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Marcos caps rice prices at P45/kilo

By HELEN FLORES

To keep rice affordable for poor Filipinos, **President Marcos** has issued an order imposing price caps on the staple nationwide.

The mandated price ceiling for regular milled rice is P41 per kilo and P45 a kilo for well-milled rice, based on Executive Order 39 signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on Aug. 31.

The President approved the recommendation of the **Department of Agriculture (DA)**, which he concurrently heads, and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to set price ceilings on the staple.

"The mandated price ceilings shall remain in full force and effect unless lifted by the President upon the recommendation of the Price Coordinating Council or the DA and the DTI," read the order, which took effect following its publication in the *Official Gazette* yesterday.

Marcos has directed the DTI and DA to ensure the strict implementation of the mandated price ceilings, monitor and investigate abnormal price movements of rice in the market, and provide assistance to affected retailers with the help of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, according to a statement released by the Presidential Communications Office (PCO).

"I would encourage anyone who finds that someone or a retailer is selling above the price ceiling to report them to the police, to the DA in your area, to the local government so we can check on this and ensure prices would not go

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higher than what we have set at (P41 to P45 a kilo)," the President said partly in Filipino yesterday.

The DA and DTI made the recommendation to the President to impose price ceilings amid the current surge in retail prices of rice in the country, "which resulted in considerable economic strain on Filipinos, particularly the underprivileged and marginalized," the PCO said.

EO 39 stated the DA and the DTI "have reported that the country's rice supplies have reached a stable level and are sufficient, owing to the arrival of rice imports and expected surplus on local production."

Based on monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of local regular milled rice is sold as high as P55 per kilo; local well-milled rice, P56 per kilo; local premium rice, P60 per kilo; and local special rice, P65 per kilo.

For its part, the House of Representatives led by Speaker Martin Romualdez yesterday stood firmly behind the President's decision to impose a price ceiling on rice.

In a statement, the House said the imposition of price limit is a "timely and necessary intervention" to shield our fellow countrymen from the undue economic burden caused by unwarranted surges in rice prices.

"We deeply understand and empathize with the plight of our people, especially the underprivileged and marginalized who are most affected

by the surge in rice prices," the chamber noted.

According to Romualdez, the House is serious in its support of the Marcos' immediate goal of stabilizing rice prices and his long-term vision of achieving rice self-sufficiency.

The Speaker likewise asked colleagues in Congress to show their sincerity in helping the government by unmasking the "bad eggs" or members suspected of involvement in unscrupulous trade practices.

Traders caught off-guard

Rice traders in Bulacan were caught off guard by the rice price cap set by the President.

Rice trader Rose Dalangin said they are on the losing end with the price cap. She cited that the latest price of clean and dry newly harvested palay is at P32 per kilo, which would translate to around P52 per kilo wholesale.

Wholesale rice trader Tony Santos said freshly harvested rice cannot be sold within the price ceiling, as it now costs P32 per kilo.

"There should be a subsidy," he said.

A rice importer and a rice miller, who did not want to be identified, admitted they are at a loss on how can they cope with the price cap.

"Everything is on hold pending verification, also on hold are the imports."

Meanwhile, Rosendo So, president

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of Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura, said the rice price cap issued by Marcos would automatically translate to farmgate prices of palay ranging between P23-P25 per kilo.

Simeon Sioson, chairman of 4SM Multipurpose Farmers Cooperative, agreed with So. However, he said the price cap should have been announced earlier to give retailers and rice traders enough time to dispose of their rice products procured at P32 per kilo of palay.

Farmers shy away from selling their palay harvest to the NFA because of its low buying price of P19 per kilo compared to private traders that buy at more than P20 per kilo, Sioson added.

Price monitors

The DTI is set to mobilize its price monitors to ensure the implementation of the recently issued price ceiling on rice.

"We recognize the urgency of addressing the escalating rice prices in the market. In parallel, it is imperative to maintain stringent oversight over rice pricing and supply to preclude any potential hoarding and price manipulation by traders and retailers," Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual said in a statement yesterday.

"To fortify our monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, the DTI will mobilize its price monitors and engage with local government units to activate their local price coordinating councils," Pascual said.

"As provided in the EO, we will perform our monitoring and enforce-

ment functions in collaboration with the DA and other concerned agencies," he added.

Pascual noted that the DTI would collaborate with the Philippine Competition Commission to undertake measures against cartels and other entities that manipulate prices, to ensure the welfare and protection of consumers.

'Situation to worsen'

Farmers' group Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor said the imposition of price caps on rice will only worsen the current situation on the supply and prices of the grains.

"If that is the situation and there is an issue in supply, the price ceiling will not work, it will make matters worse," Montemayor said.

"We hope we are wrong on this but ... if the retailers will suffer losses if they sell at P41 and P45, the availability of rice in the markets will be affected. Nobody will sell if they will not earn."

He noted the price ceiling will also result in slump in the farmgate prices of palay, especially with the upcoming harvest season starting in the second week of September.

Cartels

In the Senate, lawmakers have urged the government to find solutions to stop the rising prices of rice and prevent a similar scenario in the future.

"The government should put its money where its mouth is to address the problem of high prices of rice as President Marcos ordered to impose

a price ceiling on rice," Sen. Francis Escudero said.

"Are prices high because of lack of supply or higher cost of inputs? If there is, why hasn't the government arrested and/or sued anyone for such acts which are illegal?" he asked.

The senator suggested that government must admit that there is widespread hoarding/profitteering and price manipulation of rice, arrest and file cases against the perpetrators and allocate a bigger budget for agriculture.

"I think it's a move to crack down on cartels who hoard rice and then try to extract excessive profits and manipulate markets during times of scarce supply. Let's hope the ceiling imposed will incentivize people enough to still import to maintain supply in the market and also to stabilize the price," Sen. Sonny Angara said.

"It is an appropriate response to control inflation as well as to ensure the affordability of rice and to safeguard food security. But in the long run, we should look at efforts to improve local rice production. I agree with the decision of the President as it will help stabilize the market in the short term to benefit consumers," Sen. Francis Tolentino said.

"What needs to be done is to address smuggling, profiteering, cartels and hoarding for the local agricultural industry to flourish and for the price of rice and other agri products to stabilize," Sen. JV Ejercito said.

- With Bella Cariaso, Sheila Crisostomo, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Ramon Efren Lazaro, Catherine Talavera



'Rice price cap to affect farmers, consumers'

By DANESSA RIVERA

The price cap on rice approved by President Marcos may help curb rising costs, but it is also seen to have detrimental effects on farmers due to lower farmgate prices, as well as on consumers as this may further limit the supply of the food staple, according to industry players.

Through Executive Order 39, the President approved the recommendation to set price ceilings nationwide on rice – P41 for regular milled and P45 for well-milled rice – amid the

hefty increase in retail prices in the market.

Based on the the Department of Agriculture (DA)'s monitoring in Metro Manila markets as of yesterday, retail prices of local well-milled rice ranged between P47-P57 per kilo, and P42-P55 per kilo for local regular milled.

For imported commercial rice, well-milled was at P43-P52 per kilo while imported regular milled rice was not available in markets.

Compared to last month, local well-milled rice was only

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around P41-P49 a kilo and regular milled at P37-44 per kilo, while imported well-milled rice ranged between P44-48 per kilo.

While this may control retail prices now, the mandated price ceiling – even if well enforced – will have other effects, Philippine Institute for Development Studies senior research fellow Roehlano Briones said.

"It will also be bad for consumers because it will lead to shortage, adulterated rice, reclassification of rice grades, etc. Also, farmgate prices will be kept from increasing," he said.

The price cap comes as rice farmers are about to harvest their wet season crops, which is usually done in September to December.

Rice prices – both at the farmgate and retail level – drastically rose in early August following the impact of the storm damage in late July, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort said.

The farmgate price of palay has soared to as high as P30-34 per kilo, he said.

Broken promise

President Marcos should not give Filipinos another false hope just like his "broken campaign promise" of P20 per kilo of rice, watchdog group Bantay Bigas said after the imposition of a price ceiling on the staple grains.

ing on the staple grains.

"First, he should not give illusion to the Filipino people just like when he promised the P20 per kilo of rice. He should not target the small retailers and instead go after the big private traders and hoarders who manipulate the prices of rice in the markets," Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy Estavillo told **The STAR**.

She added that Marcos' original promise was to bring down the retail prices of the staple food to P20 per kilo and not P41 and P45 per kilo for regular and well-milled rice, respectively.

According to Estavillo, a family consumes at least two kilos of rice daily, representing 13 percent of the P610 minimum wage.

For the Makabayan bloc, Marcos' order for a price ceiling on rice is only intended to cover his unfilled campaign promise to bring down rice prices.

"He said he will bring down the price of rice per kilo to P20. It will primarily hurt small retailers who are merely at the receiving end of rice and farmgate prices due to costlier production inputs, but may do very little to curb hoarding and price manipulation by rice importers and syndicates," Gabriela Women's party-list Rep. Arlene Brosas noted.

ACT Teachers party-list Rep. France Castro, for her part, said the EO is meant to make the administration look good amid rising costs of commodities in the country. "He (Marcos) should have acted on the

spiraling prices of rice so maybe, this EO is intended only to pacify the people," she added.

Kabataan party-list Rep. Raoul Manuel said the Rice Tarrification Law only resulted in the influx of imported rice, which has been detrimental to local farmers.

For his part, farmers group' Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura executive director Jayson Cainglet backed the issuance of EO 39.

"We laud the President for issuing EO 39, mandating a price ceiling for rice. There is no reason for any price increase these past weeks as there is no rice shortage in the country," Cainglet said.

Meanwhile, Farmers' group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) on Friday said the P41 and P45 price ceiling on regular and well-milled rice is already delayed and still high amid the spike in the cost of the grains.

"Assuming that the trader bought the palay at P22 per kilo, if you add the cost, including the milling, hauling, you multiply that at 70 percent, the total additional cost will be P15.40 and add the P22 (per kilo farmgate price), the retail price for well-milled rice is only P37.40 and not P45 (per kilo)," KMP chairman Danilo Ramos said, noting that the difference is still P7.60 per kilo.

"It is for this reason that we believe that the EO 39 is still delayed and second, the price ceiling is still high," Ramos added. – With Bella Cariaso, Sheila Crisostomo



PBBM sets nationwide cap on rice price

BY SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. imposed a nationwide cap on rice prices to ensure the food staple will remain affordable amid reports of widespread price manipulation and hoarding.

Citing the provision of Republic Act No. 7581 or the Price Act, the Chief Executive issued Executive Order (EO) No. 39 on Thursday imposing the following mandated price ceiling: P41.00 per kilogram for regular milled rice (RMR) and P45 per kilogram for well-milled rice (WMR).

The mandated price ceilings will remain in effect unless earlier lifted by the President upon recommendation of the Price Coordinating Council or the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

In a statement, DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said the price ceiling for imported rice would be based on the Bureau of Customs (BOC) reference price.

Marcos issued EO 39 after the DA and DTI received reports of alleged rampant practice of price manipulation through hoarding by opportunistic traders and collusion among

industry cartels amid the lean season, international developments that affect prices of basic goods such the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India's ban on rice exportation, and unpredictable price of oil.

Soaring prices

BASED on the price monitoring of DA in Metro Manila, the retail price for local commercial RMR ranges from P42 to P55, while price for WRM ranges from P47 to P56 as of August 31, 2023.

During the same period, the price of premium rice (PR) is sold at a higher price ranging from P48 to P60, while special rice (SR) remains the most expensive with price ranging from P54 to P65.

This despite the projection of the DA that the country will have a 10.15 million metric tons (MMT) rice supply during the second half of the year, which it noted will be sufficient to cover the current demand of 7.76 MMT.

"The current surge in retail price of rice in the country has resulted in a considerable economic strain on Filipinos, particularly those who are underprivileged and marginalized," the President said.

"In light of the current situation, it is

crucial and urgent for the State to guarantee that basic necessities are not only sufficient but also reasonably priced and conveniently accessible to every Filipino," he added.

Intensified drive

THE President ordered the DA and DTI to impose the price ceiling starting September 1, 2023 in the markets with the assistance from the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

"The real problem is in NCR [National Capital Region]. Not so bad outside of Metro Manila. That is why we will be focusing our efforts in Metro Manila," Marcos said in an interview with reporters after officially declaring Palawan Island as insurgency-free on Friday.

He urged the public to report to the DA or their local government units (LGU) any unscrupulous retailer, who will sell rice over the price ceiling under EO 39.

The BOC will intensify its ongoing inspection raids of rice warehouses to combat hoarding and illegal importation, while the Philippine Competition Commission will go after rice cartels, which abuse their dominant position in the market.

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DA will share with the BOC relevant information, such as the inventory of rice stocks, the list of accredited rice importers, and the location of rice warehouses.

Artificially low

FEDERATION of Free Farmers (FFF) National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor expressed concern over the potential negative impact of EO 39 to rice farmers and traders since it made the prices of the food staple artificially low.

He noted this might compel retailers not to sell their rice stocks or to make their RMR and WMR appear to be of a higher grade, which can be sold at a higher price.

Likewise, the low price could also prompt farmers to no longer plant rice, which will further reduce the country's supply of the food staple.

The President, he said, may have not been given an accurate prognosis and recommendations on the appropriate price when he decided to issue EO 39.

"I think at P22-P25 per kilo dry basis [palay], the farmers will be happy. That will mean retail prices of P45 to 50 per kilo," the FFF head told BUSINESSMIRROR in a Facebook message.

Support mechanism

LAST Tuesday, Marcos assured the government would provide support to farmers and retailers, who will be affected by the "legal tools" they will use to regulate the price of rice.

The BUSINESSMIRROR sought DA's comment on the details about the said support mechanism, but the agency is yet to reply as of this writing. EO 39 did not mention any such support mechanism.

The DTI, for its part, assured the public on Friday it will perform its monitoring and enforcement functions in collaboration with DA, PCC and other concerned agencies following the issuance of the EO imposing mandated price ceilings on rice.

"Rice is an essential staple food of Filipinos. In our commitment to making it accessible and affordable, the DTI supports the implementation of Executive Order No. 39 on the Imposition of Mandated Price Ceilings on Rice," Trade and Industry Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said in a statement.

Pascual stressed that the price ceiling is aimed at protecting Filipino consumers from "unfair and exploitative" pricing practices. He said that both the Trade department

and the "broader Philippine government" are focused on safeguarding lower-income families and vulnerable communities, who are most affected when prices of essential goods surge unexpectedly.

"We recognize the urgency of addressing the escalating rice prices in the market. In parallel, it is imperative to maintain stringent oversight over rice pricing and supply to preclude any potential hoarding and price manipulation by traders and retailers," Pascual said.

Jayson Cainglet, executive director of agriculture group SINAG lauded President Marcos' issuance of EO 39, mandating a rice price ceiling, adding "there is no reason for any price increase these past weeks as there was/is no rice shortage in the country."

He said traders capitalized on the initial public panic created by the statement of the National Food Authority that government buffer stock is only good for 1.5 days.

"...There is no rice shortage to justify any price increase," he stressed. "Our stocks are good to last until the first quarter of next year. And we have yet to harvest the expected 7 million metric tons of rice this harvest season." *With Andrea E. San Juan*



Marcos sets rice price cap

**₱41 per kilo
for regular-milled,
₱45 per kilo
for well-milled**

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

President Marcos has approved the recommendation to impose a mandated price ceiling on rice in the country amid the "alarming" increase in its retail prices.

Marcos issued the order through Executive Order (EO) No. 39, signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on ▶ 4

Aug. 31, an offshoot of a sectoral meeting on Aug. 29 where he was briefed about the country's rice situation.

Based on the EO, the President approved the recommendation of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Trade of Industry (DTI) to set price ceilings on rice in the country.

Effective immediately, the mandated price ceiling for regular-milled rice is ₱41 per kilogram, while it is ₱45 per kilogram of well-milled rice.

"The mandated price ceilings shall remain in full force and effect unless lifted by the President upon the recommendation of the Price Coordinating Council or the DA and the DTI," the EO read.

As of Aug. 28, the DA reported the local regular milled rice in markets in Metro Manila ranged from ₱42 to ₱55 per kilogram, local well-milled rice stood at ₱48 to ₱56 per kilogram.

In his EO, Marcos said it was important for the government to address the situation and ensure Filipinos could access the staple grain.

"The current surge in retail prices of rice in the country has resulted in a considerable economic strain on Filipinos, particularly those who are underprivileged and marginalized," he said.

"In light of the current situation, it is crucial and urgent for the State to guarantee that basic necessities are not only sufficient but also reasonably priced and conveniently accessible to every Filipino," he added.

With this, Marcos directed the DA and the DTI to ensure the strict implementation of the mandated price ceilings, monitor and investigate abnormal price movements of rice in the market, and provide assistance to affected retailers with the help of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

Marcos, also the DA secretary in concurrent capacity, urged the public to report retailers selling rice above the price ceilings imposed by the government.

"I would encourage anyone who finds that someone or (a) retailer is selling at above the price ceiling to report them to the police, the DA office in your area, the local government to ensure that the prices would not exceed the ₱41 and ₱44 price ceiling that we have set," he said in an ambush interview on Friday, Sept. 1.

Timely intervention

The price cap on rice is a "timely and necessary intervention" from President Marcos, House Speaker Martin Romualdez said as he vowed that the House of Representatives would do its part to mitigate the rising cost of the staple grain.

"We, in the House of Representatives, stand firmly behind President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s decisive action to ensure every Filipino's access to affordable rice," Romualdez said in a statement. "The imposition of price ceilings on this staple food is

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a timely and necessary intervention to shield our fellow countrymen from the undue economic burden caused by unwarranted surges in rice prices."

'It won't work'

Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. (FFCCCII) president Cecilio K. Pedro had a different view.

"Price control will never work in any economy," Pedro said when asked for his thoughts on the issuance of the price ceilings on rice.

Pedro explained that if the price ceiling is low, traders will not sell at a loss. "It is a function of demand and supply. If demand is higher than supply then prices will go up, price control will never work," he said during the "Pandesal Forum on Friday.

Instead, the businessman urged government to look at the issue of rice production holistically. He said there are hybrid quality rice, but selling at affordable price will require further study on what goes into its production. These include fertilizer, labor, and weather.

There are elements that affect production, he said, urging government to study where to produce rice to avoid weather disturbances and to use modern technology.

He said the traditional brick and mortar agricultural methods are no longer applicable and only make farmers poorer.

Pedro also hit the agrarian reform law that only subdivided large tracks of agricultural lands into small and inefficient farms because farmer-beneficiaries have no capital.

War on smuggling, hoarding

To help address smuggling and hoarding, the President had also ordered the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to intensify its inspections and raids of rice warehouses to combat hoarding and illegal importation of rice in the country. It shall also facilitate the confiscation, seizure, or forfeiture of smuggled rice.

Just last week, the BOC raided and closed three Bulacan warehouses for allegedly storing imported rice worth more than ₱500 million.

In addition, Marcos directed the Philippine Competition Commission to implement measures against cartels or those abusing their dominant position in the market to ensure fair market competition and uphold consumer welfare and protection.

Meanwhile, the chief executive tasked the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other law enforcement agencies to assist the DTI and the DA and to ensure the immediate and effective enforcement of the price ceilings on rice in the country.

Republic Act (RA) No. 7581 (the Price Act), allows the President, upon the recommendation of the implementing agency or the Price Coordinating Council, to impose a price ceiling on any basic necessity or prime commodity in compliance with the conditions set by the law.

Rice supply

During the sectoral meeting on Aug. 29, the DA reported its projection that rice supply for the second semester would reach 10.15 million metric

tons (MMT), 2.53 MMT of which is ending stock from the first semester while 7.20 MMT is the expected yield from local production and only 0.41 MMT is imported rice.

The total supply would be more than enough to cover the current demand of 7.76 MMT and will yield an ending stock of 2.39 MM that will last up to 64 days.

Based on the projection, EO 39 stated that the DA and the DTI "have reported that the country's rice supplies have reached a stable level and are sufficient owing to the arrival of rice imports and expected surplus on local production."

However, the EO noted that there was still widespread practice of alleged illegal price manipulation, hoarding by opportunistic traders, and collusion among industry cartels in light of the lean season.

The EO also cited global events beyond the Philippines' control, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India's ban on rice exportation, and the unpredictability of oil prices in the world market.

In addition, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) reported the rice inflation rate increased from one percent in January 2022 to 4.2 percent in July 2023 due to the rising demand and tight supply in anticipation of El Niño.

According to Marcos, these factors, among others, have caused an alarming increase in the retail prices of the said commodity. (With reports from Ellson Quismorio and Bernie Cahiles-Magkilat)



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Marcos imposes rice price ceilings

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE,
JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL, JENICA FAYE GARCIA AND RED MENDOZA

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has put a cap on the price of rice to check the “alarming” increase in the staple’s price, Malacañang announced on Friday.

The Palace said the President, through Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, signed on August 31 Executive Order (EO) 39 approving the joint recommendation of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to set price ceilings on rice.

Under EO 39, the per-kilogram price cap for regular milled rice is P41 and P45 for well-milled rice.

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The cap will be in force until it is lifted by the President upon the recommendation of the Price Coordinating Council, or the DA and the DTI.

EO 39, which was released to the public on Friday, will take effect immediately upon publication in the Official Gazette, or in a newspaper of general circulation.

The DA has projected the rice supply for the second semester to reach 10.15 million metric tons (MMT), 2.53 MMT of which is ending stock from the first semester, and 7.20 MMT is the expected yield from local production.

Only 0.41 MMT will be imported.

The supply would be more than enough to cover the current demand of 7.76 MMT and will yield an ending stock of 2.39 MMT that will last up to 64 days, the DA said.

The President said the DA and the DTI “have reported that the country’s rice supplies have reached a stable level and are sufficient owing to the arrival of rice imports and expected surplus on local production.”

He said the two agencies pointed to widespread price manipulation by “industry cartels in light of the lean season, as well as global events taking place beyond the Philippines’ control, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India’s ban on rice exportation, and the unpredictability of oil prices in the world market” as among the factors pushing up retail prices of the commodity.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) earlier said the rice inflation rate rose from 1 percent in January 2022 to 4.2 percent last July because of rising demand and tight supply as rice-producing countries buffer their supply in anticipation of El Niño.

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Marcos directed the DTI and the DA to ensure the price ceilings are strictly followed, to investigate abnormal price movements of rice in the market, and to assist affected retailers with the help of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

The President also directed the Philippine Competition Commission to go after cartels and profiteers.

Section 7 of the Price Act (Republic Act 7581) authorizes the President, on the recommendation of the Price Coordinating Council, to set price ceilings.

The President also ordered the Bureau of Customs (BoC) to step up the inspection of warehouses that stock rice.

The DA will share with the BoC relevant information such as the inventory of rice stocks, the list of accredited rice importers, and the location of rice warehouses.

Last week, Customs raided and closed three warehouses in Bulacan, which illegally stored imported rice worth more than P500 million.

The President also urged the public to report retailers violating the price ceilings.

He told reporters during a chance interview that a "structure" composed of the DILG, DA, DTI and the Department of Justice (DoJ) has been put together to monitor the rice situation.

The President also said the retail price of rice outside the National

Capital Region (NCR) is "not so bad."

"Now, the real problem is in NCR, it's not so bad outside of Metro Manila that's why we will be focusing our efforts in Metro Manila," he said.

The DA said that as of August 28, local regular milled rice in markets in the NCR retailed from P42 per kilo to P55 per kilo. Local well-milled rice sold at P48 to P56 per kilo.

Farmers groups had mixed reactions to the rice price cap.

The Federation of Free Farmers said the caps were still too low.

FFF National Manager Raul Montemayor said the low ceiling might force traders to start buying palay from farmers at a lower price.

"That can discourage farmers from planting; they have been suffering for a long time due to lower prices," Montemayor said.

The average farm gate price of palay is P20, and with the additional expenses and traffic margins, retailers might stop selling rice to cut their losses, he said.

Regular-milled rice should be priced between P43 and P45, and well-milled rice between P48 and P50 to enable retailers to make a decent profit.

Ibon Foundation research head Rosario Guzman said that rice problems stem from long years of neglect and trade liberalization, which the President's EO cannot address.

"Without meaningful production support and crackdown on traders' price-taking, the farmers will only bear the EO with much lower farmgate price than what they are already receiving," said Guzman.

Bantay Bigas spokesman Catarina Estavillo said that 2 kilos of rice will now be sold at P82, and for a family earning a minimum wage, that will mean spending 13 percent of their income just for rice.

"We are calling for a price ceiling, but at an affordable price," Estavillo said.

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) said the government should instead find more effective ways to go after rice cartels.

On Friday, Trade and Industry Secretary Alfredo Pascual released a statement supporting the imposition of price ceilings on rice.

"The price ceiling is aimed at protecting Filipino consumers from unfair and exploitative pricing practices. ... We recognize the urgency of addressing the escalating rice prices in the market," Pascual said.

Pascual said the DTI "will mobilize its price monitors" and urge local governments to activate their Local Price Coordinating Councils.

House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez said the setting of price ceilings on rice is a "timely and necessary" intervention to shield Filipinos from unwarranted surges in rice prices.

In a statement, Romualdez said he empathizes with the plight of underprivileged and marginalized individuals who are most affected by the surge in rice prices.

He said the House of Representatives is determined to intensify its investigation into the hoarding and price manipulation not only of rice but also of basic agricultural products.

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RICE RETAILERS GROANING UNDER NEW PRICE CAPS

STORY BY THE INQUIRER STAFF

Small rice sellers who have stocks bought at old prices expect to lose money and possibly go out of business following the sudden imposition of price ceilings on the staple. Farmers also see a more depressed farm-gate price for their palay. **A2**



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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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RICE PRICES PER KG AS MONITORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

IMPORTED

DATE	SPECIAL	PREMIUM	WELL-MILLED	REGULAR
May 10, 2022	P52	P45	P41	P37
Aug. 22, 2022	52	45	41	38
Dec. 27, 2022	51	45	42	38
Dec. 28, 2022*	46-58	43-50	40-44	37-38
Jan. 23, 2023	46-58	43-52	40-44	37-38
May 15, 2023	50-58	43-52	40-46	37-38
July 21, 2023	48-58	45-50	41-48	not available
Aug. 16, 2023	50-65	47-53	45	not available
Aug. 23, 2023	52-65	47-57	46-52	43
Aug. 30, 2023	53-65	53-57	52	43

LOCAL

DATE	SPECIAL	PREMIUM	WELL-MILLED	REGULAR
May 10, 2022	P50	P45	P40	P38
Aug. 22, 2022	50	45	40	38
Dec. 27, 2022	50	45	40	38
Dec. 28, 2022*	48-60	42-49	38-44	32-40
Jan. 23, 2023	48-60	42-49	38-44	34-40
May 15, 2023	48-60	42-50	39-46	34-42
July 21, 2023	48-60	42-49	40-49	36-44
Aug. 16, 2023	51-60	45-56	40-52	38-50
Aug. 23, 2023	52-62	47-60	45-57	41-55
Aug. 30, 2023	54-65	48-60	47-56	42-55

*Monitoring changed to price range instead of prevailing prices listed.

ING GRAPHICS

Source: <https://www.da.gov.ph/price-monitoring>



HEAVY BURDEN A worker for a rice outlet carries a sack of rice for a customer in Tandang Sora, Quezon City, on Friday, the same day President Marcos imposed price ceilings on the staple—P41 for regular milled rice and P45 for well-milled rice. The prices at a rice store show they are all above the caps set by the President. —LYN RILLON

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

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FROM A1

By the Inquirer Staff
@Team_Inquirer

Small rice merchants said they expected significant losses that could even force them out of business from the sudden imposition of the price ceilings on the staple ordered by President Marcos on Friday.

Rice retailers in Bulacan, Oriental Mindoro, Leyte and Cebu interviewed by the Inquirer said that the government should have given them more time to sell their existing stocks which they had bought at prices higher than the ceilings mandated by the President.

"If we just follow the order, we would lose money and we might have to close down," said Imelda Dy, who has been a rice retailer at the public market in Tacloban City for 40 years.

Her lowest-priced rice was selling for P50 per kilogram, including a P5 markup. She got it from her supplier at P2,250 per 50-kilo sack.

Economic strain

Dy said she would lose P500 per sack if she sold it at P45 per kilo, one of the caps mandated by the President.

Executive Order No. 39 sets a price ceiling of P45 per kilo for well-milled rice and P41 per kilo for regular milled rice.

"The current surge in retail prices of rice in the country has resulted in a considerable economic strain on Filipinos, particularly those who are underprivileged and marginalized," the President said in his order, which was issued on Thursday.

EO 39 invoked Republic Act No. 7581, or the Price Act, which gives the President authority, upon the recommendation of the Price Coordinating Council, to impose a price ceiling on any ba-

sic commodity due to the "prevalence or widespread acts of illegal price manipulation" or when the prices of prime commodities rise to "unreasonable levels."

First since 1995

The order is the first price ceiling imposed on rice since July 1995 when the price council set a ceiling on basic commodities in Metro Manila to protect consumers against artificial cost increases that may be caused by the foot-and-mouth disease that was then afflicting livestock. The price cap on rice at that time was P16.10 per kilo on special rice and P14.10 on ordinary rice.

The new price caps, recommended by price council members of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), will remain "in full force unless lifted by the President."

Erwin Gok-ong, who has been selling rice for more than 40 years in Cebu City, said that while a price cap on rice would protect consumers, the government should also consider the plight of retailers.

Gok-ong pointed out that retailers like him would incur substantial losses if the price cap were enforced immediately.

"The impact will be significant. I'm also worried that some retailers might go out of business," he said.

Caught off guard

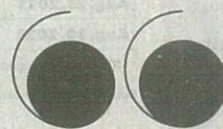
Arlene Agas, who has been selling rice in Cebu's Minglanilla town for more than 10 years, pointed out that she was just a small rice retailer making small profits. Implementing the price cap would put small merchants like her at risk, she said.

A group of rice traders and retailers in Bulacan said they were caught off guard by the announcement and expected that many of them would be unable to cope with the price ceilings.

Rodrigo Sulit, 55, vice pres-



AFFORDABLE COMMODITIES In this photo taken on March 8, President Marcos launches a Kadiwa outlet at the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines compound in Quezon City to sell basic food items at lower prices. On Friday, to make rice more affordable, he ordered price caps of P41 and P45 per kilo of regular milled and well-milled rice following an "alarming" increase in prices. —NIÑO JESUS ORBETA



The current surge in retail prices of rice in the country has resulted in a considerable economic strain on Filipinos, particularly those who are underprivileged and marginalized

President Marcos

ident of the Intercity Rice Mill Association in Balagtas town, was uncertain what the impact of the price ceilings would be on the group's 75 members.

"We're still meeting with authorities, including our local government officials, to help us understand this move," Sulit said.

In Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, rice seller and store owner Sarah Miraples, 50, said that if the price cap were implemented, she would surely lose money.

"We buy a kilo of rice from the rice mill at P52, so our loss will be P7 per kilo," said Miraples, a resident of Barangay Suqui.

The President urged the public to report rice retailers selling above the mandated price ceilings.

Speaking to reporters traveling with him to Palawan on Friday, Mr. Marcos said the rice prices were "not so bad outside of Metro Manila, that's why maybe we will be focusing our efforts in Metro Manila."

The DA's price monitoring as of Aug. 28, showed that local regular milled rice in markets in the National Capital Region ranged from P42 to P55 per kilo while local well-milled rice was selling for P48 to P56 per kilo.

According to the EO, the

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country's rice supply is "stable" and "sufficient" due to rice imports and an expected surplus in local production.

However, there had been widespread illegal price manipulation through hoarding "by opportunistic traders and collusion among industry cartels" during the lean season.

In addition, certain global events, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, India's ban on rice exports and the unpredictable global oil prices, caused "an alarming increase in the retail prices of this basic commodity."

'Timely, necessary'

The National Economic and Development Authority reported that the rice inflation rate increased from 1 percent in January 2022 to 4.2 percent in July 2023 due to the rising demand and tight supply as other countries beefed up their own rice supplies in anticipation of El Niño.

Speaker Martin Romualdez said the price caps were "a timely and necessary intervention."

In a meeting with members of the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders' Movement (PRISM) on Friday, Romualdez warned rice traders that the government would come down hard on hoarders and smugglers.

He urged members of the group to "unmask bad eggs" in their ranks.

"If you want to be part of the solution, you are with us, we will help you, we're going to support you. But if you're part of the problem, we will root you out," Romualdez said.

Critics of the President's move, however, said that this would not solve the problem of high rice prices and would only harm small retailers and rice farmers, who might be forced to sell their crops under more depressed prices.

Peasant groups were alarmed by the President's action.

"This could potentially re-

sult in a significant drop in the price of palay, because the rule of thumb is that the retail price should be twice the farm-gate price. This could lead to a decrease of up to P20 per kilogram for rice," Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women said in a statement.

Rafael Mariano, chair of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and a former agrarian reform secretary, said small retailers and local farmers rather than hoarders who manipulate the price of rice will carry the brunt of any financial losses.

"The (government) allowed price of rice to soar without price controls or ceilings. They allowed market forces, the cartels, hoarders and profiteers to manipulate prices," Mariano said.

Sen. Francis Escudero questioned the basis for invoking the presidential power to impose price ceilings in the absence of an emergency or widespread profiteering, hoarding or price manipulation as the government claimed.

"Is there (such a situation)?" he asked. "Or are prices just really high because of lack of supply or higher cost of inputs? If there is, why hasn't government arrested and/or sued anyone for such acts, which are illegal?"

Review of tariff law

According to the senator, the government should first recognize the problems besetting the country's rice industry to help it craft solutions.

He said the government should set aside more funds for agriculture, noting that the administration's proposed budget of P255 billion for flood control programs in 2024 was way bigger than the planned allocation of P181 billion for the DA.

"(This policy) will not cut it," Escudero said. "Government should put its money where its mouth is if we are to rid of this perennial problem."

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RICE RETAILERS GROANING UNDER NEW PRICE CAPS

FROM A2

Sen. Risa Hontiveros said the President's move underscored the need to review the rice tariffication law, which Congress approved in 2019 supposedly to help bring down the price of rice by removing the restrictions on rice importation.

Resorting to price caps is "a lazy solution" to curb price

hikes, she said.

"Price controls are 'cures' that could be even worse than the disease. Is this the prescription of the economists in Malacañang or their spin doctors?" Hontiveros said.

'Desperate move'

The Makabayan bloc dismissed the President's efforts as a public relations stunt.

"This is a desperate move

to quell the people's mounting frustration over his failure to deliver his campaign promise. He was the one who said it will be P20 per kilo of rice," said House Assistant Minority Leader Rep. Arlene Brosas. —WITH REPORTS FROM NESTOR CORRALES, JULIE M. AURELIO, MARLON RAMOS, ABBY BOISER, JOEY A. GABIETA, NESTLE SEMILLA, CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE, MADONNA T. VIROLA AND INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ

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MERCHANTS WARNED

MARCOS MOVE WORRIES AGRI BIZ GROUPS, THINK TANKS

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
and **Alden M. Monzon**
@Team_Inquirer

Various groups expressed concern over **President Marcos'** imposition of a price cap on rice, saying the move would not only adversely affect domestic supply but also impact the livelihood of farmers.

For Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor, the price ceiling being set looks "unrealistically low."

"If traders and millers cannot sell at that price, then either they will stop selling rice or they will shift to, or rebrand their rice products—to grades other than regular milled rice or well-milled rice in order to evade the price cap," Montemayor said on Friday.

"This will certainly affect the quantity supplied; that is, (it will) reduce it as costs are high but prices capped. This will lead to shortages, cheating and black market activity," said Roehlano Briones, a senior research fellow at the think tank Philippine Institute for Development Studies.

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MARCOS MOVE ON RICE WOES WORRIES AGRI GROUPS, THINK TANKS

FROM A1

Another think tank, IBON Foundation, said the order would further depress the already low farm-gate price—or the selling price between farmers and traders—without “meaningful” production support and a crack-down on traders’ price-taking.

“Invoking the Price Act is useful in emergency situations. But our rice problems are long-drawn problems of neglect and trade liberalization. The President’s Executive Order does not address these,” IBON Foundation research head Rosario Guzman said.

‘Rule of thumb’

Kilusang Mangbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) believes the price ceiling can still be lowered if only the “rule of thumb” is applied in setting prices.

Citing an example, KMP said that if traders purchased palay (unhusked rice) at a median

price of P19 to P22 per kilo and add the cost of milling, drying, hauling and transporting the commodity, the prevailing prices should only range from P30 to P37.40 per kilo.

Cathy Estavillo, secretary general of Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women and spokesperson for Bantay Bigas, said price ceilings would hurt the income of palay producers.

“The buying price of palay could substantially decline because the rule of thumb is the retail price of rice is twice the farm-gate price,” she said.

Go after cartels

The farm-gate price of palay reached P19.06 per kilo as of May this year, up by 10.4 percent from P17.24 in the same period a year ago, based on the data from the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Amihan, Bantay Bigas and KMP shared the view that the government should instead go after big private traders and rice cartels—not small retailers—as

they are the players who influence local supply and cause the price hikes in the markets.

Useless

Meanwhile, the head of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. (FFCCCII) also aired concerns over the price cap.

“If the set prices are low, if people are selling at a loss, then no one will produce rice,” FFCCCII president Cecilio Pedro said at a media forum in Quezon City. “Price control will never work in any economy. It is a function of demand and supply.”

Instead, Pedro said, the government should focus on helping farmers scale up while lowering their production costs.

Cashing in on panic

Only Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) lauded the Marcos administration’s latest move, seeing no reason for retail prices to surge.

“There is no reason for any



Alfredo Pascual

price increase these past weeks as there is no rice shortage in the country,” Sinag executive director Jayson Cainglet said.

Cainglet said traders capitalized on the initial public panic after the National Food Authority (NFA) on July 31 disclosed that its buffer stock was only good for 1.5 days.

“Our stocks are good to last until the first quarter of next year. And we have yet to harvest the expected 7 million metric tons of rice this harvest

season,” he said. “At any given time, our buffer stock is good for 50-60 days, prior to the onset of the harvest season later this month.”

No to ‘mislabeling’

Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual on Friday said government inspectors would make the rounds to guard against the mislabeling of rice varieties in local markets.

Penalties await merchants who will try to circumvent the price ceiling using this scheme, he said.

Pascual explained that only regular and well-milled rice are covered by the price ceiling—and premium rice is not.

“We will make sure that the rice varieties subject to the price ceiling, regular and well-milled rice, are not mislabeled as premium rice,” the trade chief said in an interview on state-run PTV4. “We have monitoring teams who will go around.”

“Also, the Department of Ag-

riculture (DA) will give guidelines so that we can distinguish premium varieties from the variety covered in the price act,” Pascual said.

Retailers found violating the price ceiling face imprisonment from under a year to 10 years, or fines ranging from P5,000 to P1 million, or both.

Price monitoring

As of Friday, locally produced regular milled rice in Metro Manila retails from P42 to P55 per kilo, from P38 per kilo last year, according to the DA price monitor.

Local well-milled rice was being sold from P47 to P57 per kilo, compared to P40 per kilo last year.

Latest data on the price of imported regular milled rice prices were unavailable, but last year this variety was sold at P38 per kilo.

Imported well-milled rice was priced from P43 to P52 per kilo, against P42 per kilo last year. **INQ**



EDITORIAL

Rice price ceilings

FOLLOWING the surge in the retail prices of the Filipinos' staple, President Marcos has imposed price ceilings on rice not only in the metropolis but across the country.

This drew cheers and applause from the poor, particularly the country's farmers, fishermen and other agricultural workers, who comprise the bulk of the population.

Under Executive Order (EO) No. 39, the mandated price ceiling for regular milled rice is P41 per kilogram, while the price cap for well-milled rice is P45 per kilo.

Republic Act (RA) No. 7581, otherwise known as the Price Act, authorizes the Chief Executive to impose a price ceiling on any basic commodity or prime commodity.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) had earlier reported that the price per kilograms of local regular milled rice in the Metropolitan Manila area ranged from P42 to P55.

The prices of local well-milled rice, on the other hand, ranged from P48 to P56 per kilo.

Earlier, the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) recommended the imposition of the price ceilings to ensure that the staple "is reasonably priced."

Reports said the recommendation stemmed from the current increase in the retail prices of rice, which resulted in a considerable economic strain on the Filipino people.

Various quarters lamented the surge in the retail prices of the staple despite the steady supply of rice in the country.



RICE PRICE CAPS PBBM sets price ceilings on rice nationwide

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has approved the recommendation to impose mandated price ceilings on rice in the whole country to ensure reasonably priced and conveniently accessible staple food to Filipinos amid the alarming increase in its retail prices in the market.

Executive Order No. 39 signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on August 31, stated that President Marcos approved the joint recommendation of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to set price ceilings on rice in the country.

It was also issued following the sectoral meeting on August 29, where President Marcos was briefed about the status of government initiatives to ensure sufficient rice supply in the country.

Under EO 39, the mandated price ceiling for regular milled rice is PhP41.00 per kilogram while the mandated price cap for well-milled rice is PhP45.00 per kilogram.

"The mandated price ceilings shall remain in full force and effect unless lifted by the President upon the recommendation of the Price Coordinating Council or the DA and the DTI," the executive order, which will take effect immediately upon publication in the Official Gazette, or in a newspaper of general circulation, stated.

The recommendation of the DA and the DTI to impose price ceilings on rice stemmed from the current surge in retail prices of rice in the country, which resulted in a considerable economic strain on Filipinos, particularly the underprivileged and marginalized.

During the sectoral meeting, the DA reported its projection that rice supply for the second semester would reach 10.15 million metric tons (MMT), 2.53 MMT of which is ending stock from the first semester while 7.20 MMT is the expected yield from local production and only 0.41 MMT is imported rice.

The total supply would be more than enough to cover the current demand of 7.76 MMT and will yield an ending stock of 2.39 MMT that will last

up to 64 days.

Based on the projection, EO 39 stated the DA and the DTI "have reported that the country's rice supplies have reached a stable level and are sufficient owing to the arrival of rice imports and expected surplus on local production."

The EO, however, noted that "despite steady supply of rice, the DA and DTI have also reported widespread practice of alleged illegal price manipulation, such as hoarding by opportunistic traders and collusion among industry cartels in light of the lean season, as well as global events taking place beyond the Philippines' control, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India's ban on rice exportation, and the unpredictability of oil prices in the world market, among other factors, have caused an alarming increase in the retail prices of this basic commodity."

As of Aug. 28, the DA reported the local regular milled rice in markets in the National Capital Region (NCR) ranged from PhP42.00 per kilogram to PhP55.00 per kilogram while local well-milled rice stood at PhP48.00 per kilogram to PhP56.00 per kilogram.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) also reported the rice inflation rate increased from 1.0% in January 2022 to 4.2% in July 2023, which could be attributed to the rising demand and tight supply due to, among others, efforts of other countries to buffer their supply in anticipation of El Niño and the above-mentioned international developments.

President Marcos has directed the DTI and the DA to ensure the strict implementation of the mandated price ceilings, monitor and investigate abnormal price movements of rice in the market, and provide assistance to affected retailers with the help of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

RA 7581, or the Price Act was enacted in 1992, allowing the state to provide effective and sufficient protection to consumers against hoarding, profiteering and cartels.



PBBM PINAKO PRESYO NG BIGAS

APRUBADO na ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang rekomendasyon na magpataw ng mandated price ceiling sa bigas sa buong bansa para matiyak ang makatwirang presyo at madaling ma-access ang mga pangunahing pagkain sa mga Pilipino sa gitna ng nakakalarmang pagtaas ng mga retail na presyo nito sa merkado.

Nilagdaan ni Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin ang Executive Order No. 39 noong Agosto 31, na nagsasaad na inaprubahan ni Pangulong Marcos ang rekomendasyon ng Department of Agriculture (DA) at Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) na magtakda ng price ceiling sa bigas sa buong bansa.

Inilabas ito kasunod ng sectoral meeting noong Agosto 29 kung saan ay saan binigyang-diin sa Pangulong Marcos ang kalagayan ng mga hakbangin ng pamahalaan upang matiyak ang sapat na suplay ng bigas sa bansa.

Sa ilalim ng EO 39, ang mandated price ceiling para sa regular milled rice ay P41 kada kilo habang ang P45 naman para sa well-milled rice.

"The mandated price ceilings shall remain in full force and effect unless lifted by the President upon the recommendation of the Price Coordinating Council or the DA and the DTI," saad sa executive order, na agad ipatutupad pagkatapos mailathala sa nationwide na pahayagan.

Ang rekomendasyon ng DA at DTI na magpataw ng mga price ceiling sa bigas ay nag-ugat sa kasalukuyang pagtaas ng presyo ng mga retail ng bigas sa bansa, na nagresulta sa malaking economic strain sa mga Pilipino, partikular ang mga mahihirap at marginalized.

Sa sectoral meeting, iniulat ng DA ang projection nito na ang suplay ng bigas para sa ikalawang semestre ay aabot sa 10.15 million metric tons (MMT), 2.53 MMT nito ay nagtatapos sa stock mula sa unang semester habang 7.20 MMT ang inaasahang ani mula sa lokal na produksiyon at tanging ang 0.41 MMT ay imported na bigas.

Ang kabuuang suplay ay magi-

ging higit pa sa sapat upang masakop ang kasalukuyang demand na 7.76 MMT at magbubunga ng pangwakas na stock na 2.39 MMT na tatagal ng hanggang 64 na araw.

Sa projection, sinabi sa EO 39 na ang DA at DTI ay "nag-ulat na ang suplay ng bigas ng bansa ay umabot na sa isang matatag na antas at sapat na dahil sa pagdating ng pag-import ng bigas at inaasahang labis sa lokal na produksiyon."

Gayunman, sinabi ng EO na "sa kabila ng tuloy-tuloy na supply ng bigas, ang DA at DTI ay nag-ulat din ng malawakang pagsasagawa ng diumano'y ilegal na pagmamanipla ng presyo, tulad ng pag-iimbak ng mga oportunistang mangangalakal at pakikipagsabwatan sa mga kartel ng industriya, gayundin ang mga pandaigdigang kaganapan na lampas sa kontrol ng Pilipinas, tulad ng digmaan sa pagitan ng Russia at Ukraine, pagbabawal ng India sa pag-export ng bigas, at ang hindi mahuhulaan na presyo ng langis sa pandaigdigang merkado, bukod sa iba pang mga kadahilanan.

Samantala, inutusan din ng Pangulo ang Philippine Competition Commission, sa pakikipag-ugnayan sa DA at DTI, na magpatupad ng mga hakbang laban sa mga kartel upang matiyak ang patas na kompetisyon sa merkado at itaguyod ang kapakanan at proteksiyon ng mga mamimili.

Inatasan din ang Philippine National Police (PNP) at iba pang law enforcement agency na magbigay ng kinakailangang tulong sa DTI at DA upang matiyak ang agaran at epektibong pagpapatupad ng mga price ceiling sa bigas sa bansa.

Sa ilalim ng Section 7 ng Republic Act No. 7581, ang Pangulo, sa rekomendasyon ng implementing agency, o ng Price Coordinating Council, ay maaaring magpataw ng price ceiling sa anumang pangunahing pangangailangan o bilihin bilang pagsunod sa mga kondisyong itinakda ng batas. Ang RA 7581, o ang Price Act ay pinagtibay noong 1992, na nagpapahintulot sa estado na magbigay ng epektibo at sapat na proteksiyon sa mga mamimili laban sa hoarding, profiteering at mga kartel.

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PBBM, nagtakda ng price ceilings sa bigas

INAPRUBAHAN ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ang rekomendasyon na magpatupad ng "mandated price ceilings" sa bigas sa buong bansa.

Layon nito na tiyakin na makatuwiran ang presyo at may "conveniently accessible staple food" sa mga Filipino sa gitna ng nakaaalarmang pagtaas ng retail prices sa mga pamilihan.

Nauna rito, nilagdaan ni Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin ang Executive Order No. 39, araw ng Huwebes, at nakasaad na inaprubahan ni Pangulong Marcos ang joint recommendation ng Department of Agriculture at Department of Trade and Industry na magtakda ng price ceilings sa bigas sa bansa.

Ipinalabas din ito kasunod ng sectoral meeting noong Agosto 29, kung saan ipinaalam kay Pangulong Marcos ang kalahayan ng inisyatiba ng pamahalaan na tiyakin ang suplay ng bigas sa bansa.

Sa ilalim ng EO 39, ang 'mandated price ceiling' para sa regular milled rice ay P41.00 per kilogram habang ang mandated price cap

para sa well-milled rice ay P45.00 per kilogram.

Ang rekomendasyon ng DA at DTI na magpatupad ng price ceilings sa bigas ay nagugat mula sa kasalukuyang pagsirit ng retail prices ng bigas sa bansa, nagresulta ng malaking "economic strain" sa mga Filipino, partikular na sa mga "underprivileged at marginalized."

Sa sectoral meeting, iniulat ng DA ang projection nito na ang rice supply para sa second semester ay umabot ng 10.15 million metric tons, 2.53 MMT nito ay ending stock mula sa first semester habang 7.20 MMT ay ang inasahang ani mula sa lokal na produksyon at tanging 0.41 MMT ay imported rice.

Base pa rin sa projection, nakasaad sa EO 39 na ang DA at DTI "have reported that the country's rice supplies have reached a stable level and are sufficient owing to the arrival of rice imports and expected surplus on local production."

Gayunman, nakasaad pa rin sa EO na "despite steady supply of rice, the DA and DTI have also reported widespread practice of alleged illegal price

manipulation, such as hoarding by opportunistic traders and collusion among industry cartels in light of the lean season, as well as global events taking place beyond the Philippines' control, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India's ban on rice exportation, and the unpredictability of oil prices in the world market, among other factors, have caused an alarming increase in the retail prices of this basic commodity."

Iniulat ng National Economic and Development Authority na ang rice inflation rate ay tumaa mula sa 1.0% noong January 2022 at naging 4.2% noong July 2023, "which could be attributed to the rising demand and tight supply due to, among others, efforts of other countries to buffer their supply in anticipation of El Niño and the above-mentioned international developments" ayon sa NEDA.

Sa kabilang dako, inatasan naman ni Pangulong Marcos ang DTI at DA na tiyakin ang mahigpit na implementasyon ng "mandated price ceilings, monitor at investigate abnormal price movements" ng bigas sa pamilihan at magbigay ng tulong sa mga apektadong retailers sa tulong ng Depart-

ment of Interior and Local Government.

Inatasan rin ng Punong Ehekutibo ang Bureau of Customs na paigtingin ang nagpapatuloy na inspeksyon at pagsalakay sa mga rice warehouses para labanan ang hoarding at illegal importation ng bigas sa bansa, at pangasiwaan at pabilisin ang "confiscation, seizure, o forfeiture" ng smuggled rice "as may be warranted by law" sa tulong ng DA.

Inatasan rin ng Pangulo ang Philippine Competition Commission, sa pakikipagtulungan sa DA at DTI, na ipatupad ang hakbang at batas laban sa cartels o iyong mga inaabuso ang kanilang dominant position sa pamilihan para tiyakin ang "fair market competition" at paninidigan ang "consumer welfare and protection."

Binigyan naman ng mandato ang Philippine National Police (PNP) at iba pang law enforcement agencies na tulungan ang DTI at DA na siguruhin ang agaran at epektibong pagpapatupad ng price ceilings sa bigas sa bansa.

KRIS JOSE

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Trader na 'di susunod sa itinakdang presyo sa bigas, isumbong - Marcos

Hinikayat ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang publiko na magsumbong sa pulisya o sa Department of Agriculture (DA) ang mga nagtitinda ng bigas na hindi sumusunod sa itinakdang presyo ng pamahalaan.

Sinabi ni Marcos na dapat isumbong agad sa pulisya o DA at maging sa Lokal na pamahalaan ang sinumang may nalalaman na may mga negosyante o tindero ang nagsasamantala sa presyo ng bigas.

"I would encourage everyone who finds that someone, or a retailer is selling, at above the price ceiling, i-report po ninyo. Report niyo sa pulis, i-report niyo sa DA doon sa lugar ninyo, i-report niyo sa local government para matignan namin at tiyak na hindi lalampas sa ating presyo na ating linagay na P40 at P44," ayon pa kay Marcos.

Batay sa Executive Order No. 39 na inaprubahan ni Pangulong Marcos, nasa P41 lamang kada kilo ang presyo ng regular milled rice habang ang mandated price cap para sa well-milled rice ay nasa P45 kada kilo.

Subalit ang tunay umanong problema ay sa National Capital Region (NCR) kaya dapat na mag-focus sa Metro Manila.

Dahil dito kaya tulung-tulong umano sa pagmomonitor ang iba't ibang ahensiya ng gobyerno tulad ng DILG, DA, DTI at DOJ. (Gemma Garcia)

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Price cap sa bigas, itinakda ni PBBM P41 sa regular, P45 sa well-milled

Aprubado na ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ang rekomendasyon na magpataw ng mandated price ceiling sa bigas sa buong bansa para matiyak ang makatwiran at accessible na presyo sa gitna ng nakakaalarmang pagtaas sa retail price ng bigas sa mga palengke.

Nakasaad sa Executive Order No. 39 na nilagdaan ni Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin na may petsang Agosto 31, na P41 na lamang kada kilo ang presyo ng regular milled rice habang ang mandated price cap para sa well-milled rice ay nasa P45 kada kilo.

Inilabas din ito kasunod ng sectoral meeting noong Agosto 29, kung saan binigyang-diin ang kalagayan ng mga hakbangin ng pamahalaan

upang matiyak ang sapat na suplay ng bigas sa bansa.

Ang rekomendasyon ng DA at DTI na magpataw ng mga price ceiling sa bigas ay nag-ugat sa kasalukuyang pagtaas ng presyo ng mga retail ng bigas sa bansa, na nagresulta sa malaking economic strain sa mga Pilipino, partikular ang mga mahihirap at marginalized.

Sa sectoral meeting, iniulat ng DA ang projection nito na ang supply ng bigas para sa ikalawang semestre ay aabot sa 10.15 million metric tons (MMT), 2.53 MMT nito ay nagtatapos sa stock mula sa unang semestre habang 7.20 MMT ang inaasahang ani mula sa lokal na produksyon at tanging 0.41 MMT ay imported na bigas.

Ang kabuuang supply ay magiging higit pa sa sapat upang masakop ang kasalukuyang demand na 7.76 MMT at magbubunga ng pangwakas na stock na 2.39 MM na tatagal ng hanggang 64 na araw.

Sa projection, sinabi ng EO 39 na ang DA at DTI ay "nag-ulat na ang suplay ng bigas ng bansa ay umabot na sa isang matatag na antas at sapat

NI GEMMA GARCIA

na dahil sa pagdating ng pag-import ng bigas at inaasahang labis sa lokal na produksyon."

Gayunman, sinabi ng EO na "sa kabila ng tuluy-tuloy na supply ng bigas, ang DA at DTI ay nag-ulat din ng malawakang pagsasagawa ng diumano'y ilegal na pagmamanipla ng pre-

syo, tulad ng pag-iimbak ng mga oportunistikong mangangalakal at pakikipagsabwatan sa mga kartel ng industriya sa liwanag ng panahon, gayundin ang mga pandaigdigang nagaganap na lampas sa kontrol ng Pilipinas, tulad ng salungatan sa Russia-Ukraine, pagbabawal ng India sa pag-export ng bigas, at ang hindi mahuhulaan

na presyo ng langis sa pandaigdigang merkado, bukod sa iba pang mga kadahilanan, ay nagdulot ng nakababahala na pagtaas sa mga presyo ng pangunahing kalakal." Lumalabas sa monitoring ng DA na nasa P42 hanggang P55 ang presyo ng local regular milled rice kada kilo sa mga palengke

sa National Capital Region (NCR) habang P48 hanggang P56 ang presyo ng local well-milled rice kada kilo.

Ipinag-utos din ng Presidente sa Philippine National Police (PNP) na tulungan ang DA at DTI para agad maipatupad ang price ceilings sa bigas sa buong bansa.



PPP, NIA to start market-sounding activity for P38-B irrigation projects

By **LOUELLA DESIDERIO**

The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Center and **National Irrigation Administration (NIA)** are set to start the market-sounding activity for three priority irrigation projects worth a total of P37.9 billion next week to gauge private sector interest.

In a project advisory, the PPP Center said a preliminary market sounding activity for the Upper Banaoang Irrigation Project, Ilocos-Norte-Ilocos Sur-Abra Irrigation Project (INISAIP), and Tumauni River Multipurpose Project (TRMP), will run from Sept. 4 to 15.

"As part of the initial stages of project development, the PPP Center and NIA are conducting this preliminary market-sounding activity to solicit insights and feedback on the project terms from interested private sector investors," the PPP Center said.

Through the market-sounding activity, the agencies want to ascertain the level of interest of the private sector to undertake the projects.

In addition, the market-sounding activity aims to gather feedback from potential project sponsors, contractors or operators and financiers.

It will also help identify potential issues or problems that may affect the viability of the projects.

Participants will be asked to accomplish a market-sounding questionnaire for their insights and feedback.

Upon submission of the accomplished questionnaire, interested firms may request one-on-one discussions with NIA and PPP Center project teams.

The PPP Center said the three projects "were identified as priority PPP projects to contribute to the expansion of and upgrading of infrastructure and modernization of agriculture and agribusiness."

Last June, the NIA board of directors approved the development of the three priority irrigation projects for PPP.

Through the P6.6-billion Upper Banaoang Irrigation Project, the aim is to construct an impounding dam with Malapao River in Abra as its water source.

With a potential service area of 5,000 hectares of agricultural land, the project is also designed to engage in fish culture and develop hydroelectric power projects.

Meanwhile, the P22.7 billion INISAIP II is intended to serve approximately 11,100 hectares of agricultural land with the Palsiguan River as the main source of irrigation water.

The project is intended to irrigate sub-areas of Ilocos Norte such as Nueva Era, Cura, Madupayas, Pinili, Badoc-Sinait and Batac-Paoay through a network of link canals.

As for the P8.6 billion TRMP, the aim is to expand the coverage of the existing Tumauni Irrigation System (TIS) to 32 barangays located in the municipalities of Tumauni, Cabagan, and the City of Ilagan, Isabela.

While the TIS was originally designed to potentially irrigate 6,100 hectares, only around 3,000 hectares are being served at present due to insufficient water-river run-off, especially during the summer season.



DA lifts ban on poultry imports from Poland

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has lifted the ban on the importation of chicken and other poultry products from Poland after imposing a prohibition amid the outbreak of avian influenza in that country.

Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban issued Memorandum Order No. 60 allowing the resumption of importation of domestic and wild birds and their products including poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs and semen originating from Poland.

Panganiban had issued a temporary ban due to the outbreak of H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

"Based on the official report of Poland in the World Organization for Animal Health, all HPAI reported events in Poland have ended with resolved status and no additional outbreaks were reported," Panganiban said, adding that Poland is now free from bird flu.

He added that based on the evaluation of the DA, the risk of contamination from importing poultry meat, day old chicks, eggs and semen is negligible.



DA READY TO ASSIST FARMERS

CROP LOSSES FROM 'GORING,' 'HABAGAT' TOP P500M

Agriculture damage due to the southwest monsoon ("habagat") enhanced by Typhoon "Goring" (international name: Saola) has surpassed the P500-million mark on Friday, the **Department of Agriculture (DA)** said.

In its latest bulletin, the DA said losses attributed to the weather disturbance reached P504.4 million, with the bulk at P362.2 million reported by rice farmers.

Records showed that 11,965 farmers in Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas,

Rizal, Quezon) and Western Visayas regions were affected.

The DA pegged the volume of production loss at 21,134 metric tons (MT) covering 19,658 hectares of agricultural areas.

Rice accounted for 71.8 percent of the total, affecting 16,488 MT spanning 13,967 ha. Corn followed with 27.6 percent or P139.1 million.

Damage to high-value crops and livestock and poultry reached P2.7 million and P487,600, respectively.

The total amount was substantially lower than the P4.6

billion worth of damage sustained by the agriculture sector following the onslaught of Typhoons "Egay" (Doksuri) and "Falcon" (Khanun) in July.

The DA is ready to provide assistance to farmers, including P100 million worth of rice, corn and assorted vegetable seeds as well as biologics for livestock and poultry.

Farmers, the agency said, could apply for a loan of up to P25,000 through the Survival and Recovery loan program from the Agricultural Credit Policy Council. It is payable in three years at zero interest.

In Negros Occidental, typhoon-related agriculture and infrastructure damage in the province reached at least P167 million.

The provincial government said heavy rains and widespread flooding hit farms in the towns of San Enrique, Pontevedra, Valladolid, Murcia, Pulupandan, Isabela, Hinigaran, EB Magalona, Binalbagan, La Castellana and Don Salvador Benedicto, and the cities of La Carlota, Silay, Bago, Talisay, Himamaylan, San Carlos and Bacolod. —REPORTS FROM JORDEENE B. LAGARE AND CARLA P. GOMEZ INQ



BRACING FOR EL NIÑO

THE government's weather forecasting agencies will be working with local communities and agricultural areas for El Niño phenomenon forecasting and dam status monitoring as agreed during a recent meeting of the El Niño team.

In a meeting held last August 29 via videoconferencing, the El Niño team also agreed to include historical data on the El Niño on irrigation system to serve as a reference to certain communities.

The team also wanted to emphasize the residual impacts of the dry spell, which could persist for a specific period and make it a reference source for stakeholders.

The El Niño forecasting and dam status monitoring will be carried out by the data analytics group in coordination with the

Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Other agreed action plans and interventions include the conduct of workshops, trainings and seminars together with their partner entities such as the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), as well as doing regular reporting to inform the body on its aims, goals and programs.

Best practices and the experiences of other countries on El Niño will also be discussed.

On the proposed workshop for the development of a National El Niño Team (NENT) Dashboard, the El Niño team agreed

to conduct a workshop for its members. The NENT Dashboard will serve as a database for the National El Niño team.

The body is expected to receive the workshop output for approval with reference for inclusion in the El Niño Action Plan.

The team also agreed to plan and to prepare for a one-day workshop with other government agencies such as the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Health (DOH), Office of Civil Defense (OCD), with DOST-

PAGASA as participating agencies. The workshop will be scheduled on September 6.

With regard to the development of a National Action Plan (NAP), the El Niño team said that although it is almost finished, the published El Niño National Action Plan is still considered a draft as it was not yet approved by the body and still needs more inputs from other agencies.

Concerned agencies are being asked to submit their inputs and reports immediately which will form part of the memorandum being prepared on the status of the NAP development for submission to the Secretary of National Defense and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) chairperson, PCO

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WALANG REGULAR, WELL MILLED RICE

A NOMANG araw, magkakahalaga na lang ang mga bigas ng P41 at P45 kada kilo.

Ito'y sa ilalim ng isang kautusan mula sa Malakanyang na nag-uutos ukol dito at magiging epektibo kaagad paglabas na paglabas ng kautusan sa Official Gazette o diaryong pangkalahatan o general circulation gaya ng Remate tabloid.

P41 ang para sa regular milled at P45 naman para sa well milled.

Karaniwang nagmumukhang maputi lahat ang mga well milled samantalang may mga brown na buo o bahagi ng isang butil ang mga regular milled.

Mas maganda ang kanin mula sa well milled dahil napapasok ito nang buo ng tubig habang may halong hilaw ang kanin mula sa regular milled.

May problema nga lang sa aktuwal na

pagtitinda ng bigas sa mga palengke.

Posibleng sabihin ng mga nagtitinda na wala silang regular milled at well milled at ang nakatatak sa kanilang karatula ay denorado, jasmine, premium, pandan, long grain, brown rice, violet rice, Cagayan rice, Nueva Ecija rice at iba pa na nagkakahalaga ng P50-P60 kada kilo.

At sasabihin ng mga rice trader at retailer na wala silang regular milled at well milled.

Paano ngayon 'yan, kayo rian sa Department of Trade and Industry at Department of Agriculture?

Mapupwersa ba ninyo silang magbenta ng P41 at P45 kada kilo sa ganyang mga uri ng bigas?



Sa mga retailer nga lang na kumukuha mula sa National Food Authority ng itinitindang bigas, sa 10 kaban, dalawa lang ang presyong NFA rice at ang walo, tinatatakan ng mga pangalan gaya ng nabanggit natin sa itaas.

Malaking hamon sa DTI at DA ang mga problema sa presyuhan at mapanlinlang na pag-uuri-uri sa mga bigas.

Pero higit na mas malaking hamon sa parte ng mga mamimili dahil karaniwang inosente sila sa kalokohan sa presyuhan at kalidad ng mga bigas.

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Presyo ng bigas sa Capiz, tumataas din

IPINAHAYAG ni Capiz Gov. Fredenil Castro na maghinay-hinay sa pagluluwas ng palay o bigas na galing sa kanyang lalawigan. Ngayong patuloy ang pagmahal ng bigas sa merkado tiyak na marami ang magugutom kapag kinapos ng supply ang Capizeños.

Hindi maipagkakaila na maganda ang ani ng palay sa mga lugar ng Panay, Maayon, Pontevedra, President Roxas, Pilar, Panitan, Sigma at Cuartero at ilan pang mga bayan ng Capiz. Ito ay sa kabila ng naranasang pagbaha dulot ng mga nagdaang bagyo. Kahit nabaha ang ilang lugar dahil sa walang tigil na pag-ulan, maganda ang ani ng mga magsasaka sa Capiz.

Ang problema, maraming negosyante ang namamakyaw ng palay sa mga magsasaka dahil mataas ang kanilang presyo kaysa **National Food Authority**. At hindi masisisi ang magsasaka na magbenta sa mga negosyante na may mataas na presyo para mabawi ang kanilang nagastos sa pagtatanim, ipinambili ng fertilizer, pesticide at bayad sa makinarya sa panahon ng anihan.

Ang mga nabibiling palay ng mga negosyante ay inilu-



luwas pa ng Metro Manila at naipagbibili ng mas mataas na halaga. Kaya kapag naubos na ang palay sa lalawigan siguradong mag-iimport na naman ng bigas ang NFA para punuan ang pagkukulang ng bigas.

Sa ngayon, maraming imported rice ang binibenta sa Capiz kaysa sa mga sariling ani. Ang 25 kilos ng bigas ngayon ay umaabot na sa P1,200 at umaaray na ang mga mahihirap na kababayan sa Capiz.

Kaya mahigpit ang panawagan ng Capiz governor na maghinay-hinay ang mga negosyante sa pagluluwas ng bigas sa Maynila at baka maubos ito. Tiyak magugutom ang kanyang mga kababayan.

Pinagtutuunan din ng governor ng pansin ang floodways sa kanyang probinsiya upang huwag magbaha sakali at umapaw ang Agbalo River at ang tubig na galing sa bulu-bundukin ng Cuartero, Dao, Dumalag, Ivisan, Jamindan, Mambusao, Sapia-an, Sigma at Tapaz.

(Sundan sa pahina 5)



Summit: Reduce fishery loss by 20%

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

THE recent national summit on coastal resiliency, organized by the Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU)-based Coastal Engineering Research Center (Coaster), can help contribute to the reduction of agricultural and fishery losses to disaster by 20 percent or about P100 million per year.

The Coaster can also help improve the protection of coastal communities from erosion, saving about P1 billion every year and will boost the tourism industry in the region.

Nathaniel Alibuyog, Coaster program leader and MMSU vice president for research and extension, said addressing problems surrounding coastal protection and management needs serious collaboration among agencies and organizations.

"Thus, we have come together to share, debate and celebrate innovative solutions for shaping our shorelines," Alibuyog said during the recent summit at MMSU Teatro Ilocandia in Batac City.

He also highlighted the coastal engineering summit "would synergize the projects of various agencies and organizations to properly shape the future of Philippine coastlines."

Best practices

According to John Vincent Toribio, MMSU Strategic Communication Information Services Section chief, the summit's resource persons discussed research-based collaboration frameworks toward coastal resiliency and flood and erosion

management. It also tackled new research methodologies, technologies and the Coaster's research outputs.

"The summit also introduced to the participants appropriate practices on science-based decision-making, especially about sustainable infrastructure designs and policies that protect resources from coastal flooding, all these toward improving the lives of people in coastal communities," Toribio said.

Local government units (LGUs), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and private contractors also learned during the summit the type of coastal infrastructure that must be built, where to build and what materials to use.

The summit was attended by officials and staff of MMSU, University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman-Marine Science Institute, UP National Institute for Geological Sciences, UP Planning and Maintenance Office, De La Salle University, Mapua University and Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University.

Attendees from international schools such as Japan's Kyoto University and Thailand's Asian Institute of Technology, as well



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■ **MMSU President Shirley Agrupis (third from left) at the first national coastal engineering summit at the university's Teatro Ilocandia in Batac City.**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

as representatives from the Japan International Cooperation Agency, shared their countries' best practices on coastal engineering.

Personnel from the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, National Economic and Development Authority, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Transportation, and provincial Disaster Risk and Reduction Management Office,

DPWH and LGUs also joined the summit.

Resilience and adaptability

The summit was done in collaboration with the Department of Science and Technology (DoST) in Region 1 (Ilocos Region) and the DoST-Philippine Council of Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development (Pcieerd).

The establishment of the re-

search center was under the DoST Science for Change Program or S4CP-Niche Center in the Regions or Nicer program with a P79.9-million fund from the DoST-Pcieerd and a P25.15-million counterpart fund.

Leah Buendia, DoST undersecretary for research and development, said the summit underscores the need to craft and implement solutions that are scientifically and technologically sound, as well as innovative approaches that challenge the status quo.

"Resilience is not an action nor a mediocrity. It is the ability to adapt, thrive and come together in the face of adversity. Using science, technology and innovation in advancing coastal resiliency entails transdisciplinary collaboration," Buendia said.

Shirley Agrupis, MMSU president, said that the event stresses "the compelling urgency to expand the horizons of science and technology to safeguard our coasts." She further urged the participants to "transform the landscape of coastal engineering in the country."