Dacutan (top row, fourth from right) with fellow delegates during the OECD-Korea Policy Centre's Competition Law Workshop on Bid Rigging conducted on March 5-7.

## International trainings help PCC staff hone skills in investigation, economics

■ ■ ■ By Erica Mae Libero and Ana Maria Mijares

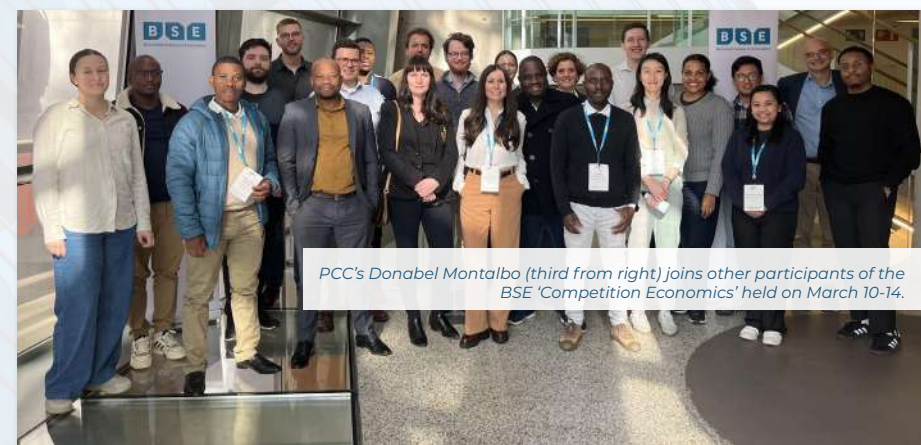
Employees of the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) honed their skills and gained valuable insights into the challenges and strategies for promoting fair competition in the digital economy and beyond through the Government Staff Development Program for Competition Law and Policy.

On March 5-7, PCC Competition Enforcement Office legal assistants Philline Kate Dugayo and Efren Lyndon Dacutan participated in the Competition Law Workshop on Bid Rigging in Seoul, organized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Korea Policy Centre. The workshop focused on detecting and combating bid rigging, stressing the importance of early detection systems and preventive measures in procurement.

Participants engaged in case studies, presentations, and practical exercises on international best practices for bid rigging investigations. The event also highlighted the challenges posed by the digital economy and the need for collaboration among competition authorities, procurement agencies, and auditing bodies.

PCC Economics Office's Competition Policy Research Officer Donabel Montalbo attended the Competition Economics course at the Barcelona School of Economics on March 10-14. The course explored modern economic approaches to competition in digital markets, particularly with respect to algorithms and digital platform dominance. It delved into adapting traditional competition analysis to rapidly evolving digital markets and highlighted the importance of sector-specific strategies and flexible, forward-looking policies.

The discussions in the course also explored the relationship between competition policy and broader economic goals, underlining the need for adaptable approaches as markets continue to change. ■



PCC's Donabel Montalbo (third from right) joins other participants of the BSE 'Competition Economics' held on March 10-14.

## IN THE NEWS

### [DHSUD, PCC link-up to enhance housing](#)

The Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) have partnered to strengthen policy and regulatory frameworks, as well as promote fair competition in the housing sector.

(Rio Araya, Manila Standard, 16 March 2025)

### [PCC launches courses on competition law](#)

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) said courses and certificate programs on competition law that it is offering to lawyers and other professionals will help them deal with complex competition cases.

(Justine Irish Tabile, Business World, 20 March 2025)

## M&A DASHBOARD

Notifications received from January to March 2025:

9

Notifications received since 2016:

326






Lea Marie Diño  
**Editorial Coordinator**

Gian Paolo Honrubia  
**Layout Artist**

The PCC can be found in the following  
social media platforms:

 Facebook  
 X  
 Youtube  
 LinkedIn

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS



Electronic publications are available at the PCC website:  
[www.phcc.gov.ph](http://www.phcc.gov.ph)