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*Photo:* Tons of rice

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# Marcos assures price of rice will stabilize

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

**P**RESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has assured the public that the price of rice will stabilize soon, as harvest starts in major palay-producing regions in the country.

In a video message posted by the Presidential Communications Office on Friday, Marcos said the government is closely monitoring the supply and price of rice.

"Binabantayan namin nang mabuti ang pag-supply ng ating bigas at pagbantay sa tumataas na presyo ng bigas (We're closely watching the supply of rice as well as its price)," the President said.

He said he has been informed that the rice harvest has begun in Nueva

Ecija, Isabela and North Cotabato.

Marcos, who also heads the Department of Agriculture, said the government is looking closely at the farmgate price, but expressed confidence that the price of rice will stabilize once there is an abundant supply and enough reserve of the staple.

Last week, Marcos said the country's rice stock could last even after the El Niño episode next year.

➤RiceA2

"The rice situation is manageable and stable. There is enough rice for the Philippines up to and after the El Niño next year," he said.

Agriculture Undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Leo Sebastian said an estimated 900,000 metric tons (MT) of rice have been harvested in Isabela, Nueva Ecija and North Cotabato.

The farmers in these provinces planted in May, earlier than in other rice-producing regions.

The palay yield will peak in late September to October, contributing largely to the country's second semester (July to December) production, estimated at more than 11 million metric tons, he said.

"Barring strong typhoons in the coming months that may adversely affect Central and Northern Luzon, we are aiming to harvest up to 11.5 million metric tons in

the second semester of the year. This would breach the 20-million-metric-ton national palay production, making it a record, being the highest in the country's history," Sebastian said.

During last week's meeting, Agriculture Undersecretary Mercedes Sombillo said that even with the low scenario with the assumption of a maintained level of production, the projected ending stock for 2023 is 1.96 million MT, enough for 52 days.

Sombillo said the ending stock projection based on Philippine Statistics Authority data presents an even better scenario, with the ending stock projected at 2.12 million MT, which would last for 57 days.

The palay harvest season traditionally starts in September and lasts until November.





# Marcos sees more stable rice prices

Harvests in Isabel, Nueva Ecija, North Cotabato to stabilize supply

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS and JEL SANTOS

**P**resident Marcos is optimistic that the prices of rice will stabilize as harvest starts in major palay-producing regions.

Marcos, who serves as Agriculture secretary in concurrent capacity, said

this in a video message uploaded to the social media channels of the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) on Friday morning, Aug. 18.

In his message, the President assured the public that the government is closely monitoring the supply and price of rice in the country.

"Binabantayan namin ► **3**



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## Marcos sees more stable rice prices 1◀

nang mabuti ang pag-supply ng ating bigas at pagbantay sa tumataas na presyo ng bigas (We're closely watching the supply of rice and if its price is increasing)," he said. "Mayroon naman tayong balita na nagsimula na ang pag-aani sa Nueva Ecija, sa Isabela, at saka sa North Cotabato. Ito'y magdadagdag sa supply natin (We received word that harvest already started in Nueva Ecija, Isabela, and North Cotabato. This will add to our supply)."

Agriculture Undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Leocadio Sebastian said the three provinces have so far produced 900,000 metric tons (MT) of rice.

The farmers in the three provinces were able to plant early in May, or earlier than other rice-producing areas in terms of harvest operations, he said.

According to the DA, the initial harvest of rice from the current wet season crop will take place until September.

### Rice harvest to peak in September

Sebastian said rice harvest will peak in late September to October, contributing largely to the country's second semester (July to December) production which is estimated at more than 11 million metric tons (MMT).

"Barring strong typhoons in the coming months that may adversely affect Central and Northern Luzon, we are aiming to harvest up to 11.5 MMT in the second semester of the year," the agriculture official said. "This would breach the 20-million MT total national palay production, making it a record, being the highest in the country's history."

Marcos said they were monitoring the farmgate price, but added he is confident that the price of rice will stabilize once there is an abundant supply and enough reserve of the food staple.

"Babantayan namin nang mabuti para tiyakin na ganon ang mangyari (We will monitor that closely to ensure that will happen)," he said.

Last week, President Marcos assured the public that the country has enough rice stock to last even after the looming dry spell next year.

"The rice situation is manageable and

stable. There is enough rice for the Philippines up to and after the El Niño next year," he said.

### PSA reports shrinking rice supply

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that there was less rice available in the country at the beginning of April.

Based on PSA's latest report, the rice inventory was 1.843 million metric tons at the beginning of that month, a decrease of 26.5 percent compared to 2.506 million metric tons in the same period last year.

Out of the total inventory, households had 1.015 million metric tons of rice, which accounted for 55.1 percent. This is a decline of 26 percent from 1.373 million metric tons last year.

Commercial warehouses stored about 728,730 metric tons of rice, which is a decrease of 26.9 percent from 997,420 metric tons last year. This represents 39.5 percent of the overall inventory.

The National Food Authority (NFA) depositories held 99,030 metric tons of rice, accounting for 5.4 percent of the national total. This is also 27.1 percent lower compared to 135,870 metric tons in the previous year.

Compared to March, the national rice inventory registered a significant increase of 30.8 percent from 1.409 million metric tons.

Month-on-month, the household sector posted a growth of 25.1 percent in rice stocks, while the commercial sector saw an increase of 47.4 percent.

In contrast, the rice stocks in NFA depositories decreased by 3.9 percent compared to the previous month.

In response to the expected impact of the El Niño phenomenon, Agriculture Undersecretary Mercedita Sombilla had earlier proposed importing 500,000 metric tons of rice from November to January next year.

Sombilla said the importation aims to ensure an adequate rice supply during the El Niño period.

According to the agriculture official, approximately 200,000 hectares of paddy fields may go uncultivated, leading to a potential loss of around 500,000 metric tons of rice output.

Sombilla also recommended that the private sector import 300,000 metric tons by the end of August and an additional 300,000 metric tons by the first to the second week of September, taking into account the upcoming harvest season in October. (With a report from Chino Leyco)





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# Rice inventory down 26.5%

## *But BBM sees stable prices as harvest begins*

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

The country's rice inventory continued to decline, dropping by 26.5 percent in April, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

President Marcos, however, said rice prices in the country are expected to stabilize as harvest in major palay-producing regions has started.

In its latest rice and corn stocks inventory report, the PSA said total rice stocks inventory stood at 1.84 million metric tons as of April 1, lower than the 2.51 million MT registered in the same period a year ago.

In contrast, the current inventory is 30.8 percent higher than the 1.41 million MT registered the previous month.

Households accounted for the bulk of the inventory or 55.1 percent at 1.015 million MT, followed by commercial warehouses with a 39.3 percent share at 728,730 MT, while supplies from the National Food Authority (NFA) depositories cornered a 5.4 percent share at 99,030 MT.

Compared to the previous year's level, rice stocks in households declined by 26 percent.

Rice stocks in commercial warehouses also declined by 26.9 percent.

In contrast, stocks in NFA depositories decreased by 27.1 percent.

On a monthly basis, rice stocks in households increased by 25.1 percent.

Stocks in NFA depositories also increased by 47.1

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## HARVEST SEASON STARTS

### MARCOS: GOV'T WATCHING RICE PRICE MOVEMENTS

By Nestor Corrales  
@NCorralesINQ

As authorities reported rice prices spiking to P56 a kilo, President Marcos assured consumers that the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) are now "closely monitoring" price movements to stop manipulation.

In a video message released by the Presidential Communications Office on Friday, the President explained that farm-gate prices are already elevated because of preharvest demand and the increased costs of fertilizer.

But agricultural officials also noted that the farmers in Nueva Ecija, Isabela and North Cotabato have begun harvesting their crops and that should stabilize prices soon.

"We are closely monitoring the rice supply and the rising prices of rice," Mr. Marcos said in Filipino. "We will watch it closely to make sure

that happens."

The Chief Executive has ordered the DA and DTI to step up price monitoring after prices were reported to have spiked to P56 per kilogram.

Based on the DA's price monitoring, the prices of imported commercial rice ranges from P46 to P65/kg, while local commercial rice was at P40 to P62/kg in Metro Manila, depending on variety on quality.

Rex Estoperez, deputy spokesperson for the DA, explained on Thursday that their latest data showed that the cheapest prices of rice ranged from P38 to P40/kg, but some were selling the same cheap varieties at P50/kg.

Aside from monitoring the suggested retail prices of prime commodities, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual said in a media forum on Thursday that the DTI would also launch three food terminals in Metro Manila as part of the agency's food logistics plan. **INQ**





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## PBBM BANTAY SA SUPLAY, PRESYO NG BIGAS

BINABANTAYAN ng Malacañang ang farmgate price ng palay pati na rin ang presyo mismo ng bigas sa harap ng ulat na nagsisimula na ang anihaan sa mga probinsya.

Binanggit ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang farmgate price at ang imported rice na siyang nagpapataas umano sa presyo ng bigas sa bansa.

"Ang binabantayan siyempre natin 'yung farmgate price dahil 'yun ang nagpapataas sa presyo ngayon pati 'yung pag-import ng mga ibang inputs at saka ng bigas mismo," wika ng Pangulo.

Kumpiyansa si Pangulong Marcos na magiging matatag ang presyo ng bigas sa sandaling dumami na ang suplay at sapat ang reserba ng gobyerno.

Batay umano sa ulat na nakarating sa Pangulo, iba-iba ang presyo ng bigas sa mga pamilihan depende sa klase nito.

Hanggang sa kasalukuyan ay pinamumunuan ni Pangulong Marcos ang Department of Agriculture (DA).

Samantala, inihayag ni DA Under-

secretary Leo Sebastian na nagsimula na ang anihaan ng palay sa Isabela, Nueva Ecija at North Cotabato na tinatayang magbibigay ng 900,000 metriko toneladang bigas.

Inisyal na pag-aani pa lamang aniya ito dahil ang talagang panahon ng anihaan ay sa Setyembre pa kaya ang maa-gang ani ang magpupuno sa kailangang suplay ng bigas upang tumatag ang presyo nito.

Kapag wala aniyang pumasok na bagyo sa bansa sa mga susunod na buwan ay maaaring makuha ang target na hanggang 11.5 metro tonelada ng bigas.

"Barring strong typhoons in the coming months that may adversely affect Central and Northern Luzon, we are aiming to harvest up to 11.5 MMT in the second semester of the year. This would breach the 20-million MT total national palay production, making it a record, being the highest in the country's history," ayon pa kay Sebastian. (Aileen Taliping/Prince Golez)



## PBBM: Rice supply to stabilize in harvest season

THE government is closely watching rice supply and prices in the country, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said on Thursday as he assured the public of stable supply of the staple as harvest starts in major palay-producing regions.

"Binabantayan namin nang mabuti ang pag supply ng ating bigas at pagbantay sa tumataas na presyo ng bigas at mayroon naman tayong balita na nagsimula na ang pag-aanisa Nueva Ecija, sa Isabela, at sa North Cotabato," President Marcos said.

"Kaya't ito'y magdadagdag sa supply natin. Ang binabantayan syempre natin'yung farmgate price, dahil'yunang nagpataas sa presyo ngayon at pati'yung pag-import ng mga ibang inputs at sakang bigas mismo," he added.

The President expressed optimism that rice prices will stabilize once there is abundant rice supply and enough reserve.

"Babantayan namin nang mabuti para tiyakin na ganon ang mangyari," he said.

Dr. Leo Sebastian, undersecretary for rice industry development of the Department of Agriculture (DA), also said the initial harvest of palay from the three provinces will augment the supply of rice and stabilize the price of the staple.

He said the harvest has started in the provinces of Isabela, Nueva Ecija and North Cotabato, producing an estimated 900,000 metric tons (MT). The initial harvest of palay from the current wet season crop will take place until September.

PCO





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**FRESH FISH** – Freshly caught fish from the Manila Bay are sorted upon arrival at the Bulungan Fishport in Parañaque City on Friday, August 18, 2023. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture (DA) will import tons of fish to augment national supply in the last quarter of the year. (Wendy Macabunga)



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**TONS OF RICE** — A stevedore unloads sacks of rice on Friday, Aug. 18, 2023 to a warehouse in Tondo, Manila. President Marcos supports the review of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) or Republic Act 11203 to restore the regulatory powers of the National Food Authority (NFA) amid issues on rice supply and price increase. (Wendy Macabunga)





## Farmers' group to charge NFA, DA officials over India 'mission'

By **BELLA CARIASO**

Charges will be filed before the Office of the Ombudsman against officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and National Food Authority (NFA) who are part of a "mission" in India to exempt the Philippines from the latter's rice export ban, farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) chairman Rosendo So said yesterday.

In an interview with **The STAR**, So said that during the inquiry of the House committee on agriculture and food chaired by Quezon Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga, NFA administrator Robert Bioco failed to attend the hearing on the rice supply as he is on an official mission in India.

"It prohibited the NFA from favoring certain importers in the private sector. The question is why

are the NFA (officials) in India when they are not allowed to import," So said, referring to the provisions of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) or Republic Act 11203 prohibiting NFA from importing.

Aside from Bioco, the DA has confirmed that Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Operations Arnel de Mesa is also part of the delegation.

"We will file cases against them before the Office of the Ombudsman just like what we did in 2018 when they used the budget for the procurement of palay in the importation of rice," So noted.

SINAG charged former NFA administrator Jason Aquino and accounting services department manager Gerry Ambrocio for technical malversation and graft before the ombudsman over the questionable use of P5.1 billion.

"The NFA is favoring

certain importers. These were the same individuals who were included in the meeting in Malacañang," So said, adding that at least five importers attended the stakeholders meeting with President Marcos recently.

So added that the DA and the NFA should instead consult with the millers and farmers to determine if there is shortage in the supply of the staple food.

"During the hearing, (Agriculture Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Regulations) Usec (Mercedita) Sombilla assured us that there is no shortage in the supply of rice. (Agriculture Undersecretary) Usec. (Leocadio) Sebastian also mentioned that the local palay production is high. What are they doing in India?" he asked.

"Why did they pick certain importers whose

identities are even questionable? Are these five favored importers acting as dummies?" So asked.

According to So, based on the information from NFA during the panel's hearing, the agency still has a remaining P8.5-billion budget for the procurement of palay.

"The P8.5-billion budget can be used to procure at least 447,368 metric tons of palay or 290,789 metric tons of rice stocks," So added.

So said the NFA can boost its buffer stock if it will be able to procure at least 290,789 metric tons of rice.

"Our daily consumption is between 32,000 and 35,000 metric tons. The stocks of NFA will improve if the P8.5-billion funding will be used for buying of palay from the farmers," he said.

The current remaining stock of the NFA is pegged at only 46,000 metric tons good for around 1.3 days.





## Galunggong price reaches P150/kilo

By BELLA CARIASO

A fish traders' group yesterday confirmed an upward trend in the retail prices of *galunggong* (round scad) as the wholesale price reached P150 per kilo.

In a radio interview, Association of Fresh Fish Traders of the Philippines president Jonjon Santos said the

supply of fish was affected by the recent Super Typhoon Egay and enhanced southwest monsoon.

"Our supply is very erratic as the volume of fish catch of our commercial fishers varies. Sometimes we sell 15,000 tubs at night. There are times we can only sell 5,000. So the

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## Galunggong

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prices are erratic," Santos said.

He added that the retail price of round scad in the Metro Manila markets is pegged at more than P200 per kilo.

"The wholesale price of *galunggong* is high at P150, that is why when the fish reaches the markets, the retail price is already more than P200," he said, adding that the current supply of round scad is also comparable with the supply of *tamban*.

"The current situation in Palawan in terms of production of *galunggong* is the same as in Zamboanga in terms of *tamban*," Santos added.

At the same time, Santos said the local fish traders backed the decision of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to import 35,000 metric tons of fish to ensure that the supply of fish is enough during the three-month closed fishing season.

"We support the importation during the closed fishing season from November to January as we don't have much fish production at that time, as long as it is calibrated so that it will not affect the producer of aquaculture and municipal water,"



A Bulungan Fish Port vendor in Parañaque shows freshly caught fish from Manila Bay yesterday.

ERNIE PEÑAREDONBDO

Santos added.

He likewise noted that small-scale fishermen in Zambales are affected by the presence of Chinese vessels in the West Philippine Sea.

"Our fishermen in Zambales usually fish near the West Philippine Sea, but their catch is affected by the pres-

ence of Chinese vessels. The contribution of our small scale fishermen is vital in our supply," he noted.

Based on the monitoring of the Department of Agriculture, the retail price of local round scad ranged between P200 and P280 per kilo; imported round scad, P200 per kilo.



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BUT HIGHER THAN MARCH STOCK LEVELS

## PH RICE, CORN INVENTORY DECLINED IN APRIL

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

The country's rice and corn inventory declined substantially in April this year as household and commercial sectors stored less of these staple Filipino grains, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed.

The statistics agency recorded rice stocks of 1.84 million metric tons (MT) as of April 1, 26.5 percent lower than 2.51 million MT in the same period last year, its latest report showed.

But on a monthly basis, this reflected an upward increment of 30.8 percent from 1.41 million MT on March 1.

All sectors—household, commercial and the National Food Authority (NFA) depositories—registered declines in their stockpile.

The household sector stored 1.02 million MT, a decrease of 26 percent. The commercial sector's buffer shrank by 26.9 percent to 728,730 MT while that of NFA depositories sank by 27.1 percent to 99,030 MT.

Households account for more than half of rice stocks at 55.1 percent, followed by the commercial sector at 39.5 percent and NFA depositories, 5.4 percent.

Latest figures from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed that the Philippines procured 2 million MT of imported rice as of Aug. 3, with Vietnam accounting for almost 90 percent of the total.

In Metro Manila, retail prices have increased. Local rice ranged from P41 to P62 per kilogram as of Thursday against P38 to P50 per kg a year ago, according to the Department of

Agriculture's price monitoring.

Imported rice retailed from P46 to P65 per kg compared to last year's P38 to P50 per kg.

Meanwhile, corn inventory sustained a downturn of 36.1 percent to 496,740 MT from 777,370 MT year-on-year.

However, this represented an expansion of 41.1 percent from 352,040 MT a month ago.

Corn kept in households dwindled by 42.8 percent to 102,880 MT while the commercial sector slashed its buffer by 34.1 percent to 393,850 MT.

About 79.3 percent of the corn stockpile came from the commercial sector and the remaining 20.7 percent from households.

Currently, the tariff rate for imported rice was at 35 percent both for in-quota and out-quota imports effective until Dec. 31 this year. **INQ**



Petmalu ang dalawang kargador sa lakas magbuhat ng mga sako ng bigas sa Dagupan, Tondo, Maynila nitong Biyernes. Nagpahayag ng suporta si Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos na repasuhin ang Rice Tariffication Law para ibalik ang awtoridad ng National Food Authority (NFA) sa gitna ng mga isyu sa suplay ng bigas at pagtaas ng presyo nito. (Jonas Sulit)



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## **IRR sa paggamit ng tropical fabric sa uniporme ng gov't offices, ilulunsad ng CSC**

Ilulunsad ng Civil Service Commission (CSC) ang inanyendahang Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) para sa Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9242, o ang Philippine Tropical Fabrics (PTF) Law, na nagtatakda ng paggamit ng Philippine tropical fabrics para sa opisyal na uniporme ng mga opisyal at empleyado ng gobyerno sa darating na Agosto 30, 2023.

Inaasahan namang dadalo ang mga opisyal at kinatawan ng PTF Inter-Agency Technical Working Group (TWG) na binubuo ng Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Textile Research Institute (DOST-PTRI), ang Department of Agriculture-Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (DA-PhilFIDA), at ang Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Si Senadora Loren Legarda, ang

pangunahing may-akda ng batas ay maghahatid ng mensahe ng suporta.

"This amendment is a product of our consultative efforts and deliberations aimed at promoting and supporting the local textile industry and instilling patriotism among civil servants. The CSC is proud to spearhead this initiative," pahayag ni CSC Chairperson Karlo Alexei Nograles.

Ang PTF Law na nilagdaan noong Pebrero 10, 2004 ay nag-aatas sa lahat ng eligible government officials na tumatanggap ng clothing allowance para sa kanilang office uniforms na gamitin ang Philippine Tropical Fabrics para sa kanilang opisyal na kasuotan at para sa mga pangangailangang may kaugnayan sa tela sa mga upisina at gawain ng gobyerno.

Maaaring may mga eksepsiyon na pinahihintulu-

tan para sa mga partikular na kinakailangan, tulad ng mga uniporme ng bumbero, kasuotang pang-sports, bulletproof vests, atbp., sa mga kaso kung saan ang mga katangian at pamantayan ng mga tropikal na tela ay hindi nakakatugon sa kinakailangang pamantayan.

Sa ilalim ng batas, ang mga tropikal na tela ay tinukoy bilang "those containing natural fibers produced, spun, woven or knitted and finished in the Philippines."

Ang terminong "natural textile fibers" ay sumasaklaw sa iba't ibang fibers o filament na nagmula sa mga halaman o gulay.

Alinsunod sa binagong IRR, ang mga hibla na ito ay kinabibilangan ngunit hindi limitado sa abaca, saging, pinya, sutla at kawayan. Magkasama, ang mga hibla na ito ay bumubuo ng mga natural na bahagi ng PTF. (Joy Cantos)

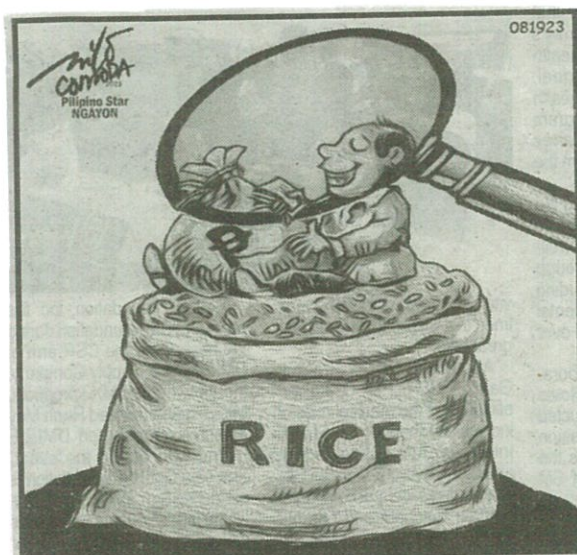


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### Editorial

## Tinatago ang bigas?

**N**AGHAHATID ng pangamba ang pahayag ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na kaya sobra ang mahal ng bigas ngayon ay sapagkat posibleng itinatago ng mga tusong negosyante. Hindi naman daw dapat magmahal ang presyo ng bigas. Ganun-man, sinabi ng DA na gumagawa na raw ng hakbang ang pamahalaan para ma-monitor at mapababa ang presyo ng bigas sa pamilihan. Isang paraan daw para mapababa ang presyo ng bigas ay ang pag-angkat. Kung talagang kailangan daw ay mag-iimport ang bansa.

Nasa P56 na ang bawat kilo ng bigas sa mga palengke at umaaray na ang mamamayan. Dati raw ay P35 hanggang P40 ang bawat kilo ng bigas pero nagtaka sila sapagkat biglang tumaas ang presyo. Dati raw ay nakakabili sila ng limang kilong bigas pero ngayon ay dalawang kilo na lang ang kaya ng kanilang pera.

Ang pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas ay sumabay naman sa pagtaas ng ilang pangunahing bilihin gaya ng isda, karneng baboy at manok. Noong nakaraang linggo, napabalita na magtataas ng presyo ang sardinas.

Sa kasalukuyan, pinag-aaralan ang kahilingan ng transport groups sa dagdag na pasahe sa dyipni. Bunga ito ng sunud-sunod na oil-price hike. Sa susunod na linggo ay may nakaamba na namang pagtaas ng gasoline, diesel at kerosene. Kung magpapatuloy pa, ang kawawa ay ang mahihirap na karampot ang kinikita.

Ang pinakamabigat na problema sa lahat ay ang pagmahal ng bigas na dapat ay solusyunan agad ng DA. Una nang pinangako ni President Ferdinand Marcos, tumatayo ring DA secretary na magiging P20 ang kilo ng bigas. Sunod sinabi niya sa SONA na hahabulin ang hoarders at smuggler ng agri products. Nasaan na ang mga pangakong ito?

Kung totoo ang sinabi ng DA kaya nagmamahal ang bigas ay dahil sa hoarders, bakit hindi dakmain ang mga ito? Sampolan ang mga ganid na hoarders na pumapatay hindi lamang sa ekonomiya kundi pati sa mamamayan.

Hangga't walang naipakukulong na hoarders at smugglers, hindi magkakaroon ng katuparan ang pangakong masaganang pagkain para sa mga Pilipino. Kabaliktaran ang mangyayari na ang mga gahamang hoarder at smugglers lamang ang mangingibabaw sa bansang ito.



## Growth in Q1 rice yield due to 'convergence' efforts -- NIA

THE National Irrigation Administration (NIA) on Thursday attributed the 3 percent growth in rice production during the first half of the year to the collaborative efforts of government agencies.

NIA chief Eduardo Guillen said the right assistance given to the farmers is also the main factor in achieving the increase.

"Well, the first thing is that we are starting to deliver the right assistance to our farmers at the right time. This is the order of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. The NIA is now working closely with the Department of Agriculture (DA), so that we can deliver farm input assistance, including farm machinery, at the right time," he said at the Laging Handa briefing.

"We hope that in the next cropping season, more people will benefit from the produce of our farmers, with the right input and receive it at the right time," he added.

Guillen also cited the convergence efforts initiated by the President between NIA, Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and DA.

"We asked the DA, because the NIA has identified areas that we can irrigate. So we said to them, give us a high-yielding variety, (hybrid crops), so that instead of, for example, our farmers' yield of only four tons, it will double, it will become eight tons," he said.

He noted that new technologies and systems in place would help address the effects of El Niño.

"And we have a new technology or system here at NIA that is being implemented now, what we call the alternate wetting and drying system where we can save around 30 percent on our irrigation and the yield of our farmers is even better. Just the proper cooperation of the national government agencies and of course, all our stakeholders so that even if we call something El Niño, we can still address it regardless of the areas that are not irrigated," he said.

"Just because there is less water, it doesn't mean they cannot plant. We have also identified those varieties that we can plant there like corn, we have high-value crops that we can plant," he added.

He said the warm weather brought by El Niño would be beneficial to rice crops.

"It's sunnier when it's El Niño, which means that the rice likes it more, the sunnier, the higher your yield will be, as long as irrigation is sufficient. The target areas we identified with the DA for farm clustering, we can really irrigate them," Guillen said.

He said the government is on the right course as various national government agencies are ready to provide better services to the farmers.





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## *Fish supply to be augmented soon—BFAR*

By **CORY MARTINEZ**

THE supply of fish products in the country will soon be augmented with the arrival of the first tranche of the imported frozen round scad, big-eye scad, mackerel, bonito and moonfish for wet markets in October.

The Bureau of Fish-

eries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) made this assurance, saying the importation of fish products is being implemented through Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 259.

To clearly and efficiently implement the FAO 259, Department of Agriculture Senior Un-

dersecretary Domingo Panganiban issued Memorandum Circular No. 36, Series of 2023 which contains the implementation of FAO 259 in relation to the importation of said fish products for the period of Oct. 1, 2023 to Dec. 31, 2023.

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### **FISH**

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In the memorandum circular, only importers who were able to register with the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) shall qualify to participate in the importation under the Certificate of Necessity to Import (CNI) of 35,000 metric tons (MT)

of frozen round scad, big-eye scad, mackerel, bonito and moonfish for wet markets for the given period.

In the same circular, the importers who were able to register with PFDA must also be compliant with the qualifications and requirements under FAO 259 and the said memorandum circular.



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## Rice, corn inventory down at start of April, says PSA

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

**T**HE country's rice and corn inventory both posted decreases in April, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The government's inventory report showed that the country's total rice stocks as of April 1, 2023 was estimated at 1.84 million metric tons (MT).

"This indicates an annual decline of -26.5 percent from its level of 2.51 million metric tons in the same period of the previous year," the PSA said.

Rice stocks in households, which accounted for 55.1 percent of the total, fell by 26.0 percent to 1.01 million MT

from last year's level of 1.37 million MT.

National Food Authority rice stocks declined by 27.1 percent with 99,030 MT posted at the start of April 2023.

Stocks held by the commercial sector was at 728,730 MT, declining by 26.9 percent from the previous year's 997,420 MT.

In relation to March 2023's level of 1.41 million MT, the latest rice inventory grew by 30.8 percent.

The PSA also said that country's total corn stocks inventory was logged at 496,740 MT, indicating an annual decrease of 36.1 percent from the 777,370-MT level in April 2022.

A decrease was noted in corn stocks held by households, going down by 42.8 percent or to 102,880 MT from the previous year's inventory of 179,890 MT.

Commercial corn stocks, which accounted for 79.3 percent of total stocks, fell by 34.1 percent to 393,850 MT.

On a month-on-month basis, overall corn stocks inventory recorded an increase of 41.1 percent compared with March 2023 corn stock level of 352,040 MT.

Michael Ricafort, chief economist at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., attributed the decline in inventories to the increasing demand as the economy reopened toward normalcy.

"Some hedging of requirements for rice and corn may have happened earlier this year to frontload requirements and secure supply of buyers before prices go up further in anticipation for risk of El Niño drought later this year up to early next year," he said.

Ricafort noted that reduced production and exports of rice, corn and other grains by some Asian countries due to the dry spell could have also reduced local inventories.





## Negros Occ logs zero hog deaths

BACOLOD CITY – After almost daily hog deaths since April, Negros Occidental recorded zero swine mortalities in the past week.

Provincial veterinarian Placeda Lemana said this is a “welcome development” even as she stressed the need for continuous surveillance of areas affected by swine diseases.

The provincial animal biosecurity incident management team said 17,801 deaths due to various swine diseases, including African swine fever, were recorded as of Aug. 10.

Hog industry losses in Negros Occidental have reached P199.5 million.

Swine diseases have affected 153 barangays in 20 towns and cities in the province.

The provincial government procured 74,000 doses of hog cholera vaccines worth P2.96 million under its animal health support program.

The vaccines are intended for hog raisers in Kabankalan, Sipalay, Ilog, Candoni, Hinobaan and Cauayan.

At least 12,000 doses were distributed on Thursday.

Free-range chicks were also distributed as an alternative source of livelihood to affected hog raisers.

Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson said the provincial government would also provide cash assistance.

– Gilbert Bayoran



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'DEMISE' OF STRUGGLING INDUSTRY FEARED

## SUGAR PRODUCERS BUCK LIBERALIZATION, TAX HIKES

Local sugar groups are opposing the proposal to liberalize the importation of the sweetener, saying the government should instead provide additional support to the struggling industry.

"What sugar producers need is more government programs to boost our production and lower our production costs, and more conducive import and taxation policies, which supports and protects our farmers," Aurelio Gerardo Valderrama Jr., national president of Confederation of Sugar Producers Associations (Confed), said in a statement.

He added that while Confed recognizes the need to generate more revenues to boost government coffers, it should not be done at the expense of local sugar producers.

For its part, Cocoy Barrera, executive director of Philippine Sugar Millers Association

(PSMA), said the liberalization of sugar imports "would lead to the demise of our industry."

"Not only will the excise tax on sugar-sweetened beverages be raised, but also in succession, beverage producers will be granted permission to bring in foreign-produced sugar to offset the increase in cost stemming from the higher excise tax," Barrera said.

Both Confed and PSMA expressed their gratitude to lawmakers for filing a resolution opposing the Department of Finance's proposal to allow food and beverage manufacturers to directly source sugar, considering its negative impact on the sector.

"The domestic sugar industry has been starved of the much-needed government support," House Resolution No. 1199 said.

"Instead of remedying this injustice, the DOF proposes to liberalize sugar importation that will

further compound the ills of the domestic sugar industry," it said.

The resolution cited a 2021 study commissioned by the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), which stated that deregulating sugar importation "would favor the rich more than the poor" at "a clear cost" to industry stakeholders.

The Neda study recommended a gradual and partial sugar trade liberalization amid severe distortions in the global sugar market.

It said there was a "modest" gain to overall society of P2 billion or 1.8 percent from full sugar liberalization.

"Fully liberalizing trade in sugar would predictably hurt planters and millers whose profits are projected to decline by 57 percent, while consumers gain in welfare by up to 65 percent," the study said.

—JORDEENE B. LAGARE INQ





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### **P90M bulok na karne, isda nasilat sa bodega**

Sinalakay ng Bureau of Customs at Department of Agriculture ang isang malaking warehouse sa M. Naval Street Navotas City.

Dito nadiskubre ang labing walong cold storage na naglalaman ng mga expired na isda at karne na nabubulok at nangangamoy na.

Tinatayang nasa 360,000 kilo ang mga nasabat na agricultural product tulad ng karne, baboy, baka, manok at galunggong na may katumbas na halagang P90 milyon.

Binigyan naman ng BOC ng 15-araw ang warehouse para patunayang nagbayad sila ng buwis sa pamamagitan ng import document.

Kung mabibigo ay bibigyan sila ng warrant of seizure and detention. (Natalia Antonio)





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# Agriculture information system pushed

NOTING the devastation caused by Typhoons Egay and Falcon, which impacted many provinces and resulted in millions of pesos worth of agricultural damage and losses, Senator Sherwin Gatchalian emphasized the need for a robust agriculture information system (AIS) which can help farmers increase their productivity and assure adequate food supply in the market even with weather interruptions.

Gatchalian said the country's vulnerability to weather disturbances such as typhoons should prompt the government to adopt an agriculture information system that would prevent any artificial shortages which can affect prices.

According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), agricultural damages due to the recent typhoons were estimated to be almost P3 billion and has affected some 117,000 farmers and fisherfolk, leaving over 140,000 hectares of crop area damaged.

"We want to support our kababayans not only in the short and medium term but also in the long run. We expect that through the creation of the AIS, the livelihood of our farmers will be more organized and the problem of hunger in the country will be resolved," said Gatchalian.

The lawmaker has filed Senate Bill No. 1374, which seeks the establishment of an AIS that would enable farmers to find their markets and sell their output where there is demand.  
*Camille P. Balagtas*