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# Marcos orders agencies to control rice prices

By ALEXIS ROMERO

All available legal tools should be used to control the prices of rice and ensure that the staple is readily available to the poor, President Marcos said in an order to all agencies after a sectoral meeting at Malacañang yesterday.

In a Facebook post, Radio Television Malacañang (RTVM) said Marcos, also the agriculture secretary, had expressed concern over the price of rice although the supply of the commodity remains sufficient based on the most recent outlook by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"The Chief Executive directs all concerned agencies to utilize the available legal tools in controlling the price of rice and make this affordable especially to poor households, as well as ensure other support mechanisms for farmers and traders alike should legal measures be invoked by the government in controlling the price of rice," the RTVM post read.

Among the possible causes of the price hike are hoarding, the effects of

consecutive typhoons namely Egay and Falcon over the past month in severely affected areas and rice-deficit regions and actions by middlemen.

The RTVM said Marcos also called on the Bureau of Customs (BOC), in coordination with the DA, to study possibilities of donating BOC-seized rice to the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio said Marcos has directed his agency to continue its warehouse raids to quell hoarders and illegal rice importers.

"As per the directive of our President, we will be conducting more inspections of these warehouses, and the inspection and visitation will be coordinated with other agencies like the DA and DTI (Department of Trade and Industry)," Rubio said at a press briefing yesterday at Malacañang.

"What we will do is we will validate all warehouses that are storing imported rice and then upon validation we will issue letters of authority to conduct inspection on these warehouses," he added.

More than P31 billion worth of smuggled items have been seized since January this year, BOC data showed. The figure is higher than the P24.65 billion worth of items confiscated in the entire 2022.

Rubio said the BOC recently served three letters of authority against three warehouses in Bulacan that were supposedly used to store imported rice. The warehouses inspected by authorities were Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse at Intercity Industrial Complex; San Pedro Warehouse Intercity Industrial Complex and FS Rice Mill Warehouse.

The sacks of rice found in the warehouses were imported from Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, respectively, with an initial estimated aggregate value of P505 million, the customs chief said.

Owners and operators of the warehouses were prohibited from retrieving the goods unless they can present required documents on their rice importation.

They were given until Sept. 8 to prove they paid the necessary duties

for the goods.

Rubio said cases would be filed if proven that the owners and operators of the warehouses are at fault. The customs chief could not provide details on the pending cases against smugglers but gave assurance that the BOC is working with the justice department in the filing of cases.

"We are in close collaboration, coordination with the DOJ to fast-track the filing of charges against the smugglers we apprehended and identified," Rubio said.

Meanwhile, Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan has filed House Bill 7970 seeking an amendment to the 31-year-old Republic Act 7581, or The Price Act of 1992, to make punishment for rice and corn hoarders and profiteers harsher.

In his bill, Yamsuan also sought the creation of an anti-rice or corn hoarding and profiteering task force in every province, city and municipality to "regularly check the inventory levels of all mills, warehouses and stock houses of rice and corn,

and find out if these commodities are being hoarded."

The measure proposes a jail term of up to 40 years to be imposed on rice and corn hoarders and profiteers "in certain instances when their illegal acts are tantamount to acts of economic sabotage."

"One of the reasons greedy and shameless traders are bold enough to hoard rice or corn even during difficult times is that the punishment imposed on them under the law is not harsh enough," he said in a statement.

Yamsuan added it is about time to amend the law to ensure that the "penalties remain commensurate to the crimes committed, and include other acts and practices that should be deemed illegal but not covered under this law."

Under the measure, the hoarding of rice and corn "during or on the occasion of any calamity, disaster or any emergency declared as such by the President" shall be deemed equivalent to economic sabotage.

- With Sheila Crisostomo





## *Rice tariff collections reach nearly P17 B*

By **LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON**

Tariff collections from rice imports have increased to nearly P17 billion despite lower volume of inward shipment.

During a press briefing at Malacañang yesterday, Bureau of Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio said preliminary rice tariff collection has reached P16.81 billion from January to Aug. 26 or six percent above the P15.82 billion posted in the same period last year, and representing 75 percent of the total revenue of P22.74 billion from import duties for full year 2022.

Higher revenues were reported despite a lower import volume of 2.257 million metric tons, down 15 percent from 2.675 million MT in end-August last year.

Global prices were on uptrend in the past months due to supply constraints stemming from various policy actions of rice-producing countries.

Likewise, the latest collection is above the mandated annual appropriation of P10 billion to fund programs for farm mechanization, seed development, propagation and promotion, credit assistance and extension services.

It has been mandated that any excess in tariff revenues due to the Rice

Tariffication Law (RTL) is allocated for financial assistance to rice farmers, titling of agricultural rice lands, expanded crop insurance program and crop diversification program under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

Broken down, P5 billion of the RCEF would be issued for the procurement of rice farm equipment; P3 billion for the development, propagation and promotion of inbred seeds to be distributed among palay farmers; P1 billion for beefing up state-owned banks' credit facility for palay farmers and cooperatives and P1 billion for payment for extension services of concerned agencies teaching skills in rice crop production, modern farming techniques, seed production and farm mechanization.

At the same briefing, Rubio said **President Marcos** ordered the BOC to validate all warehouses stocked with imported rice as part of efforts to quell hoarding and illegal importation.

"We will then issue letters of authority to conduct inspection and see whether these imported rice that are stored are paid with correct duties and taxes," Rubio said.

"If we find people involved in the release of smuggled rice, we will file cases against them," he said.



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LEGAL TOOLS TO REIN IN PRICES EYED

## MARCOS ORDERS MORE RAIDS OF RICE WAREHOUSES

By **Nestor Corrales**  
@NCorralesINQ

President Marcos on Tuesday ordered government agencies to exhaust all legal tools to control the rising prices of rice as he directed the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to inspect more rice warehouses, according to Malacañang.

Customs Commissioner Bi-envenido Rubio told a Palace briefing on Tuesday that the BOC would validate all warehouses storing imported rice upon the order of the President.

"And then upon validation, we will then issue again, I will then issue letters of authority to conduct inspection on these warehouses and to validate whether these imported articles or imported rice that are stored in these warehouses are paid with correct duties and taxes," Rubio said.

"If we find people to be involved in the release of illegally or smuggled rice, then we will file cases against them," he added.

The President gave the order to the BOC during a sectoral meeting in Malacañang.

Last week, Customs personnel, together with some lawmakers, found at least 227,000 sacks of rice inside the Great Harvest

Rice Mill, San Pedro and FS Rice Mill warehouses in Balagtas town in Bulacan province.

Rubio said the sacks of rice were imported from Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

The warehouses, he said, were sealed temporarily to secure the imported sacks of rice found pending the completion of the inventory by Customs examiners.

According to him, the warehouses were being guarded by personnel from the BOC and the Philippine Coast Guard.

The owners and operators of the warehouses were given 15 days to submit proof of payment of duties and taxes.

In a statement, Malacañang said the President also expressed concern over the unabated increase in rice prices.

"The chief executive directs all concerned agencies to utilize the available legal tools in controlling the price of rice and make this affordable especially to poor households, as well as ensure other support mechanisms for farmers and traders alike should legal measures be invoked by the government in controlling the price of rice," the Palace said.

INQ





# Crackdown vs rice smugglers

## Marcos directs Customs to intensify operations

By RAYMUND ANTONIO

**T**he Bureau of Customs (BOC) vowed to intensify inspection of warehouses believed to be storing smuggled rice or being used for rice hoarding following the order of **President Marcos** to step up its operations against these nefarious activities.

"As per the directive po ng ating Pangulo, we will be conducting more inspections of these warehouses, and the inspection and visitation will be coordinated with other agencies like the DA (Department of Agriculture) and DTI (Department of Trade and Industry)," Customs Commissioner Bien Rubio said during a Palace press briefing on Tuesday, Aug. 29. ▶ 4

## Crackdown vs rice smugglers 1◀

The chief executive made the directive to the Customs bureau during Tuesday's sectoral meeting to address hoarding and illegal importation of rice.

Right after the meeting with the President, Rubio disclosed ordering Customs teams "to check on the possible warehouses" with smuggled or hoarded rice, confiscate these, and prepare for the filing of cases.

"Katulad po ng sinabi ko maganda naman po ang coordination namin with DOJ at may assurance po na tutulungan kaming pabilisin po iyong pag-file ng mga kaso (As I've said, we have a good coordination with the DOJ and we have the assurance that they will help expedite the filing of cases)," he said.

Last week, BOC inspected three warehouses located in Intercity Industrial Complex, San Juan, Balagtas, Bulacan. These were found with suspected ₱505 million worth of smuggled imported rice from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand.

Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS) director Verne Enciso said his office is currently investigating the owners of the warehouses, as well as the lease

agreements or lease contracts of these warehouses.

"Backtracking will also be part of the investigation [to determine] if these said owners or importers of these rice have previous cases with the bureau. It will be part of the investigation," he said when asked if the owners of the warehouses had a previous history of smuggling or hoarding.

Enciso was among those who received the "derogatory information" about the warehouses.

Rubio said he issued the letters of authority "to conduct visitorial powers on these warehouses" upon validation that there were suspected smuggled imported rice in the warehouses.

Rubio was joined by Enciso, as well as House Speaker Martin Romualdez, and several other lawmakers during the inspection.

The Customs chief also reported that under his leadership, the agency had confiscated ₱30 billion worth of contraband items as of posting time, representing the "highest so far in the last five years kapag year-on-year basis po ang pag-uusapan (if the basis is year-on-year)."





# BBM wants more raids on rice warehouses

## Order part of efforts vs rice hoarders, smugglers

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

**PRESIDENT** Marcos Jr. yesterday directed the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to continue raiding warehouses and other storage facilities to address the persistent problem of hoarding, illegal importation and smuggling of rice in the country.

"We have ordered the Bureau of Customs to continue the hunt for illegal importers and hoarders of rice and agricultural goods. The illicit trade of our most precious

agricultural commodities shall never prosper," the President said on his official Facebook account.

Press Briefer Daphne Oseña-Paez said the President issued the directive during a sectoral meeting in Malacañang attended by officials from the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Bureau of Customs (BOC), among others.

The meeting focused on government initiatives to ensure sufficient supply and affordable price of rice.

Last August 24, a team led by Customs Commissioner Bienveni-

do Rubio, together with operatives from the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS), CIIS-Manila International Container Port (CIIS-MICP), and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Task Force Aduana, inspected the Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, San Pedro Warehouse, and FS Rice Mill Warehouse and found over 200,000 sacks of imported rice grains from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand worth P505 million.

The raiding team was joined by a contingent from the House of

Representatives led by Speaker Martin Romualdez.

Radio Television Malacañang, in a video release, showed the President expressing concern over the high cost of rice despite adequate rice supply in the market and based on the most recent rice outlook presented by the DA.

"The Chief Executive directs all concerned agencies to utilize the available legal tools in controlling the price of rice and make this

See ORDER ► Page B2

## ORDER

affordable especially to poor households, as well as ensure other support mechanisms for farmers and traders alike should legal measures be invoked by the government in controlling the price of rice," RTVM said.

It also said the DA is checking reports that the rice price hike is caused by hoarding, effects of consecutive typhoons over the past month (typhoons Egay and Falcon), and middlemen costs.

It added the President has also directed the BOC, in coordination with the DA, to "study possibilities of donating BOC-seized rice to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)."

Rubio said the BOC is doubling its efforts to hunt down illegal importers of agricultural goods by validating all warehouses.

"As per the directive of the President, ang gaganin po natin is we will validate all warehouses that are storing imported rice and then upon validation we will issue letters of authority to conduct inspection on these warehouses (As per the directive of the President, what we will do is we will validate all warehouses that are storing imported rice and then upon validation, we will issue letters of authority to conduct inspection on these warehouses)," Rubio said.

He said the BOC will also be coordinating with the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on the conduct of more visitations and inspections of warehouses.

Asked if the BOC will implement a reward system to track down illegal hoarders and smugglers, BPC Director Verney Encisco said the agency is already implementing the "BOC Cares" program where it receives reports and tips about hoarders, smugglers and illegal importation.

Rubio said the reward could be as much as 20 percent of the value of the goods, if proven illegal and after it has been auctioned off or has been disposed of.

Rubio also said that from January to August this year, more than 2.257 million metric tons of imported rice has already arrived in the country.

## 'DEROGATORY INFORMATION'

Rubio said the BOC has received "derogatory information" about the stored imported rice from the three Bulacan warehouses which are now being verified by the Department of Justice (DOJ) as part of its ongoing investigation into the smuggling of agricultural goods, especially rice and onion.

He did not give additional details as to the information it has received.

Likewise, Rubio said the BOC has started an inventory of the imported rice found at the Great Harvest Rice Mill (25,000 estimated sacks of rice), San Pedro (167,000 estimated sacks of rice), and FS Rice Mill (10,000 estimated sacks of rice).

He said warehouse owners and operators have been directed to submit proofs of payment of duties and taxes due the subject imported sacks of rice until



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September 8, 2023 pursuant to Section 224 of the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act.

"Kapag may naipakita po silang mga papel na duties and taxes were properly paid, then in order po iyong pagdating ng mga bodega sa warehouse na iyon (If they will be able to show the corresponding documents and proof that the duties and taxes were properly paid, then the arrival of the imported rice in the warehouse are in order)," he said.

Rubio said that if it is proven that the sacks of rice were illegally imported and smuggled, a warrant will be issued that would enable the BOC to confiscate the items.

Subsequently, he said cases will be filed against the owners and operators.

## PRICE ACT

Rep. Brian Yamsuan (PL, Bicol Saro) on Tuesday filed a bill seeking to amend the 31-year old Price Act and impose stiffer penalties against hoarders and profiteers of rice and corn, including imprisonment of up to 40 years.

"One of the reasons greedy and shameless traders are bold enough to hoard rice or corn even during difficult times is that the punishment imposed on them under the law is not harsh enough. We need to amend the outdated Price Act to ensure that the penalties remain commensurate to the crimes committed and include other acts and practices that should be deemed illegal but not covered under this law," Yamsuan said in filing House Bill No. 7970.

The bill also seeks the creation of an anti-rice and corn hoarding and profiteering task force in every province, city and municipality to regularly check the inventory levels of all mills, warehouses and stock houses of rice and corn, and find out if these commodities are being hoarded.

The anti-rice or corn hoarding and profiteering task forces specified under the bill are required to submit their monthly inventory reports to the DA.

Each task force shall be composed of the local chief executive of the local government unit (LGU) concerned as chair, with the local chief of police and one representative each from the local office of the DA, the farmers' sector, and local consumers' organization as members.

Rice hoarding is suspected to be the

main reason behind the steady increase in rice prices, which has reached more than P50 per kilo in several areas.

Hoarding creates an artificial shortage of a commodity, which, in turn, jacks up its costs.

Under the measure, the hoarding of rice and corn "during or on the occasion of any calamity, disaster, or any emergency declared as such by the President" is deemed tantamount to economic sabotage and punishable by reclusion perpetua, which means imprisonment of 20 to 40 years and eligibility for pardon after 30 years.

Criminal liability under the bill "shall attach to the persons with direct supervision and control of such establishments" where hoarding of rice or corn has been determined during times of emergency, disaster or calamity.

The hoarding and profiteering of rice and corn in other circumstances is punishable under the bill by imprisonment of 10 to 20 years and a fine ranging from P100,000 to P5 million.

"By creating an artificial shortage of rice and corn, the costs of the same shoot up, there is panic buying in the markets, government agencies are under fire for allegations of corruption and mismanagement, poor Filipino families cannot afford these basic commodities, and many go hungry. In sum, it is a dangerous crime that may potentially sabotage the economy and render our people desperate and hungry," said the bill which was co-authored by Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymund Villafuerte.

The bill also provides that hoarded rice or corn stocks shall be confiscated and forfeited in favor of the government.

Under HB 7970, the definition of hoarding has been expanded from merely being "undue accumulation" to "storage or possession" of any basic commodity or prime commodity beyond normal inventory levels "as determined by the implementing agency concerned," which is the DA in the case of rice and corn.

Prima facie evidence of hoarding is present under the bill when a trader or any person has stocks that is 50 percent higher than his or her usual inventory and refuses or fails to sell these to the public or make such stocks "available in the regular channels of production, trade, commerce and industry."

"In the case of rice or corn, a person's usual inventory thereof shall be reckoned from the month immediately preceding before the discovery of the stocks respective of the date/time he started his business," the bill said. — *With Wendell Vigilia*





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## PBBM eyes 'legal tools' to keep rice prices stable

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

✉@sam\_medenilla

**C**ONCERNED over the spike in rice prices, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ordered government agencies to use "legal tools" to keep the food staple affordable especially for the poor.

He gave assurances that government support mechanisms will be provided for farmers and traders should "legal measures be invoked by the government in controlling the price of rice."

The chief executive issued the order during a sectoral meeting in Malacañang on Tuesday after getting reports on the retail price of rice.

Based on the market monitoring of the Department of Agriculture (DA), the retail price of rice in Metro Manila ranges from P42 to P65 as of August 29, 2023.

This, despite the statement of the DA that the country has sufficient rice as of date and therefore

## Rice...

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a supply crunch should not be pushing up prices.

Authorities are now determining the cause of the uptrend in prices, which may include the effects of consecutive typhoons over the past month (Typhoons Egay and Falcon) in severely affected areas and/or rice-deficit regions, and prices posed by middlemen, as well as hoarding.

In a press briefing in Malacañang on Tuesday, Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio said they were ordered by the President to intensify their drive against rice hoarders and smugglers.

"As per the directive of the President, what we will do is...validate all warehouses that are storing imported rice and then upon validation, we will then issue—again, I will then issue letters of authority to conduct inspection on these warehouses and to validate whether these imported articles or imported rice that are stored in these warehouses are paid with correct duties and taxes," Rubio said.

He noted their most recent anti-smuggling campaign resulted in the investigation of three warehouses in Bulacan with combined sacks of rice estimated to be worth P505 million.

Owners and operators of the warehouses were given until September 8, 2023 to prove they paid the necessary duties for the goods.

Rubio said BOC was able to apprehend P30 billion worth of contraband or smuggled goods this year—the highest in the last five years.

SEE "RICE," A2



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## SALAKAYIN BODEGA NG MGA RICE HOARDER

IPINAG-UTOS ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. sa Bureau of Customs (BOC) na ipagpatuloy ang pagsalakay sa mga bodega upang sugpuin ang mga hoarder at ilegal na importer ng bigas.

Sa press briefing sa Malacañang nitong Martes, sinabi ni BOC Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio na dinodoble ng BOC ang kanilang pagsisikap na tugisin ang mga ilegal na nag-aangkat ng mga produktong pang-agrikultura sa pamamagitan ng pag-validate sa lahat ng mga bodega, partikular sa mga inangkat na bigas.

"Ayon sa direktiba ng Pangulo, ang gagawin natin ay i-validate natin ang lahat ng warehouses na nag-iimbak ng mga imported na bigas at pagkatapos ng validation ay maglalabas tayo ng letters of authority para magsagawa ng inspeksiyon sa mga warehouses na ito," ani Rubio.

Nagbigay din siya ng mga update sa mga pagsisikap ng ahensiya, kung saan inulit niya ang kamakailang sorpresang inspeksiyon sa mga bodega ng bigas sa Bulacan.

"Sa kamakailang serbisyo ng isang letter of authority, nagsilbi kami ng tatlong letter of authority laban sa tatlong bodega na iniulat na ginamit sa pag-iimbak ng mga inangkat na bigas na matatagpuan sa Intercity Industrial Complex San Juan Balagtas Bulacan," sabi ni Rubio.

Ang tatlong bodega na isinailalim sa inspeksiyon ay ang Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, na matatagpuan sa Intercity Industrial Complex; San Pedro Warehouse Intercity Industrial Complex; at FS Rice Mill Warehouse.

Ang mga sako ng bigas ayon sa pagkakasunod ay natagpuan sa nasabing mga bodega ay inangkat mula sa Vietnam, Cambodia, at Thailand na may inisyat na tinatayang kabuuang halaga na P505 milyong, ayon kay Rubio.

Ang mga may-ari at operator ng nasabing mga bodega ay pinagbawalan na kunin ang mga paninda maliban na lamang kung makapagpakita sila ng mga kinakailangang dokumento sa kanilang pag-aangkat ng bigas. Binigyan sila ng hanggang sa Setyembre 8, 2023 upang patunayan na binayaran nila ang mga kinakailangang buwis para sa mga kalakal.

"Ang mga subject warehouses ay pansamantalang tinatakan upang masiguro ang mga imported na sako ng bigas na natagpuan dito, habang hinihintay ang pagkumpleto ng imbentaryo ng mga nakatalagang examiners na magpapatuloy ngayong Agosto 29," aniya.

Tiniyak ni Rubio na sasampahan ng kaso ang mga salarin, kung mapatunayang may kasalanan ang mga may-ari at operator ng nasabing mga bodega.





## SPY ON THE JOB

REY MARFIL

**I**tinimbre ng ilang tropapips natin na nagiging viral daw sa social media ang bagong Bisaya version ng campaign jingle noon ni PBBM na 'Bagong Pilipinas' na ikinonek sa pangakong bente pesos na kilo ng bugas, este bigas.

Pero bago ang bigas, pag-usapan muna natin ang mga nagpo-post din sa social media tungkol sa apela raw nitong si Pura Luka Vega, o Amadeus Fernando Pagente, para manghingi ng donasyong pera, hindi para ipambili ng bigas kundi gagamitin daw sa kanyang legal battle.

Hindi natin alam kung siya ba talaga ang nanghihingi ng donasyon o may gumagamit lang ng pangalan niya para makapangharbat ng kuwarta. Aba'y napakarami yatang scammer ngayon.

Bukod kasi sa kaliwa't kanang pagdedeklara sa kanya ng mga lungsod at probinsya bilang persona non grata dahil sa pag-aala-Nazareno niya at ginawang rock ang 'Ama Namin', kinasuhan din siya ng mga namamanata sa Itim na Nazareno.

Sa mga post o nag-share ng post tungkol daw sa apelang donasyon, makikita sa 'reaction' na puro tumatawang emojis

## Mahal ang bugas

ang nakalagay. Aba'y sino kaya ang tinatawanan ng mga netizen? 'Yung apela o 'yung umaapela?

Bukod sa paghingi raw ng donasyon, may mga lumalabas din post na wala raw paki si Pura sa mga nagdedeklara sa kanyang persona non grata. Hanggang ngayon, pinapanindigan niya na wala siyang ginawang mali o hindi niya alam kung ano ang nagawa niyang mali. Kaya ang hirit ng ibang netizens, PM is the key.

Usapang bugas, este bigas na tayo. Nag-check tayo sa internet ng bagong bersiyon ng 'Bagong Pilipinas' at naglabasan nga ang satire version nito sa Bisaya na ikinonek sa pangako ni PBBM noong kampanya na ibaba niya sa P20 ang kilo ng bigas.

Mayroon sa YouTube, sa Facebook, at siyempre, hindi mawawala sa TikTok. May video pa tayo na nakita na si Andrew E ang kumakanta pero pinatungan na ang kanta ng 'Bugas' version.

Dahil Bisaya, ang nakalagay sa kanta eh P1,400 ang sako ng bigas, at P30 ang kalahati ng isang kilo (P60). Asan na raw ang tig-P20 na kilo?

Sa isang pagdinig kamakailan sa Kongreso mga tropapips, inamin ng mga opisyal ng Department of Agriculture na malabong mangyari sa susunod na dalawang taon na magiging P20 ang kilo ng bigas.

At sa makulit na mga tanong ni Basi-

lan Rep. Mujiw Hataman kung kaya ba talagang gawing P20 ang kilo ng bugas, sinabi ng mga taga-DA na ang target nila eh mapababa lang presyo ng bigas hanggang sa termino ni PBBM sa 2028.

Kaya ang payo ng kongresista, huwag paasahin ang mga tao. Kahit nga yata pabahain ng imported na bigas ngayon, mukhang dehins mangyayari ang P20 per kilo. Ang huling pinakamababang presyo ng bigas na nabalitaan natin na ibinenta sa Kadiwa ay NFA (National Food Authority) rice na P25 per kilo.

Ang problema, kaya nabaon noon sa utang ang NFA ay dahil sa pagbili ng mahal na bigas na ibinebenta nila ng mura. Gayung ang tungkulin nila eh tiyakin na may imbak na bigas sa bansa para sa oras ng peligro. Habang ang pag-import, ipinasa na sa private sector na tiba-tiba na naman malamang ngayon.

Pero kung si NEDA chief Arsenio Balisacan ang tatanungin kung kaya bang maging P20 ang kilo ng bigas, ang sagot niya, posible kung mapapadami ang ani ng mga magsasaka. Eh papaano naman mapaparami ang ani ng mga magsasaka, aba'y itanong natin sa mga opisyal ng DA.

Ang tanong ng mga tropapips natin, maging isyu kaya ang P20 per kilo ng bigas sa midterm election sa 2025? Depende siguro kung may kandidato ang oposisyon. Tandaan: "Bata mo ko at Ako ang Spy n'yo."



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## PBBM: Raid sa mga bodega vs rice smugglers, hoarders ituloy

Ipinag-utos ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. sa Bureau of Customs (BOC) na ipagpatuloy ang pagsalakay sa mga bodega upang sugpuin ang mga hoarders o nagtatago ng bigas at ilegal na importer ng bigas.

Sa press briefing sa Malacañang nitong Martes, sinabi ni Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio na dinodoble ng BOC ang kanilang pag-sisikap na tugisin ang mga ilegal na nag-aangkat ng mga produktong pang-agrikultura sa pamamagitan ng pag-validate sa lahat ng mga bodega, partikular sa mga inangkat na bigas.

"Ayon sa direktiba ng Pangulo, ang gagawin natin ay i-validate natin ang lahat ng warehouses na nag-iimbak ng mga imported na bigas at pagkatapos ng validation ay maglalabas tayo ng letters of authority para magsagawa ng inspeksyon sa mga warehouses na ito," ani Rubio.

Nagbigay din siya ng

mga update sa mga pag-sisikap ng ahensya, kung saan inulit niya ang kamakailang sorpresang inspeksyon sa mga bodega ng bigas sa Bulacan.

"Sa kamakailang serbisyo ng isang letter of authority, nagsilbi kami ng tatlong letter of authority laban sa tatlong bodega na iniulat na ginamit sa pag-iimbak ng mga inangkat na bigas na matatagpuan sa Intercity Industrial Complex San Juan Balagtas Bulacan," sabi ni Rubio.

Ang tatlong bodega na isinailalim sa inspeksyon ay ang Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, na matatagpuan sa Intercity Industrial Complex; San Pedro Warehouse Intercity Industrial Complex; at, FS Rice Mill Warehouse.

Ang mga sako ng bigas ayon sa pagkakasunod ay natagpuan sa nasabing mga bodega ay inangkat mula sa Vietnam, Cambodia, at Thailand na may inisyal na tinatayang P505 milyon, ayon kay Rubio.

### NI GEMMA GARCIA

Ang mga may-ari at operator ng nasabing mga bodega ay pinagbawalan na kunin ang mga paninda maliban na lamang kung makapagpakita sila ng mga kinakailangang dokumento sa kanilang pag-aangkat ng bigas. Binigyan sila ng hang-

gang Setyembre 8, 2023 upang patunayan na binayaran nila ang mga kinakailangang tungkulin para sa mga kalakal.

"Ang mga may-ari at operator ng mga bodega ay inatasan na magsumite ng katibayan ng pagbayad ng mga tungkulin at buwis dahil sa paksang

inangkat na mga sako ng bigas sa loob ng 15 araw mula sa pagpapatupad ng LOA o hanggang Setyembre 8, 2023," dagdag niya.

Tiniyak ni Rubio na sasampahan ng kaso kung mapapatunayang may kasalanan ang mga may-ari at operator ng nasabing mga bodega.





# CRACKDOWN

## PBBM orders BOC to continue warehouse raids vs. rice smugglers, hoarders

**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.** has ordered the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to continue its warehouse raids to quell hoarders and illegal importers of rice.

In a press briefing in Malacañang on Tuesday, BOC Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio said that the BOC is doubling their efforts to hunt down illegal importers of agricultural goods by validating all warehouses, particularly on imported rice.

"As per the directive of the President, ang gagawin po natin is we will validate all warehouses that are storing imported rice and then upon validation we will issue letters of authority to conduct inspection on these warehouses," Rubio said.

He also gave updates on the agency's efforts, where he reiterated the



**President Marcos**

recent surprise inspection in rice warehouses in Bulacan.

"In a recent letter of authority, we served three letters of authority against three warehouses reportedly utilized in storing imported rice located at the Intercity Industrial Complex San Juan Balagtas Bulacan," Rubio said.

The three warehouses that were subjected to the inspection were Great

Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, located at Intercity Industrial Complex; San Pedro Warehouse Intercity Industrial Complex; and, FS Rice Mill Warehouse.

The sacks of rice found in the warehouses were imported from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand with an initial estimated aggregate value of 505 million pesos, according to Rubio.

Owners and operators of the said warehouses were barred from retrieving the goods unless they can present required documents on their rice importation. They were given until Sept. 8, 2023 to prove they paid the necessary duties for the goods.

"The subject warehouses were sealed temporarily to secure the imported sacks of rice found there-in, pending the comple-

tion of the inventory by the assigned examiners which will continue on today August 29," he said.

"The owners and operators of the warehouses were directed to submit proof of payment of duties and taxes due the subject imported sacks of rice within 15 days from the implementation of the LOA or until September 8, 2023," he added.

Rubio assured that cases will be filed against perpetrators, if proven that the owners and operators of the said warehouses are at fault.

He also mentioned the ongoing collaboration of BOC with the Department of Justice (DOJ) on the filing charges against smugglers who have been apprehended.

"Doon posang naka-suhan, tuloy-tuloy naman po kaming nagfa-file ng

kasong and now we are in close collaboration, coordination with DOJ para mapabilis 'yung pagsampa ng kaso at pag-file ng charges against the smugglers pona nahulatin, na-identify natin," he said



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## RED TIDE ALERT

# SHELLFISH BAN IMPOSED IN BOHOL, PANAY, ZAMBO SUR

By Leo Udtohan  
@leoudtohanINQ

TAGBILARAN CITY—The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has cautioned the public from eating all kinds of shellfish and krill, locally known as “alamang,” taken from the coastal waters of Bohol and some areas in Western Visayas and Zamboanga del Sur that tested positive for toxic red tide.

BFAR, in a social media post on Saturday, said the red tide alert was hoisted over the coastal waters of Dauis town and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur province; and provinces on Panay Island, including the coastal waters of Roxas City, and the towns of President Roxas, Panay and Pilar in Capiz; Batan Bay in Aklan; Sapián Bay of Capiz and Aklan; and the waters of Gigantes Islands of Carles, Iloilo.

### Not safe

“(These) are still positive for paralytic shellfish poison (PSP), or toxic red tide, that is beyond the regulatory limit,” the advisory said.

It added that all types of shellfish and alamang gathered from these areas are not safe for human consumption.

However, fish, squids, shrimps and crabs are safe to eat, provided they are washed thoroughly and gutted before cooking, according to BFAR.

Shell and fish vendors in public markets in Tagbilaran City and Dauis assured that their goods are safe because they come from other areas in the province that are not affected by the red tide, local health authorities said. INQ





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## DA eyes boosting tobacco exports to trade for cheaper fertilizer, rice

By Artemio A. Dumlao

BAGUIO CITY — Boosting the production of export-quality tobacco in the regions will help put the country in a position to trade with Indonesia for cheaper fertilizers or even rice, a senior official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

In a recent meeting with the Governing Board of the DA-attached National Tobacco Administration (NTA), Agriculture Undersecretary Deogracias Victor B. Savellano said they should focus on a farming strategy that would boost production of quality tobacco without sacrificing other domestic crops — particularly rice and corn.

The NTA quoted Mr. Savellano as saying that once the country increases the tobacco supply for export, the national government could engage in barter-to-barter (B2B) arrangements with Indonesia, a producer of low-cost rice and fertilizer.

He said the DA is seeking to upgrade the country's tobacco production for export to sustain the strong contribution of the industry to the local economy, farmers' livelihood, and job generation.

The NTA said the tobacco industry provides livelihood to at least 2.1 million Filipinos, including more than 430,000 farmers, farm workers, and their family members. It

also contributes P74 billion to the Universal Health Care program annually.

For 2022, the NTA recorded a total of 43.81 million kilograms of tobacco produce, of which 53% (23 million kilos) were exported and 47% (20.81 million kilos) were supplied to local tobacco manufacturers.

During the meeting, Mr. Savellano also cited innovative ways to enhance the contribution of tobacco production to government revenue.

"Aside from our dream to increase our tobacco production for export, we are also looking at the other alternative products from tobacco and its commercialization like tobacco dust," he said.

On Tuesday, NTA Administrator Belinda S. Sanchez said the NTA's tobacco industry roadmap, Sustainable Tobacco Enhancement Program (STEP), seeks to enhance farming systems in tobacco-producing areas where block farming is one component strategy.

"Through this roadmap, our field technicians are continuously providing new and advanced farming technologies for the quality tobacco production by our local farmers to increase," Ms. Sanchez said in an emailed reply to *BusinessWorld*.

In 2020, the tobacco industry brought in P149.7 billion in terms of excise tax collections. As a result, tobacco-producing local government units received a P19-billion share for their priority programs and projects.





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PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

THE Bureau of Customs plans to inspect warehouses holding imported rice for tax compliance.

## BoC signals hoarding crackdown with plan to inspect warehouses

THE Bureau of Customs (BoC) said on Thursday that it plans to inspect warehouses holding imported rice for tax compliance and to determine whether inventory levels constitute hoarding.

The BoC will validate the inventories of warehouses storing imported rice, Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio said at a Palace briefing, "and then upon validation, we will then issue letters of authority to conduct inspection on these warehouses."

The BoC will "validate whether the imported rice paid the correct duties and taxes," he added.

Recently, the BoC raided three Bulacan warehouses, where it

found 202,000 sacks of imported rice valued at P505 million.

The rice stored in Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, San Pedro Warehouse, and FS Rice Mill Warehouse were imported from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand, respectively.

Mr. Rubio said the BoC gave the owners of the warehouse 15 days to submit documents, including proof of tax payment, to demonstrate that the rice was properly imported and released for storage.

"The warehouses were sealed temporarily to secure the imported sacks of rice found therein pending the completion of the

inventory by the assigned examiners which will continue today, (Aug. 29), he said.

Should the warehouses fail to submit the documentation, the contents of the facilities may be subject to a warrant of seizure, Mr. Rubio said.

Earlier this month, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. urged the Trade and Agriculture departments to closely monitor retail prices of rice, while saying supply is sufficient even with prices rising. Some retailers are selling rice at P38 to P40 per kilo "while some are selling their cheapest variety at P50 per kilo," the Palace said at the time.

The steady increase in the commodity's prices pushed rice inflation to 4.2% in July, its highest level since 2019.

The Department of Agriculture has recommended that the private sector import an additional 500,000 metric tons (MT) of rice in anticipation of El Niño, which is expected to be "moderate or strong" by the end of 2023 or early 2024, possibly dampening crop production.

Mr. Rubio said Philippine rice imports have been declining this year, with imports in the seven months to July amounting to 2.26 million MT, down 15.63% from a year earlier. —  
**Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**





## editorial

# When will govt start jailing rice hoarders?

**T**HE Department of Agriculture's latest report on prices of basic commodities sold in Metro Manila markets yielded interesting results. For August 28, the report dubbed Bantay Presyo indicated that the price of regular milled rice in wet markets ranged from P42 to P55 per kilogram. Unfortunately, this affordable variety was available only in Guadalupe and Pasig markets, which means consumers in other areas had to buy pricier ones.

The alternative is well-milled rice, which was sold for as much as P56 per kilogram in some Metro Manila markets. The cheapest was in Pasig City Mega Market and Malabon Central Market, where customers could purchase it for as low as P48 per kilogram, probably if you're one of their regular customers. Some stalls in Malabon Central Market sold the well-milled variety for as much as P55 per kilogram.

A year ago, wet markets sold the regular-milled variety for an average price of P38 per kilogram. This means that rice prices are now higher by 10 percent compared to the level recorded on August 29, 2022. What's more, it was available in a number of wet markets, so consumers had a cheaper alternative to the well-milled variety, which was sold for an average of P42 per kilogram.

Based on official government data, rice prices were lower at a time when fertilizer prices spiked to unprecedented levels in 2022, particularly after Russia attacked Ukraine. The average prices of certain fertilizer grades were almost beyond the reach of farmers. For instance, urea (prilled and granular) average more than P2,500 per 50-kg bag.

Data from the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority showed that prices of major fertilizer grades as of the week of August 21 are lower than the year-ago figures. Average prices of urea (prilled and granular) ranged from P1,750 to P1,830 per bag, significantly lower than last year's quotations. Among the fertilizer grades, only MOP or muriate of potash registered an increase at P2,510.66 per bag versus the year-ago average price of P2,499.84.

This is why it is not surprising that some government officials had resorted to raiding rice warehouses to determine if they're hoarding the staple. The numbers don't add up even if the lean season for rice has not ended. Prices last year were relatively stable despite the fact that fertilizer was more expensive and many farmers have not started harvesting rice.

As for the more expensive imported commercial rice, government data would again indicate that prices were on a par with the local variety. Just like the cheaper local varieties, however, only a few markets sold the affordable imported varieties. The imported regular-milled and well-milled rice were available only in Malabon Market and Commonwealth Market, respectively.

Policymakers and law enforcement agencies have promised to conduct more raids to determine if traders are hoarding rice to inflate prices. However, these raids would mean nothing and even embolden others if officials will not be able to produce evidence to put unscrupulous traders in jail.

It would do well for authorities to do their homework well to show the people that they are serious in their effort to put an end to illegal business practices that harm consumers. It's about time they start





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## 'Importation will not solve rice problem'

**CALAPAN CITY:** Oriental Mindoro First District Rep. Arnan Panaligan believes that the current thrust of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in addressing the increasing market price of rice by importation will not solve the problem.

He said the department should instead focus on the enhancement of domestic production and ensuring the accessibility of pre- and post-harvest facilities for the farmers.

In the interpellation of the House Committee on Agriculture last week, a video of which was posted on his social media page on Tuesday, Panaligan said that since the implementation of the Rice Tariffication Act on March 2019 that liberalized rice importation, the price of rice has not gone down.

"The rice inflation on February 2019 was at 4.5 percent and the Rice Tariffication Law was passed on March 2019 and our rice inflation on July 2023 is at 4.2 percent or almost the same before the law was passed and it has been more than four years," Panaligan said during the interpellation.

Panaligan also noted that the presentation of the representatives from the DA focused on importation — how to expedite and how to facilitate importation — and that there was no mention on how to increase domestic production.

"Congress had not been remiss in allocating funds for the DA on their National Rice Program. In 2023, we allotted P23 billion for domestic rice production program of the DA which is double than the previous allocation which was only P15 billion. I believe is one of highest increase in allocations for the 2023 budget," Panaligan said.

The lawmaker also criticized the DA's "slow delivery of support" to local farmers like seeds, fertilizers, machineries and irrigation facilities when needed.

Panaligan demanded immediate and concrete action from the DA in implementing the programs funded by Congress.

In a text message on Tuesday, Panaligan told *The Manila Times* that he believed that the Rice Liberalization Program of the government is not effective to ensure the steady supply of rice is cheaper as promised.

In his response, DA Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian assured the committee that the focus of the department is to enhance local production and that they have a two-pronged approach to the problem: the post-harvest which is to provide intervention in forms of subsidies to the farmers and the market side which is to ensure and protect the income of the farmers.

**IRE JOE V.C. LAURENTE**



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## P20 per kg rice: Greatest hoax ever sold

### MIDWEEK COMMENTS

**MARLEN V.  
RONQUILLO**

IR 222, the rice variety that caters to the low-end market, is currently P23 per kilogram, farmgate and fresh off the thresher. It is the only mass-planted rice variety that still retails slightly below P50 per kg. You have to eat Triple 2 rice right after cooking; served cold, there is no residual softness, and you can't repurpose it into sinangag either. Because leftover Triple 2 rice has no practical value, it is deemed an impractical buy, even by low-income families with multiple uses for leftovers.

The local rice varieties that dominate the market are IR 420 and IR 426, and both command a P25 per kg price at farmgate. These retail at the P54 to P55 level. Rice farmers tend to favor these rice varieties because these are what they eat, situated in the middle tier between Triple 2 and the fancy varieties.

The fancy local varieties, IR 160 and IR 218, have a farmgate price of P28 per kg. But this is the drawback. The paddy yield is less than the ordinary, non-fancy varieties. These are the P60 per kg varieties retailed, comparable to the prices of imported, well-milled rice.

All year round, there are certified seeds for these local rice varieties, and for Central Luzon farmers, these are the rice varieties being planted.

Under the current conditions of agronomy and by the known yardsticks of rice economics, there is really no way to source and sell rice at P20 per kg. Not after two years, not after two decades, not after two centuries. Unless, of course, synthetic rice of the edible kind can be mass-produced for humankind on the cheap.

The reason for this is straightforward enough. Production costs need to go down to P11 to P12 per kg to enable retailers to sell rice not at P20 but at P22 to P25 per kg. And there is no production environment for the cost of producing palay at P11 or P12 per kg.

Rice thrives on an ample water supply, but very few rice-producing areas in the country get a year-round, uninterrupted irrigation supply. Rice farms in Central Luzon, the country's rice granary, are dotted with shallow tube wells (STWs) that supply water during supply inefficiencies that occur very often in a single cycle of rice production. I need not go into the current average prices for gasoline or diesel that feed these STWs. It is enough to say that you can't have a production cost of P11 or P12 per kg with the average prices of gasoline and diesel over the past two years.

The wacko decision to make irrigation free also contributed to the chaotic distribution of irrigation water at the paddy level. With no fees accruing to the irrigators associations (IAs), there is no more money to fund irrigation canal and ditch maintenance. The deteriorating condition of most canals and ditches across the farming areas of the country is now a real problem, and it crimps the supply of irrigation water to paddies. Irrigation is free, but this wiped out the institutions that for years

efficiently maintained irrigation ditches and canals and arranged water supply schedules.

Planting rice is never fun, true. The current cost for a rice planter (it is still done manually; we are the regional laggard in farm mechanization) is P500 per day and even P600 daily in many farming areas where the young and able-bodied can work as janitors and baggers in nearby boxy malls. Or where the young and able can work as janitors and servers in fast-food chains. Reaping and threshing are paid based on a percentage of the total palay yield, substantially cutting the post-harvest share of the rice farmer.

Rice economics often imply that during the entire production process, the rice farmer himself is a nonpaid participant, though he is the *dramatis personae* in the entire process. The government offers subsidies, yes, but P5,000 a year does not impact much on this tough, costly and laborious process.

The Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) was a quick fix to the abnormal but transitory drop in rice supply in 2018, a mindless law that was probably one of the worst laws passed by the two chambers of Congress in this generation. And predicated on a world forever awash with cheap rice in the global market. It pandered to two things: the greed and recklessness of rice importers. It unilaterally stripped the National Food Authority (NFA) of the mandate to hold on to a substantial buffer stock, which was needed in times of reduced supply and surging prices. How can you ignore basic supply and demand realities in legislation that is about the staple food and the most politically

sensitive of commodities at that?

Several nightmarish developments upended that unrealistic, dimwitted predicate of a global market forever awash with cheap rice and looking for buyers. India, which supplies 40 percent of global rice exports, has imposed a total ban on exports. Vietnam, our traditional rice supplier for years, announced that starting in 2030, its 7 million metric tons (MT) rice exports would be reduced to 4 million MT, a decision that sent shock waves through the regional rice market. In 2019, we were the top rice importer with 3.1 million MT, and 2.7 million of that was shipped from Vietnam.

A P5-to-P7-per-kg increase covering all rice varieties and types was levied by traders and retailers overnight. The trend, according to rice price watchers, is more upward surges.

The bad news for rice in both the domestic and international environments was probably the best time for the government to finally admit that rice at P20 per kg was a wish list and a campaign promise, with its shelf life over. After all, the promise of P20 per kg of rice is not tethered to any sliver of reality.

No, the government won't. Even NEDA Director-General Arsenio Balisacan, who used to have the reputation of a straight-talking, non-flacking technocrat, doubled down on the P20 per kg hoax, arguing that there is a time for everything and that day will come.

Maybe, just maybe, his proximity to Mr. Lazaro Gadon made Mr. Balisacan realize that in the current bureaucracy, it is the flacks and hacks that survive. That smoothed Mr. Balisacan's transition from technocrat to hoax-peddling hack.





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### Farmers' cooperative to manage Carabao Dairy Hub in Negros Occ

THE San Antonio Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (SAFMPC), an organization of agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) assisted by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), was selected to manage and operate the first Dairy Box in the City of Victorias, Negros Occidental.

The construction of the dairy processing plant worth P3.7 million and located at the Bangga Daan Satellite Market will also be a one-stop product marketing outlet for the selling of carabao dairy products.

The SAFMPC will manage the Dairy Box with assistance from the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Carabao Center and the Office of Senator Cynthia Villar.

The project is part of the P10 million Carabao-Based Business Improvement Network (CBIN) project of the city government of Victorias. It provided 64 dairy carabaos, training, capacity development, and a milk processing center.

The SAFMPC will develop and sell carabao dairy products under the brand name Victorias Dairy (ViDa).



# REMATE

## ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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### Tipster sa smuggled rice, makatatanggap ng malaking pabuya - BOC

**MAKATATANGGAP** ng pabuya ang sinomang tipster na makapagbibigay ng impormasyon sa mga taga-Bureau of Customs ukol sa presensya ng mga puslit na bigas sa isang partikular na Lugar.

Sa press briefing sa Malakanyang, sinabi ni BOC Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio na 20% ng value ng nakumpiskang kontrabando ang maaaring makuha ng isang impormante

bilang kanyang pabuya.

Paglililaw ni Rubio, makuha lang ang poryento ng reward kapag "subject for auction" ang nasamsam na puslit na produkto.

Ang sistema kasi, ayon kay Rubio, bibigyan muna nila ng 15 araw ang may-ari ng kargamento para makapaglabas ng dokumentong magpapatunay na ligal ang item na pansamantalang nakumpiska. **KRIS JOSE**



Date: Nov. 30, 2023 Page: 2



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### **Villar, kumpiyansa sa food security dahil sa training sa Villar Farm schools**

Naniniwala si Sen. Cynthia Villar na nakatutulong sa food security ang training ng mga magsasaka sa Villar Farm schools sa buong bansa samantalang nagalak siya sa pagdami nang lumalahok dito.

Ipinahayag ng chairperson ng Senate committee on agriculture and food, na dumarami ang kumukuhang libreng training sa Villar Farm Schools.

Nakatutulong ang training sa paglawak sa agricultural sector ng bansa kasabay ng pagbibigay kaalaman sa stakeholders upang paigtingin ang productivity at madagdagan ang kanila kinikita.

Sa "Training of Trainers on Agricrop Production," kasama ang East West Seeds Foundation na idinaos sa Villar Farm School sa Las Piñas-Bacoor, tiniyak ng senador na patuloy silang magtuturo sa mga Filipino kung paano magtanim ng gulay sa kanilang bakuran o sakahan.

Pakatapos ng apat na araw na training, sinabi ni Villar na tatanggap ang mga lumahok ng "Certificate of Completion."

Ang mga lumahok sa training ay magkakaroon ng pagkakataong maibahagi ang kanilang natutunan at i-apply sa kanilang sariling farm schools.

Ang Villar Sipag ay may apat na farm schools sa buong bansa.

Binuksan noong 2015 ang unang farm school na nasa Las Piñas at Bacoor, Cavite katabi ng Molino Dam. Ang tatlo pang farm schools ay nasa San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan; San Miguel, Iloilo at sa Buhangin District, Davao City.



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# PRICE LAW WITH MORE

By Jester Manalastas

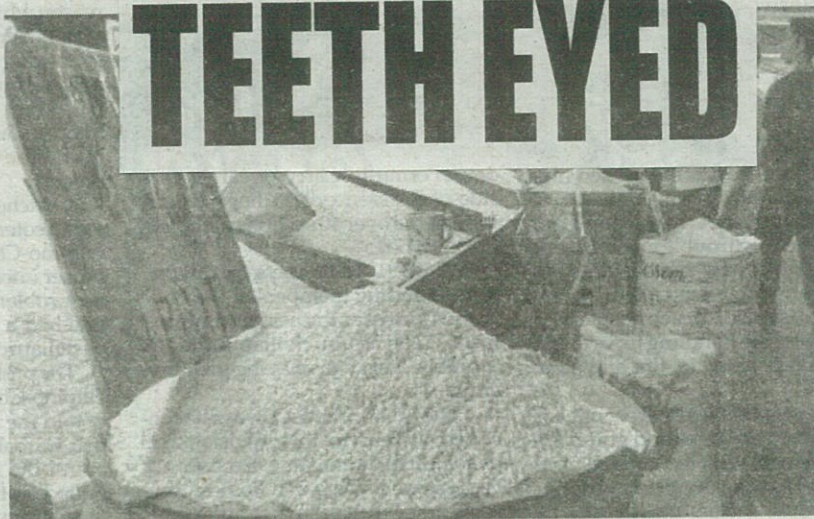
THE 31-year-old Price Act must be updated to punish rice and corn hoarders and profiteers.

This was stressed by Bicol Saro Party-list Representative Brian Raymund Yamsuan as he filed House Bill 7970.

The bill proposes imprisonment of up to 40 years in certain instances when their illegal acts are tantamount to acts of economic sabotage.

It also seeks the creation of an anti-rice or corn hoarding and profiteering task force in every province, city and municipality to regularly check the inventory levels of all mills, warehouses and stock houses of rice and corn, and find out if these commodities are being hoarded.

"One of the reasons greedy and shameless traders are bold enough to hoard rice or corn even during difficult times is that the punishment imposed on them under the law is not harsh enough. We need to amend the outdated Price Act to ensure that the penalties remain commensurate to the crimes



committed, and include other acts and practices that should be deemed illegal but not covered under this law," Yamsuan said in a statement.

Yamsuan issued the call after a fact-finding team from the House of Representatives led by Speaker Martin Romualdez and officials of the Bureau of Customs (BOC) found evidence of rice hoarding in several warehouses in Bulacan last week.

Rice hoarding has been suspected as among the reasons behind the steady

increase in rice prices, which has reached more than P50 per kilo in several areas.

Hoarding creates an artificial shortage of a commodity, which, in turn, jacks up its costs.

Under the measure, the hoarding of rice and corn "during or on the occasion of any calamity, disaster, or any emergency declared as such by the President" shall be deemed equivalent to economic sabotage and punishable by reclusion perpetua, which means imprison-

ment of 20 to 40 years and eligibility for pardon after 30 years.

Criminal liability under the bill "shall attach to the persons with direct supervision and control of such establishments" where hoarding of rice or corn has been determined during times of emergency, disaster or calamity.

The hoarding and profiteering of rice and corn in other circumstances is punishable under the bill by imprisonment of 10 to 20 years and a fine of P100,000 to P5 million.





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## Soybeans fall, wheat rises

SINGAPORE- Chicago soybean and corn prices dropped on Tuesday after US government data showed that a decline in crop conditions due to hot and dry weather was not as severe as many analysts had expected.

Wheat inched higher, although sluggish demand for US supplies and competition from cheap Russian grain limited the upside in prices.

"The market is watching US weather for soybeans in the coming weeks," said one Singapore-based agricultural commodities analyst. "Too much heat and dryness will reduce yields."

The most active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was down 0.4 percent at \$14.00-3/4 a bushel. Corn fell 0.6 percent to \$4.93-1/2 a bushel and wheat added 0.1 percent to \$6.17-1/2 a bushel.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) in a weekly crop progress report on Monday rated 58 percent of the soybean crop as good to excellent, down a percentage point from 59 percent last week. Thirteen analysts surveyed by Reuters had on average expected a 3 percentage point decline. - Reuters





## Soybeans, corn rise on US crop concerns

CHICAGO — Chicago soybeans and corn climbed on Monday after a US farm survey predicted smaller crop production than government forecasts due to hot, dry conditions across the US Midwest.

Wheat dipped on weak demand for US crops, coupled with competition from cheap Russian supplies.

Chicago Board of Trade (CBoT) most-active soybeans gained 18 cents to \$14.05-3/4 a bushel, after reaching \$14.09-1/2, its highest since July 27.

CBoT corn added 8-1/4 cents to \$4.96-1/4 a bushel, while CBoT wheat eased 4-3/4 cents to end at \$6.17 a bushel.

US 2023 soybean production could total 4.110 billion bushels, advisory service Pro Farmer said after Friday's market close,

below the 4.205 billion bushels forecast by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Pro Farmer predicted the US corn crop to be 14.960 billion bushels, below the USDA's most recent estimate of 15.111 billion bushels.

Hot, dry conditions have eroded yield potential, with the USDA reporting the US soybean crop as 58% good-to-excellent as of Aug. 27, down one percentage point from a week earlier but above the average 56% predicted in a Reuters survey of analysts.

Corn conditions dropped two percentage points to 56% good-to-excellent versus analysts average of 55%, while spring wheat dropped to 37% good-to-excellent, matching average analyst predictions.

Corn futures have been weighed down by muted export

demand, despite recent daily sales notices.

Corn export inspections for the week ended Aug. 24 reached 597,144 metric tons, 16.96% higher than the week prior, but down 14.67% from the same week in 2022.

Soybean export inspections reached 322,149 metric tons, down 36.81% from the same week last year, while wheat export inspections of 390,364 metric tons were down 38.17% year over year.

Wheat's decline could encourage export activity, but amid strong global supplies, US wheat has struggled to attract buyers.

Russia is estimated to export 5.1 million metric tons of wheat in August, up from 3.5 million metric tons a year earlier, Sovecon agriculture consultancy said.

— Reuters





## Raw sugar futures jump 3% to two-month highs

NEW YORK — Raw sugar futures on ICE closed nearly 3% up on Monday, reaching their highest prices in more than two months amid uncertainty regarding production and exports from Asia, while cocoa was also up.

There was no trading for London cocoa, robusta coffee, and refined sugar futures due to a banking holiday in the United Kingdom.

**SUGAR:** October raw sugar futures settled up 2.98% at 25.57 cents per pound (lb). The contract earlier hit the highest price since late June at 25.64 cents.

Dealers said the market has been supported by news that India is expected to ban mills from exporting sugar in the season starting in October, halting shipments for the first time in seven years.

There were also concerns about the production in Thailand, where below-average rains were seen reducing sugarcane development.

Production in the key Center-South region of Brazil, however, is running well above last season's pace with agricultural yields seen up 24% in July.

The El Niño climate pattern remains the main factor as it could further disrupt production

in Asia or the harvest progress in Brazil, traders said.

**COCOA:** December New York cocoa closed up 0.26% at \$3,475 per metric ton.

Dealers said that concerns over crop disease in West Africa and the prospect of a third successive global deficit in the 2023/24 season that begins on Oct. 1 were supporting the market.

The 2023/24 production outlook has been dented by El Niño, with the US Climate Prediction Center saying the weather phenomenon is expected to strengthen through the winter.

**COFFEE:** December arabica coffee erased earlier gains to settle down 0.26% to \$1.5275 per lb.

Dealers said that most speculators and financial investors continue to bet on a large Brazilian coffee crop in 2023, continuing to hold a net short position in the market.

"If there is anything indicative that the Brazilian crop, in the end, will not be as big, we could see a correction upwards," one broker said.

ICE certified stocks stood at 512,433 bags on Monday, unchanged from Friday and still at the lowest level in eight months.

— Reuters