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Manila Standard

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TARGET MISSED. A worker walks beside a wall of stacked rice after unloading truckload of rice at the warehouse of the National Food Authority in Manila. NFA administrator Jason Aquino has instructed the agency's special bids and awards committee on rice importation to fast-track the government-to-government procurement of 250,000 metric tons of rice for the immediate replenishment of government buffer stocks. Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Pinol and DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez (inset) inspect a stall selling rice at P39 per kilo at Libertad Market in Pasay City on Wednesday. **AFP/Norman Cruz**

Manila Standard

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MILK DEBATE. Senator Cynthia A. Villar, chairman of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, asks Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol (left) why the National Dairy Authority cannot meet the country's demand for milk. Piñol asserted that the lack of genetics is the reason for PH milk importation, as there are only 2,000 cows available in the country for artificial insemination or embryo transfer. Villar encouraged the agriculture sector to produce cows adapted to the country's conditions and thus increase dairy production. She also encourages backyard farming that takes care of carabaos and goats. **Lino Santos**

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
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DOING THE ROUNDS – Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol inspects the rice for sale at a market in Pasay City Wednesday. Piñol said he is in favor of increasing the buying power of the National Food Authority to boost its stocks which are down to alarmingly low levels. (Ali Vicoy).

The Manila Times

Date: April 19, 2018 Page: A3

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Govt urged to look into price surge in chicken

A GROUP of poultry raisers on Wednesday called on the government to investigate a sudden surge in the price of chicken being sold in the market, after reports said several stalls in Metro Manila have jacked up their prices by as much as P20 per kilo.

Increased prices from P10-20 per kilo affected choice cuts such as wings, breasts and thighs.

In Marikina City, the price is now P125 per kilo from the previous P105.

Reports said in Pritil market in Manila's Tondo district, chicken sells for P160 per kilo from the previous P150.

According to Elias Jose Inciong, president of the United Broilers Raisers Association, they are wondering why there is a sudden increase in prices, when the farmgate prices of chicken or that coming from the poultry farms remain the same.

The prices range from P70 to P82 per kilo for the farmgate chicken for last month, compared to P89 per kilo last March 16.

Inciong said they will call for a meeting with Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol over the matter.

FRANCIS EARL A. CUETO

The Manila Times

Date: April 19, 2018 Page: A2

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MARKET CHECK Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol and officials of the Department of Trade and Industry inspect government-subsidized rice sold at a public market in Pasay City.
PHOTO BY ANDREA DE LA CRUZ

The Manila Times

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The NFA kerfuffle

LOWDOWN

JOJO ROBLES

SOMETIMES it's so hard to convince people that President Rodrigo Duterte is going to do exactly as he says. But it's sad when even his own people apparently don't consider him serious enough to do the follow- through.

This is my takeaway from the removal of Cabinet Secretary Leoncio Evasco Jr. as chairman of the policy-making National

➤RoblesA6

■ **ROBLES** FROM A1

The NFA kerfuffle

ouster was inevitable, simply because there was no way Duterte could back away from the issue any longer.

Despite Duterte's many and long pronouncements on the need for the importation of cheap rice to cover the shortfall in the stocks of the National Food Authority, people—especially people in Malacañang identified with Evasco—continued to paint the issue as a power play between the Cabinet Secretary and NFA Administrator Jason Aquino. And they picked the outsider Aquino to lose against the powerful, longtime friend and supposed relative of Duterte, Evasco.

I believed then and I believe now that Duterte never framed the issue of rice importation in such Machiavellian terms. To the president, who I first heard discuss the issue early last year, it was a problem that needed a quick solution that the Palace was in a perfect position to provide.

Cheap rice stocks for the poor in NFA warehouses were running low, so he ordered government-to-government importation. Some people, including a holdover Aquino undersecretary in Evasco's office, tried to amend this oh-so-clear directive by converting the 250,000-ton importation requested by Duterte into a government-to-private sector deal. That meant private dealers would get to wet their beaks in the transaction, instead of the government just dealing with another state and the imported stocks arriving faster than if the Philippines dealt with private traders. Duterte fired her during a humiliating press conference.

Then early this year, Duterte asked about the importation, which still hadn't been sealed. Again, the president was told by the council of Evasco that the deal was in the pipeline; the president, in an NFAC meeting that he presided over, said to get it done.

Then the council members did a strange thing: They started blaming Aquino for sabotaging the importation by selling off NFA's rice stocks in large volumes too soon, thus causing the rice crisis.

Of course, Aquino had nothing to do with rice importation and would have in no way benefited from either a GTG or a GTP import scheme. Besides, I will insist that this is a case of officials trying to amend a clear and direct order by the president – and being punished after they were found out.

How difficult would it have been for Evasco and his council members, for instance, to just do what Duterte told them to do, which was to import rice to shore up NFA stocks? Why did they have to go through the rigmarole of finding local stocks that they knew did not exist, or at least were nonexistent in the mandated NFA buying price of P34 per kilo milled?

Now Evasco has been removed as head of the council, Aquino is still at NFA, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol is left with the job of fixing the unnecessary mess created. And if rice isn't imported soon, the NFA will still have nothing to sell to the poorest five percent of the population or to stock up for natural calamities.

Note that even after meeting with local rice cooperatives, government officials were only able to convince farmers to sell at P39 per kilo, which is just going to cost more. Besides, at P39, the regular-milled variety being passed off as NFA rice is just one peso cheaper than the cheapest commercial variety available, so what's the diff?

* * *

Some say the free-marketers in the Duterte Cabinet, including some of those belonging to the NFAC, don't like the idea of rice subsidies, even the bare-bones ones being provided by the NFA. But I'd like to believe that Duterte is actually a believer in social safety nets, especially for the very poor, and will maintain or even expand what little subsidies government can provide.

One of the reasons, I think, for Duterte's wide appeal is because of his demonstrable empathy and his very visible heart for the poor.

Besides, Duterte knows that rice is also a political issue. He cannot have become the accomplished politician (especially the accomplished local politician) that he is if he did not understand perfectly the issues surrounding the national staple.

Beyond Evasco and his allies in the NFAC, the kerfuffle in the council should remind the free-marketers in the Cabinet that Duterte will not sell out his poorest constituency. That is certainly non-negotiable, for him.

Looking beyond, it should be clear that even someone as purportedly close to Duterte as Evasco, a former Catholic priest, communist rebel and mayor of Maribojoc, Bohol, who is also said to be related by blood to the president, cannot rely simply on his sterling connections with the Chief Executive. Duterte may not know Aquino, a rebel soldier and former Army Scout Ranger, from Adam, but he still sided with him in that supposed spat with the powerful CabSec.

Duterte is really that rare bird who doesn't care about anything except doing the right thing. This rice importation controversy, to my mind, conclusively proves that.

Malaya
Business Insight

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NFA fasttracks procurement of rice stocks

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE National Food Authority (NFA) will fasttrack the procurement of 250,000 metric tons (MT) of rice to immediately replenish government buffer stocks and ensure the availability of affordable NFA rice sold at P27 and P32 per kilogram.

Jason Aquino, NFA administrator, said he has instructed the agency's special bids and awards committee (SBAC) on rice importation to look into how to facilitate the government-to-government procurement in compliance to President Duterte's order to beef up stocks good for 60 days.

He said the agency's Operations Department was ordered to study and recommend a marketing plan on a15-day strategic rice reserve (SRR) and 30-day stock for the lean months, and a 30-day SRR and 60-day stock for lean months.

Aquino added NFA will continue to intensify market monitoring and enforcement, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry and the Philippine

See NFA ➤ Page A4

Rice watch. Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Pinol lead the special monitoring of prices and supply of rice in Cartimar, Pasay City yesterday. *(Photo by Manolet Santiago)*

NFA

National Police.

NFA has made available in the market commercial rice sold as low as P39 per kg.

The grains were obtained from private millers last Monday for sale by NFA accredited retailers in Metro Manila.

DA secretary Emmanuel Piñol earlier said the agency will help the NFA identify provinces where the buying price of palay is relatively low. The DA will also offer incentives to farmers by providing drying facilities for free in NFA buying stations, loans for cooperatives and associations who will sell their produce to NFA and free tractors, harvesters and other farm equipment to associations who could deliver a certain volume of rice to NFA.

Remate
ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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Presyo ng manok may nagmimilagro

MAYROONG nagmimilagro sa pagtaas ng presyo ng mga manok sa mga pamilihan.

Ito ang inisyal na konklusyon ni Atty. Elias Jose Inciong, presidente ng United Broilers Raisers Association.

"Kailangan pong tingnan kung anong nangyari...mahirap pong magsalita ng kung ano baka magkasiraan pa," sabi ni Inciong.

Ang pahayag ni Atty. Inciong ay bilang reaksyon sa hindi maipaliwanag na biglaang pagsirit ng presyo ng mga dressed chicken sa mga pampublikong pamilihan dito sa Metro Manila.

Sabi pa ni Aty. Inciong nasa P70 hanggang P82 ang farmgate price ng manok, mas mababa kumpara sa P89 na naitala noong Martes, Marso 16, 2018

Maraming mamimili, tindera at sila sa UBRA ay malaki ang pagtataka sa pagtaas ng presyo dahil kumpara noong nakaraang buwan ay mababa ang farmgate price ng manok o presyo nito sa mga poultry farm .

Ipinahihiwatig ng tono ng pananalita sa kanyang panayam na nagkakaroon ng manipulasyon sa pagtataas o pagdaragdag ng presyo ng dressed chicken.

Ani Atty. Inciong, ilalapit ng kaniyang grupo ang isyu kay Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Emmanuel "Manny" Piñol kung matutuloy ngayong araw ng Huwebes ang pulong na hiniling nila sa Kalihim.

Nasa P10 hanggang P20 ang itinaas ng kada kilo ng manok kabilang ang mga choice cut na paa, pakpak at pitso.

Sa Bulacan naman, nagtataka na napakamamahal ng manok samantalang umaapaw ito sa farm. **D BALUYOT**

Balita

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Murang bigas mula sa N. Ecija, bantay-sarado

Nag-inspeksiyon kahapon ang mga opisyal ng Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) at National Food Authority (NFA) sa mga palengke sa Pasay City upang tiyaking nakarating ang mga bigas na tulong ng pamahalaan.

Pinangunahan mismo nina DA Secretary Manny Piñol, DTI Sec. Ramon Lopez at NFA Administrator Jason Aquino ang inspeksiyon at unang pinuntahan ang Cartimar market sa Pasay.

Ikinatuwa ng mga opisyal ang naka-display na bigas galing sa Nueva Ecija, na mabibili ng P39 kada kilo, bilang pansamantalang pamalit sa NFA rice sa merkado habang hinihintay pa ang tone-toneladang bigas na inangkat ng gobyerno sa ibang bansa.

Binisita rin nila ang Libertad market at walang nakitang paglabag sa rice retailers sa lugar.

Paglilinaw ng mga opisyal, layunin ng inspeksiyon na masiguro na makararating sa mga pamilihan at mabibili sa abot-kayang halaga ang mga well-milled rice mula sa Nueva Ecija.

Ayon kay Piñol, bubuo sila ng technical working group para bantayan ang presyo ng mga bigas sa pamilihan.

Bella Gamotea

PILIPINO MIRROR
FILIPINO MIRROR MEDIA GROUP CORPORATION
• SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

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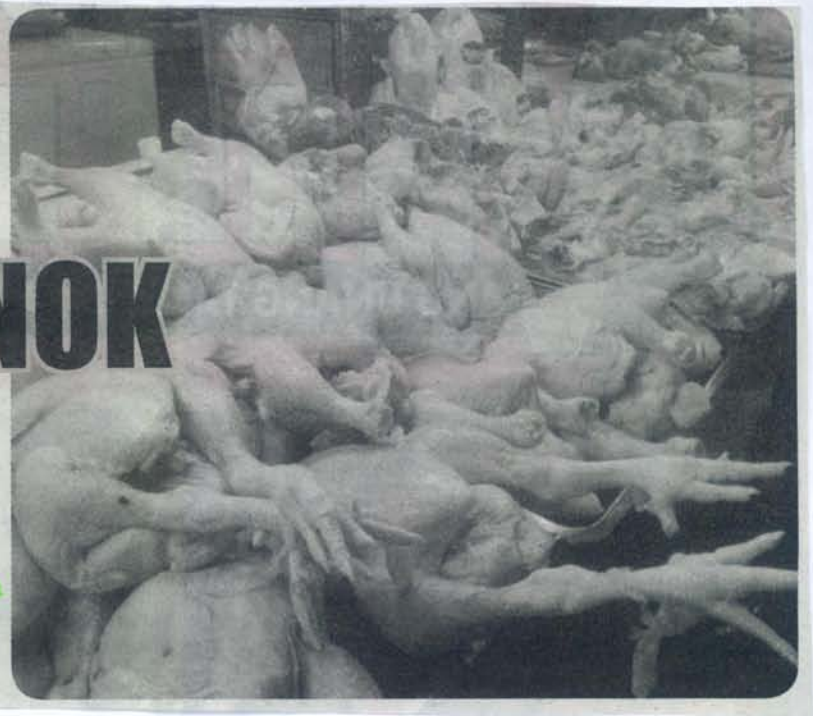
NEGOSYANTE SA DAR: IMBESTIGAHAN ANG TAAS-PRESYO NG MANOK



UMALMA ang isang grupo ng mga negosyante kahapon at hinimok ang gobyerno na imbestigahan ang pagtaas ng presyo ng manok sa ilang pamilihan sa Metro Manila.

Tumaas ng P10 hanggang P20 ang kada kilo ng manok, lalo na ang paa, pakpak at pitso, batay sa pagroronda sa ilang palengke.

Sa Marikina market, P125 kada kilo na ang bentahan mula sa dating P105. Tumaas naman sa P160 mula P150 ang kada kilo ng choice cut ng manok sa Pritil Market sa Tondo, Maynila.

Nakapagtataka ang naturang taas-presyo dahil kumpara noong nakaraang buwan, mababa ang farmgate price ng manok o presyo nito sa mga poultry farm, sabi ni Atty. Elias Jose Inciong, presidente ng United Broilers Raisers Association.

Nasa P70 hanggang P82 aniya ang farmgate price nitong Martes, mas mababa kumpara sa P89 na naitala noong Marso 16.

"Kailangan pong tingnan kung anong nangyari," ani Inciong.

Ilalapit aniya ng kanyang grupo ang isyu kay Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol kung matutuloy sa Huwebes ang pulong na hiniling nila rito.

PILIPINO MIRROR
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PRODUKSIYON NG BIGAS TATAAS

POSIBLENG tumaas ang produksyon ng bigas sa bansa.

Sa pagtataya ng Department of Agriculture, maaring umangat ng 3.11% o katumbas ng 20 million metric tons ang produksiyon ng bigas.

Sinabi ni Agricultre Secretary Manny Piñol, aabot sa 600,000 metric tons ng bigas ang inaasahang magagawa ngayong taon na dulot ng matatag na presyo ng palay, maayos na panahon at pag-angat ng magagandang kalidad ng mga binhi.

Batay naman sa datos mula sa United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO), tinatayang lalawak ng 40% ang rice imports ng Pilipinas na aabot sa 1.4 million metric tons.

Samantala, tiniyak ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) na sa susunod na buwan ay makakabili na ng murang bigas ang publiko na ibinebenta ng National Food Authority.

Siniguro ni DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez ang pagdating ng suplay ng NFA mula Mayo hanggang Hunyo.

AIMEE ANOC

Pilipino Star
NGAYON
Diyaryong disente ng masang Intelihente

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Editoryal

Dapat lang na DA ang humawak sa NFA

TAMA ang desisyon ni Pres. Rodrigo Duterte na isailalim sa Department of Agriculture (DA) ang National Food Authority (NFA). Sa loob nang mahabang panahon na ang NFA ay pinangangasiwaan pa ng mga kung sinu-sinong tao na ang resulta ay ang pagbabangayan. At ang resulta sa pagbabangayan ay ang pagkaubos ng buffer stock ng NFA gaya nang nangyari kamakailan. Nasimot ang stock ng NFA at ang resulta, lumobo ang presyo ng commercial rice. Sa dakong huli si Duterte rin ang gumawa ng paraan para may mabiling bigas ang mamamayan.

Ang kontrobersiya sa NFA ang nag-udyok sa Presidente na isailalim na sa Agriculture department ang NFA. Si Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol na ang mamumuno sa bagong NFA Council na dating pinamumunuan ni Cabinet Secretary Leoncio Evasco Jr. Bukod sa NFA, isasailalim na rin sa DA ang Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) at ang Fertilizers and Pesticides Authority (FPA).

Ngayong nasa ilalim na ng DA ang NFA, maaaring hindi na maulit ang kakapusan sa bigas na nagbigay ng kaba sa mga mahihirap. Tumaas ang presyo ng bigas. Ang dating NFA rice na ang presyo ay P39.00 ang kilo ay naging P42.00. Sabi ng mga kakarampot ang suweldo, hindi makasapat ang kanilang kinikita sa biglang pagtaas ng bigas.

Isa rin sa magandang resulta ng pagkakasailalim ng NFA sa DA, nabigyan agad ng instruksiyon ng Presidente si Piñol na taasan ng NFA ang pagbili ng palay sa mga magsasaka. Ayon sa Presidente, kapag mataas ang presyo ng NFA, maraming magsasaka ang magbebenta ng kanilang aning palay. At ang resulta, hindi mauubusan ng stock ang NFA. Sa kasalukuyan, bumibili ang NFA ng palay sa halagang P17 bawat kilo. Ang mga private traders naman ay P20 bawat kilo. Sabi ni Piñol balak niyang dagdagan ng P3 ang pagbili ng NFA.

Gawin ni Piñol ang lahat para maibalik ang talaksan ng bigas sa NFA at mas maganda kung hindi na aasa sa importasyon. Paunlarin ang sakahan para hindi na mamroblema ang mamamayan sa pagbili ng bigas.

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Manila Standard

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Solon pushes rice probe

House panel to look into supply situation; 13 traders face inquiry

By Maricel V. Cruz

THE chairman of the House committee on agriculture and food on Wednesday said he sees the need for a series of congressional investigations to assess the rice situation in the country in light of the recent shortage of buffer stocks from the National Food Authority.

The House committee earlier discovered that some 13 private traders have been hoarding rice in the National Capital Region, triggering an increase in the price of the commodity.

"As an oversight function of Congress, we need to complete the investigation and come out with new policy or amendment of existing ones to address the issue," said ANAC-IP Party-list Rep. Jose Panganiban, the panel's chairman.

The committee identified the alleged private rice hoarders as Evergreen, Rising Sun, GRC, CGG, Expo, ARNS, Working Gold, Leoneco, PMT, Hype Rice, LM Rice Cereal, MML Grain and Grandio.

Panganiban said his panel would invite the representatives of these companies to appear in the next House hearing to hear their side.

Meanwhile, Anakpawis Party-list Rep. Ariel Casilao urged the government to look into the botched smuggling of 1, 539 metric tons of rice. *Next page*

Solon...

From A1

Casilao, member of the leftist Makabayan bloc, said the rampant smuggling not only of rice but also of other agricultural products is the result of the continuing commitment of the government to importation under the Word Trade Organization agreement on agriculture.

"Agricultural smuggling is only a reflection of the country's continuing madness to import. Not only has it abetted corruption but it is also an insult to our farmers," Casilao said.

Citing a report of the Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura, in the years from 2013 to 2015, Casilao said a total of P64 -billion revenue losses were incurred by the government due to widespread smuggling of agricultural products. This reflected a P32-billion loss per year, which is equivalent to the Department of Agriculture's budget for 2016 and excess funds for the rehabilitation of the agriculture sector.

A separate report by Dr. Jose Ramon Albert, a senior research fellow from Philippine Institute for Development Studies, showed that those who were classified as poor had agriculture-related jobs, Casilao noted.

"Aside from virtually no government subsidies to local rice farmers for procuring reasonable price of palay, agricultural smuggling which includes rice is further killing our local rice farmers' livelihood. Worse, through smuggling, billions of [pesos in] revenues are lost," Casilao said.

NFA Administrator Jason Aquino ordered the agency's special bids and awards committee to speed up the government-to-government procurement of 250,000 metric tons of rice to replenish government buffer stocks.

President Rodrigo Duterte earlier directed NFA to immediately import the needed stocks as consumers continued to clamor for the P27- and P32-per-kilo NFA rice.

Aquino said the President wants government to have buffer stocks good for 60 days.

"As a long-time responsible and responsive leader, he knows that government should always be ready to effectively address any contingency," Aquino said.

But, as a policy, he said, government would only import the deficiency in local production.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

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Traders edging out NFA in race for local palay

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

THE National Food Authority (NFA) could not buy more palay from farmers even if the summer harvest season has reached its peak as traders continue to aggressively compete with the food agency for locally produced rice.

A government official told the BusinessMirror that the state-run grains agency can only buy palay from farmers in remote and nontraditional areas through its mobile procurement scheme.

"The palay procurement is very minimal. [The NFA] is only able to buy in remote and nontraditional areas through mobile procurement and *ugnayan*, the official, who requested anonymity, told the BusinessMirror.

"The main reason for the low procurement is the high ex-farm price of palay ranging from P20 to P24 per kilogram [kg] and the aggressive stance of private traders," the source added.

The source revealed that the NFA has received help from some local government units (LGUs), such as Isabela, to improve its palay procurement and salvage its nearly depleted rice stockpile.

"There's help coming from LGUs, like the provincial government of Isabela, which gives [farmers] a premium of additional P4.50 per kg on top of the government support price of P17 per kg," the source said. "But the problem is that they only have limited funding."

Part of the NFA's stockpile, which has fallen to 170,000 50-kg bags, or around 8,500 metric tons (MT) as of April 18, consists of unmilled rice bought from farmers. The NFA's buffer stock is equivalent to less than a day, or just one-fourth of the country's total daily requirement volume of about 32,000 MT or 640,000 bags.

See "Traders," A12

Traders. . .

Continued from A1

This means that the NFA is only capable of supplying a fourth of the country's total rice demand for a day should it become the lone seller of the staple and the stocks held by the commercial warehouses and households are totally wiped out. Also, the source disclosed that the present stockpile held by the NFA would be totally depleted by the end of the month.

Earlier, the NFA has vowed to step up its purchases of unmilled rice, but an official from the agency said it would be a tall order for the NFA to hit its procurement target for this year's dry season harvest.

The NFA said it has bought 19,361 50-kilogram (kg) bags of palay from farmers. Of this volume, 7,412 bags were bought last month, at the start of the summer crop harvest.

"Rice harvest started in March, and it would peak this month. So, if the farm-gate price of palay would drop, then we could procure more palay," the official said. "We remain optimistic that we can hit our target, but it would be quite difficult."

Rice imports

NFA Administrator Jason Aquino on Thursday ordered the agency's special bids and awards committee to fast-track the government's importation of 250,000 metric tons (MT) of rice via the government-to-government (G2G) procurement scheme to replenish the government's nearly depleted stockpile.

Aquino made the directive following President Duterte's instruction that the NFA should "immediately" import its needed stocks to bring back cheap government rice in local markets.

An official told the BusinessMirror that the NFA will invite Bangkok and Hanoi to participate in the G2G importation within the week. Thailand and Vietnam are the only countries that can participate in G2G importation as they have agreements with Manila.

The official said the NFA will receive and open the offers made by Thailand and Vietnam on April 27. "If successful, the notice of award will be issued on the same day. After the submission of required performance bond and other documents, the issuance of notice to proceed [would be] issued by May 7." The official said the rice imports will have to be delivered to the Philippines starting the third week of May until June 30.

Of the 250,000 MT that will be imported, 250,000 MT is 25 percent brokens, while the remaining volume is 15 percent brokens. "Most likely, the DAP price for 25 percent brokens rice would be around $460 per MT, while the 15 percent brokens would be around $470 per MT." The attached agency of the Department of Agriculture has set aside a budget for P6.1 billion for the rice imports.

Under the approved terms of reference for the G2G importation, the official said the NFA would implement a delivered-at-place (DAP) system, which would require Thailand and Vietnam to deliver rice directly to NFA warehouses. Also, the DAP indicated that exporters should process and shoulder the delivery costs. The official said rice imports would be delivered to the following ports: La Union, Subic, Tabaco, Manila, Batangas, Ilo-ilo, Bacolod, Cebu, Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro, Davao, General Santos and Surigao.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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'Cheap NFA rice missing in markets'

By DING CERVANTES

SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga – Various groups reported yesterday that the "affordable" P39 per kilo rice boasted by the National Food Authority (NFA) could not be found in markets in Metro Manila and the provinces.

"We have scoured major markets and rice retailers in Metro Manila but we did not see the P39 per kilo of 'cheap rice' boasted by the NFA. It's a big hoax. The rice crisis is worsening, and we can only blame the Duterte government for this," Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) secretary-general Antonio Flores said.

In a separate statement, rice watchdog Bantay Bigas and National Federation of Peasant Women or Amihan also aired the same observation, noting that the NFA's "relatively affordable rice, priced at P27 and P32 per kilogram, has vanished."

Flores said the lack of rice supply in the hands of the government started last January.

"This is more than just a problem of supply. The rice industry is liberalized and deregulated, with the private sector dominating the industry. This leaves the government without any effective control and policy direction on the production, supply, marketing and pricing of rice that is considered as a socially sensitive product," Flores said.

"Importing 250 million metric tons of rice is not even a palliative to the 'cheap rice' shortage. Importation will never be the solution when it is among the root problems of the perennial rice crisis," he added.

Flores said rice prices continue to go sky-high and there is no affordable rice available in local markets.

"The rice supply is in the hands of private rice traders. Ageing rice stocks are left rotting in NFA warehouses and ports," he said.

Flores lamented rice smuggling remains unabated.

"The rice cartel must be celebrating. They are profiting so much from the government's incompetence and the people's growing hunger," he said.

He added the "unending political bickering and infighting" between Malacañang and NFA officials doesn't help.

"Consumers will always be at a losing end in this situation. For a rice-producing and rice-eating country like ours, these worsening problems of the rice industry are unacceptable. Day in and day out, our local rice farmers do backbreaking work in the fields, yet the domestic rice industry is in this deep mess. Significant policy reforms should be undertaken with political will," Flores added.

Zenaida Soriano, Amihan national chair, said Duterte should acknowledge this rice crisis and study it from the sphere of production to circulation or distribution.

"The government is essentially abandoning both the welfare of the producers or farmers and the marginalized sectors as consumers, such as the urban poor," Soriano said.

"Imported rice will definitely bring about the displacement of farmers through bankruptcy and indebtedness, consequently diminishing self-sufficiency and food security," she added.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos said there must be transparency and projection about amount for food security amidst the prevailing rice shortage.

"Sometimes we become paranoid because officials do not tell the truth about the rice situation," Marcos said.

She said population is growing while farmlands are decreasing "so I am wondering why there is no projection (of rice need)."

Marcos said rice price is increasing, which makes farmers happy as farm gate price reaches P19 to P22 per kilo of palay.

Marcos said the last time she checked the market in her area, there was no NFA rice.

"So I was wondering why they say there is no shortage when in fact it is very clear there is no NFA rice," she said.

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NFA to intensify rice price monitoring

ADMINISTRATOR JASON Laureano Y. Aquino of the National Food Authority (NFA), which has just been reorganized and is now back under the Department of Agriculture, said on Wednesday the government will continue to intensify its monitoring and enforcement of the price of rice as they continue to fast-track the importation of 250,000 metric tons to replenish its buffer stock. — **Anna Gabriela A. Mogato**

The Manila Times

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DTI sees coffee industry growing under roadmap

BY ANNA LEAH E. GONZALES

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) expects the Philippine coffee sector to grow substantially as the government aims to increase its sufficiency level from the current 41.6 percent to 161 percent by 2022 under an industry plan signed last year.

In a statement on Wednesday, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said his agency was working with the Department of Agriculture (DA) to ensure that the industry would be on a par with top coffee producers Brazil, Vietnam, Columbia, Indonesia, and Honduras.

Coffee is the second-most traded commodity in the world. It is grown in 50 countries along the equatorial zone called the "Bean Belt," on which the DTI chief said the Philippines lies.

The country currently produces about 37,000 tons of the coffee annually.

Leading producers are Region 12 (Soccsksargen), with 25,100.77 metric tons (MT); Region 11 (Davao), 11,429.78 MT; Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), 10,341.59 MT; Region 10 (Northern Mindanao), 5,604.95 MT; and Region 6 (Western Visayas), 4,356.25 MT.

Coffee demand is currently at 90 percent, and imports amount to roughly P12 billion annually, Lopez said.

Vietnam is the top exporter of coffee green beans to the country, according to latest DTI data. Filipinos are fifth among the world's leading coffee drinkers, after the Europeans, Americans, Brazilians, and Japanese, the department said.

"We have to have a patriotic drive to encourage demand for Philippine coffee. We are encouraging local producers to expand coffee production to create demand," Lopez said.

To bolster production, President Rodrigo Duterte signed the Philippine Coffee Industry Roadmap 2017-2022 in March 2017.

It aims to ensure that the sector is cost-competitive, aligned with global quality standards, and environment-friendly; provides sustainable benefits to its players; and attains food security and alleviates poverty.

Under the roadmap, which the Philippine Coffee Council will implement, 213,788 hectares will be made available for coffee-planting. Each hectare is expected to yield 1 ton of coffee beans, instead of the usual 0.33T.

The country is expected to generate 214,62 MT by 2022, Lopez said.

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NDA's failure to boost milk production hit

Senator Cynthia Villar is pushing for the removal of the National Dairy Authority (NDA) as a government-owned and controlled operation (GOCC) so it could focus on developing the dairy industry and backyard farmers.

Villar, chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, lamented NDA's failure to improve the country's milk production despite operating for 23 years.

The Senate agriculture panel recently held an inquiry on the state of the dairy industry and the NDA's effectiveness in developing the sector.

"After more than two decades of its operations, the National Dairy Authority has yet to make a dent on the level of importation of milk by the country," Villar said.

She said milk production has consistently remained "nil," and the country has continued to import 99 percent of the population's milk demand.

The NDA reported that country's total milk production was 22.76 TMT (thousand metric tons) in 2017. Villar, however, said this is way below than daily milk production in the neighboring Indonesia which is at 1.68 million liters per day, and in India, whose average milk production is 42 MMT per day. **(Vanne Elaine P. Terrazola)**

INQUIRER Bandera
BALITA • BUENAS • CHIKA

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NFA rice mabibili sa Mayo

TINIYAK ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) na sa susunod na buwan ay makabibili na ng murang bigas ang mamamayan mula sa National Food Authority (NFA).

Siniguro ni DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez na darating ang suplay ng NFA rice simula sa Mayo hanggang Hunyo.

Ani Lopez, bunsod nito ay mabibili na ang P27.00 at P32.00 na NFA rice sa mga pamilihan.

Magkasamang nagsagawa ng Rice Watch ang Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agriculture (DA) at National Food Authority (NFA) sa mga pamilihan kahapon ng umaga.—*Liza Soriano*

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Section Editor: ZAC B. SARIAN

Tale of a rimas grafted unto kamansi stock

AGRI PLAIN TALK
ZAC B. SARIAN

Rimas or breadfruit is a unique fruit tree because its fruit is seedless. As such there is no way of multiplying the tree from seed. The old way is to nick the root and when new sprout is produced, the sprout is detached when it has developed roots. Another way is through marcotting or air-layering.

A lesser known method of multiplying the seedless rimas is by grafting unto a rootstock of a related fruit tree such as the Kamansi or Pakak as it is known in the Ilocos.

In February 2015, we visited the Mariano Marcos State University in Batac City, Ilocos Norte. We wrote about the interesting varieties of fruit trees being grown and propagated there. All along, we have been trying to look for a rimas that we could plant in our farm in Teresa, Rizal. Fortunately, there was one grafted rimas left with just three leaves. It was grafted unto a rootstock of Kamansi. That we got for our little farm. We did not plant it until early May when rains were expected.

We really took good care of the struggling grafted breadfruit, supplying it with a lot of Durabloom organic fertilizer and also spraying it with Power Grower Combo, a plant growth accelerator. It did not take long for it to become healthy-looking.

In late January 2018, the tree had started producing elongated male flowers, the four main branches putting two male flowers at a time. We have been anticipating that in no time the real fruit will come out sooner or later. And lo and behold! When we visited on April 10, we were surprisingly pleased to see one young developing fruit.

THREE-YEAR-OLD RIMAS WITH FIRST FRUIT – Harriette Beatrice Sac, together with members of her family, visited the Sarian Farm in Teresa, Rizal and were fascinated by the first fruit of the rimas that was grafted on Kamansi rootstock. Harriette is pointing to the young fruit. Rimas is an important food item in the Pacific Islands. In the Philippines, it is also boiled, fried, cooked as vegetable or made into sweets. However, there are no known big plantations of breadfruit in the country.

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On April 14, the family of Harry Sac, a retired government employee, visited our farm and bought some planting materials of exotic fruit trees. They were also thrilled to see the three-year-old grafted breadfruit with its first fruit and posed for pictures with the tree. Of course, we were also thrilled by the first fruits of our lone breadfruit. We will keep on monitoring developments.

*****

AGRI-BAZAAR AT QUEZON CIRCLE – Fruiting vegetables grown at the AANI Urban Farm will be showcased and offered for sale at the Agri-Bazaar cum Agri-Kapihan which will be held at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City on April 20-22.

There will be lectures during the 3-day event. On April 20, Friday, topics include mushroom growing, organic farming and rabbit-raising. On Saturday, topics include grafted vegetable technology, benefits of spirulina, Sweet Biostimulant by Bien Magcalas, and Snap Hydroponics by Richard Bernardo.

On Sunday, Tony Rola will talk on mango production, followed by a talk on several ways to make rice farming profitable. The last speader will be Dr. Eduardo Paningbatan on container gardening.

*****

AGRI-KAPIHAN AT AANI ARCA SOUTH – A free seminar on Quail Raising will be held at the AANI Weekend Market at Arca South (formerly FTI) on Saturday, April 28. The seminar will be conducted by DrQuail, a pioneer in quail production accredited by the Bureau of Animal Industry.

The company has been in the business for 17 years as a partnership of Denrick Alcaraz and Rommel Decal. For more information, contact Cristy Mosico at 0995-718-1454.

FRUITING ORGANIC VEGGIES AT AGRI-BAZAAR – Fruiting vegetables that are grown in organic media will be made available at the Agri-Bazaar that will be held on April 20-22 at the Planas Gardens, Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City. These are grown in big numbers at the AANI Urban Farm at the Kingsville Court in Antipolo City. The vegetables in fruit include tomato (in photo), eggplant, pepper pangsigang, hot pepper and okra.

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DTI vows to make PHL coffee sector competitive

By Elijah Felice E. Rosales
@alyasjah

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) vowed to prioritize coffee producers in the government's assistance for small businesses to accelerate their production in the next four years.

TAYLOR WEIDMAN/BLOOMBERG

Trade Secretary Ramon M. Lopez said the government remains firm on its commitment to make the country on a par with the world's top coffee producers, such as Brazil, Vietnam, Columbia, Indonesia and Honduras. He added the DTI and Department of Agriculture are "working closely" to achieve the objectives of the Philippine Coffee Industry Roadmap 2017-2022 a year after it was signed by President Duterte.

"We have to have a patriotic drive to encourage demand for Philippine coffee. We are encouraging local producers to expand coffee production to create the demand," Lopez said.

He added local growers should take advantage of the Filipinos' coffee consumption, which is one of the highest in the world. Proof to this, the Philippines is the top importer of soluble coffee and fourth-highest importer in the world.

Under the coffee road map, the country is aiming to create a coffee industry that is "cost-competitive," aligned with global quality standards and reliable and environment-friendly. The framework is also intended to provide sustainable benefits to farmers, processors, traders and exporters in a bid to reach food security and poverty alleviation.

The coffee road map is also aimed at raising annual coffee production to 214,626 metric tons by 2022 from the estimated 37,000 MT each year. If accomplished, this will increase the country's self-sufficiency level to 161 percent from 41.60 percent.

To achieve this, Lopez said the DTI will be "unwavering" in assisting local growers with their production and finding markets.

"Through the DTI's 7Ms [Mindset change, Mastery, Mentoring, Money, Machine, Market access and Models of business], we will continue to provide enabling mechanisms to empower coffee farmers and help in addressing the challenges in the industry," he explained.

Lopez assured there are enough consumers for coffee growers to service, with the country's current demand for coffee at 90 percent and imports of the staple amounting to P12 billion. He added the demand is also increasing by the day with broadening consumption among younger people.

Due to the Philippines's favorable location and tropical climate, it can produce four varieties of coffee, namely, robusta, arabica, excelsa and liberica. At present, Soccsksargen produces the highest volume of coffee at 25,100 MT, followed by Davao (11,429 MT), Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (10,341 MT), Northern Mindanao (5,604 MT) and Western Visayas (4,356 MT).

Coffee growers, along with trade and agriculture officials, recently discussed the future of the coffee road map at the Third Philippine Coffee Conference.

The discussion shed light on the strategies to achieve the goals of the coffee road map, trends in coffee-brewing methods, quality coffee farming of Arabica and fine Robusta, retailing a coffee business, financing for coffee business and coffee-business models.

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Govt interventions mitigated ill effects of climate change on agriculture, poverty–study

By Cai U. Ordinario
@cuo_bm

THE national government's interventions prevented extreme weather phenomena, such as El Niño and La Niña, from contributing significantly to food inflation and poverty increase, according to a study from the Philippine Center for Economic Development.

In a discussion paper, titled "Establishing the Link between Poverty and Changes in Climatic Conditions in the Philippines," University of the Philippines School of Economics Associate Professor Agustin L. Arcenas said changes in climate, particularly during El Niño and La Niña, even led to a decline in prices and poverty level.

"Closer examination, however, indicates that the expected results would have happened if not for the implementation of the disaster and climate-change adaptation program of the country. It now appears that the government's initiatives to make the agricultural sector disaster and climate-change resilient may be functioning," Arcenas said.

In 2015 data showed that the bottom 30 percent of the population and upper 70 percent of the population spent 60 percent and 39 percent of their income, respectively, on food. On average, Filipino households set aside 42 percent of their budget for food expenditures.

Arcenas's results showed poverty level is significantly affected by the agricultural wage rate, the production of irrigated palay, total irrigated area in the agricultural sector and the occurrence of the extreme weather phemenona, El Niño and La Niña.

El Niño and La Niña, which are represented by changes in average temperature and precipitation, do not significantly affect food prices and, ultimately, poverty levels.

Government interventions, such as rice and corn programs, and financial assistance to farmers during times of natural calamities, allowed the creation of ample food supply, keeping prices low and high poverty at bay.

"This statistical insignificance of average temperature and precipitation can be attributed to the successful adaptation of farmers to the changes in these variables," Arcenas said.

"The surprising result is the significant but negative relationship between El Niño and La Niña, and food prices, which indicates that the occurrence of either of these weather shocks could lessen poverty in the Philippines," he added.

However, Arcenas said that while climate-proofing the agriculture sector can be considered an anti-poverty program, the government should not depend on it alone.

He said poverty is "multidimensional" and as such, requires various solutions. Arcenas said there is a need to address the needs of poor households that are not linked to agriculture, particularly those in urban areas during climate change-related shocks in the country.

Arcenas said there is also a need to improve programs and interventions for the agricultural poor, particularly non-terrestrial agricultural poor, indigenous people and other nonfarm workers living in the rural sector.

"One may argue that with the limited government resources, the course of action should be to secure the food supply first. There is no argument that food security is, indeed, important, especially during these times where climate-change hazards are imminent, but it would be worthwhile to keep in mind that total resilience to disasters and climate-change hazards must eventually involve the long-term protection of all sectors," Arcenas said.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said in 2015 that interventions to mitigate the impact of El Niño on 66 provinces will require P19.2 billion. The Neda added El Niño affected various provinces, including Quirino, Aurora, Quezon, Bohol, Siquijor, Camiguin and Misamis Oriental

To address the needs of these provinces, the Neda said the government implemented cash-for-work programs worth P2.9 billion in 2015, and P7.3 billion in the first semester of 2016.

The Neda said the Department of Social Welfare and Development also introduced food stamps to farmers who were affected by the drought. This intervention, the agency added, received a budget of P1.3 billion for 2015, and P1.9 billion for the first semester of 2016.

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PH among top coffee producers soon

THE Philippines is looking to be one of the top producers of top-grade coffee around the world.

The Philippine Coffee Industry Roadmap 2017-2022 aims to boost the country's domestic coffee output in the next five years.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is working closely with the Department of Agriculture to ensure that the Philippine Coffee industry would be at par with the world's top producers such as Brazil, Vietnam, Columbia, Indonesia, and Honduras.

"We have to have a patriotic drive to encourage demand for Philippine coffee. We are encouraging local producers to expand coffee production to create the demand," said Ramon Lopez, DTI secretary.

The roadmap will guarantee a coffee industry that is cost-competitive, aligned with global quality standards, reliable and environment-friendly, which will provide sustainable benefits to farmers, processors, traders, and exporters, and attain food security and poverty alleviation.

Coffee is the second most traded commodity in the world and is grown in 50 countries along the equatorial zone called "The Bean Belt."

The Philippines lies within the Bean Belt.

Due to this advantageous location and favorable, although tropical, climate, the country produces four varieties of coffee including robusta, arabica, excelsa, and liberica.

Road to self-sufficiency. Under the roadmap, coffee output is eyed to grow to 214,626 MT by 2022.

According to Lopez, the current coffee output of the Philippines is pegged at 37,000 metric tons (MT) a year but with the Philippine Coffee Roadmap, the country is expected to raise the coffee production to 214,626 MT by 2022.

This will bring the country's coffee self-sufficiency level to 161 percent from the current 41.60 percent.

The roadmap would also make available 213,788 hectares of area planted with coffee nationwide, translating to a huge yield of one ton of coffee beans per hectare, a huge discrepancy from the usual 0.33 ton per hectare.

The task of implementing the roadmap falls on the Philippine Coffee Council.

Lopez is optimistic the country will be able to achieve this feat especially with DTI assisting the coffee industry, which is one of the priority sectors of the agency.

Data shows that Vietnam is the highest exporter of coffee green beans to the Philippines. Filipinos are also fifth among the highest consumers of coffee behind European Union, the United States, Brazil and Japan.

The Philippines is the top importer of soluble coffee and fourth total importer in the world.

As far as coffee production is concerned, the gap between coffee demand and production is widely noticed with demand for coffee is at 90 percent and imports amounting to P12 billion.

The demand is still increasing with expanding consumption based among younger generation.

Currently, the top five regions in producing coffee are SOCCSKSARGEN (Region 12) with 25,100.77 metric tons, Davao with 11,429.78 metric tons, Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) with 10,341.59 metric tons, Northern Mindanao with 5,604.95 metric tons, and Western Visayas with 4,356.25 metric tons.

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Wheat rises for 2nd day, soybeans ease

SINGAPORE- Chicago wheat futures rose for a second session on Wednesday, as investors bought the commodity after prices dropped to a 10-day low earlier this week.

Soybeans ticked lower, giving up some of Tuesday's gains with focus on US planting, while corn edged higher following a drop to a near two-week low in the last session.

The most-active wheat contract on the Chicago Board Of Trade rose 0.3 percent to $4.67-1/2 a bushel by 0351 GMT, after closing up 0.9 percent in the previous session.

Soybeans gave up 0.1 percent to $10.44-1/2 a bushel after closing up 0.4 percent on Tuesday, and corn added 0.1 percent to $3.80-3/4 a bushel, having closed down 0.6 percent in the previous session.

"US weather has been improving and it remains to be seen how much the winter crop can recover," said one Australia-based commodities analyst.

"If the yields are good we will see lower wheat prices in the second half of the year."

The USDA said late on Monday that 31 percent of the US wheat crop is in good to excellent condition, up from 30 percent last week. A year ago, the crop was rated 54 percent good to excellent.

The USDA said 3 percent of the corn crop was planted as of Sunday, lagging market forecasts.

The spotlight in agricultural markets is on the US-China trade war.

China said on Tuesday it will slap a hefty anti-dumping deposit on imports of US sorghum, stirring trade tensions between the world's top two economies. China is the biggest buyer of US soybeans and any moves it makes on its commodity purchases ripple across the agriculture sector. -***Reuters***