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(May 17, 2022)

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

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Pagbabago ng agrikultura at pangisdaan ng bansa

Sa pagdiriwang ng Buwan ng Magsasaka at Mangingisda, sabay na inilulunsad ang National Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization and Industrialization Plan o NAFMIP 2021-2030 – na bubuo ng isang balangkas tungo sa maunlad na sektor ng pagsasaka at pangisdaan para sa kasalukuyan at mga darating pang panahon.

Ang NAFMIP ay magsisilbing gabay sa pagpapatupad ng OneDA Reform Agenda sa pakikipagtulungan ng pambansa at lokal na pamahalaan, pribadong sektor, mga namumuhunan, at iba pang mga kasama sa pagsasaka at pangisdaan.

Layunin ng NAFMIP na himukin ang pagkakaisa tungo sa mas malusog na Pilipinas, mas maunlad na mga magsasaka at mangingisda, at mas matatag na agrikultura laban sa pagbabago ng klima at mga di-inaasahang krisis.

Magsisilbi itong gabay upang higit na pagbutihin ang sistema ng pagkain sa bansa, mula sa pagpaplano, pagtatanim, pag-ani, paghahanda, pagproseso, pagdala sa merkado, hanggang sa pag-recyle at tamang pagtatapon.

Ang NAFMIP ay magiging patnubay ng bansa upang sama-samang kamtin ang ating pangarap para sa masaganang ani at mataas na kita.

Ano ang bumubuo sa NAFMIP?

1. Commodity Systems Plan – naglalahad ng mga konsepto, estratehiya at mga programa, proyekto at aktibidad kung saan ang pagpaplano, pagbabadyet, at pagpapatupad ay hindi lamang nakatutok sa iisang produkto.

2. Regional Plans – naglalahad ng papel ng bawat rehiyon sa inaasahang pagbabagong-anyo na hahantong sa agri-industriyalisasyon at modernisasyon sa loob ng 10 taon ng pagpapatupad nito. Nagbibigay din ito sa bawat rehiyon ng pisikal at sektoral na profile para sa pagpaplano at kontribusyon sa pagkamit ng mga output sa buong sektor.

3. Functional Plans – nagpapakita ng mga sistema para sa "Centrally-supported Decentralized Services Delivery"na bubuo at maghahatid ng mga serbisyong pang-agrikultura't pangisdaan sa panahon na pagpapatupad ng plano.

NAFMIP
2021 - 2030

Isang Pilipinas na may matibay na seguridad sa pagkain at mga magsasaka at mangingisdang may maunlad at masaganang buhay!

Tempo
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MAY 17, 2022
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Buwan ng Magsasaka at Mangingisda

"Modernisasyon at Industriyalisasyon tungo sa masaganang ani at mataas na kita."

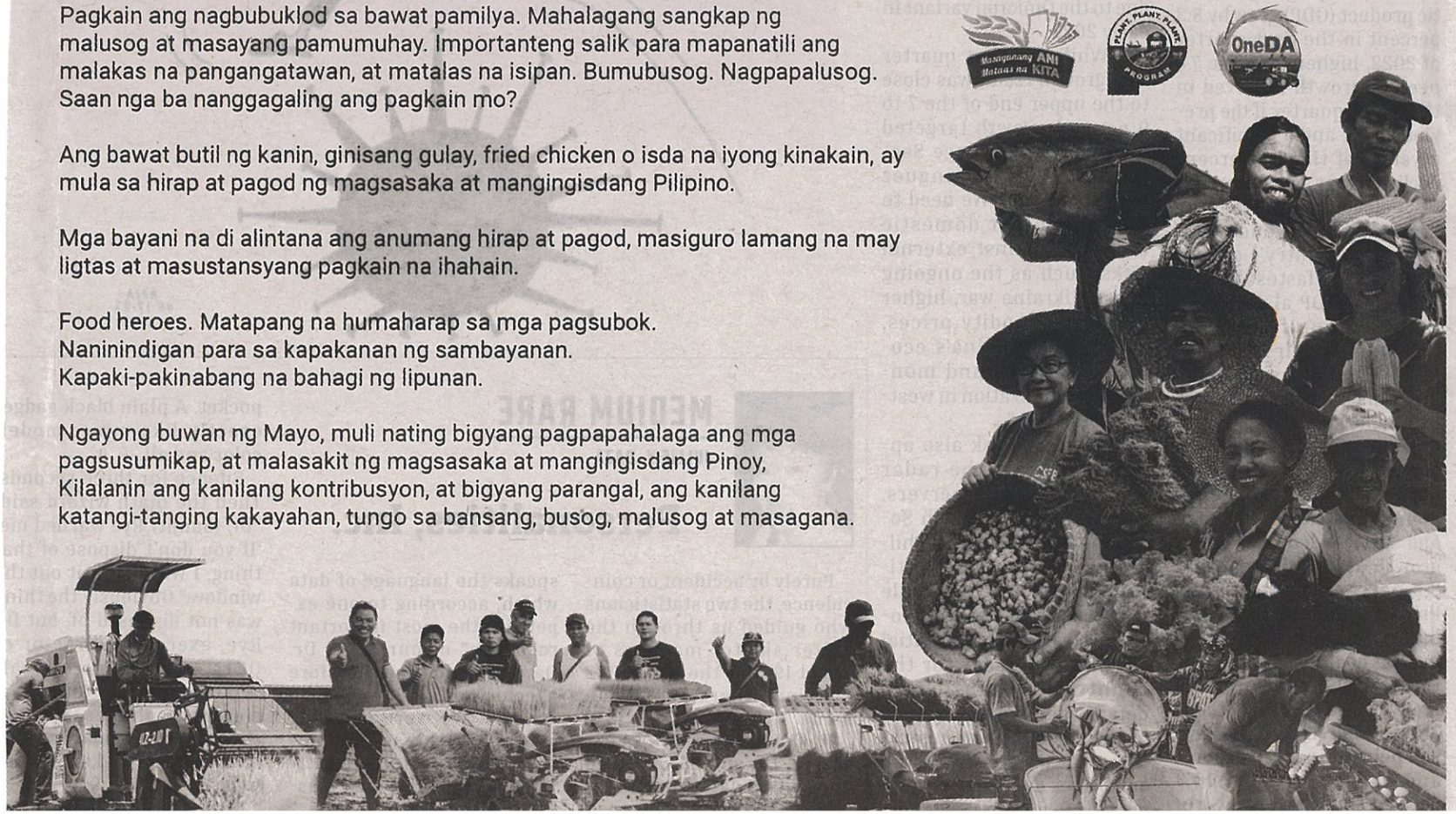
Pagkain ang nagbubuklod sa bawat pamilya. Mahalagang sangkap ng malusog at masayang pamumuhay. Importanteng salik para mapanatili ang malakas na pangangatawan, at matalas na isipan. Bumubusog. Nagpapalusog. Saan nga ba nanggagaling ang pagkain mo?

Ang bawat butil ng kanin, ginisang gulay, fried chicken o isda na iyong kinakain, ay mula sa hirap at pagod ng magsasaka at mangingisdang Pilipino.

Mga bayani na di alintana ang anumang hirap at pagod, masiguro lamang na may ligtas at masustansyang pagkain na ihahain.

Food heroes. Matapang na humaharap sa mga pagsubok.
Naninindigan para sa kapakanan ng sambayanan.
Kapaki-pakinabang na bahagi ng lipunan.

Ngayong buwan ng Mayo, muli nating bigyang pagpapahalaga ang mga pagsusumikap, at malasakit ng magsasaka at mangingisdang Pinoy, Kilalanin ang kanilang kontribusyon, at bigyang parangal, ang kanilang katangi-tanging kakayahan, tungo sa bansang, busog, malusog at masagana.



The Manila Times®

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Zambo bans entry of pork products

BY AL JACINTO

ZAMBOANGA CITY: A SUSPECTED outbreak of the African swine fever (ASF) here has forced the local government to ban the transport or entry of live hogs and pork products including its by-products from Vitali district to prevent it from spreading.

The Office of the City Veterinarian (Ocvet) has requested the police and military to put up a checkpoint in the village of Tagasilay as it awaits confirmation of the series of tests it conducted at some villages in Vitali.

The Bureau of Animal Industry under the Department of Agriculture is yet to declare the outbreak of the disease.

Vitali is one of seven veterinary districts composed of the villages of Tigbalabag, Taguiti, Tumitus, Vitali, Tagasilay, Mangusu, Tictapul, Limaong, Licomo and Sibulao.

Aside from the checkpoint in Tagasilay, the local government also maintains another checkpoint in the village of Licomo at the boundary of Zamboanga Sibugay province.

City Veterinarian Dr. Mario Arriola urged the public not to resort to panic buying and for businessmen not to jack up prices of pork products. He said the Ocvet, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture and Department of Trade and Industry, will intensify price monitoring of pork products and strengthen surveillance and census initiatives.

The local government previously said that it investigated the mysterious deaths of swines in at least three villages for fear that the ASF had reached Zamboanga.

Members of the Zamboanga City African Swine Fever Task Force also convened to address the issues and concerns surrounding the unusual hog mortalities since April in the villages of Pasonanca, Pasobolong and Mangusu.

Mayor Maria Isabelle "Beng" Climaco-Salazar has ordered a strict border control to prevent the entry of the deadly swine disease. Climaco-Salazar underscored the need for the immediate adaptation of the National African Swine Fever prevention program to protect Zamboanga from the dreaded animal disease and also to protect the swine industry and stakeholders.

City veterinary personnel continue to inspect and conduct disinfection of trucks transporting live hogs and other animals to Zamboanga, the mayor said, adding that strict protocols are also being observed to monitor and regulate the entry of hog and pork products here as a measure against the spread of the contagious animal disease.

The ASF virus is transmitted by direct contact, ingestion of garbage or swill feeds containing unprocessed infected pig meat or pig meat products, ticks and biting flies, and contaminated premises, vehicles, equipment and clothing. While not a human health threat, the ASF is capable of annihilating the entire swine industry. No vaccine or treatment exists to combat the virus.

Manila Standard

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DTI: Lowering rice price to P20 a kilo possible, but needs study

THE campaign promise of presumptive president Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to reduce retail price of rice to P20 or P30 is "possible," but needs careful study, an official of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said on Monday.

"Maybe we can study it then it's possible that we can lower the (rice) prices)," DTI Undersecretary Ruth Castelo said in a television interview.

"I remember in 2018, we studied rice prices and we set it at P35. It was upon the initiative of DTI with the help of the DA (Department of Agriculture), but at that time, our time was too short. We're moving fast to give proper prices so it was at P35," Castelo added.

"Maybe we can do it again, if we will thoroughly study how we can lower the prices," she pointed out.

Latest data from the DA showed that local rice prices in Metro Manila ranged from P38 to P50 per kilo, while imported rice was sold at P37.00 to P52.00 as of April 13, depending on the variety.

Marcos had said he would recommend a price cap on rice and mandate government agencies to serve as middlemen in the procurement of harvests under his administration.

DTI's stance echoed the remarks of Socio-economic Planning Secretary Karl Kendrick Chua who earlier said Marcos' campaign promise was possible, but warned that it might be problematic if the support for farmers comes in the form of subsidy that does not relate to outputs.

"If we are going to use taxpayers' money solely to subsidize without conditions and without any productivity measures, then that's a bad idea," Chua stressed.

Meanwhile, Castelo said Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez was preparing for the transition of the department to its next leaders under the incoming administration.

Malaya
Business Insight

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Duterte signs 'Timbangan ng Bayan' centers law

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte has signed several bills into law, including a measure institutionalizing the establishment of "Timbangan ng Bayan" centers in public and private markets in the country.

The President on April 13 signed Republic Act (RA) No. 11706, a consolidation of Senate Bill 1241 and House Bill 3255 that was passed by the Senate on January 31 and the House on February 2, respectively, which also amended RA 7394 or the Consumer Act of the Philippines. Copy of the law was only released by Malacanang yesterday.

RA 11706 mandates the use of government-installed weighing scales in all public and private markets, including supermarkets, flea markets and grocery stores, to allow people to check the accuracy of the quantity or measurements of their purchases.

It directs market or mall supervisors to maintain and safekeep the weighing and measuring instruments, and to maintain a record of every product found to be lacking in quantity and substandard.

The new law also adopts the prohibited acts under Article 64 of the Consumer Act that are applicable to Timbangan ng Bayan instruments.

Among the "Fraudulent Practices Relative to Weights and Measures" prohibited under Article 64 of the Consumer Act include: any person other than the official sealer or his duly authorized representative to place or attach an official tag, seal, sticker, mark, stamp, brand or other characteristic sign used to indicate that such instrument of weight and measure has officially been tested, calibrated, sealed or inspected.

It also prohibits the imitation; altering; re-using; selling or using fake, altered or counterfeit seal, sticker, mark, stamp, brand, tags; use of any false scale, balance, weight or measure, whether sealed or not; give short weight or measure in the making of a scale; misrepresent the weight or measure, among others.

Violations of RA 11706 will be penalized with a fine of P50,000 to P300,000 or imprisonment of one to five years. Two successive violations of provisions under the Consumer Act automatically result in the cancellation of the business permit of the erring individual or business establishment.

The Departments of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and Trade and Industry (DTI), in coordination with the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, the League of Provinces of the Philippines, League of Cities of the Philippines, League of Municipalities of the Philippines and other relevant government agencies shall promulgate the rules and regulation to effectively implement RA 11706.

The President on April 27 signed RAs 11734, 11735 and 11736 establishing a central multi-species marine hatchery in Sta. Lucia in Puerto Princesa in Palawan, Batad in Iloilo, and Basilisa in Dinagat Island, respectively.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Department of Agriculture (BFAR-DA) will oversee the establishment and operation of the marine hatcheries, and transfer the supervision of the hatcheries in Puerto Princesa and Dinagat Island to the local government units (LGUs) concerned after two years.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

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Dominguez defends rice import liberalization law

By Ben O. de Vera and Jordeene B. Lagare
@Team_Inquirer

President Duterte's chief economic manager has warned against moves to repeal the rice tariffication law (RTL), pointing to its benefits to Filipino consumers such as the big reduction in rice prices as more imports were allowed into the country.

According to Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, rice is currently sold at an average of P39 a kilo—cheaper by about P7 than prices in 2018 when short supply triggered prices of the staple to skyrocket to about P46.

The high inflation mainly caused by expensive rice in 2018 led to the enactment of Republic Act No. 11203 or the RTL in 2019. It removed the import quota or so-called quantitative restriction slapped on rice, which for decades protected local producers and raised the debts of the state-run National Food Authority (NFA).

Before the new law removed the NFA's commercial function, the agency had accumulated about P165 billion in debt as it intervened in the market by selling cheaper "NFA rice" varieties that it bought at higher prices.

"The NFA monopolized rice importations before the (RTL), with a few private traders granted import permits that enabled them to control the price and supply of rice through hoarding and other manipulative practices. With the (RTL), the role of the NFA has been limited to ensuring emergency rice stocks exclusively procured from local palay growers," Dominguez said in a statement.

The NFA was also granted about P11 billion in tax subsidies yearly from 2005 to 2018, but rice prices did not go down as much.

In 2018, before the RTL took effect, Dominguez said the retail price of regular-milled rice spiked to P46.04 per kilo, but after the law took effect, the average price of this rice variety went down to P39.13 as of April 2022, or cheaper by P6.91 per kilo.

"Freed from local entrenched interests that took advantage of the protectionist policy on rice for decades, this staple food is now more affordable, especially for low-income Filipinos who spend about 16 percent of their total household budget on rice," Dominguez said.

URBAN FARM Farmer Joey Bernardino walks through a rice paddy at Barangay Krus na Ligas in Quezon City in this 2021 photo. Bernardino and his family, together with other urban farmers of Krunali (Krus na Ligas) Farm and in collaboration with the Grow QC Movement, planted palay in this 2-hectare land to benefit their community. —LYN RILLON

Failed attempts

"The (RTL) was finally achieved after more than 30 years of failed attempts under previous administrations. The law opened up the Philippine rice market and, in turn, reduced the price of our country's staple food for more than 100 million Filipinos," said Dominguez, who was a former agriculture secretary during the administration of the late President Corazon Aquino.

Dominguez pointed out that these past few years, rice was no longer a major contributor to inflation.

With the private sector now given a free hand in importation, the government was also able to raise P40.4 billion in import duties—P12.1 billion in 2019, P9.3 billion in 2020, and P18.9 billion in 2021—from rice from March 2019 to December of last year.

As of April this year, the government through the Bureau of Customs collected P46.6 billion from rice import tariffs.

In its 2021 annual report published early this month, the Department of Finance (DOF) said rice import duties had "assured the government of continuous and sufficient financing support for the P10-billion yearly rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF)" for farmers badly hit by the entry of cheaper imports.

In particular, the RCEF was being "used exclusively to finance programs that will sharpen the competitiveness of palay growers by way of providing them with easy access to fertilizer, farm machinery and equipment, high-yield seeds and cheap credit; and offering them skills training programs on farm mechanization and modern farming techniques," it said.

Due to the RCEF, it noted that more than a million farmers have enjoyed access to 13,499 units of farm equipment and "thousands more units are on their way to more farmers."

"Tens of thousands of rice farmers, and farmer cooperatives and associations have also attended workshops, technical briefings, and training sessions in 90 newly established and 43 enhanced farm schools all over the country," the DOF report added.

A separate report last week of the interagency, Cabinet-level Economic Development Cluster chaired by Dominguez said that "the rice tariffication law is also expected to accelerate agricultural growth and facilitate the structural transformation of the economy with gross domestic product (GDP) increasing by at least 0.13 percent in 2025," citing estimates of the National Economic and Development Authority.

Opposition

However, presumptive President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. had said during the campaign that an administration under him would reduce the price of rice to P20 to P30 a kilo and review the RTL for supposedly making life harder for Filipino farmers.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) also refuted the claims made by the DOF, arguing that the price of rice just slightly decreased from the time the government had control over rice imports.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, FFF said prices of regular milled rice now averaged P37.60 a kilo, lower than P39.02 in 2016 and P39.52 in 2017.

"Although RTL allowed the entry of cheaper imported rice, the savings were mostly captured by importers and traders and were not passed on to consumers. Also, most of the imports were for premium rice grades for sale to well-off consumers, not the more affordable grades that NFA used to import for the poor," said FFF national manager Raul Montemayor.

"That is why poor consumers today are actually paying almost the same as in 2016 and 2017. To top it off, the P27/kilo rice that [NFA] used to distribute has disappeared from the market," he added in a statement.

The group claimed that economic managers were primarily responsible for the crisis in 2018, saying "they conspired in the NFA Council to prevent the NFA from replenishing its inventories until its stocks had shrunk to zero."

The FFF is appealing to the incoming administration to undertake a "serious and factual review of the RTL and to amend the law as deemed necessary." INQ

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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SHOW 'UNITY' CALL IS SINCERE

FARMERS TO MARCOS JR.: ENSURE RETURN OF COCO LEVY

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
@dtmallarijrINQ

LUCENA CITY—As the country's farmers celebrated the feast of their patron, San Isidro, on Sunday, coconut farmers challenged presumptive president Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to finally resolve the issue of the multibillion-peso coconut levy fund.

Danny Carranza, secretary general of national farmers' group Kilusan Para sa Tunay na Repormang Agraryo at Katarungang Panlipunan, on Sunday said Marcos Jr. should acknowledge that the coco levy fund was "stolen" from coconut farmers during the strongman rule of his late father and namesake, Ferdinand Marcos, and that it should be returned to its "real owners."

He also called on Marcos Jr. to fulfill his campaign promise of "unity" in favor of the marginalized sectors, particularly the small coconut farmers.

"[Marcos Jr.] must ensure that small coconut farmers benefit from the coco levy fund," Carranza said in an interview on Monday.

Doubts

Carranza said coconut farmers had been doubting the sincerity of Marcos Jr. as he had been harping on the good records of his late father's administration during the campaign.

"If he doesn't acknowledge that something wrong happened in the past, how can he rectify it? That's the reason small coconut farmers are worried. Marcos Jr. must treat the coco levy fund as stolen," Carranza said.

A total of P9.6 billion was collected from coconut farmers from 1971 until 1983 under the older Marcos' rule. After Marcos Sr. was ousted from power in 1986, all coco levy-acquired assets were sequestered by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG).

Based on various lawsuits after the dictator fled, it was discovered that the collected levy fund was used to invest in, and buy businesses for, the benefit of Marcos and his cronies, notably the late business tycoon Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., then defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile, and the late Clara Lobregat, among others.

Ironic

The coconut levy fund, now with the government, was estimated to be around P100 billion, at least P75 billion of which is in cash and the rest in assets, such as coconut mills. In 2012, the Supreme Court ruled that the fund belonged to the government for the benefit of coconut farmers.

Carranza said he found it ironic that Marcos Jr. would now be the one to implement the Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act (Republic Act No. 11524) that was signed by President Duterte on Feb. 26, 2021.

The law created a trust fund for the country's coconut farmers and aimed to benefit some 3.5 million coconut farmers who own not more than 5 hectares of land and belong to the poorest sector in the country.

"This is the paradox; that we've been saying. The coco levy fund was taken during the time of Marcos. Coconut farmers went after it after the Edsa [revolution], and were promised that they would get it back, but the issue now falls into the hands of the son," Carranza said.

Under RA 11524, a Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan is to be crafted by the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA).

Farmers' groups demanded stronger participation in the utilization of the fund but the sector only secured three of the nine seats on the PCA board. The other six members were from various government agencies.

"We hope that it will never happen that the Marcos' cronies will again benefit from the coco levy fund," Carranza said.

Carranza said all projects that would be funded and implemented under RA 11524 should be transparent for the sake of the 3.5 million coconut farmers spread in approximately 3.6 million ha of agricultural land in the country, dominating the landscape in 68 out of 81 provinces. INQ

THE LONG WAIT Coconut farmers in the village of Robocon in Linamon, Lanao del Norte province, in this photo taken in June 2019, eke out a living by manually drying their harvest into copra while waiting for the benefits due them from the coconut levy fund. —RICHEL V. UMEL

Pilipino Star
NGAYON
Diyaryong disente ng masang intelihente

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P20 kada kilo ng bigas posible - DTI

Ni DANILO GARCIA

Posible naman umanong maipatupad ang 'campaign promise' ni presumptive President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na ibaba sa P20 ang kada kilo ng bigas ngunit sinabi ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) na kailangang magdahan-dahan dito dahil kailangang masusi pang pag-aralan ang lahat ng implikasyon nito.

Ayon kay DTI Undersecretary Ruth Castelo, noong 2018 ay pinag-aralan nila ang pagpapababa sa presyo ng bigas ngunit dahil sa maiksi ang panahon ng kanilang pag-aaral ay naibaba lamang nila ito sa P35 kada kilo.

"Baka ito pwede pa rin kung talagang pag-aaralan pa natin nang husto paano siya mapapababa," ayon kay Castelo.

Sa kasalukuyang datos mula sa Department of Agriculture (DA), naglalaro ang presyo ng lokal na bigas sa Metro Manila mula P38 hanggang P50 kada kilo at ang imported na bigas ay nasa P37-P52 kada kilo.

Sa pangako nitong nakaraang kampanya, sinabi ni Marcos na maaaring maibaba hanggang P20 ang presyo ng bigas kung ang ahensya ng pamahalaan ang magsisilbing 'middlemen' sa pagbili ng mga ani ng mga magsasaka.

Samantala, naghahanda na rin ang DTI para sa transisyon ng tungkulin sa papasok na bagong administrasyon at mga bagong opisyales ng ahensya.

Isa sa nais ni Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez na ituloy ng darating na bagong lider ng DTI ay ang pagpapalakas at pagamiyenda sa Consumer and Price Act para mas mabigyang proteksyon sa pagmamalabis ang mga konsyumer.

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
Everybody's Newspaper

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Liberalized rice trading lowers staple food price for Filipinos

MANILA – The passage and implementation since 2019 of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) has slashed prices of the country's staple food to the current average of PHP39 per kilogram (kg) or a reduction of about PHP7 per kilogram compared to its cost in 2018 when it peaked to a per-kilo retail cost of around PHP46.

Freed from local entrenched interests that took advantage of the protectionist policy on rice for decades, this staple food is now more affordable, especially for low-income Filipinos who spend about 16 percent of their total household budget on rice.

President Rodrigo Duterte signed the RTL into law on Feb. 14, 2019 as Republic Act 11203. The law, which later took effect on March 5, 2019, replaced rice import quantitative restrictions with tariffs.

"The Rice Tariffication Law was finally achieved after more than thirty years of failed attempts under previous administrations. The law opened up the Philippine rice market and, in turn, reduced the price of our country's staple food for more than 100 million Filipinos," Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III said in a statement Sunday.

As a result of this reform, which he first proposed three decades ago when he was Agriculture Secretary, rice is no longer a main contributor to inflation, Dominguez said.

"It took the strong political will of the President for rice tariffication to finally happen for the benefit of our consumers," he added.

With rice made affordable through the RTL, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) estimates that three years from now, the proportion of malnourished children and population at risk of hunger in the country would be reduced by 2.8 percent and 15.4 percent, respectively.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III (File photo)

These estimates are equivalent to around 2.1 million less people at risk of hunger and malnutrition, the NEDA said.

In 2018 before the RTL took effect, the retail price of regular-milled rice (RMR) spiked to PHP46.04 per kg. After RTL, the average price of this rice variety went down to PHP39.13 as of April 2022, or cheaper by PHP6.91 per kg.

Another key benefit of RTL is the flow of billions of pesos in funds to the agriculture sector through the creation of the PHP10-billion Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), which is used exclusively to finance programs that will sharpen the competitiveness of palay growers by way of providing them with easy access to fertilizer, farm machinery and equipment, high-yield seeds and cheap credit; and offering them skills training programs on farm mechanization and modern farming techniques.

Under the RTL, all import duties collected from rice imports beginning March 5, 2019 go to the RCEF and other agriculture modernization programs.

In the first four months of 2022 alone, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) already collected PHP6.6 billion in duties from rice imports, which is already two-thirds of the PHP10 billion earmarked annually for RCEF.

The National Food Authority (NFA) monopolized rice importations before the RTL, with a few private traders granted import permits that enabled them to control the price and supply of rice through hoarding and other manipulative practices.

With RTL, the role of the NFA has been limited to ensuring emergency rice stocks exclusively procured from local palay growers.

Dominguez said that with rice tariffication, the government was able to handle the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) crisis "with strength on the food security front."

He said that despite logistical restrictions resulting from the mobility restrictions or lockdowns imposed nationwide to protect people and communities from the pandemic, the government was able to sustain the flow of produce from local farms to Filipino consumers.

The agriculture sector was "one of the brightest spots" of the Philippines' response to the pandemic owing in large part to the RTL, Dominguez added.

PEOPLES JOURNAL Tonight

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BFAR to determine 'jellyfish' species in Boracay

By CORY MARTINEZ

SAMPLES of jellyfish found ashore on the whole stretch of White Beach in Boracay last Saturday were taken for laboratory testing to determine their species.

Officer-in-Charge (OIC) Director Evelyn Abad of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Aklan Provincial Fisheries Office said the jellyfish were small and appeared to be newborn jellyfish.

The BFAR has also advised the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) in Region 6 to get samples in case of a recurrence and note the time these were observed.

According to the Boracay Inter-Agency Rehabilitation and Management Group (BIARMG), the presence of jellyfish in the whole stretch of White Beach was reported at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 14.

By 5:00 p.m., the jellyfishes have washed away, and no recurrence was observed on Sunday morning.

According to the initial assessment of BFAR Aklan, the jellyfish is a natural occurrence in the coastal areas of the province from May to September and is dependent on the direction of the wind.

Meanwhile, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna said the BIARMG has coordinated with the BFAR Aklan regarding the incident.

"The safety of the public is our primary concern. We want to assure the locals and the tourists that the DENR, as chair of the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force, is closely working with the BFAR as part of our responsibility in the rehabilitation of the island," Sampulna said.

BIARMG General Manager Martin Despi said thumb-sized jellyfish were seen in all three stations of the White Beach, particularly in the waters and on the beach area, and in Angol and Diniwid, but these were washed out in the late afternoon.

"Yesterday (Saturday), the wind direction was southwest or 'habagat' towards the White Beach. This caused the jellyfish to accumulate in the beach area," said Despi.

As of Sunday morning, May 15, Abad said that the team they sent reported that the White Beach, from stations 1 to 3, is clear of jellyfish and has almost no trace of Saturday's incident.

Despi, on the other hand, added that the lifeguards have advised tourists not to swim in the affected area should there be a recurrence.

Abante TONITE
MABILIS SA BALITA
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NEWS BRIEF

₱20 per kilo bigas hindi bumenta sa mga magsasaka

Imposible umano ang pangakong P20 kada kilong bigas ni presumptive president Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr., ayon sa isang samahan ng mga magsasaka.

"Sa balangkas at sa umiiral na batas na Rice Tariffication o Rice Liberalization Law imposible," Ani Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas chairman emeritus Rafael 'Ka Paeng' Mariano sa panayam sa TeleRadyo kahapon.

"'Yong P20 per kilo sa balangkas ng mga patakarang neoliberal tulad ng umiiral na mga patakaran ng liberalisasyon, deregulasyon... imposibleng makamit," giit nito.

Binigyang-diin ni Mariano na kailangang bigyan ng subsidiya ng gobyerno ang produksyon ng palay kung nais nilang mapababa ang presyo ng bigas.

"Ia-address mo 'yong presyo ng farm inputs eh. Meron kang subsidiya doon sa farm inputs -- binhi, abono, at iba pa. At dapat ang farm gate price, ang presyo ng palay sa bukid, 'pag inani ng magsasaka, eh 'yong competitive naman," paliwanag niya.

"Ibig sabihin, sabi ko nga, kung mapapababa 'yong cost to produce isang kilo ng palay sa P6, P8 katulad sa Thailand at saka sa Vietnam, ibenta man nang -- kunin 'man 'yon ng P16, so meron na agad P8... na puwedeng dagdag sa kita ng magsasaka natin. **(Issa Santiago)**

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WORLD BRIEFS

Wheat prices hit record high after Indian export ban

PARIS—Wheat prices surged to a new record high on Monday after India decided to ban exports of the commodity as a heatwave hit production. The price jumped to $453 per ton as the European market opened. Global wheat prices have soared on supply fears since Russia's February invasion of agricultural powerhouse Ukraine, which previously accounted for 12 percent of global exports. The spike, exacerbated by fertilizer shortages and poor harvests, has fueled inflation globally and raised fears of famine and social unrest in poorer countries. —AFP