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DA predicts increased palay output this year

BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

PALAY (unhusked rice) production in 2018 is projected to exceed the record 19.267 million metric tons (MT) posted last year, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Tuesday.

The department made the projection after 203,712 MT of the staple were harvested in the first quarter.

According to Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data, output rose by 4.61 percent to 4.623 million MT in January to March from 4.419 million MT a year ago.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol attributed the growth to increased harvest areas and yield that resulted from public- and private-sector financial and technical assistance.

The number of areas harvested rose by 4.05 percent to 1,194,860 hectares in the period from 1,148,348 the year before, he said.

"The increased rice production for this year was mainly because of the absence of destructive typhoons and [the] record-high buying price for farmers' produce, which the PSA said was at an average of P21.50 per kilo for clean and dry paddy rice," Piñol added.

Last year's output met 93 percent of the country's annual rice requirements, he noted.

The department aims to achieve rice sufficiency by 2020 by producing 95 percent to 96 percent of the country's rice requirements, and the rest by importing the staple "to comply with Philippine commitments to the World Trade Organization," the Agriculture chief said.

His projection came after the statistics agency forecast that *palay* production may drop by 1.8 percent to 4.07 million MT in the second quarter from 4.15 million MT because of the reduction in harvest area and yield.

Harvest area could contract to 932,640 hectares from last year's 947,190, and yield was expected to fall by 0.2 percent from last year's 4.38 MT per hectare.

The Manila Times

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Editorial

Unintended consequence of rice importation

THE entry of subsidized imported rice into the wet markets this week is a welcome respite to Filipino consumers already reeling from record inflation.

On Monday, the National Food Authority (NFA) announced that it had begun distributing lower-priced rice to outlets in Mindanao, particularly General Santos City, and the Bicol Region. In the Caraga Region, NFA rice is already sold by 188 accredited retailers in the Agusan and Surigao provinces as well as Dinagat and Siargao islands. Metro Manila markets are expected to get fresh supplies today, Wednesday, weather permitting.

The NFA, the state grains agency, procured a total of 250,000 metric tons of rice through government-to-government deals with Thailand and Vietnam, after its buffer stocks were depleted in April.

There is no question as to the economics of this importation exercise. The immediate effect of the return of NFA-subsidized rice to the wet markets is two-fold. First is the welfare effect on lower-income households. Ensuring the supply of affordable rice is of course a core mandate of the NFA.

Second, the presence of NFA rice, which is priced at P27 to P32 per kilogram, will exert downward pressure on the prices of commercial rice. Malacañang on Monday noted that commercial rice was already being sold at P36 to P38 per kilo, from more than P40 or even P50 earlier this year. This is simple demand and supply.

There is a third, unintended, effect. Thailand and Vietnam are only too happy to sell their excess rice output to the Philippines, which had to cough up some P6 billion in taxpayers' money. That's P6 billion in welfare to Thai and Vietnamese farmers.

Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno is correct: that money could have very well been spent on buying the produce of struggling Filipino rice farmers.

For some reason, the NFA administration did not buy rice from Filipino farmers during the harvest season, which Diokno had rightfully described as gross incompetence. The NFA seems to have forgotten that ensuring the livelihood of Filipino rice farmers, by buying their output, is also part of its core mandate.

The NFA Council (now headed by Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol), the policymaking body of the grains agency, should henceforth exert a stronger influence on the NFA administration to carefully time its procurement of *palay* (paddy rice) to buy as much of local output as possible given the support price level.

This also means requiring NFA buyers to scour the whole country for farmers willing to sell their produce to the government, instead of to rice traders.

President Rodrigo Duterte was right in saying last week that the Philippines cannot really be rice self-sufficient. There are many reasons for this, chiefly the vulnerability of the rice-producing regions to weather disturbances.

This doesn't mean, however, that the NFA has no control of the situation and should be allowed to import rice using taxpayers' money anytime it wants. That's a moral hazard that the NFA Council should guard against.

With the government finally deciding to tariffy rice and remove quotas, the private sector should share the burden of rice importation and pay the corresponding duties and taxes. That is only right and just for the Filipino farmer, consumer and taxpayer.

Malaya
Business Insight

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PH to import rice till '20 despite rising output

THE Philippines' paddy rice output is expected to rise to meet 95 to 96 percent of the country's annual requirement by 2020, from 93 percent last year, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said yesterdaay.

The latest forecast misses Piñol's own target for the Philippines to be self-suffient in rice production by 2020, but is in line with comments last week by President Duterte.

Piñol said this year's paddy rice harvest is likely to exceed the 2017 record-high level of 19.3 million tons, taking into account the 4.6 percent improvement in first-quarter output from a year ago.

The Philippines is a frequent buyer of rice, mainly from Vietnam and Thailand, usually importing more than a million tons of the staple grain each year to meet domestic demand and maintain stockpiles.

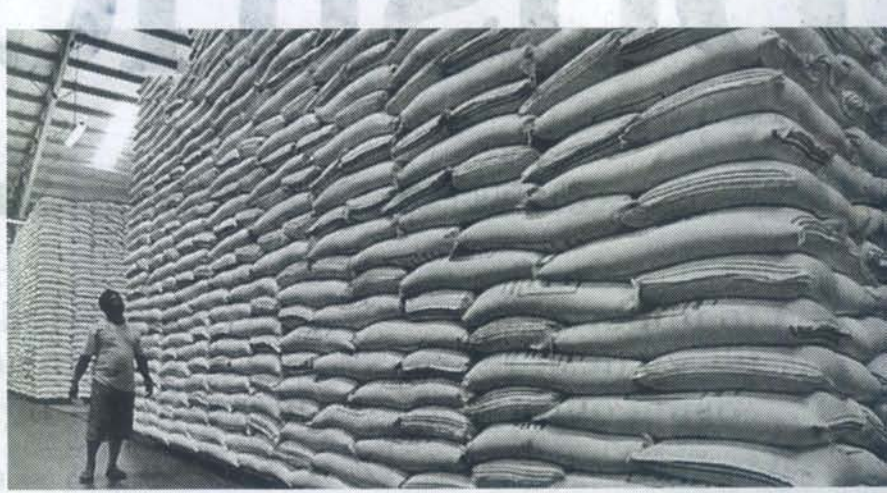
The region's second most heavily populated nation after Indonesia with about 105 million people, the Philippines consumes roughly 11.7 million tons of rice every year.

The country limits private rice imports to protect its farmers, buying up to 805,200 tons of rice with a 35 percent import tariff, under an annual quota scheme covered by a World Trade Organization deal.

The state grains stockpiling agency, the National Food Authority, also buys rice free of tariffs.

Recent rice shortages have pushed up domestic prices and put pressure on inflation.

Duterte's economic team has suggested restrictions on the volume of imports should be scrapped in favor of a scheme where all imports are subject to the tariff, which could push up private imports during poor harvests. – ***Reuters***



Self-sufficient? Rice output this year would be able to meet up 96 percent of demand.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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HIGHER BUYING PRICES

RICE OUTPUT SEEN HITTING NEW RECORD HIGH IN 2018

By Karl R. Ocampo
@kocampoINQ

The country's rice output this year is expected to exceed last year's record high as more farmers plant the staple due to higher buying prices for palay.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol posted on his Facebook page that with the first quarter output exceeding last year's, it is likely that total output may hit another record-high this year.

In 2017, the country's rice production reached 19.26 million metric tons (MT), which Piñol said "was the highest in the country's history."

During the first quarter this year, rice production reached 4.62 million MT from 4.41 million MT in the same period last year, PSA data showed.

PSA said the increase could be attributed to favorable weather conditions as fewer typhoons hit the country in the first three months.

The buying price for palay also hit the P21-mark for the first time in two years, encouraging farmers to plant more rice.

According to Piñol, the agency aims to produce 95 to 96 percent of the country's total national rice requirement, with the remainder to be imported as part of the Philippines' commitment to the World Trade Organization.

Piñol added that he was banking on the introduction and use of solar-powered irrigation systems across the country to sustain the steady increase in the country's rice production. INQ

BusinessWorld
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Agriculture chief says PHL to import rice through 2020 despite rising output

THE PHILIPPINES' paddy rice output is expected to rise to meet 95-96% of the country's annual requirement by 2020, from 93% last year, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said on Tuesday.

The latest forecast misses Mr. Piñol's own target for the Philippines to be self-sufficient in rice production by 2020, but is in line with comments last week by President Rodrigo R. Duterte.

Mr. Piñol said this year's paddy rice harvest is likely to exceed the 2017 record-high level of 19.3 million tons, taking into account the 4.6% improvement in first-quarter output from a year ago.

The Philippines is a frequent buyer of rice — mainly from Vietnam and Thailand — usually importing more than a million tons of the staple grain each year to meet domestic demand and maintain stockpiles. The region's second most heavily populated nation after Indonesia with about 105 million people, the Philippines consumes roughly 11.7 million tons of rice every year.

AFP

THE GOVERNMENT is looking for ways to bring down prices of palay.

The country limits private rice imports to protect its farmers, buying up to 805,200 tons of rice with a 35% import tariff, under an annual quota scheme covered by a World Trade Organization deal.

The National Food Authority, also buys rice free of tariffs.

Recent rice shortages have pushed up domestic prices and put pressure on inflation.

Mr. Duterte's economic team has suggested restrictions on the volume of imports should be scrapped in favor of a scheme where all imports are subject to the tariff, which could push up private imports during poor harvests. — ***Reuters***

BusinessWorld
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DA focused on fixing supply-chain issues to address shortages

A NEWLY appointed undersecretary said the Department of Agriculture (DA) is currently focused on improving the supply chain for farm produce to address complaints by manufacturers of inadequate raw materials, which is forcing them to resort to imports.

Undersecretary for Agribusiness and Marketing Jose Gabriel M. La Viña told reporters late Monday that Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol's marching orders for him include addressing supply chain problems in agriculture.

"The manufacturers say that we do not have enough raw materials, that's why we have to import. The producers say that we don't have enough people to sell to," he said.

"We have to map out the needs of the manufacturers here and somehow, match that with the producers," he said.

Mr. La Viña said his mandate also includes the development of rubber production in the Philippines, which is the sixth-largest producer of natural rubber. The rubber industry is poised to serve a proposed tire factory in Mindanao.

Mr. La Viña said that Mr. Piñol also told him to set up more outlets under the TienDA Para sa Bayani program, a "farmer's market" style initiative which enables growers to sell their produce directly.

The DA is set to inaugurate the fourth TienDA Para sa Bayani in Camp Evangelista, Cagayan de Oro, by next week. The department hopes to have about 10 to 20 such outlets. He added that he has special instructions to set up such outlets for military pesonnel at bases nationwide.

"There are still some problems that we need to resolve such as the cost of the goods. These are the things we're looking at — how to bring the prices down so that the soldiers will really decide to go there rather than the markets."

He added he has instructions to ensure that producers can supply agricultural goods to South Korean supermarket chain E-Mart.

Mr. Duterte signed a P28-million agricultural supply agreement during his visit to South Korea earlier this month. — **Anna Gabriela A. Mogato**

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
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FEATURE

SUCs and rice importation

By **NILO E. COLINARES**

"PH to import 250,000 tons of rice from Vietnam, Thailand"

"Rice importation still needed, says PhilRice."

When headlines such as these hog the front pages of major dailies, one is wont to ask: Why all the fuss on importation with no mention of production?

Some say that there is a need to import rice to feed the burgeoning population of the country, and to enable consumers access to more affordable rice. Others, on the other hand, aver that importation "aggravates the situation of the hurting rice sector" because farmers cannot compete with cheaper and usually subsidized rice imports. Controversies of this nature bring us to the role State Universities and Colleges (SUC) – Colleges of Agriculture play on rice production.

Erstwhile CHED Commissioner Carlito S. Puno stated in a Keynote speech "SUCs as Leaders of Economic Development" delivered during the Mid-Year Conference of the Philippine Association for State Universities and Colleges (PASUC) and in a "Symposium on the Rationalization of Public HEIs: Some thirty years ago, we taught the Thailanders how to plant rice. In five years' time, they became self-sufficient in rice and in another five years, they became the world's number one exporter of rice."

In the same manner, 40 years ago there was hunger in South Korea so they sent their agriculturists to the Philippines to learn how to increase their rice production. Our engineers were also tapped to construct the first four-story building and other infrastructure projects in South Korea. In ten years' time, the situation was reversed.

Commissioner Puno further observed that among our state universities and colleges, a good number are in agriculture. Our agricultural faculty members and researchers, he opined, are world-class academicians. We can see them providing leadership and expertise in international and regional institutions here and abroad. But why has the country's agricultural sector not been so efficient?

Simply stated, why are we still importing rice despite the agricultural expertise of SUCs?.

Every national government administration promises to remedy this situation, Thus, a few years ago, the DA secretary assured the country that there will no longer be rice importation by 2013 under DA's Agri-Pinoy program. The secretary told farmers, irrigators, local leaders, and various stakeholders at a Farmers Forum in Kalinga, that the Philippines will achieve rice sufficiency in three years and will stop importing rice from other countries. It is now 2018 and the recent headlines speak for themselves.

As to the SUCs' rice production record, we take as sample a state university in the province — the University of Eastern Philippines, which celebrates its centennial anniversary today. Founded in 1918 as the Catarman Farm School, it metamorphosed into a National Agricultural High School, to a state college as the Samar Institute of Technology, later converted into the University of Eastern Philippines, a comprehensive university currently with nine colleges producing board topnotchers in nursing, engineering, teacher education, veterinary medicine, accounting; and agriculture, criminology board passers and bar passers

Rice production did not spread out much to the province. The agricultural school, however, had its moments of seeming abundance, ironically when the agricultural school was converted into the Samar Institute of Technology. Under the watch of its first president Lt. Col. Emeterio Asinas, faculty members and employees – from the president down to the lowliest gardener, were receiving a sack of rice and 2 dozen eggs every month, to the point that a few began selling rice and eggs in sari-sari stores. But nowhere was the plentiful rice due to the presence of the agricultural college in the university. And the same may be said of the presence of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the UP Los Baños, or any big-name agricultural school in an SUC. Not one can claim to have averted rice importation in a province, region and/or country because of its production.

What then is the answer to the past commissioner's comment on the efficiency of the agricultural sector?

SUCs may claim that their main function is to teach and not necessarily to produce. In fact, the Chinese proverb, "Give a man fish and he will live for a day; teach a man to fish, and he will have food for life," is now being paraphrased in the joke, "Teach a man to plant rice and he will know how to import."

Time was when the SUCs tripod functions were Reseach, Instruction, and Extension. Now a fourth one has been added: Production, with many implications inclusive of manpower production, instructional materials, agricultural technology flyers research outputs, bookwriting, consultancy, and community services.

Rice importation they say, is not a technical question, nor an academic problem to be solved by the SUCs "world class academicians" and expert agriculture faculty and researchers.

So, to import or not to import? To produce or not to produce?

The question is political, to be addressed by the state and not by the academe.

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Rice prices to go down in Central Visayas

By **CALVIN CORDOVA**

CEBU CITY–The prices of commercial rice are expected to go down in two to three weeks following the arrival of 200,000 sacks of rice from Vietnam.

MV Vina Ship Gold arrived at the Cebu International Port Monday afternoon with 10,000 metric tons of rice, forming part of the 500,000 sacks of imported rice that the National Food Authority (NFA) promised to deliver to Central Visayas.

Olma Marie Bayno, information officer of the NFA in Central Visayas (NFA-7), said it may take a while before the effects of the arrival of the imported rice will be felt.

"We have terms of reference that we follow. The responsibility of NFA will commence after the shipment is transferred to our warehouses. Right now, the unloading is still the responsibility of the supplier which is the government of Vietnam. They are still doing the paper works like in Customs but probably by Wednesday, the sacks of rice will already be transferred to NFA warehouses," said Bayno.

Bayno admitted that prices of rice soared because of the shortage of NFA rice.

"It's been months that we were not able to inject NFA rice in the market and because of that, prices increased because there is no competition," said Bayno.

Bayno said the newly arrived supply of rice will be distributed to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), disaster offices and retailers.

Bayno clarified that even with the arrival of imported rice, prices will not go down automatically.

"While part of the new supply will be distributed to retailers, prices will not go down right away since what is being sold in the market was bought at a higher price," said Bayno.

Prices of NFA rice vary with 15 percent broken grains being sold at ₱35, while those with 25 percent broken grains going for retail at ₱27 per kilo.

Malaya
Business Insight

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PhilMech develops protocol for local chili, onion powder production

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) is developing a protocol that will allow chili and onion farmers and agribusiness entrepreneurs to venture into the production of the two commodities in powdered form.

The agency noted this as an opportunity since at present, the country imports almost all of its powdered chili and onion requirements. The top suppliers of powdered chili in the world are China and India.

Ofero Capariño, PhilMech Bio-Process Engineering Division chief, said the agency has tapped a private farm in Batangas to develop the protocol to produce powdered chili.

He said PhilMech has developed equipment that can be used for drying chili. Other equipment needed for the whole process of producing chili powder can all be locally procured.

"The idea here is to produce high-quality chili powder using local technology and equipment, which will also allow farmers to earn from value-adding," Capariñoadded.

Once PhilMech perfects the protocol, small farmers and agribusiness companies can adopt it to produce powdered chili and initially supply the local demand.

For onion powder, Capariño said PhilMech wants to give farmers a solution to address the high postharvest losses they incur during harvest season.

"Based on our field surveys, the postharvest losses of onion farmers reach as high as 40 to 50 percent because of lack of cold storage facilities and other factors," he said.

"If we can develop a protocol or process to produce onion powder using locally available equipment, farmers and cooperatives can produce the commodity (powdered onion) instead of losing as much as 40 to 50 percent of their produce to postharvest losses," he added.

So far, Capariño said PhilMechis testing a Far Infrared and Convection Heating System Cabinet Dryer, Multi-commodity Solar Tunnel Dryer, and Greenhouse Dryer to dry chili and onions.

He mentioned that the drying process is the most critical part since it would affect the quality of chili or onion powder.

PhilMech is the government agency tasked to lead the country's agricultural and fishery mechanization programs by developing protocols and processes.

Among the successful protocols it has developed include those involving the production of soybean products like tofu and soymilk.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Cheaper rice from Vietnam, Thailand available in Caraga

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

The National Food Authority (NFA) is now selling low-priced rice imported from Vietnam and Thailand in the Caraga region.

In a statement, the NFA said it has started distributing P27 and P32 per kilogram rice through 188 accredited retailers in Agusan and Surigao, including the islands of Dinagat and Siargao.

"The initial shipment of the 250,000 metric tons (MT) government to government rice arrived on June 2 at the Surigao and Subic ports, but the rice was not immediately unloaded due to bad weather," the NFA said.

Last May 4, the NFA awarded Vietnam and Thailand the contract to supply 250,000 MT of rice consisting of 200,000 MT of 25 percent and 50,000 MT of 15 percent broken rice.

"Unloading of the 5,000 MT allotted for Surigao was completed only last Saturday, June 16, and after the necessary documentation and prescribed procedures, the stocks were distributed on June 18, according to NFA Surigao Del Norte provincial manager Daisy Luna.

The NFA said it also unloaded part of the 126,000 bags from *MV An Thinh Phu* in Tobaco, Albay.

Meanwhile, after 13 days at berth, unloading operations commenced in Zambales as weather conditions improved.

NFA Zambales provincial manager Jonathan Yazon said heavy rains have prevented the NFA office to unload the imported rice from *MV Tyson 2* docked at the Subic Freeport.

"In other disport areas across the country, the vessels carrying imported rice have started to arrive. Without weather issues, unloading operations will proceed accordingly," the NFA said.

The NFA also reported that two haulers discharged from *MV Truong Loc* docked at the Macabalan Port in Cagayan de Oro City arrived at the NFA office in Baloy loaded with 92,000 bags of imported rice from Vietnam.

Based on the contract to supply, Thailand was set to bring in 60,000 MT of 25 percent broken rice not later than May 31, 2018, and the balance of 60,000 MT not later than June 15, 2018.

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Abante
UNA SA BALITA

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Naantalang NFA rice ipapakalat na sa Luzon

UUMPISAHAN nang dalhin ng National Food Authority (NFA) sa Central Luzon at Cagayan Valley ang mga inangkat na bigas mula sa Vietnam matapos ang pagkakaantalang ipamahagi dahil sa sama ng panahon.

Ayon kay NFA Spokesman Rex Estoperez, asahan sa susunod na linggo ay mayroon nang mabibiling NFA rice sa nasabing mga lugar na nagkakahalaga ng P27 at P32 kada kilo.

Sinabi ni Estoperez, sinimulan kamakalawa na ibaba ang may 220,000 sako ng bigas sa Subic Bay Freeport na dumating pa noong Hunyo 5 ngunit hindi magawang maibaba dahil sa sunod-sunod na pag-uulan dala ng bagyo at habagat.

Sunod na tutukan ng NFA ang pamamahagi ng bigas sa Mindanao at inaasahan ng ahensya na magiging stable na ang presyo ng commercial rice sa merkado dahil sa makakabili na nang murang NFA rice.

Dagdag ni Estoperez, hindi lahat ng inangkat na bigas ay ilalabas sa merkado dahil magtitira ang NFA para sa kanilang mga stock na mahuhugot sa oras na may sakuna na batay sa kanilang mandatong 15 araw na buffer stock. **(Tina Mendoza)**

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

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Posibleng hanggang sa Biyernes pa maipakalat ng National Food Authority (NFA) sa mga pamilihan sa Metro Manila ang inangkat nilang bigas. **SUNDAN SA PAGE 2**

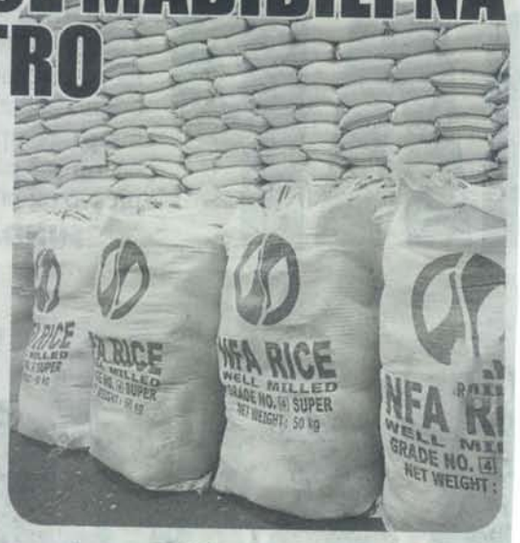
NFA RICE MABIBILI NA SA METRO

Mula sa pahina 16

Ayon kay Director Rex Estoperez, Spokesman ng NFA, ngayon pa ibababa ng barko ang nakalaang bigas para sa NCR, dadalhin pa ito sa bodega para suriin ang kalidad bago ipamahagi sa mga retailer.

Tiniyak ni Estoperez na hindi na aabutin ng Sabado at mabibili na sa merkado ang murang bigas mula sa NFA dito sa Metro Manila.

Sinabi ni Estoperez na mas inuna nila ang distribusyon ng murang bigas sa mga lugar na marami ang mahihirap tulad ng Surigao, General Santos City, Bicol area at iba pa. **DWIZ882**



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editorial

Govt must not abandon rice farmers

THE President confirmed last week what some experts have been saying all along: That the Philippines will be hard pressed to achieve rice self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency mantra gained traction during the Arroyo administration, when the Philippines struggled to buy rice from other countries in 2008. Despite having the money to import rice, supply was thin then as the combination of natural disasters and the need to feed their own people forced sellers to hoard their rice supply.

The realization that exporting countries would always prioritize their own citizens, coupled with the ill effects of climate change, prompted the government to reexamine its rice policy. To hike production and ultimately achieve rice self-sufficiency, the government raised its support price for paddy to P17 per kilogram, from P11.50 per kg in 2008. It also rolled out a program dubbed FIELDS (Fertilizer, Irrigation, Education and training farmers and fishermen, Loans, Dryers and other postharvest facilities, and Seeds of the high-yielding, hybrid varieties). FIELDS was a P43.7-billion program, which sought to help farmers increase their output. The government also pumped more money into irrigation and expanded irrigated rice areas.

Rice self-sufficiency means the Philippines would no longer have to depend on imports as the staple required by Filipinos are planted, harvested and purchased locally. The country has shown that it is capable of being self-sufficient in the staple. In 1992 the Philippines had rice surplus and was even able to export 35,101 metric tons (MT), according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). That year the Philippines produced 5.97 million metric tons and needed 5.7 MMT for 65.34 million Filipinos. The PSA noted that per-capita consumption of the staple was only at 87.13 kg or 238.71 grams per day. Rice cost only P10.25 per kg in the National Capital Region in 1992, about 8.7 percent of the minimum wage of P118 for nonagriculture workers.

The former chief of the National Statistical Coordination Board, Dr. Romulo A. Virola, and President Duterte both attributed the decline in Philippine paddy production to the loss of farmlands devoted to rice. Virola said it does not help that the conversion of irrigated lands into subdivisions and golf courses remain unabated. Also, millions of hectares of farmlands lack irrigation, which is crucial to growing a water-loving crop like rice. The government's aspiration to increase mechanization to cut labor cost and improve productivity remains just that—a dream. Farmlands in Mindanao that are suitable for rice are being used for cash crops. This practice has not changed despite the continuous expansion of the country's population.

These may have been the reasons the President seems exasperated about the country's rice-supply situation. The task of fixing it is daunting, but this should not stop the government from trying. Duterte has shown he has the political will to go after criminals and drug addicts. This kind of resolve is needed in pursuing our rice self-sufficiency goal. Otherwise, rice farmers need an alternative livelihood if government is abandoning its self-sufficiency bid.

The government must give a clear signal if it intends to move the country away from producing rice to just importing its entire requirements. Sending out confusing signals would discourage farmers and even cause volatility in the international rice market as the Philippines is a major importer of the staple. Should it make up its mind about abandoning the self-sufficiency goal, the government must have a backup plan in place to help 2.4 million farmers cope with the certain loss of their livelihood.