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# DA sees rice prices stabilizing by Nov.

AGRICULTURE Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said Tuesday that he expects rice prices to stabilize by November amid expectations of a strong harvest.

"We're expecting that by the end of this year, the price of rice will stabilize, mainly because by that time, the harvest will be at its peak," Mr. Piñol told reporters in a news conference at the Department of Agriculture in Quezon City.

According to Mr. Piñol, rice currently sells for more than P50 per kilogram, "the highest in history," because farmers are selling at P22-P29, which translates to higher prices at retail level.

"What is the cause of this historic increase? It is a chain of events. It all started with the disappearance of NFA (National Food Authority) rice in the market as early as February and March. In fact, in some areas, NFA rice disappeared for a long time. With the absence of NFA rice, speculators came in, increased the price of commercial rice. This prompted the traders to buy whatever available rice stock there was from the farms," Mr. Piñol said.

He said farmgate prices typically double when they reach retail level.

"While this may be bad for the consumers, the farmers who are actually among the poorest of society, are enjoying good prices for their goods," Mr. Piñol said.

According to Mr. Piñol, rice imports from Vietnam and Thailand are set to arrive by Sept. 15. Mr. Piñol also said the interception of smuggled rice in Tawi-Tawi has affected the rice supply in the area.

"For so long they relied on smuggled rice. It was a lot cheaper. The disruption of rice smuggling affected the rice supply in Tawi-Tawi."

Mr. Piñol said he has proposed to government leaders in Mindanao to legitimize smuggled rice to help increase supply in the area.

"In my proposal, I said instead of running after the smugglers, why don't we establish a rice trading center in Tawi-Tawi where all rice coming from the outside which we call smuggled will be brought to that center, documented, with tariffs to be imposed so that we will at least legalize everything. In that way, we will be able to control the volume of imported rice coming in... If you allow them to import, of course, they will pay tariffs," Mr. Piñol said. — **Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio**

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# Inflation busters all set: Palace

By Bernadette D. Nicolas
@BNicolasBM

MEASURES are to be put in place to curb inflation, according to Malacañang.

This was after the Cabinet-level Committee on Tariff and Related Matters (CTRM) decided to thumb down almost two weeks ago the recommendation of economic managers to reduce import duties on select food items to ease inflation by 5 percent, noting that the tariff reduction is not a solution to inflation.

Presidential Spokesman Harry L. Roque Jr. said in a Palace briefing that among the inflation-busting measures being taken include the authorized importation of

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# Inflation busters all set: Palace

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round scad (*galunggong*), temporary removal of special safeguard (SSG) duty on imported onions and chicken, close monitoring on the utilization of the minimum access volume quota for meat imports, regular inspection of commodity importers' warehouses to determine the level of inventory for vegetable products like garlic and onions, and close monitoring of the arrival and distribution of National Food Authority (NFA) rice importations.

"The Department of Agriculture [DA] held a consultative meeting with red and white onion traders and importers last week, August 23. The meeting resulted in an agreement that red onions will be sold at P55 per kilo in retail stores, while white onions will be sold at P65 in two weeks time," Roque said.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol earlier said that, due to the SSG, the retail cost of imported onion is high, as the landed cost of the spice is only about P33 per kg, way below the P74.21-per-kg trigger price level.

As for chicken imports, Piñol previously said the CTRM agreed to temporarily lift the SSG duty until the end of the year.

With the importation of P17,000 metric tons of round scad, prices of local *galunggong* are also expected to go down, after reaching as high as P200 per kilo in the market depending on the size.

Roque also assured the public that the government will not allow the importation of formalin-laced round scad.

"We will only allow the importation of *galunggong* provided it is not preserved with the use of formalin," he said.

Earlier, fishermen belonging to the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas warned that the importation may lead to the flooding of the market with fish laced with formalin to preserve freshness.

Roque also noted the DA's suggestion that putting NFA under its jurisdiction would facilitate importation and timing of importation so that this would arrive during the lean months when the rice is needed the most.

He added that the government wanted to assure the public that NFA rice will really be distributed to the people through close monitoring.

"The problem today is that there is no shortage, since we have enough importations. The problem is the slow distribution, which led the rice to be infested with weevil," he explained.

Aside from these measures, the Palace also announced that the Pantawid Pasada Program fuel cards can already be availed of by public-utility jeepney franchise holders nationwide.

The distribution of fuel cards was meant to provide jeepney drivers with fuel subsidies in a bid to mitigate the impact of the hike in fuel excise taxes as mandated by the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion law.

July inflation was recorded at a new five-year high at 5.7 percent. This was higher than the June inflation at 5.2 percent.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee revised earlier its 2018 inflation forecast range from 2-4 percent to 4-4.5 percent.

Year-to-date inflation is already at 4.5 percent.

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# Unmet infra goals, reforms imperil bid to reduce poverty

By Cai U. Ordinario @cuo_bm

THE country's poverty targets may not be met if infrastructure projects and other key reforms do not push through by next year, according to economists.

## 6 million

**The number of Filipinos who should be lifted out of poverty if the goal to cut poverty incidence to 14 percent by 2022, from 21.6 percent, in 2015 is met**

The government aims to cut poverty incidence to around 14 percent by 2022, from 21.6 percent in 2015. This means lifting around 6 million Filipinos out of poverty.

This estimate was based on the attainment of a 7-8 percent GDP growth in real terms and increase per capita income to $5,000 by 2022 from $3,550 in 2015.

"Yes the country is still on track to meet its poverty targets but it will depend heavily on what will happen after this year. If benefits of infrastructure project fail to kick in and short-term problems persist until next year, poverty targets may not be achieved or may not be reduced by as much as the target," University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) School of Economics Dean Cid Terosa told the BusinessMirror.

Given the challenges the economy faces, economists such as Calixto V. Chikiamco and former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo L. Neri expressed their doubts on government's efforts to

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meet its poverty targets.

## Farm sector

THIS pessimism arose from the lackluster growth and development of the agriculture sector, which not only affects the incomes and livelihoods of farmers but also makes commodity prices, mainly food, expensive.

Chikiamco said prices of copra, on which millions of poor coconut farmers depend, "collapsed" and overall agriculture growth has been flat. In the first semester, the farm sector only posted a growth of only 0.58 percent in 2018 from 5.73 percent in the same period of 2017.

"Unless agriculture productivity rises, which I doubt given the populist and throw-money approach of [Secretary Emmanuel F.] Piñol, poverty levels may even rise," Chikiamco said.

Neri, for his part, said that as long as agriculture continues to be a laggard in the economy, food prices will continue to be high. This will especially be difficult for poor and near-poor households who are sensitive to price hikes.

He said the poor spend as much as 55 percent of their budget on food. This problem is compounded by inflationary factors such as the weak peso, which is also putting more pressure on the country's current account deficit.

"[The poverty targets will not be achieved] as long as agriculture, where 70 percent of our poor depend on, has stagnant growth. Also it will make food prices high due to limited food supply from local sources," Neri said.

For Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) Senior Research Fellow Jose Ramon Albert, given the current situation of the economy, it would be difficult to say whether the poverty targets are achievable or not.

## Social protection

IDEALLY, Albert said, the social protection extended by the government, such as the Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs), are supposed to help the poor. But, he said, the data that backs the program is "a static list of the poor" and, as such, could leave out some of the poor who deserves and needs the assistance.

He said it is unclear how the CCTs can mitigate the impact of inflation on the poor and low-income Filipinos, including the social pension since some of the recipients are not poor or from low-income households.

"Short-term relief is important but so is long-term strategy," Albert said. "We continue to adopt one-size-fits-all strategies, which, in the end, are not harnessed for development outcomes."

Terosa and Chikiamco believe the CCTs are insufficient in augmenting the incomes of the poor, especially with inflation increasing to 5.7 percent in July 2018.

"At present, social protection measures don't seem sufficient since prices of the most basic commodities and services have increased tremendously," Terosa said.

## Inflation

A NUMBER of economists also believe inflation has not yet peaked. This includes the Ateneo Center for Economic Research and Development, which expects inflation to average 5.1 percent this year. This means inflation could post a rate nearer 6 percent in the coming months.

Albert said battling inflation is not enough. Efforts to find long-term solutions such as implementing radical measures like the Universal Basic Income (UBI) are in order, especially since people's survival is involved.

He said, however, that jumping into the UBI bandwagon without properly studying the impact of such a measure and the costs involved will be foolhardy.

The UBI as implemented in Finland gave unemployed citizens aged 25 to 58 years old a monthly stipend of €560 a month. This two-year experiment was envisioned to cut red tape, poverty and unemployment. However, Albert said in some countries where the UBI was implemented, the programs were discontinued after a year of implementation because of the high costs involved.

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# Fish imports till 2019

## DA cites need to allow stock replenishment

**By Kuhlin Gacula**

The government will increase the volume of *galunggong* (round scad) importation to meet demand for fish in local markets in the face of the fishing season coming to a close.

Aside from stabilizing fish prices, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said the importation will allow the country's fish supply to replenish.

"It's part of our fish conservation program. We really have to put up a system and importation is only one of them. We also have to develop our aquaculture and mariculture program," he said.

*Galunggong* importation will take effect on 1 September amidst the closing of the fishing season across different municipal waters starting from October until February next year.

As part of a long-term program to address a declining fish supply, the DA chief said the country may opt to import fishes again next year.

Currently, DA is working to achieve the "40 percent captured fish and 60 percent aquaculture and mariculture" situation in order to replenish fish supply in the country.

Piñol clarified that there's no shortage of *galunggong* in local waters except local fishermen are having difficulty catching them due to equipment limitations.

### New design of fishing boats being mulled for increased catch.

"We are coming up with a new design for fishing boats that will help fishermen reach areas where they can catch more fish," Piñol said.

For now, the government may give the greenlight for bigger commercial fishing boats to enter certain fishing zones in order to increase tonnage of captured fishes.

The DA secretary said this is more practical as it justifies the fuel used in the bigger fishing boats.

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# NFA abolition gains traction

By Elmer Navarro Manuel

Sen. Cynthia Villar lashed out yesterday at the National Food Authority (NFA) for its alleged failure to buy rice from local farmers and then sell the grain at affordable prices to consumers.

In a radio interview, Villar pointed out that NFA has funds to buy *palay* or unmmilled rice from farmers at P17 per kilo, mill it and then sell it at P27 to P32, the same selling price of imported NFA rice.

Commercial rice retails for P48 to P55 per kilo. The rice crisis in Zamboanga City, meanwhile, pegged the price of the staple grain to as much as P70 per kilo.

The agency last year spent billions of pesos to pay off maturing loans instead of using the money to buy the grain, the senator said, citing a Commission on Audit report.

"I guess they failed in their mandate," Villar, who chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, said.

She pushed a new "liberalized" model on the importation of rice which she said may pave the way for the abolition of the NFA as demanded by some quarters.

The NFA is being blamed for the Zamboanga rice shortage, the discovery of 130,000 sacks of rice infested with *"bukbok"* or weevils in Subic Bay.

Villar said she will sponsor a bill imposing tariffs on rice imports in place of quotas, which is expected to bring down the staple's prices and tame inflation.

"We have to liberalize the importation of rice but we have to impose tariff to protect our farmers," Villar said. "Under our liberalized model, the NFA will not have a role in the importation of rice."

She said the new model must be implemented as it is required by the World Trade Organization, of which the Philippines is a member.

## Villar says agency will have no role under liberalized rice importation.

The House of Representatives earlier this month approved the measure that was certified urgent by President Rodrigo Duterte during his third State of the Nation Address.

Villar said she will push for a provision that will set up a P10-billion fund to help farmers become more competitive in mechanization and in choosing better seeds.

"If the bill is approved, it will be up to the Department of Finance to determine whether or not the NFA will still be necessary," Villar said.

In a separate interview, NFA administrator Rex Estoperez said that the NFA had encountered delays in unloading rice at its warehouses, where stocks have been depleted since March.

"Remaining supplies are very limited, which prevented the agency from influencing market prices," Estoperez said.

"We have no more stocks so we are dependent on the upcoming importation," he added.

"The NFA and National Bureau of Investigation have created a task force to ensure that rice traders are not hoarding rice to spike prices," Estoperez said.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol proposed to legalize all rice importations, including those being smuggled at present. He noted the rice crisis now enveloping the Zamboanga-Basilan-Sulu-Tawi-Tawi (Zambasulta) area.

"The crisis is a peculiar problem in that area, Zamboanga has relied on smuggled rice," Piñol said in a television interview.

"So my proposal is for the establishment of a rice trading center in Tawi-Tawi, where government would now take full control. You come in, you bring in your rice, you pay a little tariff, never mind if it's just a token, for as long as we're able to control the volume of rice coming in," he said.

The DA chief said the delay in the delivery of NFA rice and the crackdown on smuggled rice have contributed to the higher prices in Zambasulta.

## CBCP takes cudgels for embattled gov't entity tasked to distribute low-cost rice.

The NFA, however, found a defender in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines as San Jose, Nueva Ecija Bishop Roberto Mallari credited the agency for the distribution of low-cost rice.

Mallari said that instead of abolishing the NFA, the government must curb corruption in the agency to make it more effective in meeting its mandate.

During a hearing on the rice fiasco conducted by the House Ways and Means Committee, NFA officer-in-charge Tomas Escarez shifted the blame on the NFA council for allegedly failing to immediately approve their importation request.

"As early as October last year, we were requesting for the importation of rice but it's so complicated. We have a council and they decide how much we procure and when it should be delivered," he said.

The NFA chief's statement prompted committee chair Dax Cua to say that because of the red tape in the agency "the people are without rice today." **With Mario J. Mallari, Hananeel Bordey and Raymart T. Lolo**

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INVENTORY GOOD FOR 40 DAYS; NFA BUFFER DOWN TO 7 DAYS

# Rice stocks plunge

BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

THE country's total rice supply has dwindled to less than half of the required level, the Department of Agriculture (DA) admitted on Tuesday, while the National Food Authority (NFA) said its buffer of subsidized rice for the poor was down to a mere seven days.

Supply of the staple is in a "very tight situation," Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol told reporters, amid the slow process of importing and unloading rice at the country's congested ports.

In a hearing at the House of Representatives, NFA Deputy Administrator for Finance and Administration Tomas Escarez pointed the finger to the policymaking NFA Council for the dwindling rice supply, saying the interagency body sat on a request for rice importation for four months, and acted only in February 2018.

"As early as October last year, we already requested a permit to import rice, but the NFA Council,

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## Rice stocks

after so many months, did not act on it, resulting in higher price of rice. The NFA Council always says that the private sector can take care of it (rice supply). And so, the imported rice only arrived in June. Our request was for one million metric tons," Escarez told lawmakers.

"But our mandate is to have 15 days of buffer stock and 30 days during lean months. Now, we only have seven days [of buffer stock]," Escarez added.

The national inventory stood at 1,320,927 metric tons (MT), good for only 40 days, and significantly lower than the supposed 90-day national buffer stock requirement, Piñol said.

This does not include imported rice under the minimum access volume (MAV) scheme, he said.

Under the Food Staples Sufficiency Program, the entire country should have a 60-day inventory at any given time, and a 90-day buffer stock during lean months.

### Supply to stabilize in Nov

Piñol said the 805,000 MT of rice imports allowed by the government under the MAV scheme were supposed to be completed by September 15. Only 168,000 MT have been unloaded as of the third week of August.

"The traders and porters have appealed that this be extended to September 30 because they had a hard time looking for vessels to bring their stocks to the country due to congestion at the ports," the Cabinet official said.

Rice traders also wanted government help in facilitating the unloading of rice from Vietnamese and Thai vessels, "so that the rice stocks could be delivered to the market right away."

Piñol said consumers could expect rice prices and an adequate supply of the staple to stabilize by November.

Still, the retail price of regular well-milled rice should start at P40 per kilo, Piñol said, urging government agencies to strengthen their price monitoring.

### Finger-pointing

At the House, lawmakers chided the NFA and the NFA Council for finger-pointing.

Trade Undersecretary Ruth Castelo said the council's issuance of an importation permit was delayed because the NFA failed to submit its inventory to the NFA council.

She said NFA Administrator Jason Aquino's statement on January 25 that there were no more NFA rice stocks drove prices up.

"They did not submit the inventory, and we should also remember that the NFA only supplies 5 percent of the rice supply of the country. The rest accounts for commercial rice and household rice. The NFA is just there to stabilize the rice prices when there is not enough rice in the market," Castelo said.

This did not sit well with Escarez, who was adamant that the NFA should not be faulted for rising rice prices.

"This is not our fault. Inventory? Journalists are coming to our office every day, and we tell them that we only have a buffer stock for five days. They (NFA Council) knew the situation. Besides, we have records of our meetings where we told the same thing to them," Escarez said.

Deputy Speaker Prospero Pichay of Surigao del Sur sided with Escarez.

"Do you people [at the NFA Council] really need that much time to evaluate a request for rice import? Rice is very vital for our food security. Do you need an algorithm for that? Why does it take you so long?" Pichay said.

Castelo responded by saying, "I will relay it to the council, your Honors."

Sen. Cynthia Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, proposed price controls. "Because they (NFA officials) have failed in their mandate, why don't we just put price control on rice?" she told reporters in the Senate. "Or it would be better if they declared a state of calamity and impose price control on rice."

Sen. Francis Pangilinan said NFA officials should explain the alleged "diversion of rice stocks that drove prices up in some parts of Mindanao."

"With the arrival of imported rice, why hasn't the supply stabilized? Sadly, our food officials have not lived up to the task," he said.

**WITH LLANESCA T. PANTI AND BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO**

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# 3-month price freeze for basic goods

## Suspension of special duty on onion, chicken imports approved; NFA abolition eyed

By **BERNIE C. MAGKILAT, GENALYN D. KABILING,** and **VANNE P. TERRAZOLA**

Manufacturers of basic necessities and prime commodities (BNPC) have agreed in principle to hold off price increases at least in the next three months or up to the end of the year, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said Tuesday.

The government likewise approved five measures, including the suspension of special safeguard duty on onion and chicken imports and close monitoring of government rice importation and distribution, to mitigate the impact of soaring inflation.

At the Senate, Senator Cynthia Villar said she is set to sponsor for plenary deliberations the measure on rice tariffication which, in effect, may eventually lead to the abolition of the National Food Authority (NFA).

DTI Undersecretary for Consumer Protection Group Ruth Castelo said they have already met with BNPC manufacturers, representing the 235 items listed in the expanded sug- ▶6

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# 3-month price freeze...

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gested retail price (SRP), where they requested and appealed to their social responsibility to stop increasing their prices in the next three months or until December 30 this year.

"We requested manufacturers of basic necessities and prime commodities though, to hold off any price increase at least for the next three months. Response in principle is very positive, although we hope to get their commitment in writing. We actually appealed to their social contribution and responsibility," said Castelo.

She, however, said this is "not a moratorium" because government does not have the power to do that under the Price Act.

Given the choice, Castelo said they would have preferred the manufacturers to agree to hold off SRP price increases until the first quarter of next year.

It was recalled that consumer advocacy group Laban Konsyumer, Inc. (LKI) strongly urged the DTI to implement a moratorium on price increases on items listed in the expanded SRP until the end of the first quarter of 2019.

"That is part of our appeal, preferably until next year. Some manufacturers will not increase their BNPC prices until next year," said Castelo.

So far, Castelo said they got a firmer commitment from manufacturers for coffee, noodles, laundry and bath soap, soy sauce, patis (fish sauce), vinegar, and bread candles against movement in prices in the coming months. But canned sardines and meat manufacturers have not no commitment yet.

DTI said that 40 percent of items under the SRP list have increased prices. Castelo said their computation showed that only 84 out of the 209 SKUs increased their prices and 125 remained stable.

The increases are basically for canned fish and meat products due to current global oil prices, although not all brands increased.

### 5 measures to stabilize prices

Meanwhile, Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the decision on the supply-side intervention was reached by the President's economic managers, other Cabinet members, and tariff authorities after rejecting the proposed reduction of import tariffs on fish and meat products.

"Our economic managers alongside the Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Tariff Commission had a recent meeting. They reached a decision that lowering tariffs would not really bring down the prices of commodities especially food," Roque said during a Palace press briefing.

"So they decided instead to pursue (five) measures to lower prices firstly by approving the importation of round scad. That's ongoing as we speak," he said.

Apart from the importation of galunggong, Roque said, the government would also temporarily suspend the special safeguard duty on certain imported onions and chicken to reduce prices. He noted that onion traders have agreed to sell red onions at P55 per kilo in retail stores and white onions at P65 "in two weeks' time."

Roque said the Department of Agriculture has also given importers of pork one month to maximize their import quota allocations. At present, he said, 50 percent of the minimum access volume on pork imports have been not utilized by importers.

"Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol has given them one month to import otherwise the quota will be given to someone else. The intention is to fully avail the minimum access volume quota on the importation of pork products," he said. On vegetable products, Roque said the government would conduct "regular inspections" of the warehouses of importers. He said the warehouse inspection seeks to determine the actual level of inventory.

As for the NFA's rice imports, Roque assured the public there would be "close monitoring" of the importation and distribution of the commodity. He noted that most imports have not yet reached government warehouses.

"The DA noted that putting the NFA under the DA would facilitate coordination and timing of importation such that this would arrive during lean months when they are most needed," he said.

But once the Villar bill, which amends the Agricultural Tariffication Act of 1996 to replace the quantitative restrictions (QR) on rice imports with tariff , the DOF shall decide whether or not the NFA "is still relevant to the system."

The chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food said the measure introduces a "new model" for the country's rice market. Under the bill, they are looking at imposing a tariff of 35 percent at most in the rice imports from members in the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS SINCE 1900
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS SINCE 1900
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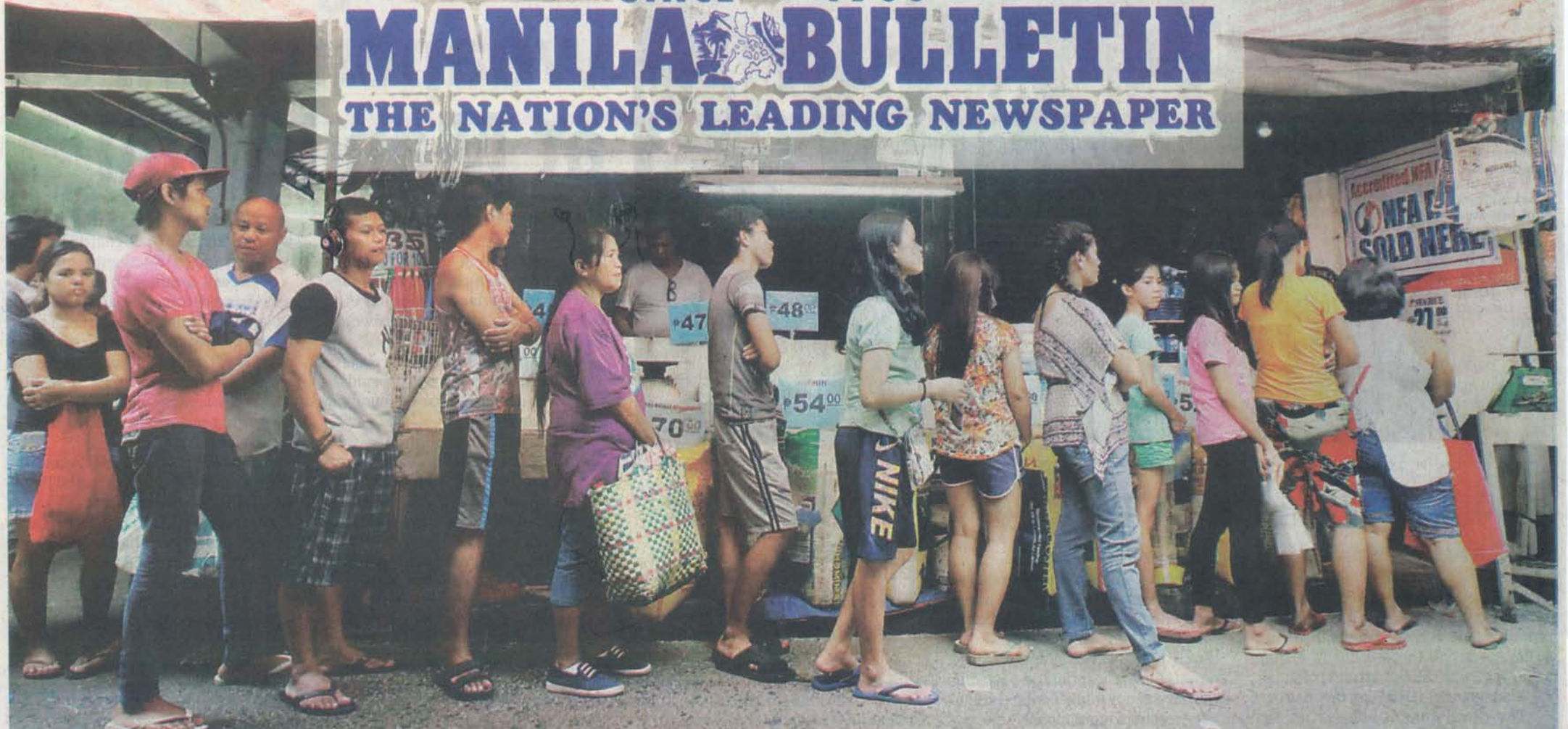


**RICE LINE** – A line forms at an NFA stall in Commonwealth Market in Quezon City Tuesday. Calls for the abolition of the grains agency were raised following the rice shortage in Zamboanga City and the weevil-ridden rice shipment that arrived at the Subic Freeport recently. (Mark Balmores)

Manila Standard

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# 'No-nationality' galunggong causes uproar over import plan

**By Macon Ramos-Araneta**

ROUND scad or "*galunggong*" do not have a "nationality," and thus Filipinos should have no problems with this variety of fish that is imported from other countries to augment the local food supply, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said Tuesday.

However, Senator Cynthia A. Villar exhorted the public not to eat *galunggong*—once regarded in the country as the poor man's fish—as it could be laced with formalin or embalming fluid.

In responding to critics of the government's move to import *galunggong*, Piñol told ANC Headstart the Philippines has long imported many types of fish to augment its supply especially during the closed fishing season.

"In 2017 alone, the country imported 130,000 metric tons of fish and nobody complained," Piñol told the cable television program. "This year, another three-billion fingerlings will be bought from Indonesia."

"We have been importing and this idea of Chinese *galunggong*, Taiwanese galunggong, Vietnamese *galunggong*—*galunggongs* don't have nationality," he said.

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"The *galunggong* from China doesn't have chinky eyes. That's the same *galunggongs* swimming in the waters that we share with these countries, they just catch it. What's the problem with that?" Pinol added.

The agriculture chief also allayed fears that *galunggong* currently available in local markets were

laced with formalin, saying traces of formaldehyde in fish did not necessarily mean that it had embalming fluid, which makes it appear fresh.

But in yesterday's Senate hearing of the agriculture and food committee, Villar reminded officials of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources that importing *galunggong* is illegal, and warned that this could amount to smuggling since the country had no previous shortage of round scad.

"You said there's formalin in round scad fish. Let's just eat vegetables. I can't understand who to believe anymore. Better safe than sorry, let's just not eat round scad fish," said the senator, who chairs the committee.

Sammy Malvas, BFAR deputy director for administrative services, said the country is importing *galunggong* for "canning" and "processing." But when Villar asked him to provide examples of such products, Malvas only said "tinapa" or smoked fish, leading to a firm rebuke from the senator.

"I've never heard of that importation to make it into smoked fish. Why are you importing *galunggong* when there's no.... It's not allowed under the law unless there's a shortage of fish. Why import? It is against the law. That's smuggling," Villar said.

"You are just saying that you are importing for processing but you are really importing it for the wet market. We should not be importing for wet markets," she added.

To solve the apparent fish shortage, the DA is helping increase production in fish pers, Piñol said.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
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# Batanes out of rice; gov't to distribute smuggled rice

By JACK CASTAÑO

BASCO – The Ivatans, residents of the northernmost region in the country, are running out of rice and food supplies following the spate of bad weather in the area.

The National Food Authority (NFA) warehouse here had less than 200 bags of rice left for distribution. At 100 bags consumption a day, the stocks may not last until weekend.

The supply of commercial rice is dwindling faster than expected. Yesterday, commercial establishments engaged in grains distribution had only 500 bags in storage.

With the cheaper rice disappearing from government retail outlets, ordinary residents were forced to buy the more expensive commercial stocks.

While typhoons that passed near the islands may have contributed to the unusual grains situation, observers said the squabble among authorities in the national level might be the root cause of the shortage.

"Had the National Food Council and NFA immediately authorized the importation of rice, we would not have suffered rice shortage," a retailer said.

The *M/V Everwin Star II* that has been loaded with 3,000 bags of government rice three weeks ago cannot leave the Port of Manila because of big waves in the western seaboard of Luzon.

For the sixth time, it is scheduled to leave Manila later today, weather permitting.

NFA manager Philip Rumbaoa said the province was enjoying a surplus of rice stocks from February until June. The delay in deliveries caused by the spate of bad weather, however, forced them to limit the allocation of rice to retailers.

While admitting there is still plenty of rice in the government warehouse, Rumbaoa said these are emergency stocks.

"We do not want to be caught flat-footed in case of any eventuality," Rumbaoa said.

Malacañang has given assurance the government is working to increase the supply of rice to address the rising price of the staple.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the government would strictly monitor the distribution of NFA rice to ensure that they are sold in public markets to avoid a repeat of the supply issues, particularly in Mindanao.

Roque said the problem lies not in the quantity of rice being imported but the way the staple is distributed.

The local government of Zamboanga City previously declared a state of calamity after rice prices went up to P50 to P70 per kilo because of lack of supply.

The agriculture department opened stores selling cheap rice to stabilize prices and to address the supply problem.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol has said the higher rice prices in Zamboanga City, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi were caused by rice

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smuggling.

The state of calamity declaration was lifted last week.

As concerns were raised about the availability of rice in some areas, reports about the infestation of weevils in more than 130,000 sacks of rice from Thailand surfaced, prompting some lawmakers to call for an investigation.

The NFA has attributed the infestation to the delay in the unloading of the rice from ships in Subic Bay.

## Damage control measures

Davao City Rep. Karlo Nograles said the NFA should act on rising rice prices and the shortage of NFA rice in the market.

He said he has just visited Cagayan de Oro City, where he found that there was a "large spike in the cost of rice because the NFA diverted part of the supply for Northern Mindanao to the Zamboanga area."

Nograles quoted retailers as saying that the NFA has cut deliveries to them to 25 bags per week from 100 bags.

Nograles added that favored rice retailers are selling the allocation they receive from the rice agency at higher prices.

"The leadership of the NFA has to take responsibility and act on this soon. Either step up and take action – or step down," he said.

During yesterday's hearing of the House of Representatives' committee on ways and means on rice smuggling, Quirino Rep. Dakila Cua, committee chairman, reiterated his proposal for smuggled rice to be distributed to typhoon and flood victims and poor families.

He asked Department of Finance (DOF) Undersecretary Karl Chua if Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III would allow it.

"The last time we met, I brought it up and he is OK with it. He has no objection. We have to look into how to do it," he said.

Cua said the law allows the BOC to declare confiscated contraband as forfeited in favor of the government and then decide what to do with it.

In the case of smuggled rice, he said it could be given to the poor.

If it were auctioned – another option open to the BOC under the law – Cua said smuggled rice might find its way to the smuggler who could use dummies to offer winning bids.

Sen. Cynthia Villar said the government should consider imposing price controls for rice as a temporary measure to stabilize prices of the staple.

"I think that's (price controls) the best way to make rice traders follow and discourage them from doing that (jacking up prices)," Villar said.

Piñol, for his part, is proposing to legalize rice smuggling operations to address the supply shortage in Zamboanga-Basilan-Sulu-Tawi-Tawi (Zambasulta) area.

He said this is the most practical option right now to address the rice shortage.

"Instead of running after the smugglers, why don't we establish a rice trading center in Tawi-Tawi where all rice coming from the outside would be brought to that center, be documented with minimal tariff to be imposed," Piñol said.

While the proposal is subject to NFA Council approval, Piñol said this has been consulted with the local government units in Zambasulta.

"If we legalize it, it will no longer be smuggled, the moment you put it in the trading center and with the payment of the tariff," Piñol said.

**– With Alexis Romero, Paolo Romero, Louise Maureen Simeon**

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

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## Sa pag-angkat ng isda

Ni LYKA NAVARROSA

# PIÑOL: GALUNGGONGS DON'T HAVE NATIONALITY

**IPINAHAYAG ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Emmanuel Piñol na walang nationality ang mga galunggong matapos lumabas ang isyu tungkol sa mga ini-import na isda sa bansa na 'di umano'y galing din sa ating karagatan.**

"We have been importing and this idea of Chinese galunggong, Taiwanese galunggong, Vietnamese galunggong--galunggongs don't have nationality. The galunggong from China doesn't have chinky eyes. That's the same galunggongs swimming in the waters that we share with these countries, sila lang nakahuli. Ano ba problema dun?" paliwanag niya sa isang panayam.

Ayon sa kanya, noong nakaraang taon ay nag-import tayo ng halos 130,000 metric tons na isda at wala naman daw umangal dito kung kaya't hindi naman na dapat ito pinapalaki.

Paglilinaw niya, kailangan talagang mag-import ng mga isda dahil nagkakaroon ng closed fishing season. Magpapatuloy din ang pag-iimport ani niya dahil sa parte ito ng sustainable program ng gobyerno.

Hindi rin naman daw dapat isisi sa kanila ang pagtaas ng presyo ng galunggong na sa ngayon ay umaabot ang halaga sa P140 kada kilo.

"Agriculture is also being blamed for inflation. Agriculture only reacts to inflationary developments like fuel," giit niya.

Epekto umano ng Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion o TRAIN Law ang pagtaas ng mga presyo hindi lang ng isda kundi ng mga ibang pangunahing bilihin dahil sa pagtaas ng petrolyo. Inamin niyang hindi nila napaghandaan sa departamento ang magiging epekto ng TRAIN.

"When we checked, the production cost actually barely increased, less than 1 percent but in the market, it was 5 to 10 percent. Nag-speculate 'yung merkado (The market speculated) and I think what we should focus on right now is the market," dagdag pa ni Piñol.

ABANTE TONITE
MABILIS SA BALITA

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# Galunggong mula China, 'di singkit, pareho lang sa 'Pinas – Piñol

Taong 2010 pa nang magsimulang mag-import ang bansa ng galunggong na galing sa China na dinidirekta sa mga palengke subalit wala namang nagrereklamo dahil walang pinagkaiba ang lasa nito sa lokal na nahuhuling galunggong.

Ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol, sa tagal nang nag-i-import ng bansa ng iba't ibang klase ng isda hindi lamang galunggong ay walang nagreklamong nagkasakit dahil sa mataas na antas ng formalin na nasa isda, patunay umano na ligtas ang ini-import na yamang-dagat na bago ilabas sa merkado ay mayroong clearance certificate.

"We have been importing and this idea of Chinese galunggong, Taiwanese galunggong, Vietnamese galunggong–galunggongs don't have nationality. The galunggong from China doesn't have chinky eyes. That's the same galunggongs swimming in the waters that we share with these countries, sila lang nakahuli. Ano ba problema du'n?" pahayag ni Piñol kung saan noong 2017 umano ay 130,000 metric tons din ng isda ang in-import ng bansa.

Umapela si Piñol sa publiko na huwag nang magpakalat ng mga negatibong impormasyon ukol sa pag-i-import ng galunggong na nakatakdang dumating sa bansa sa susunod na buwan, nagdudulot lamang umano ito ng takot na hindi ligtas ang ating kinakain na isda, na walang katotohanan.

Nabatid na noong 2006 ay pang-anim ang Pilipinas sa may pinakamalaking fish production subalit pagsapit ng 2010 ay nagsimula nang mag-import ng iba't ibang klase ng isda. Bukod sa galunggong ay nag-aangkat din ng hasa-hasa, pusit, tulingan, tamban at dilis dahil sa kakapusan ng supply na sanhi umano ng talamak na dynamite fishing at sobrang pangingisda. **(Tina Mendoza)**

INQUIRER Bandera
BALITA • BUENAS • CHIKA

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# Piñol kakain din ng binukbok na bigas

ANO ang problema sa kanin na may bukbok?

Ito ang tanong ni Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol sa mga kritiko ng gobyerno at sinabing nakahanda siyang kumain ng kanin na puno ng bukbok.

"Ang problema lang natin diyan is kung maraming-marami na 'yung bukbok na inuubos na nung bukbok 'yung bigas. But it is only 10 lonely bukbok crawling over a sack of rice, so why should we alarmed about that?" sabi ni Piñol.

Idinagdag niya na hindi rin kailangang isailalim sa fumigation ang kanin na may bukbok, kundi dapat hugasan lang nang maigi.

"Serve me that bukbok rice, I will eat it," dagdag ni Piñol. "I'm a farmer. Bukbok is much a reality to grains as much as black ants is to food. Anong problema nung bukbok? Binubukbok naman talaga 'yung palay, binubukbok naman talaga 'yung bigas," ayon pa kay Piñol.

Samantala, inanunsyo ng kalihim na magbebenta na ng corn-rice ang NFA.

Inirekomenda rin niya sa publiko ang pagkain ng corn-rice bilang alternatibo sa bigas dahil mas maganda umano ito sa kalusugan.

Niluluto umano ito katulad ng pagluluto ng pangkaraniwang bigas.

"The good thing about white corn is that there's a lot of areas that we could plant it. Unlike sa ating rice na talagang ang ating production areas could only be irrigated areas," aniya.

*—Inquirer.net, Leifbilly Begas*

Balita

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# Ang pagbubukas ng 'Bigasang Bayan' sa Zamboanga

PINANGUNAHAN ni Agriculture Sec. Emmanuel Piñol nitong Sabado ang pagbubukas ng "Bigasang Bayan" na magbibigay ng mura ngunit de kalidad na uri ng bigas, gayundin ang ibang produkto para sa mga mamimili.

Isinagawa ang paglulunsad isang araw makaraang ideklara ni Piñol na tapos na ang krisis sa bigas sa Zamboaga, kasunod ng pagdating ng dagdag na supply mula sa mga kalapit na probinsiya, gayundin ang galing sa National Food Authority (NFA).

Ayon kay Piñol, maganda ang kalidad ng bigas na ibinebenta sa center dahil ang uri nito ang inangkat ng pamahalaan, sa pamamagitan ng NFA mula Thailand na ibinebenta sa P27 kada kilo.

Pagbabahagi ng kalihim, ang pagbubukas umano ng Bigasang Bayan ay layong maitaas ang supply at mapababa ang presyo ng bigas sa lungsod. Daan-daang residente ng lungsod ang agad na pumila upang makabili ng mas murang bigas sa pagbubukas ng center.

Sa kabila nito, nilinaw naman ni Piñol na hindi agarang maaapektuhan ang presyo ng komersyal na bigas sa pagkakaroon ng dagdag na supply, na ipinuntong ibinebenta ng mga negosyante ang butil base sa capital at iba pang gastos sa produksiyon.

"It (arrival of rice stocks) will slowly bring down the price of rice (in this city)," aniya.

Bukod sa bigas, iba pang produktong pang-agrikultura ang mabibili sa center kabilang ang mga gulay, halamang ugat, at mga prutas.

Samantala, isa pang kargamento ng 180,000 sako ng NFA rice ang dumating mula sa Thailand nitong Biyernes para higit pang maparami ang supply ng bigas. Sa kabuuan, 80,000 sako ang inilaan sa lungsod habang 90,000 para sa probinsiya ng Zamboanga Sibugay, Basilan, Sulu, at Tawi-Tawi.

Ang natitirang 10,000 sako ng bigas ay magsisilbing buffer stock na gagamitin sa mga emergency cases ng social welfare department at ng iba pang kaugnay na ahensiya ng pamahalaan.

Matatagpuan naman ang Bigasang Bayan sa compound ng Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), isang kadikit na ahensiya ng Department of Agriculture (DA), sa Corcuera Street – sa likod ng kapitolyo.

**PNA**

Remate
ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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# PROBLEMA SA BIGAS, KAY PIÑOL

HINDI na matapos-tapos ang problema natin sa bigas.

Dati, pinag-awayan pa ang tungkol sa importasyon ng bigas hanggang naibalik sa Department of Agriculture ang kontrol sa pagresolba ng problema sa bigas.

Natanggal pa nga si Cabinet Secretary Leoncio "Jun" Evasco Jr. bilang chairman ng National Food Authority Council.

Itinalaga si NFA administrator Jason Aquino bilang chairman ng NFA council ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte kahit maraming alegasyon ng korapsyon laban kay Aquino.

Hindi pa natatapos ang problema sa importasyon ng bigas, pumutok naman ang reklamo sa mamamayan sa kakulangan ng NFA rice.

Pagkatapos, sunod-sunod na naglabasan ang rice smuggling dahil maraming nakukumpiskang smuggled rice ang Bureau of Customs na milyones ang halaga.

Tapos, pumutok ang bukbok na bigas, kakapusan ng bigas sa Zamboanga, kawalan ng NFA rice sa mga palengke, at iba pa.

Mapapansin na walang katapusan ang mga problema sa bigas ngayong panahon ni Duterte.

Baka walang problema sa bigas. Baka ang Department of Agriculture. Baka nga si DA Sec. Manny Piñol ang problema ni Duterte.

Dapat aksyunan na ito ni Pang. Duterte bago lumala.

Napakahalaga ng bigas, hindi lamang sa mga magsasaka at nagnenegosyo nito, kundi lalo na sa mamamayan.

Naniniwala akong hindi matatapos ang problema sa bigas hanggang matapos ang termino ni Duterte sa 2022 hangga't hindi nasisipat nang wasto kung nasaan ang problema at kung sino ang may kagagawan ng problema.

Hindi pwedeng parang gulong ang mga problema sa bigas, walang tigil na umiikot na lamang ang tungkol sa mga kakapusan ng supply, rice smuggling, rice shortage, bukbok, at napakamahal na presyo nang walang tigil.

Kapag ganito, niloloko na ng DA at NFA ang mamamayan. Kaya, nararapat lamang paimbestigahan na ni Duterte ang talamak na mga kontrobersya sa bigas habang nakaupo pa si Manny Piñol sa DA at Jason Aquino sa NFA.

**WALANG DROGA SA MGA BAHAY-ALIWAN**

DAPAT walang iligal na droga tulad ng ecstacy sa mga bahay-aliwan sa Quezon City. May mga menor-de-edad na nga, mayroon pang droga.

Ayon kay Vice-Mayor Joy Belmonte, "While those who work in the city government are already required to undergo drug testing at least once a year, we also want drug-free business establishments in the private sector."

Gamit ni Belmonte ang ordinansa sa Lungsod Quezon na noon pang 2015 pinaiiral.

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# BSP leaves door open for further rate hike

By LAWRENCE AGCAOILI

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) is keeping the door open for more possible interest rate hikes to rein in inflationary expectations, saying the economy is strong enough to absorb further tightening.

During the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines (EJAP) Economic Forum, BSP Governor Nestor Espenilla Jr. said monetary authorities would continue to watch for further broadening inflationary pressures as the consumer price index is expected to remain elevated this year.

"We have kept the door open as well to take further policy action as may be necessary based on the data. What is more important for the BSP is to send a strong signal to the whole community that we are

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## BSP leaves... From B1

committed to return the inflation path back to target, and we are prepared to deploy our instruments to do that," he said.

The BSP sees inflation averaging 4.9 percent this year and 3.7 percent next year.

"Our best estimate is that inflation will probably peak in the third quarter and will not probably hit six percent. The word there is probably," he said.

However, Espenilla said inflation momentum is slowing down, as headline inflation has generally declined on a month-on-month term to 0.5 percent in July from 0.9 percent in January.

After spiking in the first quarter, he said the month-on-month changes for electricity, tobacco, and sweetened beverages are seen to be slowly tapering off toward the third quarter.

"This supports our analysis that the impact of the excise tax adjustments is transitory," he said.

The BSP chief added upside risks including additional wage adjustments, pending petitions for adjustments in transport fares and electricity rates, faster-than-expected monetary policy normalization in advanced economies, and the proposed increase in the buying price of rice from farmers by the National Food Authority (NFA) continue to dominate the inflation outlook.

On the other hand, he added the main downside risks to inflation include slower global economic growth due to protectionist policies in advanced economies, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, and potentially lower rice prices resulting from the proposed replacement of quantitative restrictions with tariffs and the deregulation of rice imports.

According to Espenilla, monetary authorities are also closely watching excessive volatility in the foreign exchange markets.

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# SRA sees sugar output falling to 2.225 MMT

THE SUGAR REGULATORY ADMINISTRATION said its production estimate for crop year 2018-2019 is 2.225 million metric tons (MMT), which would represent a reduction in output from the 2.38 MMT expected from the preceding crop year.

It also plans to allocate 5% of output for export to the United States.

The SRA's allocation policy comes into force on Sept. 1 and will remain valid until Aug. 31, 2019.

It declared its intention to pursue a policy that will ensure the "economic viability" of those engaged in the sugar industry.

In early August, the Department of Trade and Industry proposed a 35% tariff on sugar imports to help stabilize the price of the commodity.

The SRA approved the importation of 200,000 MT of sugar earlier this year to help meet demand.

— **Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio**

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# Research agency sees major expansion in soybean planting

THE Bureau of Agricultural Research said that it projects about 15,000 hectares of land to be planted to soybean by 2019, from 700 hectares in 2011 and 10,000 currently.

"We will revive the soybean program of 2011," Head of BAR Technology Commercialization Division Anthony B. Obligado told reporters on Monday.

He said the expansion in planting will be accompanied by the use of soybean in more products.

BAR Director Nicomedes P. Eleazar said in a news conference that BAR is using geotagging to determine the hectarage of the soybean crop, which is significantly higher than the Philippine Statistics Authority's estimate of 5,000 hectares.

Mr. Eleazar said the priority is to address human consumption needs first, while soybean for animal feed will remain imported.

The Global Agricultural Information Network (GAIN) has reported that imports of soybean meal are expected to increase 5.45% to 2.9-million metric tons (MMT) this year, up from 2.75 MMT a year earlier, due to the expansion of the livestock and poultry sectors. GAIN said that the US will remain the top supplier of soybean meal to the Philippines.

— **Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio**

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## editorial

# 'Scary' coconut oil

A YEAR after the American Heart Association (AHA) issued an advisory discouraging people from consuming coconut oil, the country's top agricultural export is back in the spotlight. In a recent lecture at the University of Freiburg in Germany, an epidemiologist at the Harvard TH Chan school of public health called coconut oil "pure poison" and should be avoided. The British daily, *The Guardian*, which published a story about the Harvard professor's remarks on August 22, noted that the lecture has been viewed almost a million times on YouTube.

The article noted that Karin Michels based her warning on the high proportion of saturated fat in coconut oil, which could raise the so-called bad cholesterol, or low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. Bad cholesterol is a major cause of artery-clogging plaque and consuming food with high saturated fat would raise the risk of contracting cardiovascular diseases. This led Michels to proclaim that coconut oil was "one of the worst things" people can eat.

Coconut oil and other coconut products have been maligned in the past by so-called experts from Western countries. But calling it pure poison is a different matter altogether because the claimant is telling consumers to stay away from coconut oil as it is fatal to human health. This claim is deplorable and malicious. It does not only harm the livelihood of more than 3 million Filipino coconut farmers but may cause the demise of the entire coconut industry. The Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) has clarified that such irresponsible statement was based on "old and flawed research."

It also appears that those attacking coconut oil have conveniently overlooked other studies that presented its health benefits. For one, the PCA noted in a BUSINESSMIRROR report (***See "Pure baloney: PCA hits new smear drive vs coconut oil"***) that coconut oil raises levels of good cholesterol or high-density lipoprotein (HDL), which counters the bad effects of LDL cholesterol. The PCA also said recent studies conducted abroad showed that dietary cholesterol is not the root cause of cardiovascular disease but inflammation.

Citing Dr. Dwight Lundell, a world-renowned heart surgeon who has performed over 5,000 open-heart surgeries, the PCA said the biggest culprit of chronic inflammation is the overconsumption of simple, highly processed carbohydrates (sugar, flour and all their by-products) and of omega-6 vegetable oils like soybean, corn and sunflower that are found in many processed foods. The agency said the US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health and the *British Medical Journal* are replete with overwhelming number of studies proving coconut oil to be one of the healthiest foods on Earth.

The latest attack against coconut oil came at a time when promotions from health food shops and endorsements from celebrities, such as Gwyneth Paltrow, have boosted sales of coconut oil in the United Kingdom. According to *The Guardian*, consumer research group Kantar found that sales of coconut oil in the last four years surged to £16.4 million, from £1 million, as a result of said endorsements. In the United States, Kantar said sales peaked at $229 million in 2015.

The revived attacks on coconut oil seem to have affected shipments in the first six months of the year. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that revenues from coconut-oil shipments fell by nearly 29 percent to $596.62 million in the January-to-June period, from $839.26 million. If the trend continues, Filipino exporters could end the year with a double-digit decline in earnings from coconut oil. If this is the goal of critics, then it appears that they are succeeding.

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

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# Hungry and angry

A growing number of Filipinos are reeling from the spike in the prices of food, particularly rice and chicken, but some unscrupulous traders and profiteers are likely laughing all their way to the bank.

The retail price of chicken soared to between P140 and P160 per kilo as of mid-August.

The price increase is surprising considering the data from Department of Agriculture (DA) indicate a drop in the farm gate prices of locally-produced chicken by as much as P20 per kilogram. As of the third week of this month, chicken price at the farm remained at around P77 per kilo.

Yet, the latest market information of the DA tells us the decline in the farm gate prices of chicken did nothing to temper the retail prices.

An official of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) disclosed that based on their computation, the reasonable market price of chicken can be ascertained by adding a P50 markup from the farm gate prices.

That margin should already make traders and vendors very happy, according to the DTI official.

If there is no profiteering, the consumers should have to shell out only as much as P130 per kilo of chicken.

However, the DTI official pointed out that the problem lies not with the retailers because based on the agency's inquiry, the vendors were forced to hike the retail price because they were getting their supply at P130 per kilo.

Similarly, the prices of imported chicken have gone down following the lifting a few weeks ago of the special safeguard on the item.

The United Broiler Raisers Association (UBRA) noted that imported chickens should be cheaper since these consist of parts such as drumsticks and wings that are sold at lower prices compared to breast parts in the exporting countries.

> *"It bolsters the common suspicion that unscrupulous businessmen are making hay out of the sufferings of the people.*

"In our experience, a drop in the farm gate of locally-produced chickens and even in the imported ones does not necessarily drag down the retail prices," an UBRA official said.

He lamented that producers, like UBRA members, have actually no leverage to influence farm gate prices. In fact, he said that with the recent price increase in the imported component of feeds, they are sometimes forced to sell at a loss.

A similar pattern emerges in the case of rice. The Philippine Statistics Authority reported the average retail price of well-milled rice at P45.71 per kilo picked up by 0.86 percent from last week's level of P45.32 per kilo.

That average price is still a little bit higher than the DTI's computation that pegged the reasonable price of locally-produced rice to P45 per kilo. Such price, according to DTI, should already provide traders and retailers a comfortable margin of profit.

Imported rice, which is considerably less expensive than local rice, should command an even lower retail price, according to the DTI.

But in some areas of the country, particularly in Mindanao, rice prices have gone up to even higher levels.

For instance, reports said rice prices in various places in Region 9 were: Dipolog, Zamboanga del Norte, P55 to P60 per kilo; Pagadian, Zamboanga del Sur, P55 to P60 per kilo; Ipil, Zamboanga del Sur, P55 to P60 per kilo and Zamboanga City, P60 to P68 per kilo.

In Basilan, the price of rice is reportedly pegged at P60 to P70 per kilo.

In both cases, the DTI said evidence point to the middlemen or traders as the only sector that can influence the prices.

That is a virtual confirmation that profiteering is indeed taking place. It bolsters the common suspicion that unscrupulous businessmen are making hay out of the sufferings of the people.

What makes it even more deplorable is that profiteering diverts precious government resources to urgent measures, albeit temporary, to tame runaway prices and ease the burden on the consuming public.

Unfortunately, laws against economic sabotage were proven largely ineffective against profiteering or price manipulation.

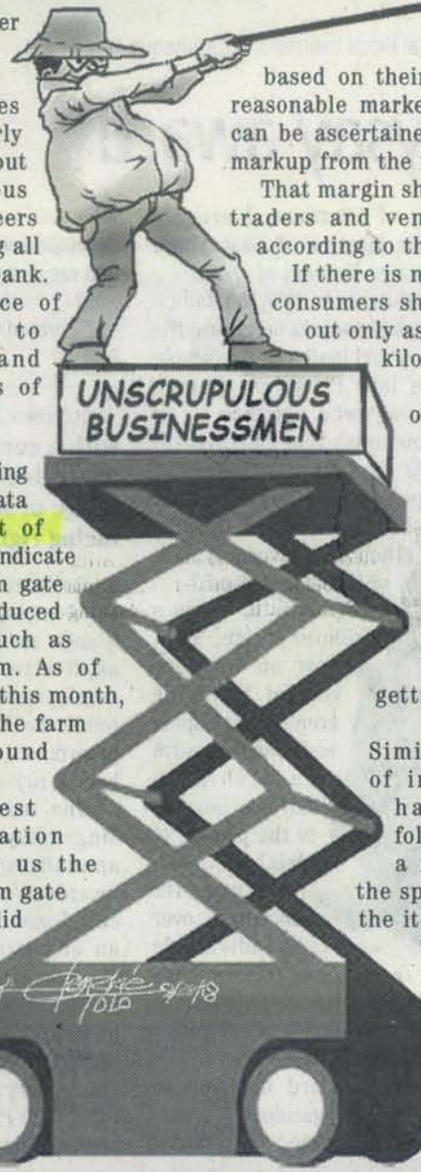
The government, however, may exercise its power under Executive Order 436 series of 1990 that authorizes the DTI to take measure to ensure all prices of basic commodities remain reasonable.

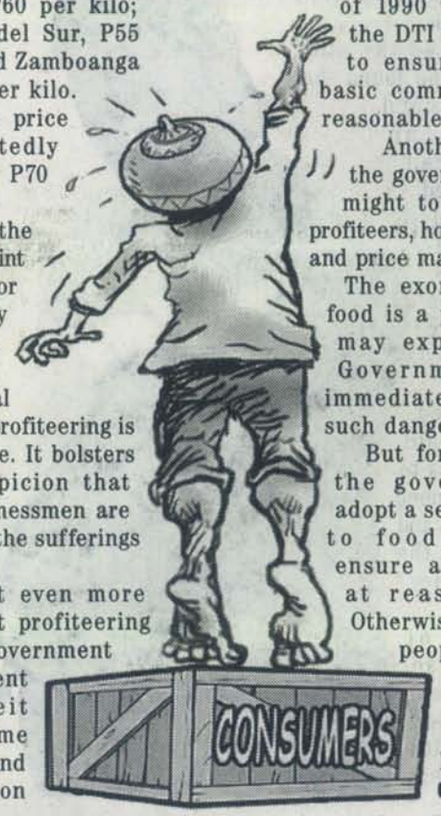
Another option is for the government to use its might to crack down on profiteers, hoarders, smugglers and price manipulators.

The exorbitant price of food is a powder keg that may explode anytime. Government must act immediately to stave off such danger.

But for the long term, the government must adopt a sensible approach to food security to ensure adequate supply at reasonable costs. Otherwise, it would erode people's confidence in our leaders.

You can't argue with a hungry man.



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# Producers to freeze prices for 3 months

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said manufacturers have agreed in principle to hold off any increases in the suggested retail prices (SRPs) of basic and prime commodities for the next three months or until the end of the year.

Ruth Castelo, DTI undersecretary, said this is not tantamount to an imposition of a moratorium but more of a request to manufacturers as "social contribution and responsibility."

The request covers 235 items listed by the DTI.

"We requested manufacturers of basic necessities and prime commodities though to hold off any price increase at least for the

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## PRODUCERS

next three months," Castelo said.

She said the response from manufactures "in principle is very positive, although we hope to get their commitment in writing. "

If they agree, manufacturers will not raise SRPs around the holidays when demand surges and prices increase.

"That is part of our appeal, preferably until next year. Some manufacturers will not increase their prices until next year," Castelo added.

Those which have made firm commitment not to raise SRPs are manufacturers of coffee, noodles, laundry and bath soap, soy sauce, patis, vinegar, bread and candles.

Manufacturers of canned meat and sardines have yet to make any commitment.

The Cabinet earlier rejected a proposal to reduce tariff on imported fish, pork and other food commodities purportedly to address lack of supply.

Instead , it agreed to suspend the special safeguard duty on the imported onions and chicken

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said the spike in the food prices is temporary and government is finding "pragmatic solutions that will balance consumer and producer interest and achieve price reprieve at the soonest time possible."

Other measures include allowing the importation of galunggong that is not tainted or preserved using formalin, the conduct of regular inspection of vegetable warehouses to ensure the availability of supply, and the monitoring of distribution of imported rice especially by the National Food Authority (NFA) to ensure availability of supply and avoid the stocking of rice that could end up being infested with weevil (bukbok).

Roque said another measure to ensure the utilization of the minimum access volume quota for pork that had been granted to importers and withdrawing these permits and giving it to other pork importers who are able to meet their quota targets.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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# NFA, council swap charges on rice crisis

NEWS

## NFA, council clash over rice shortage

Officials of the National Food Authority (NFA) and its governing body, the NFA Council, faced off before the House ways and means committee on Tuesday over the reasons for the NFA's depleted rice supply. The NFA said the delay in procurement of rice from abroad had led to the surge of rice prices, a claim belied by a member of the NFA Council. —STORY BY MARLON RAMOS, MAR S. ARGUELLES AND JULIET CATALUÑA A2

**By Marlon Ramos, Mar S. Arguelles and Juliet Cataluña**
@Team_Inquirer

Who's to blame for the shortage of "cheap" rice that has resulted in the spike in the prices of the staple?

Officials of the National Food Authority (NFA) and its governing body, the NFA Council, traded barbs on Tuesday in the House of Representatives as lawmakers moved in to address the NFA's depleted rice supply for a nation of 106 million rice-consuming people.

Facing off before the ways and means committee, the officials tasked with ensuring a steady supply of rice for the poor locked horns over the reasons for the inadequate supply of NFA rice.

NFA Deputy Administrator Tomas Escarez said the agency had requested the NFA Council in October 2017 to allow it to import 1 million metric tons of rice to increase the country's buffer. But the approval came only last May.

Escarez said the delay in the procurement led to the

**Agencies under the executive branch should work as a team**

**Prospero Pichay Jr.**
Surigao del Sur Representative

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Tomas Escarez

Ruth Castelo

surge of rice prices as the supply of NFA rice was depleted before the imported rice arrived in June.

"This is not our fault," Escarez told the committee chaired by Quirino Rep. Dakila Cua.

"The NFA Council, after so many months, did not act on it, resulting in the higher prices of rice. The NFA Council always said that the private sector could take care of it," Escarez said.

**Buffer stocks**

He pointed out that the NFA mandate was to ensure a 15-day regular buffer and 30 days during the lean months. "Now, we only have seven days (of buffer stock)."

He said the "circuitous bureaucracy" also made the process of buying imported rice difficult. "We have a council above us. It is the council which will say how much and when to procure."

But Trade Undersecretary Ruth Castelo, a member of the NFA Council, countered that the failure of the NFA to submit to the council its inventory was the cause of the delay.

"The council asked for an inventory of the rice supply even before the NFA requested for importation. The NFA was not able to submit it," Castelo said.

She also insisted that the NFA pronouncement that there was a rice shortage led to spiraling rice prices.

"The NFA is just there to stabilize the rice prices when there is not enough rice in the market," she said.

**Official records**

To which Escarez responded, "We have records of our meetings wherein we told them . . . our recommendations."

"Why will we lie (about the rice stocks?)" he said.

The exchange prompted Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. to ask for the official records of the meetings between the NFA and the NFA Council to find out how the two bodies acted on the problem.

"Agencies under the executive branch should work as a team," Pichay told them.

Rice imports have started to arrive in the country.

**Thai rice in Bicol**

The NFA in Bicol said the 164,000 bags of imported rice from Thailand arrived on Saturday and were still awaiting clearance from customs and health authorities before these could be unloaded at the Tabaco City port.

Nelsie Alcantara, the agency's regional spokesperson, said the new shipment was part of the 800,000 bags of imported rice allotted for Bicol for the year.

It will be unloaded after the 12-day fumigation and aeration of 174,000 bags of rice that arrived earlier this month is finished on Wednesday.

The first shipment was found to be infested with weevils ("bukbok").

At Subic Bay Freeport, the unloading of 130,00 sacks of rice from Thailand last week was delayed because it was also infested with weevils.

Alcantara said the new rice shipment would be distributed to the six Bicol provinces.

At present, rice was being sold at the NFA in Legazpi City for P27 per kilogram; while accredited outlets sell it for P32 per kilo, for up to three kilos.

Commercial rice was being sold at P45 to P50 a kilo.

Alcantara said another shipment of 236,000 bags of imported rice was expected to arrive next month to complete the 800,000 bags of imported rice intended to for the region this year.

**Tacloban port**

About 219,000 sacks of Thai rice arrived at the Tacloban City port on Aug. 10, according to NFA Regional Manager John Robert Hermano.

The depletion of the NFA buffer, along with the curbing of smuggling of rice from Malaysia, created a severe rice shortage in Zamboanga City, Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi.

The crisis prompted the administration to divert to the city part of whatever NFA rice was allocated to other areas.

Davao City Rep. Karlo Nograles on Tuesday said the NFA must ensure the proper prepositioning of rice stocks in areas where the prices of the staple had been surging.

**Rice airlift for Batanes**

In Basco, Batanes province, a military cargo plane landed on Tuesday with 70 bags of rice for Itbayat, the northernmost town that had run out of low-priced grains.

The provincial government said NFA rice stocks had dwindled, and residents and transient workers could not afford the more expensive commercial rice in the market.

Bad weather in the last two weeks had prevented fresh supplies from being shipped to Batanes, the northernmost province. A vessel carrying an emergency shipment of 300 bags has yet to arrive from Manila.

Although commercial rice has been available in Itbayat, a kilo sells from P60 to P70, compared with P32 for NFA rice, residents said.

"We have been boiling bananas instead. At least these are in season," said Jenylee Ann Castillo, a resident who joined the military plane back to Basco.

The NFA was expecting a regular shipment of 10,000 bags for Batanes, but did not say when it would arrive. INQ

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# Sugar output to remain tight in next crop year

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

The country's sugar production for the next crop year is seen to go down to 2.23 million metric tons (MT), with Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) allotting 95 percent of the output to domestic consumption and completely nothing for the world market exports.

Sugar Order No.1 (SO1), which was released yesterday, showed that SRA decided to allot 95 percent of the country's estimated sugar output for next year to domestic sugar market or 'B' sugar, while 5 percent will be tapped to meet US Quota Sugar or 'A' sugar.

For now, nothing is allotted for D Sugar or those that will be exported to other overseas countries.

When asked about this, SRA Board Member Roland Beltran only said "the order of preference are domestic market and US market and when there are more or excess sugar, then we allocate for the world market".

Beltran said the SRA wants to prioritize the allocation in accordance with the mandate under Executive Order No. 18 Series of 1986.

"At any rate, Section 4 of SO1 provides for periodic reassessment that gives us flexibility considering the unpredictability of the weather or climate," Beltran said.

As for the 'A' sugar allocation, SRA explained that the US, a historical trading partner of the Philippines, "continuous to be a reliable market and remains an instrument to stabilize domestic sugar supply that its allocation is imperative".

The next crop year will stretch from September 1 to August 31, 2019.

Sugar allocation for the previous crop year was amended several times as well as the target production.

In May, SRA, through SO9, ordered the reclassification of the remaining D Sugar or World Market Sugar into B or Domestic Sugar to arrest rising cost of local sugar.

"It is the national interest to institute measures that will bring about stabilized prices of B Domestic Sugar which are reasonably profitable to producers and fair to consumers," SRA said.

In July, with only less than a month left before the sugar crop year ends, Beltran said the country is no longer poised to hit its production target of 2.27 million MT of sugar, which was lower than the 2.5 million MT recorded in the previous crop year.

As of July 15, the country's total sugar production only stood at 2.1 million MT.

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# Senate measure may lead to NFA abolition—Villar

**By Macon Ramos-Araneta and Maricel Cruz**

THE chairperson of the Senate agriculture and food committee on Tuesday said a new "liberalized" model on the importation of rice may pave the way for the abolition of the National Food Authority.

Senator Cynthia Villar made the statement as the NFA came under fire for soaring grain prices, including in Zamboanga City which has been placed under a state of calamity because of a rice crisis.

"We have to liberalize the importation of rice but we have to impose tariff to protect our farmers," she said, adding that the NFA will no longer be needed under the proposed rice tariffication bill.

A Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund instead will be established to help farmers become competitive.

Villar noted that the NFA seemed to have strayed from its mandate to buy rice from farmers so that the farmers "will not be at the mercy of traders."

The Commission on Audit earlier flagged the decision of the NFA to use some P5.1 billion in subsidy from the national government as payment for maturing loans instead of allocating the funds for the food security program of the agency.

*Next page*

**SHOCK ABSORBER.** NFA Baguio City and Benguet Province are operating normally and have enough bumper rice to last four days in 18,358 sacks, while allocations to accredited stores have been boosted following the recent typhoons that triggered the monsoon rains, mudslides and damaged roads. **Dave Leprozo Jr.**

## Senate...

*From A1*

Government auditors said the amount was supposed to ensure there was sufficient food supply in the country.

"The procurement shortfall affected other programs of NFA, such as rice distribution and buffer stocking resulting in higher price of rice, unavailability of NFA rice in the market and lower inventory of rice in various NFA warehouses," CoA said.

For his part, Senator Francis Pangilinan called the attention of Agriculture chief Manny Piñol for his alleged failure to put an end to large-scale rice smuggling, which is considered a form of economic sabotage and is a non-bailable offense.

"If Secretary Piñol has been in the know about the rice smuggling and other illegal transactions related to rice in Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, what has he done about it? Why hasn't he acted on it considering that he has been in the post for more than two years now?" Pangilinan said.

As this developed, Piñol said he is ready to eat the weevil-infested rice to assure the public that the grains are safe to eat.

NFA earlier said the tons of weevil-infested rice brought into Subic were safe for distribution after being fumigated.

"Serve me that bukbok rice, I will eat it!" Piñol said in an ANC interview.

"I'm a farmer. *Bukbok* is as much a reality to grains as black ants are to fruits. What's your problem with weevil? Unmilled rice really get attacked by *bukbok*," he added.

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# PAGBUWAG SA NFA TINUTULAN NG OBISPO

**TUTOL ang isang obispo ng Simbahang Katoliko sa panukala ng ilang mambabatas na buwagin na lamang ang National Food Authority (NFA) matapos umanong mabigong magampanan ang mandatong tiyaking sapat ang suplay at abot-kaya ang halaga ng bigas sa bansa.**

Ayon kay San Jose, Nueva Ecija Bishop Roberto Mallari, nakatutulong sa mamamayan ang NFA dahil dito lamang sila nakabibili ng mababang presyo ng bigas.

Aniya, sa halip na buwagin, ay dapat na lamang na tutukan ng pamahalaan ang NFA at pagsumikapang alisin ang korupsiyon sa ahensiya, para maging maayos ang pamamalakad dito para na rin sa kapakinabangan ng mahihihirap na mamamayan.

"Siguro, mahalagang tutukan ng pamahalaan ang pamunuan ng NFA kasi nakatulong naman ito sa mamamayan. Dapat maalis 'yung korupsiyon sa ahensya para maging maayos ang pamamalakad nito," ani Mallari sa panayam ng church-run Radio Veritas.

Hiling din ng obispo sa gobyerno na tulungan ang mga magsasaka sa bansa upang maisulong at mapalago ang lokal na produksiyon ng bigas.

Matatandaang nanawagan sina Senators Cynthia Villar, Aquilino Pimentel III at Francis Drilon, na buwagin na lamang ang NFA.

Nais naman ng ilang mambabatas na suriin at pag-aralan ang maaaring kahihinatnan kung tuluyang alisin ang NFA bilang ahensyang nangangasiwa sa suplay ng bigas sa bansa.

Ang NFA ay matatandaang itinatag sa pamamagitan ng Presidential Decree No. 1770 noong Enero 1981.

Layunin nang pagtatatag nito na maisulong ang paglago sa industriya ng palay sa bansa at pagtiyak sa seguridad ng suplay ng abot kayang halaga ng bigas para sa mga Filipino.

Sa kasalukuyan ay mayroon umanong 15 regional offices ang NFA habang 86 naman ang provincial offices. **ANA ROSARIO HERNANDEZ**

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## Panawagan ng mga mangingisda

# IMPORTED NA 'GG' IBOYKOT

**PINABOBOYKOT ng grupo ng mga mangingisda ang mga imported na galunggong na bagama't mura ay may masama umanong epekto sa kalusugan.**

Ayon sa Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas o Pamalakaya, unti-unting papatayin ng importasyon ang lokal na fish industry sa halip na makatulong ito.

Hindi rin kumbinsido ang grupo sa pahayag ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) na mayroon lamang mababang lebel ng formalin ang galunggong mula China o Taiwan.

Anila, imposibleng tumagal ng ilang buwan ang galunggong nang walang halong kemikal upang mapanatili itong sariwa na katulad ng tuna ay madaling masira o mabulok.

Una nang inaprubahan ni Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol ang Fisheries Administrative Order 195 upang umangkat ng 17,000 metriko toneladang galunggong mula China, Vietnam at Taiwan simula sa Setyembre 1. **DWIZ 882**

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# PALAY NA P20 PER KILO IPINABIBILI SA GOBYERNO

**HINILING ng Makabayan sa Kamara na ipagutos na ni Pangulong Duterte ang pagbili ng palay sa mga local farmer sa halagang P20 kada kilo.**

Giit ng Makabayan, si Pangulong Duterte ang responsable sa krisis sa bigas na nararanasan sa bansa.

Dapat umanong bumili ang gobyerno ng maramihan na palay mula sa mga lokal na magsasaka sa presyong P20 per kilo mula sa kasalukuyang P17 per kilo at gawin itong available sa lahat ng mga tindahan sa bansa sa murang halaga.

Paliwanag ng Makabayan, ang P7 bilyon na subsidiya ng gobyerno para ngayong taon kung ibibili ng palay sa halagang P20 kada kilo ay makakalikom ng 350,000 metric tons ng palay o 4.5 million bags ng milled rice.

Dapat ding samantalahin ng pamahalaan ang harvest season sa bansa dahil makatutulong ito para kumita ang mga local farmer at sa pagpuno ng kakulangan sa suplay ng bigas.

Inirekomenda din ng Makabayan na sa halip na i-

abolish ang NFA ay dapat pa ngang taasan ang budget ng ahensya para sa pagbili ng palay sa mga magsasaka.

Hinimok din ang pagpapataw ng price control sa Zamboanga Peninsula at iba pang lugar sa bansa para matigil ang manipulasyon sa presyo ng bigas ng mga rice cartel.

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# SMUGGLED NA BIGAS IPAMIMIGAY

NAGKASUNDO ang Kamara at Department of Finance (DOF) na ipamahagi na lamang sa mga kababayang nasalanta ng kalamidad ang mga nakumpiskang smuggled rice.

## Mga biktima ng kalamidad makikinabang

*Mula sa pahina 1*

Sa pagdinig ng Kamara, positibo ang naging tugon ng DOF sa suhestiyon na ito ni House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Dakila Cua.

Sinabi ni DOF Usec. Karl Kendrick Chua na walang pagtutol si Finance Sec. Carlos Dominguez III na ipamigay sa mga nasalanta ng sunod-sunod na bagyo ang mga nakumpiskang bigas ng Bureau of Customs (BOC).

Ayon kay Chua, pinag-aaralan na nila ngayon kung paano ito isasagawa.

Kaugnay nito, sinabi ni Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Usec. Florita Villar na magsusumite sila ng mga alituntunin na sinusunod ng kanilang kagawaran sa pamamahagi ng mga donasyon na bigas mula sa gobyerno.

Nagpadala na rin si Cua ng liham kay Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapeña para hilingin na ibigay na lamang sa DSWD ang nasabat na 50,000 smuggled na bigas.

Ipinauubaya naman ni Lapeña sa DOF at sa National Food Authority (NFA) ang pag-apruba sa mungkahing ito ni Cua.

**CONDE BATAC**

ABANTE TONITE
MASILIS SA BALITA

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# Imported GG, baboy, manok sagot sa inflation - Palasyo

Ibinasura ng mga economic manager ng gobyerno ang mungkahing patawan ng taripa ang ilang bilihin para bumaba ang nararanasang inflation sa bansa.

Ito umano ang napagkasunduan sa ginanap na pulong ng Tariff Commission, kasama ang ilang ahensiya ng pamahalaan.

Sinabi ni Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque na sa halip na taripa ay inaprubahan ang pag-i-import ng galunggong o GG at pag-aalis ng special safeguard measures sa sibuyas at manok kaya aasahang bababa ang taripa sa pag-i-import ng mga ito.

"Nagkaroon po sila ng desisyon, ang pagbaba po ng taripa ay hindi talaga magbababa ng mga halaga ng bilihin, lalo na ang mga pagkain. So ang ginawa po nilang pamamaraan para mapababa ang presyo, unang-una ay 'yung pag-approve sa pag-i-import ng galunggong," ani Roque.

Sa karne naman ng baboy, sinabi ni Roque na binibigyan ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang mga negosyante ng isang buwan para makapag-import sa tinatawag na minimum access volume quota holders at bababaan ang kanilang presyo.

Para naman sa mga produktong gulay, sinabi ni Roque na magkakaroon ng regular inspection sa mga bodega ng mga importer para malaman kung ano talaga ang level ng kanilang imbentaryo.

Habang sa supply naman ng bigas, magkakaroon aniya ng mahigpit na monitoring sa pagdating at pamamahagi ng mga inaangkat ng National Food Authority. **(Aileen Taliping)**

ABANTE TONITE
MABILIS SA BALITA

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# Walang mali sa alokasyong bigas ng CDO sa Zambo – NFA

Nanindigan ang National Food Authority (NFA) na walang mali sa naging desisyon nito na ibigay muna ang alokasyong bigas ng Cagayan de Oro City sa Zamboaga City upang agad na masolusyunan ang kakulangan ng suplay ng bigas doon.

Aprubado din umano iyon ni NFA Administrator Jason Aquino, ayon kay NFA Spokesperson Rex Estoperez. Hindi rin umano matatawag na diversion kundi reallocation lamang.

Nakiusap sila sa Cagayan de Oro na ang kanilang alokasyon ay dalhin muna sa Zamboanga matapos na ring lumabas sa kanilang evaluation na mataas pa ang inventory ng bigas sa CDO habang nangangailangan naman ng agarang supply ang lalawigan ng Zamboanga.

"Hindi naman maapektuhan ang operation and distribution sa Cagayan de Oro kung sa Zamboanga muna ibaba 'yung 60,000 sako ng bigas," giit ni Estoperez kung saan nasa 290,000 ang stocks pa ng bigas ng CDO.

Ukol naman sa panawagan na magbitiw sa puwesto si Aquino at tuluyan nang buwagin ang NFA, sinabi ni Estoperez na kapwa walang basehan ang panawagan ng mga kritiko ng ahensya.

Malinaw naman umano na nagtatrabaho ang mga opisyal ng NFA subalit hindi nito kontrolado ang pamamalakad dahil kailangang dumaan sa council ang bawat hakbang na gagawin. **(Tina Mendoza)**

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# Villar dares NFA execs to eat rice with 'bukbok'

By MARLON PURIFICACION

**TO prove the safety of the rice imported from Thailand and Vietnam, Senator Cynthia Villar yesterday challenged the officials of the National Food Authority (NFA) to spearhead the consumption of the weevil infested rice and demonstrate it to the public.**

Villar said she is flabbergasted with the officials of the NFA in adding more problems in the country by importing contaminated rice.

"Sila (NFA) bumili ng rice na may bukbok at sila ang kumain. Bakit ka bibili ng rice na may bukbok pa? Bakit lahat ng kamalasan sila ang gumagawa?" Villar said.

Villar said it is about time of the government to study the possible implementation of price control in rice or a possibility of declaring a state of calamity which will cover only rice.

"Bakit hindi na lang tayo mag-price control ng rice? I don't know how they can implement it but meron silang Suggested Retail Price and then they go around and inaano (pinaparusahan) nila ang hindi sumusunod or mas better pa magdeclare ng state of calamity and then impose it on rice para sa price control," she suggested.

The senator insisted that the NFA officials failed to perform their given mandate in assuring that there is adequate rice stocks which caused all rice problems today.

"But of course nalaman natin dahil sinabi nila hindi sila (NFA) nakapag-buffer stocking and that started our problem with rice. Nagwala ang mga prices kasi it's all in the hands of the private sector. Alam naman natin na may rice cartel, NFA failed it's mandate," Villar stressed.

On the issue of importation of "Galunggong", Villar also expressed alarm over the reports that the fish were treated with formalin.

Amidst this fear, Villar advised the public to instead look for alternative food especially in consuming healthier foods such as vegetables.

"Bakit naman mag-iimport? Maghanap tayo ng alternative, sinabi nyo na may formalin ang galunggong. Eh di kumain tayo ng gulay," she said.

The senator confirmed that the local supply of fish has become low due to abuses in nature. In the past, 70% of the fish harvest came from the sea and 30% from aquaculture, today its has been 50-50.

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## EDITORIAL

# Rice production

IF the Philippines, a nation of more than 100 million rice-eating and English-speaking people, finds it hard to attain rice self-sufficiency, blame it partly on the high cost of production.

It is one of the cruelest ironies in this country, where farmers and fishers comprise the bulk of the population, with an individual consuming an average of 111.6 kilograms of rice a year.

Even the chairman of the House of Representatives' committee on appropriations pointed out that raising rice production should go hand-in-hand with enhancing the productivity of farmers.

One way to raise rice production in the country is to increase the number of irrigated lands, according to Davao City Rep. Karlo Nograles, chairman of the powerful House committee.

Likewise, Nograles called on the Department of Agriculture and the National Irrigation Administration to increase the percentage of farmers connected to the National Irrigation System (NIS).

This is to improve the profitability and productivity of rice farming, with the end in view of ensuring "rice security" in the Philippines, according to the lawmaker from Mindanao.

The NIS provides irrigation to around 50 percent of the country's total irrigable areas, meaning half of rice farmers have much higher production costs, said Congressman Nograles.

Rice farmers connected to the NIS spend some P2,100 per hectare for fuel costs, while those who are not connected to the system spend around P15,876 per hectare for fuel costs.

We share the view of Nograles that the expansion of NIS-serviced areas is critical if we are to lower the high cost of production in the country, where the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is located.

Talagang nakalulungkot ang nangyayari dahil sa Pilipinas lang nagpakadalubhasa ang mga namamahala ng palay production sa mga bansa kung saan tayo ngayon umaangkat ng bigas.

Tempo
NEWS IN A FLASH
THE NATION'S FASTEST GROWING NEWSPAPER

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# Villar sees NFA abolition

The National Food Authority (NFA) may soon be abolished as the bill liberalizing rice importation starts rolling in Senate.

Senator Cynthia Villar yesterday said she is set to sponsor for plenary deliberations the measure on rice tariffication which, in effect, may render the NFA irrelevant.

The bill amends the Agricultural Tariffication Act of 1996 to replace the quantitative restrictions (QR) on rice imports with tariff and hence, will remove unnecessary government intervention on rice market. It is expected to lower rice prices in the country.

The chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food said the measure introduces a "new model" for the country's rice market. Under the bill, they are looking at imposing a tariff of 35 percent at most in the rice imports from members in the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). **(Vanne Terrazola)**

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
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# VILLAR FOR RICE PRICE CONTROL

**By Marlon Purificacion**

**SENATOR Cynthia Villar yesterday proposed price control for rice even as she challenged the officials of the National Food Authority (NFA) to prove that the rice imported from Thailand and Vietnam are safe by eating the weevil infested rice before the public.**

Villar said that she is flabbergasted with the officials of the NFA for giving the country more problems by importing contaminated rice.

"Sila (NFA) bumili ng rice na may bukbok at sila ang kumain. Bakit ka bibili ng rice may bukbok pa? Bakit lahat ng kamalasan sila ang gumagawa?" Villar said.

Villar said it is about time that the government considered price control for rice or declaring a state of calamity covering only rice.

"Bakit hindi na lang tayo mag-price control ng rice? I don't know how they can implement it but meron silang Suggested Retail Price and then they go around and inaano (pinaparusahan) nila ang hindi sumusunod or mas better pa magdeclare ng state of calamity and then impose it on rice para sa price control," she suggested.

The senator said the NFA officials failed to perform their mandate of assuring adequate rice stocks which has caused the rice crisis today.

"But of course nalaman natin sinabi nila hindi sila (NFA) nakapagbuffer stocking and that started our problem with rice. Nagwala ang mga prices kasi it's all in the hands of the private sector. Alam naman natin na may rice cartel, NFA failed it's mandate," Villar stressed.

On the issue of importation of "galunggong", Villar also expressed alarm over the reports that the fish were treated with formalin.

In this light, Villar advised the public to instead look for alternative food especially healthier foods such as vegetables..

"Bakit naman magiimport, maghanap tayo ng alternative. Sinabi n'yo na may formalin ang galunggong, eh 'di kumain tayo ng gulay," she said.

The senator confirmed that the local supply of fish has been depleted due to abuses in nature. In the past, 70% of the fish harvest came from the sea and 30% from aquaculture, today it's 50-50.

Villar suggested that the government implement a "closed season" in sea fishing in order for the supply of fish in the ocean to become abundant once again. While doing this, the government must find sources of income for fishermen who will lose their livelihood.

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# Farmers assured of P20B subsidy from rice tariffs

**By Jester P. Manalastas**

**RICE farmers will be getting P20 billion worth of subsidy from the proposed Rice Tariffication law.**

This is according to ANAC-IP party-list Rep. Jose Panganiban Jr., chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food, as he pushed for the final approval of the measure.

In the House of Representatives, members overwhelmingly approved on third and final reading earlier this month House Bill 7735 which seeks to liberalize rice imports by replacing the quantitative import restrictions on rice with tariffs, and create the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund.

"Kapag naipasa ang rice tariffication bill na ito, marami tayong magagamot na problema. Una na dito ang ating commitment sa WTO (World Trade Organization). Pangalawa, mapapababa natin ang presyo ng bigas sa merkado at matutulungan natin ang ating magsasaka. Kaya lahat dito panalo sa rice tariffication bill na ito," Panganiban said.

Panganiban said the country will have about P29 billion to P30 billion that will directly benefit the rice sector.

The P20 billion will come from the annual rice tariff, while the additional P9 billion from the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"Doon sa P20 bilyon na makokolekta sa taripa, meron na po 'yang percentage kung saan mapupunta gaya ng subsidy sa binhi, pataba, mechanization at subsidy sa pag-improve ng irrigation system," he added.

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# Gov't mulls steps to cushion inflation

**By Efren Montano**

**MEASURES proposed by several economic managers to cushion the impact of inflation on the country would be put in place, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque Jr. announced yesterday.**

In a Palace press briefing, Roque said in a bid to mitigate the effects of inflation, economic managers had a dialogue with heads and representatives of different government agencies, including the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and the Tariff Commission.

During the dialogue, the economic managers, along with the representatives from the different agencies, arrived at a consensus that lowering tariff won't solve the spiking of the prices of goods, Roque added.

"The Committee discussed potential solutions to curb inflation, not limited to tariff modification, taking into account the report on the results of the public hearing," Roque said, citing the economic managers' proposed measures to lessen the effects of inflation.

Included in these proposed measures are allowing importation of galunggong; temporary suspension of Special Safeguard Measures (SSM) on chicken meat imports; closely monitoring the importation of minimum access volume (MAV) quota for pork; regular inspection of commodity importers' warehouses to determine level of inventory with respect to vegetable products like garlic and onion; and closely monitoring the arrival and distribution of NFA rice importations.

As to the fear that formalin-tainted galunggong will infiltrate the country, Roque said this will not happen.

"We will not allow of course the importation of formalin-tainted. We will only allow importation of galunggong provided it is not preserved with the use of formalin," he said.

Meanwhile, the SSM, the Cabinet official said, is levied on goods from countries that give subsidies to their farmers.

"Tinanggal po natin 'yan. Ang resulta niyan bababa po ang taripa na babayaran kung magkakalap po o magiimport ng poultry products," Roque said.The Palace spokesperson likewise announced that the price of onions will be lowered in the next two weeks after the DA arrived at an agreement with red and white onion traders last week.

Balita

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PART 1 of 2

**PARA SA MURANG BIGAS** Mahaba ang pila ng mga nais bumili ng murang bigas ng National Food Authority (NFA) sa palengke sa Commonwealth sa Quezon City, kahapon. Nananatiling mataas ang presyo ng bigas sa mga pamilihan, kasunod ng pagdedeklara ng state of calamity sa Zamboanga City dahil sa rice shortage, habang 130,000 sako ng NFA rice ang binukbok lang sa pagkakaimbak sa Subic, Zambales. **MARK BALMORES**

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PART 2 of 2

# NFA, bubuwagin na?

**Nina BETH CAMIA at VANNE ELAINE P. TERRAZOLA**

**Pinag-aaralan na ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na buwagin ang National Food Authority (NFA).**

Ayon kay Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque, sa ilalim ng isinusulong na rice tarrification bill ay maaari nang mag-angkat ng bigas ang lahat, at lalagyan na lang ito ng taripa.

Sa ganitong paraan, aniya, mawawalan na ng saysay ang NFA, kaya maaari na itong buwagin.

"Ito naman po ang direksiyon na tinatahak natin, dahil iyong panukalang batas na tariffication po, kapag nagkaroon na ng tariffication, pupuwede nang mag-angkat ng mga bigas ang lahat at lalagyan na lang ng taripa," sabi ni Roque.

"Mawawalan po talaga ng saysay na ang NFA. So, patungo na po tayo sa direksiyon na baka mabuwag na nga 'yang NFA, dahil nakikita natin na 'yung mga quota-quota, 'yung monopolya pagdating sa pag-angkat, eh, 'yan po ay hindi nagbibigay ng solusyon sa ating mga problema pagdating sa kakulangan sa ating bigas," dagdag pa niya.

Ito rin ang nakikinita ni Senator Cynthia Villar sa oras na nawalan na ng limitasyon sa rice importation.

Matatandaang kamakailan lang ay pumasa na sa ikatlo ang huling pagbasa sa Kamara ang rice tariffication bill, at sinabi ni Villar titiyakin niya ang pagtalakay ng Senado sa nasabing panukala.

Ayon kay Villar, chairperson ng Senate committee on agriculture and food, kapag ganap nang naging batas ang panukala, pagdedesisyunan na ng Department of Finance kung ang NFA "is still relevant to the system".

Gayunman, tutol si San Jose, Nueva Ecija Bishop Roberto Mallari sa pagbuwag sa NFA, sinabing tanging ang ahensiya lang ang nabibilhan ng mahihirap ng murang bigas.

"Siguro, mahalagang tutukan ng pamahalaan ang pamunuan ng NFA, kasi nakakatulong naman ito sa mamamayan. Dapat maalis 'yung kurapsiyon sa ahensiya para maging maayos ang pamamalakad nito," sinabi ni Mallari sa panayam ng Radio Veritas.

Hinamon naman kahapon ni House appropriations committee chairman Rep. Karlo Nograles si NFA Administrator Jason Aquino na aksiyunan ang patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas at kakulangan nito sa pamilihan.

"The NFA Administrator is right; we legislators should go out in the field and really look into the problems in the rice industry. The short recess of Congress provided an opportunity to go to our markets and learn firsthand about the prices and supplies of rice--and what I discovered is very worrisome," ani Nograles.

Nitong Biyernes ay hinamon ni Aquino ang mga mambabatas na maglibot sa iba't ibang lugar sa bansa upang malaman ang mga isyu tungkol sa bigas.

**May ulat nina Mary Ann Santiago at Bert de Guzman**

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# Importasyon vs inflation

**Inaprubahan ng pamahalaan ang limang hakbangin, kabilang ang pagsuspinde sa special safeguard duty sa mga inaangkat na sibuyas at karne ng manok at masusing monitoring sa pag-aangkat ng gobyerno ng bigas, upang maibsan ang epekto ng lumolobong inflation.**

Ito ang napagpasyahan ng mga economic manager at iba pang opisyal ng Gabinete ni Pangulong Duterte, makaraang tanggihan ang panukalang bawasan ang import tariffs sa isda at karne.

"Nagkaroon na po ng pagpupulong ang ating mga economic managers kasama po ang Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, DOLE, Foreign Affairs at saka ang Tariff Commission, 'no," sabi ni Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque. "Nagkaroon po sila ng desisyon, ang pagbaba po ng taripa ay hindi talaga magbababa ng mga halaga ng mga bilihin, lalo na ang mga pagkain.

"So ang ginawa po nilang mga pamamaraan para po mapababa ang presyo, unang-una nga po iyong pag-approve ng pag-i-import ng galunggong, 'no. So iyan po ay ongoing as we speak," dagdag ni Roque.

Bukod sa pag-aangkat ng galunggong, sinabi ni Roque na pansamantala ring sususpendihin ng pamahalaan ang special safeguard sa ilang inaangkat na sibuyas at karneng manok upang mapababa ang presyo ng mga ito.

Sinabi pa ni Roque na binigyan ng Department of Agriculture ang mga importer ng isang buwan upang ma-maximize ang kanilang import quota allocations.

Magsasagawa rin ng "regular inspections" sa mga bodega ng mga nag-aangkat ng gulay, ayon kay Roque.

Masusi ring tutugaygayan ng pamahalaan ang pag-aangkat ng bigas, ayon kay Roque.

**Genalyn D. Kabiling**

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IMBESTIGADaVe

Dave M. Veridiano, E.E.

# Problema sa bigas kapit-bisig na harapin!

NABIGLA ang lahat, kabi-kabila ang sisihan at pagtuturuan nang biglang mawalan ng "buffer stock" ng bigas sa ilang malalaking siyudad sa Mindanao, at mas lumala ang sitwasyon nang masundan ito nang pagkawala ng rasyon ng murang bigas, na galing sa National Food Authority (NFA), para sa mahihirap at biglang magtaasan ang presyo ng mga "premium" na bigas sa merkado.

Ang sisi at mura na ibinato ng mga tao sa mga tanggapan ng pamahalaan – na siyang dapat managot sa problema – ay agad na ipinasa sa mga negosyanteng nagsu-supply ng bigas sa buong bansa.

At ito ang pinalakpakan ko – bagamat hindi makadepensa sa alegasyong sila ang dahilan ng pagkawala ng bigas sa merkado, kumilos ang mga negosyanteng ito at nagtulung-tulong na umangkat sa "rice miller at dealer" sa ibang bansa upang ibenta ng mura sa ating mga kababayan, sa panahong ito na unti-unti nang lumalaganap ang "krisis" sa bigas.

Ang hindi ko makalilimutan na pakiusap ni Jojo Soliman, pinuno ng Alliance of Grains Industries Stakeholders (AGRIS), sa mga mamamahayag na dumalo sa lingguhang Balitaan sa Maynila sa Bean Belt Coffee sa Dapitan street, Sampaloc: "Kalimutan po muna natin ang sisihan at pagtuturuan. Maraming kababayan natin ang nangangailangan ng tulong, kaya gumawa na po ang grupo namin ng paraan o solusyon sa problema. Nag-import kami ng premium na bigas at ini-repack namin sa tig-10 kilo pakete sa halagang P360 o lumalabas na P36 kada kilo, hamak na halos kalahati sa presyo ng nasa merkado sa ngayon."

Kapuri-puri ang naging pagkilos na ito ng AGRIS, na sa halip na sumalag nang sumalag sa mga ibinibintang sa kanila ay gumawa ng paraan upang kahit papaano ay makatulong sa pamahalaan sa pagharap sa malaking problemang ito na kinakaharap ng ating bansa.

Tama ang paulit-ulit na tinuran ni Jojo – isang batambatang negosyante na sinlaki na yata ng mundo ang problemang sinusuong sa negosyong minana pa niya sa kanyang mga ninuno – na walang mararating at makukuhang solusyon sa pagsisisihan at "finger-pointing" ng mga nasa pamahalaan.

Kaya simula noong Linggo ng tanghali, ay makabibili na ng mura at dekalidad na bigas sa mga palengke sa Maynila muna – at sa buong Metro Manila sa susunod na mga araw.

Ayon kay Jojo, inaangkat ng kanilang grupo ang "premium" white round rice sa Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan, at India. Dagdag na pakiusap niya ay isa-isang supot lang ang pagbili – 'wag mag-hoard sa mga bahay.

Dagdag pa niya, ang kanilang importasyon ng bigas na ito ay umaabot sa lima hanggang pitong milyong sako sa bawat shipment kaya hindi mauubusan ng supply – huwag lang itong i-repack ng mga tusong rice dealer at bagkus ay direkta itong ibenta sa mga consumer. 'Yung mga negosyanteng gustong kumita, ay dumistansiya muna at itigil ang pananamantala, upang makarating ang murang bigas na ito sa mga taong nangangailangan.

Ipinagdiinan naman ni Cathy Estabillo, tagapagsalita ng Bantay Bigas, isang militanteng grupo na nagmo-monitor sa problemang ito sa bansa, na hindi na kailangan mag-import pa ng bigas dahil sa hindi tayo nakasisiguro sa kalidad ng mga ito kapag dumating na sa bansa. Gaya nga sa nangyaring inaamag ang mga saku-sakong imported na bigas sa mga bodega ng NFA bago pa man mailabas sa merkado.

Para naman sa tagapagsalita ng NFA na si Rex Estoporez, hindi direktang masasabing may kakulangan sa supply ng bigas sa bansa kaya tayo umaangkat. Aniya, ay may mga kalagayan kasing pinagbabatayan ang pamahalaan – gaya ng climate change, populasyon, land conversion at ang pagliit ng bilang ng mga magsasaka – kaya napagdesisyunang umangkat ng bigas sa ibang bansa.

*Mag-text at tumawag sa Globe: 0936-9953459 o mag-email sa: daveridiano@yahoo.com*

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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EFFECT

# TARIFF ON RICE TO CURB INFLATION BY 0.4 PERCENTAGE POINT

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendeveraINQ

If passed into law this year, the plan to slap a 35-percent tariff on imported rice and removing the import quota will reduce the inflation rate by up to 0.4 percentage point, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Nestor A. Espenilla Jr. said Tuesday.

Also, Espenilla reiterated during the Second Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines (Ejap) Economic Forum that while the BSP's estimates showed that headline inflation would peak in the third quarter, "it will not probably hit 6 percent."

In July, inflation reached a new high in more than five years of 5.7 percent, bringing the seven-month average to 4.5 percent, above the government's full-year target range of 2-4 percent.

"Supply-side factors are the main drivers of overall inflation. These include rising international oil prices, higher excise taxes and weather disturbances that affected food supply," Espenilla explained.

Last month, the basic jeepney fare increase to P9 from P8 previously as well as higher utility rates jacked up the rate of increase in prices of basic goods and services, the BSP chief added.

Espenilla nonetheless said that "the inflation momentum is slowing down, as headline inflation has generally declined in month-on-month terms from 0.9 percent in January to 0.5 percent in July."

"In particular, after spiking in the first quarter of 2018, the month-on-month changes for electricity, tobacco and sweetened beverages are seen to be slowly tapering off as we head deeper into the third quarter of the year. This supports our analysis that the impact of the excise tax adjustments is transitory," according to Espenilla.

The BSP chief said that the inflation momentum would "continue to lose steam" in the near term and return within the target range by next year.

"The main downside risks to inflation are the following: Slower global economic growth due to protectionist policies in advanced economies; geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, along with potentially lower rice prices resulting from the proposed replacement of quantita-

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TARIFF ON RICE TO CURB INFLATION BY 0.4 PERCENTAGE POINT

FROM B1

tive restrictions (QR) with tariffs and the deregulation of rice imports," Espenilla said.

President Duterte said in his third State of the Nation Address that his administration saw rice tariffication as one solution to ease rising inflation.

"We need to switch from the current quota system in importing rice to a tariff system where rice can be imported more freely. I ask Congress to prioritize this crucial reform, which I have certified as urgent today," the President said last July 23.

Economic managers have been pushing for the amendment of the decade-old Republic Act No. 8178 or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, which had put the rice import quota or so-called QR in place.

In 2014, the WTO allowed the Philippines to extend its QR on rice until June 30, 2017, in a bid to buy more time for local farmers to prepare for free trade in light of the government's goal of achieving rice self-sufficiency.

Last year, Mr. Duterte extended the rice import quota for three more years under Executive Order No. 23.

Since the government imposes a quota on rice imports, domestic prices are vulnerable to shocks resulting from meager supply.

The QR puts the burden of rice supply and demand on the government, whereas market forces are being limited by the quota system.

Analysts said importation should be done by the private sector in order to allow market forces to determine prices.

The extended QR slaps a 35-percent duty on imported rice under a minimum access volume (MAV) of 805,200 metric tons. Importation outside of the MAV limit are levied a higher tariff of 50 percent.

The Philippines' most favored nation rate—the additional tariff imposed when imported outside of Asean—on the commodity remains at about 40 percent. INQ

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# DOF okays donation of smuggled rice

By **ELLSON A. QUISMORIO**

The Department of Finance (DOF) is open to the proposal of Quirino lone district Rep. Dakila Cua to allow the donation of confiscated smuggled rice to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DWSD) to aid victims of recent flooding.

During the House Ways and Means Committee hearing on Tuesday, Finance Undersecretary Karl Kendrick Chua affirmed this.

"The last time we met, I brought it up with DOF Secretary Carlos Dominguez III and he said he is OK with it. We have to look into how to do it," Chua said.

Cua said he initially directed his appeal to Bureau of Customs (BOC) Commissioner Isidro Lapeña.

"I saw in the news that Customs said, it's up to DOF to decide. So can you support us in convincing the Secretary na maybe we can donate the smuggled rice that were confiscated to DSWD?" he asked Chua."At least may maibibigay doon sa mga flood victims (At least we can give something to the flood victims)."

The congressman subsequently asked if Dominguez's approval ▶6

## DOF okays donation... ◀1

could be announced, to which Chua answered, "I will consult with Secretary [since] we are looking at how this could be operated...it's not easy."

But Chua nonetheless said that Dominguez "has no objection."

Cua underscored the urgency of the matter given the heavy rains and flooding earlier this month that affected thousands of Filipinos. "Sayang naman kasi may mga (It is a waste because there are) flood victims all over the country."

Just a few weeks ago, the BOC seized 2,500 tons of white rice at the Manila International Container Port (MICP). The contraband was worth PHP125 million.

"With all candidness, [sometimes the] confiscated rice from smuggling finds its way [back to the smugglers]. [Even if it's not intended by the BOC], these smugglers can use proxies to buy back the rice. Saka nila rin bumabalik eh. So mabuti pa i-donate na natin (It comes back to them. So better to donate it)," Cua explained.

Chua said the DOF secretary" is open to it. So I'll just follow up how we can move this idea faster."

Meanwhile, DSWD Undersecretary for Policy and Plans, FloritaVillar, who also attended the hearing, disclosed during the hearing that the BOC and DSWD actually have a longstanding agreement when it comes to the donation of smuggled food, especially rice.

"I think this is not the first time that the DSWD is being identified. I think there [are] outstanding guidelines on the receipt of donations for use of victims. This is for rice...We have a MOA (Memorandum of Agreement)," she said.

The panel subsequently asked Villar to furnish them with a copy of the MOA so it may help expedite the process with the BOC.

Cua said the proposed donation of smuggled rice is allowed under the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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# URC sees quality sugar output with acquisition of Roxas mill

Universal Robina Corp., the listed snack foods company of the Gokongwei Group, expects to produce more good quality refined sugar with the acquisition of the milling and refinery assets of Roxas Holdings Inc.

URC earlier disclosed it has reached an agreement to acquire the milling and refining assets of RHI and the land assets of subsidiary Central Azucarera Don Pedro Inc. (CADPI) in Batangas.

"The acquisition by URC of the milling and refining assets of CADPI will create synergies in the sugar industry in Batangas that will benefit all stakeholders. This transaction is expected to enhance the capability of URC to produce good quality refined sugar," URC said yesterday.

Under the terms of the sale transaction, URC will acquire all buildings, improvements, machineries and equipment, spare parts and transportation equipment.

The plant is located at Brgy. Lumbangan, Nasugbu, Batangas.

Total raw sugar production in Batangas for crop year 2017-2018 is around 2.6 million 50-kilogram bags, or roughly six percent of the total annual national sugar production.

URC, through its sugar and renewables division, operates six sugar cane mills nationwide, producing raw sugar, refined sugar and molasses. It also operates a 20-megawatt cogeneration plant, a 100,000 liter per day fuel ethanol plant and a 40 tons per day liquid CO2 plant.

"URC strongly believes in the long-term viability of the sugar cane industry in the Philippines and we shall always continue supporting the sugarcane farmers and workers," Gokongwei said.

Under its sugar and renewables division are URC – Passi in Iloilo, URC – Tolong and URC – Ursumco in Negros Oriental, URC –Sonedco in Negros Occidental, URC – Carsumco in Cagayan, and URC – Balayan in Batangas, three of which are integrated with sugar refining facilities.

URC also ventured into the renewables business for sustainability through a cogeneration plant in Kabankalan, Negros Occidental and distillery and CO2 recovery and liquefaction plants in Bais, Negros Oriental. – **Iris Gonzales**

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# 2 BARKO NA KARGADO NG SMUGGLED RICE NASABAT

**BASILAN - NASABAT ng Philippine Coast Guard ang dalawang barko na balak magpuslit ng bigas sa isang isla sa lalawigang ito.**

Aabot sa 22,000 sako ng bigas ang karga ng mga barko sa karagatang sakop ng Tamuk Island.

Nagsasagawa ng Maritime Patrol ang mga tauhan ng Coast Guard sa M/L Overseas at M/L Nadeepa nang matuklasan ang sako-sakong mga smuggled na bigas.

Nang hingan ng papel ay walang naipakitang karampatang dokumento ang mga crew ng dalawang barko.

Agad pinigil ng Coast Guard ang dalawang barko at inasistihan patungo sa Zamboanga City Port.

**EUNICE C.**

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# PAGBUO NG PASILIDAD PARA MAPAIGTING ANG FISH SUPPLY ISUSULONG

**IGINIIT ni Senadora Cynthia Villar ang pagbuo ng mas maraming fishing facilities bilang legislative priority at sinabing kailangan ang marine hatcheries, fish ports, training at research facilities upang matugunan ang kakulangan sa isda at maparami ang supply ng pagkain sa bansa.**

"Building of more facilities to improve our fish farming capabilities is one of the long-term solutions we need in order to improve our productivity. Many of our traditional fishing grounds are getting overfished and we need to create breeding grounds and hatcheries to help arrest the dwindling fish stock," ani Villar.

Binigyan-diin din ni Villar, chairperson ng Committee on Agriculture and Food, na makikita ang kakulangan sa suplay ng isda sa pagtaas ng presyo nito sa merkado lalo na ang galunggong na P140 kada kilo ang iminungkahing retail price subalit ibinebenta ito ng P170 - P200 kada kilo.

"Reports have it that over 70 percent of the world's fish stocks are fully exploited or are already overfished. Overfishing is a major concern globally, with experts issuing warnings that if sustainable fishing is not practiced and oceans are not given time to recover, they could become 'virtual deserts' by 2050 or 32 years from now," sabi pa ni Villar.

Noong Martes, nagsagawa si Villar ng public hearing sa mga panukala para sa pagbuo ng multi-species marine hatcheries sa Zamboanga City, First District ng Nueva Ecija at mga munisipalidad ng Minalabac, Pasacao, Libmanan at San Fernando sa Camarines Sur.

Tinalakay din sa pagdinig ang mga panukala sa pagbuo ng fishports sa Minglanilla, Cebu at Saint Bernard, Southern Leyte pati na ang pagbuo ng fisheries research centers sa Abulug, Cagayan; Balo-I, Lanao del Norte; at sa Aklan Province.

"We want to solve this shortage not only because fish is an important part of the Filipino diet. We also want to take advantage of the ever-inceasing demand for high-value marine species in both local and export markets and to satisfy the world's growing appetite for fish," ani pa Villar.

"With the creation of these hatcheries and more in the future, our people are now assured of a source of food. Through these facilities, we can provide the opportunity to our fisherfolks to undergo training and improve present practices to improve productivity," dagdag pa niya.

Binanggit ni Villar ang pag-aaral ng UN Food and Agriculture Organization na nagsasabing noong nakaraang 20 taon, 70% ng ating fish production ay nanggaling sa ocean at 30% sa aquaculture. Sa ngayon, ang fish production ang 50% wild catch at 50% aquaculture.

Sinabi rin ng Nacionalista Party senator na ang aquaculture production ng Filipinas ay mahigit US$1.58 billion dahil ito ang ika-6 na pinakamalaking producer ng isda sa mundo.

Nagbibigay din ang fisheries sector ng direct at indirect employment sa mahigit isang milyong katao o halos 12 porsiyento ng agriculture sector sa labor force.

**VICKY CERVALES**

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17
Abante
UNA SA BALITA

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# BAKIT GALUNGGONG GUSTO NIYO? MAG-GULAY KAYO! – VILLAR

DATI, itinulak ni Senador Cynthia Villar na ipagbawal ang pagseserve ng unlimited rice.

Ngayon, hinihikayat naman niya ang publiko na tumigil na sa pagkain ng galunggong.

Sa isang ambush interview nitong Martes, binanggit ni Villar na kung marami na ang nagdadalawang-isip na bumili ng galunggong dahil sa kamahalan at pangambang sinabuyan ito ng formalin upang lumabas na sariwa, mas makabubuting huwag na lang kumain ng galunggong ang mga tao.

"Para sigurado na lang, better safe than sorry, huwag na lang tayong kumain ng galunggong," giit ni Villar.

Sinabi pa ng mambabatas na mabubuhay naman ang mga tao kahit walang galunggong dahil sa mga masustansiyang gulay.

"Bakit pa tayo magi-import, maghanap na lang tayo ng alternative kung sinasabi ninyong may formalin ang galunggong. Puwede naman tayong mabuhay nang walang galunggong. Kumain tayo ng gulay," katuwiran ng senadora.

Ang galunggong ang pangkaraniwang inuulam ng mahihirap na pamilya, subalit sa paglipas ng panahon, pamahal nang pamahal ang presyo nito kung saan pumapalo na ito sa P160 hanggang P200 ang bawat kilo, halos hindi nagkakalayo sa presyo ng baboy at manok.

Binanggit naman ni Villar na kaya bumababa ang dami ng mga nahuhuling isda ay dahil halos nauubos na rin ang suplay sa dagat at bunga na rin ng pagsalaula sa kalikasan.

Ipinaliwanag ng senador na kung dati ang 70% ng suplay ng isda ay nagmumula sa dagat habang ang 30% ay aquaculture, ngayon ay 50-50 na subalit nakakapangamba anya na dumating ang panahon na pawang aquaculture na lamang ang panggagalingan ng suplay nito.

Iminungkahi ng senador na magkaroon ng closed season sa pangingisda upang mapahinga ang karagatan at hayaang lumaki ang mga isda bago muling payagan ang paghuli ng mga isda.

Sa isang public hearing ng Senate Committee on Agriculture noong Hunyo 14, 2017, iginiit ni Villar na ipagbawal na ang paghahain ng unlimited rice sa mga restoran.

"Ipagbawal na 'yang unlimited rice, masama 'yan. Ipagbawal na natin 'yang unlimited rice kasi nagkakasakit tayo gawa ng unlimited rice na 'yan. We should learn how to eat vegetables," diin ni Villar.

Subalit matapos kuyugin ng mga netizen, umatras din si Villar at sinabing hindi siya maghahain ng panukalang batas upang ipagbawal ang unli rice. **(Dang Samson-Garcia)**

Tempo
NEWS IN A FLASH
THE NATION'S FASTEST GROWING NEWSPAPER

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# DoF open to donation of smuggled rice to DSWD

By ELLSON QUISMORIO

The Department of Finance (DoF) is open to the proposal of Quirino lone district Rep. Dakila Cua to allow the donation of confiscated smuggled rice to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DWSD), which could then use it to aid victims of recent flooding.

Cua learned this during a House Ways and Means Committee hearing Tuesday that was attended by Finance Undersecretary Karl Kendrick Chua. Cua chairs the panel.

The agenda of the hearing was a discussion on the social benefits program under Republic Act (RA) 10963 or the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law, but Cua grabbed the opportunity to ask the DoF about his earlier proposal in connection with seized smuggled rice.

Cua said he initially directed his appeal to Bureau of Customs (BoC) Commissioner Isidro Lapeña since it was them that possessed the rice.

"I saw in the news that Customs said, it's up to DoF to decide. So can you support us in convincing the Secretary na maybe we can donate the smuggled rice that were confiscated to DSWD?" he asked Chua.

"At least may maibibigay doon sa mga flood victims."

"That's a good point Mr. Chairman," Chua told the House leader. "The last time we met, I brought it up with [DoF] Secretary [Carlos Dominguez III] and he said he is OK with it. We have to look into how to do it."

The congressman subsequently asked if Dominguez's approval could be announced, to which Chua answered, "I will consult with Secretary [since] we are looking at how this could be operated...it's not easy."

But DoF official nonetheless said that Dominguez "has no objection."

Cua underscored the urgency of the matter given the heavy rains and flooding earlier this month that affected thousands of Filipinos. "Sayang naman kasi may mga (It is a waste because there are) flood victims all over the country."

Just a few weeks ago, the BoC seized 2,500 tons of white rice at the Manila International Container Port (MICP). The contraband was worth ₱125 million.

Remate
ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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# Pagtatayo ng fishing facilities, prayoridad

**BIBIGYANG prayoridad ni Senador Cynthia Villar ang pagtatayo ng fishing facilities sa iba't ibang bahagi ng bansa tulad ng marine hatcheries, fish ports, training at research facilities upang makatugunan ang kakulangan ng isda at matiyak ang suplay.**

Sa pahayag, sinabi ni Villar, chairman ng Senate committee on agriculture, na kailangan magtayo ng mga pasilidad para sa pangisdaan sa pamamagitan ng pagsasabatas nito bilang pangmatagalang solusyon sa food security.

Binigyan-diin ni Villar, chairperson ng Senate committee on agriculture and food, na makikita ang kakulangan sa suplay ng isda sa pagtaas ng presyo nito sa merkado lalo na ang galunggong na P140 kada kilo ang iminungkahing retail price subalit ibinebenta ito ng P170 - P200 kada kilo.

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ERNIE REYES

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# Nakumpiskang smuggled rice ipamimigay sa calamity victims

**IPAMIMIGAY na sa mga nasalanta ng kalamidad ang mga nakumpiskang smuggled rice.**

Ito ay matapos magkasundo ang Kamara at ang Department of Finance na ipamigay na lang sa mga biktima ng kalamidad ang mga nakumpiskang smuggled rice.

Naunang iminungkahi ni House committee on ways and means chairman Dakila Cua na ipamigay na lang sa mga nasalanta ng kalamidad ang nabanggit na mga bigas.

Sa pagdining ng komite, sinabi ni Finance Undersecretary Karl Kendrick Chua na pumapayag si Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III na ipamigay sa mga nasalanta ng sunod-sunod na bagyo ang mga nakumpiskang bigas ng Bureau of Customs.

Sinabi ni Chua na pinag-aaralan na ng ahensya kung sa paanong paraan maisasagawa ito.

Ayon naman kay Department of Social Welfare and Development Undersecretary Florita Villar na magsusumite ang kagawaran ng umiiral na guidelines na sinusunod sa pamamahagi ng mga donasyon na bigas mula sa gobyerno.

Nagsumite naman na si Cua ng liham kay Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapeña para hilingin na ibigay na lamang sa DSWD ang nasabat na 50,000 sako na smuggled na bigas.

Ipinauubaya naman ni Lapeña sa DOF at sa National Food Authority ang pag-apruba sa mungkahing ito ni Cua.

**MELIZA MALUNTAG**

BusinessWorld
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# Arabica coffee, sugar extend gains amid thin volumes on Brazilian currency's bounce

NEW YORK — Arabica coffee and raw sugar on ICE Futures US climbed on Monday, supported by a rise in top grower Brazil's currency and after short covering inspired by data showing speculators took record bearish stances.

New York cocoa futures turned lower, bucking the day's move higher in larger markets as the 19-commodity Thomson Reuters CoreCommodity Index rose for the second straight session.

Volume was thin in US soft commodity markets as London-based cocoa, robusta coffee and white sugar futures were closed for a British public holiday.

December arabica coffee was up 1.30 cent, or 1.2%, at $1.06 per pound (/lb) at 11:52 a.m. EDT (1552 GMT).

## SUPPORTING PRICES

Data released after the market closed on Friday showed speculators increased their net short position in arabica futures and options to a record 106,105 contracts, surprising traders and spurring short covering on Monday, traders said.

Also supportive to prices was the Brazilian real's rebound above Friday's two-and-a-half-year low against the US dollar, which discourages producers in the world's biggest producer from selling, traders added.

October raw sugar rose 0.2 cent, or two percent, at 10.43 cents per pound.

Raw sugar futures were also supported by the bounce of the Brazilian currency, traders noted.

Although market participants were not surprised by Friday's data that showed speculators sharply raised their net short position in raw sugar contracts to a record in the week to Aug. 21, the information did attract light short covering on Monday, traders said.

December New York cocoa fell by $21, or 0.9%, at $2,343 per ton, after rising to $2,397, the highest since July 18.

Prices turned lower in what traders described as a corrective move after surging 10% last week, the second-position contract's biggest weekly move since January 2012.

Cocoa prices had neared overbought levels after the market eyed a possible delay in bean deliveries from top grower Ivory Coast after its largest local exporting company was liquidated last month, while concerns about dry crop weather were also supportive to the market, traders said.

The December contract hovered around its 200-day moving average at $2,344. — ***Reuters***

BusinessWorld
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# China's swine fever outbreak may spread in Asia — FAO

BEIJING — An outbreak of African swine fever in China may spread to other parts of Asia, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned Tuesday, as the world's largest pork producer scrambled to contain the disease.

China has culled more than 24,000 pigs in four provinces to stop the disease from proliferating, the FAO said in a statement. The first outbreak was reported in early August.

The FAO said the cases have been detected in areas more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) apart, meaning it could cross national borders.

"The deadly pig virus may spread to other Asian countries anytime," the FAO said.

The "diverse geographical spread of the outbreaks in China have raised fears that the disease will move across borders to neighboring countries of Southeast Asia or the Korean Peninsula where trade and consumption of pork products is also high," it added.

China reported its first case of the disease in northeast Liaoning province earlier this month.

Last week, the eastern city of Lianyungang announced it had culled 14,500 pigs in an attempt to check the disease's spread.

"The movement of pig products can spread diseases quickly and, as in this case of African swine fever, it's likely that the movement of such products, rather than live pigs, has caused the spread of the virus to other parts of China," explained Juan Lubroth, FAO's chief veterinarian.

African swine fever is not harmful to humans but causes haemorrhagic fever in domesticated pigs and wild boar that almost always ends in death within a few days.

There is no antidote or vaccine, and the only known method to prevent the disease from spreading is a mass cull of the infected livestock.

In a report to the World Organization for Animal Health, Beijing said an emergency plan had been launched and control measures taken to halt the spread of the disease.

The FAO warned in May of the risk of the spread of African swine fever from Russia.

Around half of the world's pigs are raised in China, and the Chinese are the biggest consumers of pork per capita, according to the FAO. — ***AFP***

Malaya
Business Insight

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# Wheat at 1-month low; soybeans extend losses

SINGAPORE- Chicago wheat futures ticked higher on Tuesday but the market was still trading near last session's one-month low as selling by investors kept a lid on prices.

Soybeans and corn lost ground to extend losses into a second session, weighed down by expectations of a record harvest for both crops in the United States.

The most-active wheat contract on the Chicago Board of Trade gained 0.1 percent to $5.22-3/4 a bushel, but was not far from Monday's low of $5.21-3/4 a bushel, the weakest since July 25.

Corn was down 0.3 percent at $3.60-1/2 a bushel and soybeans gave up 0.4 percent to $8.45 a bushel.

Commodity funds were net sellers of CBOT wheat, corn, soybean and soymeal futures contracts on Monday and net buyers of soyoil, traders said. –***Reuters***

The Manila Times

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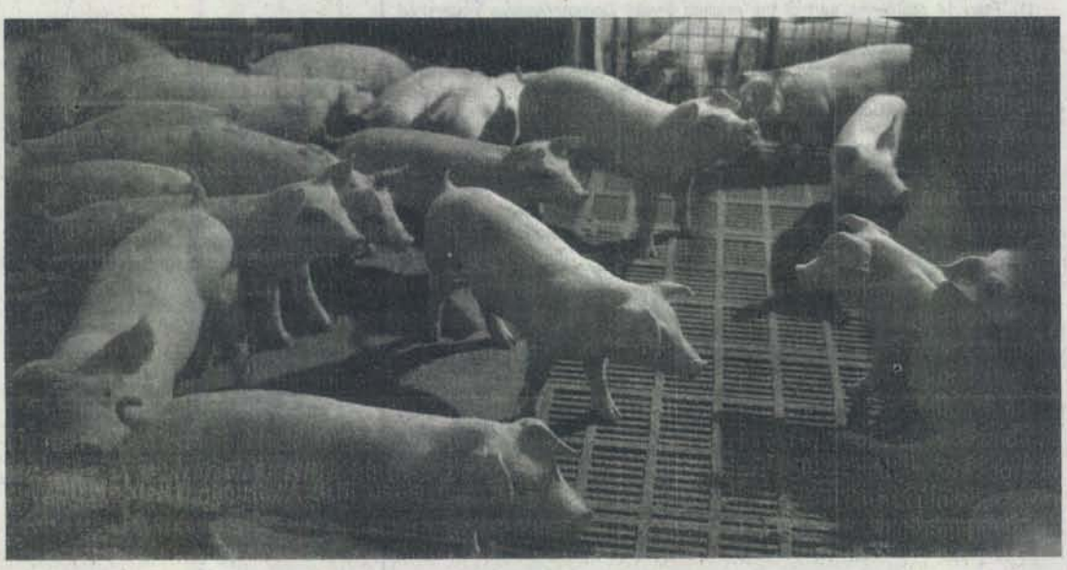

**DISEASED PIGS** This file picture taken on August 10, 2018 shows piglets standing in a pen at a pig farm in Yiyang county, in China's central Henan province. AFP PHOTO

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
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Manila Standard

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# China culls 24K pigs amid feared disease outbreak

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## China...

*From A1*

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