

CLIPPINGS FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2023

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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THE MANILA TIMES

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PEOPLE'S JOURNAL

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PILIPINO STAR NGAYON

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P15K ayuda sa rice retailers, posibleng taasan – DWSD

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Bong Go pushes for Gov't intervention to support small farmers amid inflation

D. FOREIGN STORY

MANILA BULLETIN

Global rice prices hit 15-year high after India curbs - FAO



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SUBSIDY Local Government Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr. and Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual oversee the initial distribution of cash aid to rice retailers in Metro Manila affected by the government-imposed price cap on the food staple on Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. Abalos was at the Maypajo Market in Caloocan City with Mayor Dale Gonzalo Malapitan, while Pascual was in San Juan with Mayor Francisco Zamora at the Agora Public Market. They were accompanied by officials from the Departments of Social Welfare and Development and Agriculture. PHOTOS BY RENE H. DILAN AND JOHN ORVEN VERDOTE

SMALL RICE RETAILERS GET CASH AID

AS ordered by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the distribution of the P15,000-cash grant to micro retailers affected by the implementation of the rice price ceiling

has started, Malacañang said Saturday.

"A total of 232 small rice retailers have received the P15,000 cash grant — 48 each in Quezon City and San Juan City,

while 136 beneficiaries received the cash assistance in Caloocan City," Presidential Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil

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■ AID FROM A1

Small rice retailers

said in a statement.

Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian led the distribution of cash grants at the Commonwealth Market in Quezon City with Mayor Josefina "Joy" Belmonte.

"The President wants to convey his message that he understands what you are going through. I was talking to him yesterday (Friday), and he knows that this is not easy for our micro rice retailers. That is why he immediately instructed us to provide this kind of financial assistance or livelihood grants to assist you," Gatchalian said.

Simultaneous payout centers were also opened at the Agora Market in San Juan City with Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual and Mayor Francisco Javier Zamora present, and at the Maypajo Market in Caloocan City

with Interior Secretary Benhur Abalos Jr., Caloocan Rep. Oscar Malapitan and Mayor Dale Malapitan present.

"I would like to express my gratitude to Secretary Pascual. We are all here because we are delighted that San Juan will be among the first to receive assistance from the national government," Zamora said.

The DTI said that the P15,000 financial support is the highest amount granted to compensate rice retailers identified as micro-enterprises based on Republic Act (RA) 9501, or the "Magna Carta for MSMEs," for losses experienced for at least seven days from the effective date of Executive Order (EO) 39.

Following the recommendation of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Agriculture, Marcos signed EO 39, mandating the price limit

of regular milled rice at P41 per kilogram and well-milled rice at P45 per kilogram, effective September 5.

Marcos said the mandatory price ceiling on rice would be temporary.

"This is just temporary; this will not last. We are already harvesting rice in the Philippines. Also, the rice we imported will soon arrive. We will bring these to the market, and we will the rice find its own price," the President said in his speech before leaving for Jakarta, Indonesia.

'Palliative measure'

Bantay Bigas spokesman Cathy Estavillo said the government's cash aid of P15,000 to small rice retailers will only provide temporary relief.

"The P15,000 cash aid is just a palliative measure from the government. The victims are the retailers, especially the small retailers," Estavillo told *The Manila Times* in Filipino.

"It is clear that the wholesalers and

millers are the price manipulators, and they have been cleared. If the [Marcos] regime is sincere in their commitments, hoarders, who are the manipulators, should be arrested and apprehended," she added.

Estavillo said the mandate on rice trade should be returned to the National Food Authority (NFA).

"This is why we call for the return of the NFA's mandate when it comes to rice trading, for farmers to purchase the rice at no less than P20 per kilo, and to immediately abolish RA 11203, or the 'Rice Liberalization Law'," Estavillo said.

She added that because of the price ceiling imposed by the government, rice should be sold at P34 to P36 per kilo among wholesalers, noting that the NFA's regulatory power should be restored to bring back the subsidized price of rice to P27 to P32 per kilo.

**CATHERINE S. VALENTE,
MOISES CRUZ, ALEXANDRA J.
FURIO AND ARIC JOHN SY CUA**

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Rice price cap, 1 linggong iiral

Susundin ng rice retailers ang rice price cap ng pamahalaan sa loob ng isang linggo at makaraan nito ay saka magdedesisyon kung ano ang susunod nilang aksyon.

Ayon kay James Magbanua, national president ng Grains Retailers Confederation of the Philippines (GRECON), positibo ang reaksyon ng mga retailers sa kautusan pero susundin nila ito sa loob ng isang linggo at kung hindi kakayanin makaraan nito ay saka ihahayag sa pamahalaan kung hanggang saan lamang ang kanilang makakaya kaugnay ng kautusan.

Sinabi naman ni Orly Manuntag, co-founder ng Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement at national spokesman ng GRECON, na ang isang retailer ay mawawalan ng halos P49,000 halaga sa isang linggo lamang na pagtupad sa rice price cap.

Suportado si Magbanua sa posisyon ni Manuntag dahil ang isang retailer ay mawawalan ng P5 kada kilo sa naibebentang well-milled rice na may halagang P45 per kilo.

Anyang, ang rice retailers ay magsasagawa ng monitoring sa aktuwal na nangyayari sa mga pamilihan bago sila magpulong ng hanay ng mga retailers kaugnay ng epekto ng rice price cap.



Ang rice price cap ay inutos ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. upang maibsan ang epektong dulot sa mamamayan ng mataas na presyo ng bigas.

Kahapon ay sinimulan na ng pamahalaan ang pagkakaloob ng P15,000 halaga ng cash aid sa bawat retailers na apektado ng naturang kautusan. (Angie dela Cruz)

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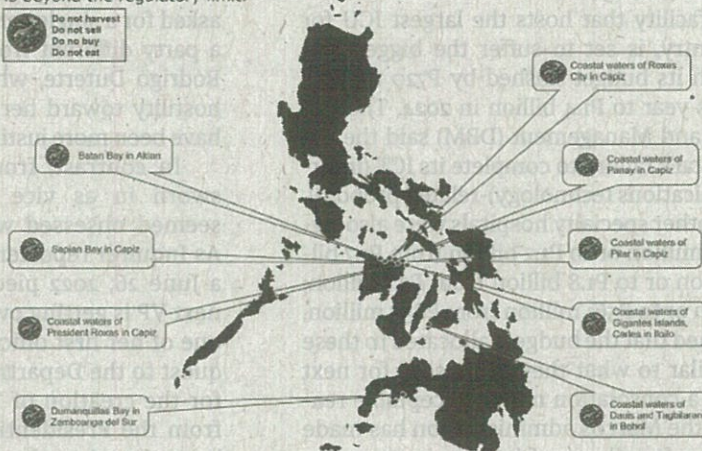


BAGONG PILIPINAS
Taoapagtaguyod ng Malinis at Masagunang Karagatan

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Shellfish Bulletin No. 21
Series of 2023
08 September 2023

Shellfishes collected and tested from coastal waters of Altavas, Batan, and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aklan; Sapián Bay (Ivisan and Sapián in Capiz; Mambuquiao and Camanci, Batan in Aklan); coastal waters of Panay; Pilar; President Roxas; Roxas City in Capiz; coastal waters of Gigantes Islands, Carles in Iloilo; coastal waters of Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; and Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur are still positive for Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) or toxic red tide that is beyond the regulatory limit.





Do not harvest
Do not sell
Do not buy
Do not eat

All types of shellfish and *Acetes* sp. or alamang gathered from the areas shown above are NOT SAFE for human consumption. Fish, squids, shrimps, and crabs are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking.

The following areas continue to be **FREE from toxic red tide**: coastal waters of Cavite, Las Piñas, Parañaque, Navotas, Bulacan, and Bataan (Mariveles, Limay, Orion, Pilar, Balanga, Hermosa, Orani, Abucay, and Samal) in Manila Bay; mariculture areas in Infanta, coastal waters of Bolinao, Anda, Alaminos, Sual, and Wawa, Bani in Pangasinan; mariculture areas in Rosario, and Sto. Tomas in La Union; coastal waters of Pampanga; Masinloc Bay in Zambales; Pagbilao Bay, Pagbilao, and coastal waters of Walay, Padre Burgos in Quezon; Honda, and Puerto Princesa Bays, Puerto Princesa City, and coastal waters of Inner Malampaya Sound, Taytay in Palawan; coastal waters of Milagros, and Mandaon in Masbate; Sorsogon Bay, and Juag Lagoon, Matnog in Sorsogon; coastal waters of Borongan, San Dionisio in Iloilo; coastal waters of E.B. Magalona, Talisay City, Silay City, Bacolod City, Hinigaran, and Victorias City in Negros Occidental; Tambobo, and Siit Bays, Siaton; and Bais Bay, Bais City in Negros Oriental; coastal waters of Daram, and Zumarraga, Cambatutay, Irong-Irong, Maqueda, San Pedro and Villareal Bays in Samar; coastal waters of Gulan, and Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar; coastal waters of Leyte, Calubian, Ormoc, Sogod, Carigara Bay, and Cancabato Bay, Tacloban City in Leyte; coastal waters of Biliran Island; Tantanang Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay; Murcielagos Bay in Zamboanga del Norte and (Sapang Dalaga, and Ballangao) in Misamis Occidental; Panguil Bay, Tangub City, and coastal waters of Ozamiz City in Misamis Occidental; coastal waters of Baroy in Lanao del Norte; Taguines Lagoon, Benoni, Mahinog in Camiguin; Balite, and Pujada Bays, Mati City in Davao Oriental; Malalag Bay in Davao Occidental and Davao del Sur; coastal waters of Nasipit in Agusan del Norte; Litlilit Bay in Surigao del Norte; and coastal waters of Hinatuan, Cortes, Lianga, and Bislig Bays in Surigao del Sur.

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CASH SUBSIDY

GOV'T STARTS DOLE FOR SMALL RICE RETAILERS

By Julie M. Aurelio
and Nestor Corrales
@Team_Inquirer

Market vendor Leah Semilla was very pleased she decided to go early to her small rice retail outlet at Commonwealth Market on Saturday morning.

Because of her promptitude, she became the third small rice retailer to get the P15,000 cash aid the government started distributing over the weekend.

Leah got her share from Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian himself, along with **Senior Agriculture Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban** and Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte.

"This is already a big help to me," Semilla told the Inquirer in Filipino. "I will use it to buy rice to sell and within the price ceiling of P41 to P45, of course."

Semilla said she was among those who lost money, because of the government's decision to put a cap of rice prices, but she still considered herself lucky because she did not lose too much, like other rice retailers.

"We just buy in small batches. It's tricky if you buy it in bulk, and then the price goes down, like what happened with the price cap. You end up losing



DIRECT PAYOUT Social welfare workers distribute P15,000 in cash directly to small rice retailers at the Commonwealth Market in Quezon City. — **LYN RILLON**

more," Semilla said.

She was among the 589 micro rice retailers who were among to receive the cash aid. Of the total, 405 were from Quezon City, 136 beneficiaries from Caloocan City and 48 from San Juan City.

While the dole began with registered rice retailers, Gatchalian said unregistered rice retailers will also receive P15,000 and *sari-sari* store owners will get P5,000.

Gatchalian noted that the P15,000 cash assistance may be increased, if the government sees the need to augment the support.

"Yes, that's possible," he said. "The national government is studying it, along with the

Department of Trade and Industry, on how we can augment and extend more help to micro rice retailers."

Safety net

He said that while President Marcos' Executive Order (EO) No. 39 is designed to help small consumers, the government also realizes that small retailers should also have their own safety net.

He added that the government would continue to identify other forms of support, but the government was running out of time.

Phillip Sawali, director of Fair Trade Enforcement Bureau of the DTI said the dole should be finished by Sept. 15 because

of the ban on public expenditures due to the Oct. 30 elections.

"There's an election spending ban starting Sept. 15, and we were informed by the [Department of Social Welfare and Development] that we should submit the lists of rice retailers before then so that the pay-out will be finished before the election spending ban takes effect," Sawali said.

"This is just the beginning," said Press Secretary Cheloy Velicaria-Garafil. "[Mr. Marcos] wants to give [assistance] to all those affected [by the rice price cap]."

Aside from Gatchalian in Quezon City, Garafil said other Cabinet and local government officials also helped in the aid distribution.

Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual was in San Juan City and Mayor Francis Zamora while Interior Secretary Benhur Abalos Jr. and Caloocan Rep. Oscar Malapitan were with Mayor Dale Malapitan in Caloocan City.

The President issued EO 39 on Aug. 31, imposing price ceiling of P41 per kilogram of regular-milled rice and P45 per kg of well-milled rice nationwide due to the "alarming" increase in retail prices. **INQ**



Rice retailers get relief

Micro traders get P15,000 aid from gov't

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO
and ELIZABETH MARCELO

The government yesterday began distributing cash aid of P15,000 each to small retailers of rice affected by the newly imposed cap on rice prices, with Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian spearheading the launch of the program in Quezon City.

In his message to the beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)'s Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), Gatchalian said the distribution

of cash assistance is in line with President Marcos' directive to immediately assist rice retailers deemed most affected by Executive Order (EO) No. 39, which puts a cap on the price of rice at P41 per kilo for regular milled rice and P45 per kilo for well-milled rice. The EO took effect on Sept. 5.

"The President wants to convey his message that he understands what you are going through. I was talking to him yesterday and he knows that this is not easy for our micro rice retailers," he said, addressing the retailers.

"That is why he immediately instructed us to provide this kind of financial assistance or livelihood grants to assist you," Gatchalian added.

At the launch, Mayor Joy Belmonte thanked the President for giving priority to the micro retailers in the city.

She also praised rice traders

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for supporting Malacañang's efforts to make the staple affordable to the people.

"We are fortunate because our city is the first one to benefit from this program ... I thank you (retailers) because you are still selling even at zero profit," the mayor said.

SLP distribution was also conducted in the cities of San Juan and Caloocan yesterday.

Gatchalian assured qualified micro retailers of rice who were unable to receive their share of cash aid yesterday that payout would continue in the following days. A total of 589 micro retailers from three public

markets in Quezon City, San Juan and Caloocan received the cash aid.

SLP-cash aid payouts benefited 405 micro retailers at the Commonwealth Market, as well as 136 retailers at the Maypajo Market in Caloocan City and 48 at the Agora Market in San Juan City.

"On behalf of President Bongbong Marcos, we thank our small rice retailers like you who followed immediately and helped to be part of the solution... When we work together, we know that nothing is impossible," Gatchalian said.

The official underscored that EO 39 is a "mechanism to protect our small buyers."

"We know that it is also important that they have food on the table, but

our President knows that we should also help you, our partners, in delivering food services to our people," he added.

Free stall rental

In San Juan City, Mayor Francis Zamora announced a month-long free rental of stalls for rice retailers at the Agora market, on top of the cash assistance of P5,000 from the city government and the P15,000 from the DSWD.

"A total of 48 registered small rice retailers from San Juan received a one-time aid of P15,000 from the national government and P5,000 from the San Juan local government unit in cash to help augment for the losses they will incur during the strict implementation of EO 39 which



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mandates the temporary price caps on regular-milled P41 per kilogram and P45 per kilogram on well-milled rice, which started last Sept. 5," Zamora said.

He thanked the DSWD, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the **Department of Agriculture (DA)** for what he called swift distribution of cash assistance to rice retailers.

"This is a big help to our rice sellers, especially since they are the ones greatly affected by the rice price ceiling," he said.

Zamora also appealed for understanding from the rice retailers.

"To our retailers, we are also asking for your understanding and patience during this time. Rest assured that we are doing everything we can

to help you in cushioning the impact of EO 39," Zamora said.

The list of beneficiaries prepared by the DTI was based on record of registered retailers at Agora market and on the business permit and licensing office of the city government.

In a text message, Presidential Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil said President Marcos was satisfied with the conduct of the aid rollout and directed concerned agencies to ensure all beneficiaries get their share.

"This is just the beginning," she said. "President Marcos wants all of those affected to receive assistance and that is the directive of the President to all concerned agencies." — **With Jose Rodel Clapano, Alexis Romero**



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Coastal waters of Roxas City in Capiz
Coastal waters of Panay in Capiz
Coastal waters of Pilar in Capiz
Coastal waters of Gigantes Islands, Carles in Iloilo
Coastal waters of Daus and Tagbilaran in Bohol
Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur
Coastal waters of President Roxas in Capiz
Sapián Bay in Capiz
Batan Bay in Aklan

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Red tide alert up in VisMin areas

Red tide has been detected in several coastal areas in the Visayas and Mindanao.

The **Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)** said among these areas are the Altavas, Batan and New Washington in Batan Bay and Saplan Bay, which covers Ivisan and Saplain in Capiz as well as Mambuquiao and Camanci in Batan, all in Aklan province.

The coastal waters of Panay, President Roxas and Roxas City in Capiz also tested positive for red tide.

The advisory also covered the coastal waters of Gigantes Islands in Carles, Iloilo.

Red tide was also monitored in the coastal waters of Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol and Dumanguillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur.

BFAR said waters in the areas tested positive for paralytic shellfish poison or toxic red tide that is beyond the regulatory limit.

All shellfish from these areas are not safe for human consumption and cannot be harvested or sold.

BFAR said fish, squid, shrimp and crabs are safe for consumption as long as they are fresh and washed thoroughly.

— Romina Cabrera



Rice retailers get cash aid

First batch of beneficiaries each received ₱15,000

By RHOWEN DEL ROSARIO
and MA. JOSELIE COCHING GARCIA

Micro rice retailers adversely affected by the current price ceiling ordered by President Marcos started receiving their ₱15,000 cash assistance on Saturday, Sept. 9.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) spearheaded the simultaneous cash assistance payout in Caloocan City, Quezon City, and San Juan City.

The simultaneous cash distribution took place at Commonwealth Market in Quezon City, Maypajo Market in Caloocan City, and Agora Market in San Juan City as part of the government's

Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) implemented by the DSWD.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian, DA Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban, and DTI Director Phillip Sawali led the distribution at the Commonwealth Market, witnessed by Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte and other officials.

Gatchalian said President Marcos ordered immediate assistance to micro rice retailers affected by the price ceiling that is mandated under Executive Order (EO) No. 39. Under the EO, the price ceiling for regular milled rice is at ₱41 per kilogram and well-milled rice at ₱45 per kilogram.

The price cap, which took effect on Sept. 5, was the President's response to the alarming increase in retail costs of rice. ▶7



AID FOR RICE RETAILERS – A businesswoman receives ₱15,000 during the distribution of cash assistance under the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Sustainable Livelihood Program for micro rice retailers affected by Executive Order 39 or the rice price cap at Maypajo Market in Caloocan City on Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. Interior and Local Government Secretary Benhur Abalos and Caloocan Mayor Dale Gonzalo Malapitan led the activity. (Arnold Quizol)



Rice retailers get cash aid 1◀

"The President wants to convey that he understands what you (retailers) are going through. I was talking to him yesterday, and he knows that this is not easy for our micro rice retailers. That is why he immediately instructed us to provide this kind of financial assistance or livelihood grants to assist you," Gatchalian told the first batch of micro retailer-beneficiaries at the Commonwealth Market.

The DSWD said the first batch of 589 micro rice retailers impacted by the imposition of price control received their cash assistance on Saturday—405 micro retailers at Commonwealth Market, 136 retailers at the Maypajo Market, and 48 recipients at the Agora Market.

"On behalf of President Bongbong Marcos, we thank our small rice retailers like you who followed immediately and be part of the solution. When we work together, we know that nothing is impossible," the DSWD chief said.

In addition, the DSWD chief emphasized that the SLP provides more than just monetary aid. It is also to urge government agencies to "continue the dialogues with rice retailer organizations "so that we can better understand what other assistance will come from the national government for our small rice retailers."

"Don't worry, we will continue to monitor your well-being," Gatchalian assured the micro rice



CASH AID — Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Alfredo Pascual, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Assistant Secretary Ada Colinco, Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, and San Juan City Mayor Francis Zamora distribute ₱15,000 cash aid for small rice retailers affected by the price cap in San Juan City on Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. (Mark Balmores)

retailers.

Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual, who led the cash assistance distribution at the Agora Market emphasized that the government is ready to support rice retailers greatly affected by the price ceiling on rice.

"The DTI, in partnership with the entire government, will help work hand-in-hand to quickly solve the problems we have to face. Through the whole-of-government approach, the entire government is willing to extend support to ensure the welfare

of rice retailers and consumers. We understand each other's situation very well. We at DTI will work hard to speed up our distribution in various parts of the country," he said.

With Pascual at the Agora Market were San Juan City Mayor Francis Zamora, DSWD Assistant Secretary Ada Calico, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa.

Local Government Secretary Benhur Abalos Jr. and Mayor Dale Malapitan led the cash assistance distribution at the Maypajo Market.

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DA walang alokasyon sa rabies vaccine, kinastigo

Sa kabila ng pagtaas ng mga kaso ng rabies sa bansa, walang inilaang alokasyon ang Department of Agriculture (DA) para sa bakuna para masugpo ang nasabing virus.

"May I know why rabies vaccination for dogs has been taken out among the priorities of the Department?", kuwestiyon ni Deputy Majority Leader at 1st District Iloilo Rep. Janette Garin sa mga opisyal ng DA.

Sa pahayag ni DA Undersecretary Agnes Catherine Miranda, sa mga nakalipas na taon ay may pondo ang ahensya para sa nasabing mga bakuna, gayunpaman, sa kasalukuyan ay nasa loob ito ng mandato ng local government units.

Binigyang-diin ni Garin ang panganib ng pagkakaroon ng mga asong gala na hindi bakunado laban sa rabies, kung saan ang kagat nito ay maaaring magdulot ng kamatayan sa tao.

Anyang mga bakuna ay magiging isang kasangkapan upang maprotektahan ang mga indibidwal mula sa matinding pinsala na maaaring dulot ng rabies.

"Mahal ang human anti-rabies vaccine. Nakakamatay ito at walang gamot. Minsan hindi naman naibibigay na libre ang full dose ng rabies vaccine. Kaakibat ng solusyon sa 'zero rabies death' ay ang pambabakuna sa mga aso," ani Garin, dating kalihim ng DOH sa budget deliberations ng DA.

Ayon sa World Health Organization (WHO), nasa 59,000 tao ang namamatay taun-taon dahil sa rabies, 95 porsiyento ng mga kaso ay nangyayari sa Africa at Asia.

Pinaalalahanan rin ni Garin ang DA na itigil ang pagtuturo sa mga LGU dahil anf bakuna sa rabies para sa mga aso ay nagkakahalaga lamang ng P10 bawat isa. (Joy Cantos)



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DA chided over zero outlay for rabies vaccine

By Jester Manalastas

A lawmaker has questioned the Department of Agriculture's lack of allocation for rabies vaccines.

According to Iloilo Rep. Janette Garin, rabies vaccination has been taken out among the priorities of the DA.

"Nakakapagtaka this preventable disease has actually

slowed down the past years, pero ngayon tumaas siya and supposedly the Department of Agriculture would have been spending rabies vaccine for our dogs, lalo na 'yung mga stray dogs. Parang nawalan na yata ng pondo," Garin said during the budget deliberations of DA.

DA Undersecretary Agnes Catherine Miranda responded that for the past years the agency has fund for the said vac-

cines, however, currently those are within the mandates of local government units.

The House appropriations panel vice chairperson stressed the danger of having stray dogs unvaccinated against rabies, in which its bite may cause death to humans, adding that vaccines will be a tool to protect individuals from grave harm that may be caused by the disease.

"Patuloy nanganganib ang

mga taong makakasalubong ng 'dog without an owner' and unvaccinated dogs," Garin added.

"Napakamurananga. Ipinagkaitpa. Tignan ponatinkung paano natanggalonawala [yung pondo para sa rabies vaccines]... I cannot swallow people dying from preventable illnesses," Garin said.

"It is imperative that DA brings back rabies vaccines for dogs," Garin pointed out.

Jester Manalastas

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RM Awards: Man of song and soil champions organic farming



By Abby Boiser
@AbbyBoiserINQ

One of this year's Ramon Magsaysay Award recipients, Eugenio Lemos, endured years of extreme hunger in the mountains as a child, having fled the conflict areas of Timor-Leste during the civil war and Indonesian invasion in the mid-1970s.



Eugenio Lemos —PHOTO COURTESY OF RMAF



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To survive, his family was forced to scrounge for food in the forest, but his father and youngest sister starved to death. After emerging from hiding, his brother couldn't adapt to the diet that was available and also died.

The harrowing experience sowed the seeds of a life dedicated to ensuring that the future generations of his country, which became an independent, sovereign state only in 2002, would not suffer the same hardships.

"My experience during the civil war is no good experience at all. I hope it's not going to repeat again in any country because I witnessed myself how people were dying of hunger, they lost their family and the kids were malnourished," Lemos said at a press conference on Sept. 4.

Now also a popular musician in his home country, Lemos has spent years promoting community-based organic farming as a simple yet transformative solution for food scarcity.

Low-level, high-impact

In 1999, Lemos learned from an Australian practitioner the concept of permaculture, an autonomous framework for managing the development of agricultural ecosystems.

Recognizing its potential, he established the educational program Permatil with the goal of instructing young adults in organic farming.

"It [set out] to strengthen the knowledge of the people and make them more resilient rather than become marginalized by modern technology," he said, recalling his early efforts.

Almost single-handedly, he launched his mission with the setup of about a thousand water collection ponds and 300 springs—projects that would soon benefit around 400,000 of his countrymen.

Underlining these initiatives was his belief that the most high-impact actions were still those springing from the grassroots or the community itself, not from centralized, top-to-bottom directives.

And so one of his projects focuses on individual Timorese families, encouraging them to tend a vegetable garden in their own home, no matter how small.

Passive to active learning

He also worked to persuade Timorese youths to pursue agriculture as a course and main source of livelihood or enterprise, calling for the integration of permaculture into the national curriculum.

"Shifting passive learning in the classroom to active learning outside the school [is like giving] students a live-for-living book rather than a written book," said Lemos, 51. The latter, he said, can be in different languages and be applicable to different places or cultures.

As founder of the group Sustainable Agriculture Network and the Organic Agriculture Movement, he also campaigned for the preservation of indigenous traditions while warning against overdependence on modern technology in agriculture.

"For even when we introduced technology and machinery, we never really solved food insecurity in the world and now we are affected by climate change," he said.

Traditional knowledge, Lemos said, can continue to empower people and make them more resilient amid the environmental crisis.

Songs, road trips

Not surprisingly, these advocacies are woven into his creative life as a singer-songwriter. His award-winning songs conveying these themes in the native tongue Tetum are now sung by children in classrooms.

One branch of his projects is indeed directed at campuses, where young students are introduced not only to basic cultivation but also composting, seed selection and natural pest control. These initiatives have so far covered over 250 public schools across Timor-Leste.

Lemos is also currently a lecturer on sustainable farming and on public arts and culture at the University of Timor-Leste in the nation's capital, Dili.

But when he is not busy in the academe, he hits the road on his motorbike, traveling to small communities to see where else he can promote permaculture.

In hailing Lemos as one of its 2023 honorees, the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF) notes how the "charismatic Lemos works with people from all walks of life ... drawn by his open, humble, down-to-earth manner."

"More than just about method and techniques, Lemos promotes a whole way of looking at nature and people," RMAF said in its citation. "[We] recognize his indomitable spirit in uplifting the lives of local communities, his vision and passion for integrating local and indigenous culture ... and for being truly a man of and for his people, and thus for the whole world." INQ

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Petition to reduce tariff on imported rice filed

By LOUELLA DESIDERIO

The Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) has in a petition asked the Tariff Commission (TC) to start the investigation for temporary tariff reduction on rice imports to address the increasing price of the staple.

In a petition filed Sept. 7, the group asked TC chairperson Marilou Mendoza to order the commission to look into the possibility of reducing the tariff on imported rice by 25 percent.

"The immediate reduction of import tariffs on rice from 35 percent to 10 percent will be effective in solving the demand-supply gap and arrest the increasing food price inflation, for the welfare of the general consuming public," said FEF president Calixto Chikiamco and board of trustee member Kristine Alcantara in their petition.

Soaring retail prices of rice have prompted President Marcos to issue Executive Order 39, which imposed a price ceiling of P41 per kilo for regular milled rice and P45 per kilo for the well-milled variety. The price caps took effect last Sept. 5.

However, FEF believes that reducing tariffs is the way to go to provide relief to the domestic rice market, noting that the increase in the price of imported rice has been the main cost push for current local pricing for the staple.

"The greater the reduction – down to zero or close to it – the greater the relief. A cut down to a 10 percent rate will have a significant impact," it said. "The high cost of imported rice with the tariff is causing traders to scramble for scarce palay stocks, leading to high prices cascading down the value chain."

FEF said retailers who are adhering to the price ceiling are incurring losses and, because of this, a number of them would rather keep their stocks than sell at a loss.

"The protectionist 35 percent rice import tariff is the most significant driver of the cost of imported rice. A back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that duty-free importation of rice, even at \$600 per ton, should bring the landed cost of imported rice at parity with wholesale

well-milled rice (WMR) of P39 per kg, which is consistent with a retail price of P45 per kg – the current WMR price ceiling," the group pointed out.

On the concern that importers will simply pocket the cost savings from tariff reduction, the FEF said this is allayed by the recent experience from tariffication.

It also said the tariff reduction on rice imports will prevent distortions from the price ceilings.

"These are well known from domestic and international experience, namely: the high cost of enforcement, i.e. monitoring over 50,000 retailers across the country; preventing adulteration or reclassification of rice to higher grades; ensuring adequate supply and preventing shortages," FEF said.

Once the demand and supply stabilizes, it added, the tariff could be brought back to its previous level.

FEF is composed of economists, former and present Cabinet secretaries and undersecretaries as well as leading figures in the academe, finance and business communities. It is dedicated to advancing economic and political liberty, good governance, secure and well-defined property rights, market-oriented reforms and consumer welfare.

It earlier urged the government to lift or bring down tariffs on rice imports instead of imposing price caps, which would harm consumers, farmers and the entire economy.

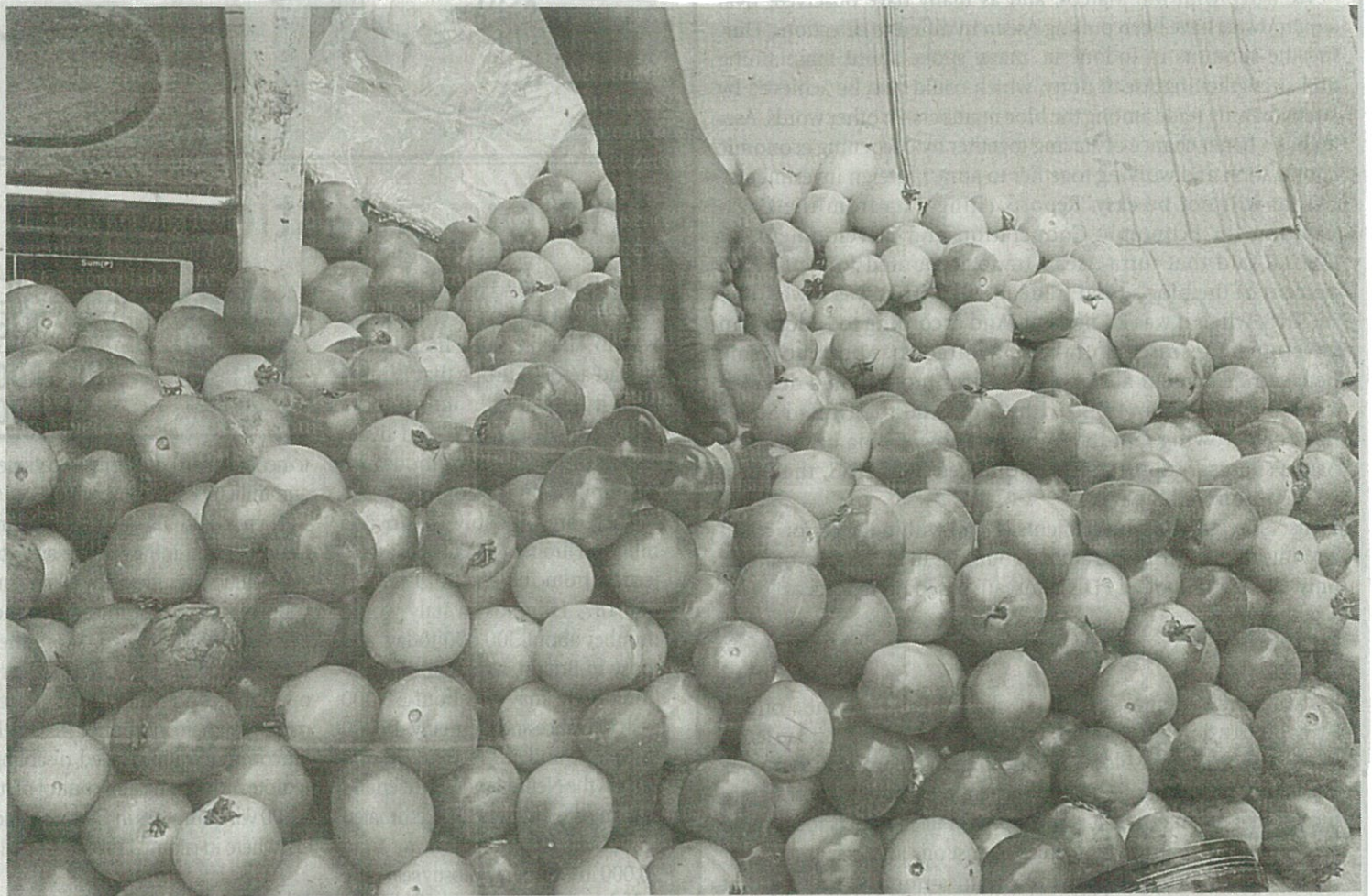
Last week, National Economic and Development Authority Secretary Arsenio Balisacan also called for a review of the existing tariff levels on rice to help bring down the price of the staple and consider its impact on local producers.

"To partially counterbalance the rise in global prices and alleviate the impact on consumers and households, we may implement a temporary and calibrated reduction in tariffs," he said.

His call for review was made after inflation accelerated for the first time in seven months to 5.3 percent in August, largely due to increases in food prices, such as rice. Rice inflation, in particular, went up to 8.7 percent in August from 4.2 percent in July.



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EXPENSIVE TOMATOES Not only is the price of rice high in the market, but so are tomatoes, which, according to reports, were being sold for as much as P300 a kilo. Jayson Cainglet, executive director of Sinag, or the Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura, said the retail price of tomatoes will remain high amid a shortage in supply caused by the recent typhoons that destroyed most crops. PHOTO BY RENE H. DILAN



How El Nino could impact health, food, economy

THE El Niño weather phenomenon is just warming up, according to scientists, potentially paving the way for higher temperatures and extreme weather events in a year that has already seen plenty of both.

The first El Niño in years began last month, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

The naturally occurring warming of temperatures in the Pacific Ocean typically lasts between nine to 12 months and is expected to become stronger towards the end of the year.

Scientists have warned the impacts of El Niño—combined with human-induced global warming—will likely stretch beyond the weather.

* Disease. Vector-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue, have been shown to expand their range as temperatures rise.

Scientists warned that El Niño, coming in addition to already dire global warming, could make the situation worse.

The rise stems from two effects of El Niño: unusual rainfall that increases breeding sites for transmitters such as mosquitoes, and higher temperatures that speed up transmission rates of



various infectious diseases.

* Health. It is difficult to calculate exactly how much El Niño contributes to extreme weather events such as wildfires. But heat waves themselves pose a significant danger to health.

More than 61,000 people are estimated to have died due to the heat in Europe alone last summer—when there was no El Niño. And July 2023 has now been confirmed as the hottest month in recorded history.

* Food security. "In an El Niño year, there are countries where the chances

of having a bad harvest increase, for example in South and Southeast Asia," said Walter Baethgen of the International Research Institute for Climate and Society.

Last month India, the largest rice exporter in the world, restricted its exports due to crop damage from irregular monsoon rains.

According to the researchers, such actions have the potential for dire consequences for countries dependent on exports, such as Syria and Indonesia, that could face a "triple challenge" during El Niño.

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Bong Go: Maliliit na magsasaka, suportahan

Nananawagan si Senador Christopher "Bong" Go sa gobyerno na bigyan ng higit na suporta ang maliliit na magsasaka dahil sila ang gulugod ng ekonomiya ng bansa at may mahalagang papel sa pagpapanatili ng food security ng bansa.

Si Go, miyembro ng Senate committee on agriculture, ay patuloy na nagsusulong sa lehislatibo na maiangat ang buhay ng mga Pilipinong magsasaka, partikular sa mapanghamong panahon ng ekonomiya. Isa siya sa nag-akda at nag-ispensor ng Republic Act No. 11953, na kilala bilang New Agrarian Emancipation Act.

Ang landmark na batas na ito ay nagko-condone ng mga pautang, kabilang ang mga interes, multa,

at surcharge ng mga benepisyaryo ng repormang agraryo. Sa pamamagitan nito, mapapagaan ang mga pinansiyal na pasalin na kinakaharap ng mahigit 600,000 agrarian reform beneficiaries sa buong Pilipinas, sa gayo'y mapahusay ang kanilang economic resilience.

Dagdag pa rito, si Go ay nag-akda at nag-co-sponsor din ng RA 11960, o ang One Town, One Product (OTOP) Philippines Act. Ang batas na ito ay nagdesentralisa ng mga oportunidad sa ekonomiya sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay kapangyarihan sa bawat bayan at lalawigan na paunlarin at isulong ang kanilang mga natatanging produkto.

Binigyang-diin din ni Go ang kahalagahan ng paghikayat sa mga end

user na direktang bumili mula sa mga producer. Ito ay hindi lamang nakatutulong sa mga magsasaka ngunit tinitiyak din na ang mga mamimili ay makakukuha ng sariwa at abot-kayang ani.

"Hindi lamang ito tungkol sa hindi natin kailangang mag-import mula sa ibang mga bansa. Ito ay tungkol sa pagkilala at pagsuporta sa ating mga lokal na magsasaka at mga benepisyaryo ng repormang agraryo," dagdag ni Go.

Habang tinatahak ng bansa ang mga hamon sa ekonomiya, muling iginilit ni Go na ang pinakamahalagang bagay ay walang nagugutom.

"Dapat po, walang magutom. Importante po dito tiyan ng bawat Pilipino," ani Go.

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P15K ayuda sa rice retailers, posibleng taasan - DSWD

Maaaring taasan pa ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) ang cash aid na

P15,000 na naipagkaloob sa mga rice retailers na apektado ng price cap sa bigas sa bansa.

Ni ANGIE DELA CRUZ

Ayon kay DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian, nakausap niya si Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. hinggil dito kaya't inatasan ang DSWD at Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) na mag-calibrate pa upang matiyak na hindi sila mag-aatubili na mag-adjust sakaling kulangin ang pinamimigay na P15,000

cash aid.

Sinabi ni Gatchalian na ang kanyang tanggapan at DTI ay magkasama sa pamamahagi ng cash aid na nasimulan nitong Sabado sa Quezon City, Caloocan at San Juan.

Binigyang diin ni Gatchalian na mahalaga na mapangalagaan ang kapakanan ng mga micro, small, and medium enterprises na matulungan

silang makabangon mula sa epektado ng price cap sa bigas.

Ang bawat small rice retailers ay pinagkakalooban ng P15,000 financial assistance ng DSWD sa ilalim ng Sustainable Livelihood Program ng ahensiya.

Ang mga rice retailers na benepisyaryo ng programa ay dumaan sa pagkilatis ng DTI.



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Bong Go pushes for gov't intervention to support small farmers amid inflation

SENATOR Christopher "Bong" Go calls on the government to provide more support to small farmers as they are the backbone of the nation's economy and play a crucial role in maintaining the country's food security.

Go, member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, has been supportive of legislative efforts aimed at uplifting the lives of Filipino farmers, particularly in these challenging economic times. He contributed to the passage of Republic Act No. 11953, known as the New Agrarian Emancipation Act, which he co-sponsored and co-authored in the Senate.

This landmark legislation condones loans, including interests, penalties, and surcharges, incurred by agrarian reform beneficiaries. By doing so, it aims to alleviate the financial burdens faced by over 600,000 agrarian reform beneficiaries across the Philippines, thereby enhancing their economic re-

silience.

In addition to this, Go also authored and co-sponsored RA 11960, or the One Town, One Product (OTOP) Philippines Act. This law decentralizes economic opportunities by empowering each town and province to develop and promote their unique products.

By doing so, it not only fosters community-led innovation but also bridges the urban-rural economic divide, providing small farmers with more avenues to market their produce.

Go also emphasized the importance of encouraging end users to directly purchase from producers. This not only helps the farmers but also ensures that consumers get fresh and affordable produce.

"It's not only about us not needing to import from other countries. It's about recognizing and supporting our local farmers and agrarian reform beneficiaries," Go added.

As the nation navigates through economic challenges, Go reiterated that the most important thing is that no one goes hungry.

"Dapat po, walang magutom. Importante po dito tiyan ng bawat Pilipino," he said.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, inflation rate rose to 5.3 percent in August, up from 4.7 percent in July. The increase in inflation was primarily due to the faster rise in prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages.

Specifically, inflation for food and non-alcoholic beverages accelerated to 8.1 percent in August. The year-on-year growth rate for rice prices rose to 8.7 percent from 4.2 percent.

The government has implemented a cap on rice prices to reduce costs and penalize hoarding, although this measure has sparked discussions about its impact on both farmers and consumers.



Global rice prices hit 15-year high after India curbs – FAO

PARIS, France (AFP) — Global rice prices reached a 15-year high in August after top exporter India banned some overseas sales of the grain, the Food and Agriculture Organization said Friday, Sept. 8.

While global food prices eased

in August, those of rice rose 9.8 percent compared to the previous month, “reflecting trade disruptions in the aftermath of a ban on Indica white rice exports by India,” the FAO said in a monthly report.

“Uncertainty about the ban’s

duration and concerns over export restrictions caused supply-chain actors to hold on to stocks, re-negotiate contracts or stop making price offers, thereby limiting most trade to small volumes and previously concluded sales,” the UN agency said.

Rice is a major world food staple and prices on international markets have soared in the wake of the Covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the impact of the El Niño ▶7

Global rice prices hit 15-year high after India curbs – FAO 1◀

weather phenomenon on production levels.

India announced in July a ban on exports of non-basmati white rice, which account for around a quarter of its total.

The consumer affairs and food ministry said at the time that the move would “ensure adequate availability” and “allay the rise in prices in the domestic market.”

India accounts for more than 40 percent of all global rice shipments.

The ban was expected to hit African nations, Turkey, Syria and Pakistan, all of which were already struggling with high inflation, data analytics firm Gro Intelligence warned in a note in July.

The Philippines, one of the world’s top importers of rice, reached a five-year agreement with Vietnam on Thursday to buy rice.

El Niño effect

World rice stocks are forecast to reach an all-time high of 198.1 million tons, with India and China holding nearly three quarters of this volume

like in previous seasons, according to the FAO.

This total represents around 38 percent of rice consumption forecast over the same period.

But aggregate rice reserves held by the rest of the world are expected to end the year with a second successive contraction, it added.

El Niño could also have a negative effect on the next harvests.

The turmoil in the rice market comes as global food prices have been progressively easing from a peak last year after war broke out between major grain producers Russia and Ukraine.

The FAO’s global food price index, which tracks monthly changes in international prices of a basket of food commodities, averaged 121.4 points in August, down 2.1 percent from July.

The index was 24 percent below the summit it reached in March 2022.

Prices of cereal, meat, dairy and vegetable oils all fell in August.

Sugar prices, however, rose by 1.3 percent due to “heightened concerns over the impact of the El Niño phenomenon on sugarcane crops, along

with below-average rains in August and persistent dry weather conditions in Thailand.”

‘Modest’ recovery

Global food prices had slightly rebounded in July when Russia pulled out of a deal brokered by the UN and Turkey that had enabled Ukraine to ship grains via the Black Sea.

The FAO said on Friday it had lowered its forecast for world trade in cereals in 2023 and 2024 to 466 million tons—a 1.7 percent drop from the previous marketing season.

“Traded volumes of wheat and maize are all predicted to decline, due to a mix of reasons, including falling exports by Ukraine due to trade disruptions associated with the ongoing

war,” it said.

“FAO has also lowered its forecast for world trade in rice from the July figure considering the stepped-up export restrictions by India,” the FAO added.

An expected recovery of the rice trade in 2024 would be “modest” if the India restrictions are protracted and El Niño disrupts production in other Asian exporters, the FAO added.