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## Mga importer kikita sa tapyas-buwis ng bigas

Aabot sa P20.5 bilyon ang mawawala umano sa koleksiyon ng pamahalaan kapag pinayagan ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang panukalang ibaba ang taripa sa bigas ng 10% mula sa 35%, sabi ni Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) national manager Raul Montemayor kahapon.

Ayon kay Montemayor, ang kalkulasyon niya ay base sa importasyon ng bigas na tatlong milyong tonelada sa presyong P27,335 per metric ton.

Sa public hearing ng Tariff Commission nitong Biyernes, Setyembre 15, sinabi ni Montemayor na P28.7 bilyon ang makokolekta ng pamahalaan sa taripa kung 35% ito subalit bababa ito sa P8.2 bilyon na lamang kung ibabagsak ang buwis sa 10%.

Babala niya, malulugi ang mga magsasaka ng P18.7 bilyon kapag itinu-loy ang panukala dahil ang koleksiyon ay dapat mapunta para sa pagpapalakas ng sektor.

Ang Foundation for

Economic Freedom ang nagpetisyon sa pamahalaan para ibaba ang taripa sa bigas. Ito rin ang nagsulong ng pagbaba ng taripa sa mga produktong agrikultura tulad ng baboy at iba pa noong administrasyong Duterte.

"When import prices go down, the retail prices do not go down. Malaki ang kinikita ng mga 'importers' pag bumaba ang presyo pero hindi nila pinapasa sa retail," ayon kay Montemayor. (Eileen Mencias)

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## Kailan dapat umangkat ng bigas?

HINDI ko tututulan ang importasyon ng bigas kung talagang kinakailangan. Sa mga panahong sinalanta ng kalamidad ang mga taniman ng palay at walang ani ang mga lokal na magsasaka, kailangan tayong umangkat. Pero kung gagawin nang pirmihan ang rice importation, aba'y kawawa ang ating mga magsasaka.

Madalas tuligsain ang pamahalaan dahil sa patuloy na pag-angkat ng bigas habang napapabayaang ang pagkakakitaan ng mga magbubukid. Para sa akin, kung ang dahilan ng importasyon ay upang punan ang matinding kakulangan ng bigas, tamang hakbang iyan. Mas dapat sisihin ang gobyerno kapag walang ginawang aksyon para ibsan ang pagkagutom ng mga Pilipino.

Subalit kung ang motibo sa pag-angkat ay para kumita ang ilang importers kasama ang mga kasabwat nila sa pamahalaan, ruok nang kasamaan iyan. Tiniyak naman ni **Presidente Bongbong Marcos** na hindi dedepende sa importasyon ng bigas ang Pilipinas. Kaya lang daw mahabang panahong umangkat ng bigas ang bansa ay dahil



sa pandemya na naging sanhi ng kakulangan ng ani dahil sa ipinairal na lockdown.

Hindi lang ang COVID-19 ang masasabing dahilan. Sa mahabang panahon ay napabayaang ang sektor ng agrikultura. Sa kabila ng Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) nagawa pa ring ibenta ng ilang magsasakang benepisyaryo ang kanilang lupain sa mga developers ng subdivision. At hindi rin masisisi ang ilang nakapagbebenta ng lupaing agrikultural. Hindi na sila kumikita sa pagsasaka kaya minarapat na dispatsahin na lang ang kanilang lupang sakahan at kikita pa sila nang malaki.

Noong panahon ni President Marcos Sr., kinalinga nang husto ang mga magsasaka para mapalaki ang ani sa programang Masagana 99. Nang mawala si Marcos Sr. Naglaho rin ang programa at doon nagsimulang maghirap ang mga magsasaka. Sana, ito ang pagtuunan ng pansin ni Presidente Bongbong—ang pagbuhay sa magagandang programa ng kanyang ama.





## DA to boost carabao production for feeding program

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The government is moving to boost the country's carabao production to support the feeding program for preschoolers, according to an official of the Department of Agriculture.

DA Undersecretary Deogracias Victor Savellano cited the need to preserve the carabao population.

"We need to preserve the genetics of our carabao population. Even other countries want to import

from us," Savellano told The STAR yesterday.

Based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the volume of carabao production from April to June 2023 was recorded at 33,720 metric tons.

"We can supply milk for our feeding program for our preschoolers and we can expand it to school children," he added.

According to Savellano, additional funding is needed to fund the development of carabao production.

"We should support the industry which can help our economy. We cannot develop (the carabao industry) with only meager resources," Savellano added.

He said the DA provides various programs for cooperatives to encourage farmers to engage in carabao production.

PSA data showed that Western Visayas is the top producer of carabaos with 4,400 metric tons.

Other top five regions with highest volume of carabao production

include Northern Mindanao, 3,040 metric tons; Davao, 2,940 metric tons; Eastern Visayas, 2,840 metric tons and Calabarzon with 2,620 metric tons.

On the other hand, the National Dairy Authority (NDA) Southern Mindanao and the local government of Kapai, Lanao del Sur have stepped up efforts to enhance the dairy industry in the region.

The NDA distributed 10 dairy cattle to local farmers from the Hanes Integrated Farm and Agri-Marketing Cooperative in Kapai.



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## 'Phl as top rice importer no cause for panic'

By BELLA CARIASO

There is no reason to panic after the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) tagged the Philippines as the world's top rice importer, a ranking official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said yesterday amid the country's dependence on imported grains.

In its latest "Grain: World Markets and Trade" report, the USDA projected that Philippine rice importation will reach 3.8 million metric tons in marketing year 2023-2024, overtaking China's imports with an expected drop to 3.5 million MT.

In a radio interview, Bureau of Plant Industry Director Glenn Panganiban said the "raising (of) some alarm bells" is unwarranted.

"Yes, (no cause for alarm), and this is only an assumption as the utilization of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance can only be seen after the arrival of the (rice) imports. For now, these are just projections. We have our local production so there is no reason to be worried," Panganiban said.

According to Panganiban, it is also possible that China increased its local production, which is the reason for the decline in its rice imports.

"It is possible that China was able to upscale its production technology. That is why its production increased and there was a drop in the importation. On our part, our imports only

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## Phl From Page 1

complement our shortfall (in rice production). Compared to last year, we imported almost 20 or 25 percent of our rice supply. This year, we are expecting comparatively less, as for the last quarter, we expect relatively safe or enough for our demand," he said.

At the same time, Panganiban said that allowing rice importation under the Rice Tariffication Law also provides revenues for the development of the rice industry.

Panganiban added that there is no exact date for the lifting of Executive Order 39 imposing price ceiling of P41 and P45 per kilo on regular and well-milled rice, 10 days into its implementation.

### FEF: Cut tariff to 10%

Meanwhile, the Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) has pro-

posed to slash tariffs on all rice grades from 35 percent to 10 percent for six months – a suggestion opposed by farmer groups.

In a Tariff Commission hearing yesterday, FEF fellow Roehlano Briones said the temporary reduction in rice tariff will have an immediate effect on the retail price of the food staple.

Based on FEF's computation, a lower tariff at 10 percent will translate to P36.40 per kilogram landed cost for rice.

Meanwhile, FEF fellow Fermin Adriano said this is a temporary measure that would provide "maximum benefit to a greatest number of people," which are the consumers.

He said this would also allow the government to "plug" uncertainties arising from the impact of natural calamities such as typhoons on rice production in the last quarter of

the year.

### Groups want Diokno, Balisacan out

Farmers' groups on Friday called on President Marcos to remove Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan from their respective posts for advocating for the reduction of tariffs on rice.

In a joint statement signed by members of Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura, Federation of Free Farmers, Philippine Confederation of Grains Associations, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, Pambansang Mannalon, Mag-uuma, Magbabaul, Magsasaka ng Pilipinas and National Movement for Food Sovereignty, they cited the hasty deliberation of the proposed tariff cut on imported grains to 10 percent from the cur-

rent 35 percent.

Farmers groups have also bucked the possible appointment of Balisacan as secretary of the Department of Agriculture, despite the latter having already doused speculation that he is being tapped to replace Marcos at the DA.

### Rice retailers receive cash aid

In Central Luzon, 336 rice retailers have each received P15,000 cash assistance under the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), in collaboration with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The cash assistance is under the DSWD Sustainable Livelihood Program that provides immediate support to rice retailers affected by the government's mandated price ceiling on rice under EO 39.

DTI Region 3 information officer Nerson Ray Romero said other rice retailers can still avail themselves of the cash assistance by getting in touch with their market coordinators, DTI offices, Negosyo Center, and call or text DTI Consumer Care Hotline: 1-384 (1-DTI).

The Valenzuela City government will be shouldering three months-worth of rent for rice retailers affected by the price ceiling on well milled and regular milled local rice starting October.

According to the city's public information office, 151 of the 200 registered rice retailers received cash aid amounting to P5,000 at the city hall on Thursday.

They added that 49 retailers failed to receive the first batch of cash aid from the local government. – With Ramon Efren Lazaro, Mark Ernest Villeza, Danessa Rivera





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## Customs seizes P42-M smuggled rice in Zambo City

By **LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON**

The Bureau of Customs has forfeited over 40,000 sacks of allegedly smuggled rice valued at P42 million in Zamboanga City.

In a statement, BOC said its Port of Zamboanga forfeited some 42,180 sacks of rice worth P42 million following a raid on a warehouse in Zamboanga City.

The recent BOC inspection revealed tens of thousands of sacks of Alas Jasmine fragrant rice.

The owner's representative then submitted import documents pursuant to the Customs

Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA).

Upon verification, however, it was found out that the subject confiscated goods were not covered by requisite sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance from the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Plant Industry.

The BOC also found discrepancies in the actual seized goods from what was declared in the documents.

Furthermore, the proof of payment submitted referred to a shipment of the cheaper white rice 15 percent broken, but actual

examination revealed that it was jasmine fragrant rice, which is supposed to be more expensive.

The order of forfeiture was due to violation of the CMTA, Rice Tariffication Law and the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act.

The forfeited goods will be disposed of in a manner provided by law.

The BOC maintained that it would continue to monitor and act on reports regarding smuggling in all forms amid the call of President Marcos to go after hoarders and illegal importers of rice.





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## DA eyes Livestock Animal Registry

By **DANESSA RIVERA**

The **Department of Agriculture (DA)** is partnering with the livestock industry to establish a Livestock Animal Registry (LAR) to ensure that legitimate farmers get the benefit from government programs and allow smooth repopulation amid the spread of animal diseases.

Partnering with the private sector will ensure accurate industry data and that industry leaders will be able to come up with best business decisions, DA Undersecretary Deogracias Victor Savellano said in a recent assembly of the National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. (NFHFI).

"This will identify how many and where are the different farm animals and to whom should the

government give any form of subsidy from funds earmarked by the government," he said.

"Philippine Statistics Authority reports there are 10.2 million pigs. But, in fact, it could be just around 7.5 million if industry stakeholders said the industry lost around 40 percent from African Swine Fever (ASF) from 2019," the DA official said.

With the thrust to repopulate hogs amid the continuing threat of ASF, the DA wants to ensure that the vaccine trial will be proven safe and effective.

The agency recently formed a technical working group (TWG) to integrate vaccination against ASF in the country's policy to manage the spread of the deadly disease in hogs.

Phase 1 of the trial showed

that 80 percent of the tested animals are producing antibodies 28 days post-vaccination. Trials for Phase 2 are ongoing in Batangas, Quezon, and Pangasinan until this month.

Meanwhile, Savellano said the DA would also study ways to help livestock farmers cut costs of farm inputs such as feed ingredients and livestock genetics (superior breed of piglets, calves, chicks).

The project aims to ease farmers' burden on these costs that represent a sizable 70 percent of producing meat, milk and egg.

The focus for the DA Livestock Group is to produce more livestock products locally in large volumes and to balance local production with minimal importation.

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## **Typhoons, monsoon agri losses hit P12 B**

Damage to agriculture due to the southwest monsoon or *habagat* enhanced by Super Typhoons Egay and Falcon has reached P12 billion, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In its final report on the weather systems, which was released yesterday, the DA said 10 regions were affected. These are the Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Zamboanga peninsula, Soccsksargen and Caraga.

The DA said production loss reached 279,289 metric tons, covering 250,174 hectares of agricultural land. Rice, corn, high-value crops, livestock, poultry and fisheries were affected.

Agricultural machinery and equipment, irrigation systems, farm and fishery facilities as well as fishing gears and paraphernalia were also damaged. Losses were pegged at P3.26 billion.

Damage to rice production was placed at P3.08 billion, with 145,010 hectares of rice fields affected.

The DA said losses in palay production represent only 0.35 percent of the country's total annual production.

Damage to corn, which reached P2.37 billion, was 1.36 percent of the total annual production of 9.30 million metric tons.

As of Thursday, P46.48 million worth of rice seeds were distributed to affected farmers in Central Luzon, Mimaropa and Western Visayas and P10.08 million worth of corn seeds in the Cordilleras, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley and Western Visayas.

The DA also provided P1.75 million worth of assorted vegetable seeds in Cagayan Valley and P50,900 worth of veterinary drugs for livestock farmers in Ilocos.

— Bella Cariaso



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TO STREAMLINE PROCESS

## IRRIGATION AGENCY CHIEF BARES REFORMS VS GRAFT

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

Acting **National Irrigation Administration (NIA)** chief Eduardo Guillen conceded on Friday that irregularities at the agency have spawned corruption and delayed key irrigation projects.

But he said he has been trying to address the issue since he was named to the post last December.

"I am not saying that NIA is perfect," said Guillen, a former mayor of the farming town of Pidig, Ilocos Norte, who got an earful from senators during a blue ribbon probe on the agency last month.

"In fact, we have already launched an investigation to look into anomalies within the agency," Guillen said in an interview with the Inquirer on Friday.

Guillen noted that the

long-standing corruption stemmed not only from inherently dishonest officials, but also from a poorly managed process that allowed red tape to multiply and fester.

"The volume of documents we receive for one project alone can almost fill a pickup truck," said Guillen, a civil engineer by profession.

The agency is now trying to streamline the process to ensure the timely completion of irrigation projects.

On average, it previously took at least two to three years to finish an irrigation project, but the agency now expects projects to be completed sooner, because NIA has cut the preparatory work so that it can be finished in four months.

Proponents of small irrigation projects, for instance, are

no longer required to submit feasibility studies.

"I also removed or reduced redundant documentary requirements," Guillen said, adding that he also reduced the number of signatures required on a project and decentralized the authorized signatories.

The NIA central office in Quezon City, for instance, will no longer approve the implementation of irrigation projects, but only facilitate requests for the extension of contract time.

But red tape is not the only problem, Guillen said, noting that corrupt practices have entrenched incompetent managers and their favored contractors.

"First, we have a shortage of contractors. Good contractors don't like it here, so we end up with those who are just look-

ing for irrigation projects and offer [unrealistically] low construction costs," he added.

While the NIA has not been telegraphing its moves against corrupt officials, Guillen said he is building up cases to be filed before the Ombudsman after due process.

He also asked all contractors with delayed projects to submit catch-up plans in deference to the criticisms of senators and the Commission on Audit.

Moreover, Guillen said he also regulated the extension of contract completion deadlines.

"I only allow district offices to issue time extensions of 60 days. Beyond that timeframe, contractors should go to the regional office. After 90 days, they should make the request to the central office," he said. **INQ**



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## ■ Rice retailers in Iloilo City receive subsidy

In response to presidential directives outlined in Executive Order No. 39, the first wave of payouts to assist affected rice retailers started Sept. 13, at the Iloilo City Vice Mayor's Office. EO No. 39, which took effect in 5 September 2023, established price ceilings for regular milled rice (RMR) at ₱41.00 per kilo and well-milled rice (WMR) at ₱45.00 per kilo. Following this, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is working closely with other lead implementing agencies including the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Agriculture (DA), the National Food Authority (NFA), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Philippine National Police (PNP). In Iloilo City, 100% of verified micro rice retailers were provided cash assistance, with each beneficiary receiving ₱15,000. According to DTI-6, the distribution program will continue in the entire Iloilo province this week. (Ma. Joselie C. Garcia)



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# Lower rice imports likely – DA official

By BETHEENA UNITE

**T**he Philippines intends to import less rice in 2023. Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Leoca-

dio Sebastian said this following the projection of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that the Philippines rice importation will hit 3.8 million metric tons (MMT) in the marketing year 2023-2024.

With the projection, the country is set to overtake China, which imports 3.5 MMT rice, as the world's top importer of rice.

"We expect to import much less than USDA's 3.8 MMT projected rice

import in 2023. This indicates that the volume we imported in 2022 was much more than the deficit," Sebastian said in a statement released by the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) on Thurs- ► **8**





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## Lower rice imports likely – DA official 1◀

day, Sept. 14.

The agriculture official said they expect to import less rice as they focus on improving local production of the food staple.

"We also expect that with the intensified efforts to produce more rice locally, we will import less than the projected 3.8 MMT in 2024," he said. "The uncertainty of depending on external sources for our staple and the high price of imported rice makes it imperative for us to produce more locally."

### Bilibid to offer cheaper rice

As the country is looking at lessening the volume of imports this year, the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) in Muntinlupa City is set to offer to the public cheap well-milled rice.

The Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) said "well-milled rice will be sold at ₱44 per kilo or one peso less than the price cap imposed by the government." The cheaper well-milled rice will be available

starting Saturday, Sept. 14, at the Kadiwa store at the Bilibid, which is jointly operated by the BuCor and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"The Kadiwa store will be selling commodities every weekend," the BuCor said. "It opened Wednesday, as part of the birthday gift to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. by BuCor and DA."

The BuCor noted that, aside from rice, "available commodities for sale at the Kadiwa store include vegetables from the Argo products of the NBP planted by persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), chicken, pork, fish, eggs, coconut oil, onions, garlic, bananas, root crops, coffee, and fruits."

Kadiwa is a "marketing initiative of DA, implemented through the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance (AMAS). It seeks to empower the farming community by providing a direct and effective farm-to-consumer food supply chain."

Meanwhile, the Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm (IPPF) in Palawan reported that 10 hectares of its land have already been transplanted with rice seedlings.

The bureau explained the rice planting at the IPPF reservation is part of the Reformation Initia-

tive for Sustainable Environment for Food Security (RISE) project of the BuCor, DA and Department of Justice (DOJ).

Under the RISE project, 501 hectares of the IPPF's property measuring 28,788.54 hectares will be used for agriculture, including the planting of rice.

"The RISE project aims to engage and implement agro-industrial projects through the development of land areas and resources into productive agricultural camps or food production centers to contribute to the country's food security," the BuCor said.

The BuCor said the project is also "part of the reformation program for PDLs under the Work and Livelihood Program of BuCor where they are provided with different livelihood opportunities that would sustainably improve their income as PDL workers and equip them with the needed capability for their means of livelihood in preparation for their reintegration into society and their families."

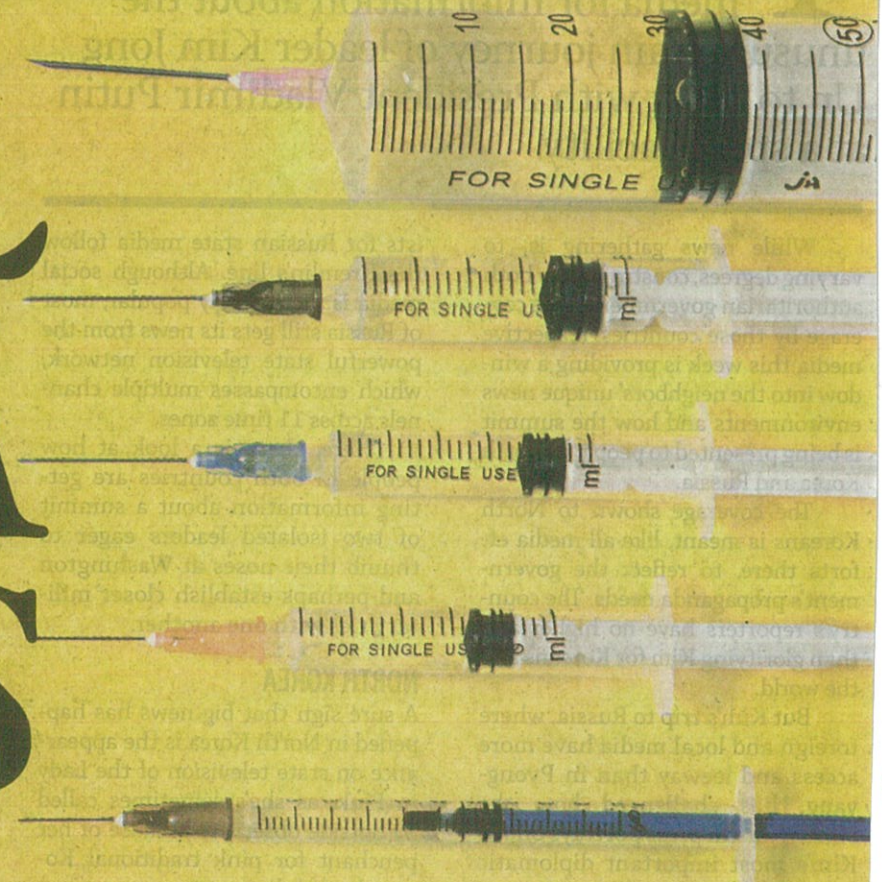
Inmates participating in the project also gain additional Good Conduct and Time Allowance (GCTA) which would enable their early release. (With a report from Jeffrey Damicog)





Hog industry weighs in on ASF vaccines, which have not completed trials and are not seen as a quick fix—in contrast to strict biosecurity measures

# LITERAL GUINEA PIGS





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BY REINE JUVIERRE S. ALBERTO

**P**IGS are considered friendly and intelligent creatures, ideal to raise as a form of livelihood. But once infected by the deadly African swine fever (ASF), they can be a different kind of beast for hog raisers.

Since the disease's first outbreak in the Philippines in 2019, the hog industry consisting of commercial and backyard growers has grappled with losses amounting to P200 billion, according to Engr. Rosendo So, who heads the umbrella alliance SINAG, or Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura.

In the search for signs of hope to uplift the industry, there were initial indications of progress in the development of anti-ASF vaccines. However, the optimism began to wane as subsequent developments unfolded.

### ASF vaccine woes

THE ASF vaccine currently being tested is not yet "100 percent ready" to be commercially available and be injected into hogs, an industry group told the *BusinessMirror*, and suggested that protocols for the trial have to be fixed first.

Rallying for transparency, the hog industry must know the details regarding the trial such as who is being tested and where are the testing locations.

"Open tayo na may trial, pero dapat ay open book sila [We are open to trials, but they must be conducted in an open-book manner]," said So.

"May mga vaccine na tinst. Nalaman namin na namatay yung mga baboy up to 1,000 heads and ang nawala sa kanya ay P10 million [There are vaccines that have been tested. We found out that up to 1,000 pigs have died and the loss amounted to P10 million]," he revealed."

As 70 percent of the whole coun-

try remains infected with ASF, So said that with the live vaccines—which should be isolated—the virus could eventually spread through shedding.

To boost the immunity of hogs against ASF, sows are administered the vaccine, and their immunity can be passed on to the piglets, explained So.

The Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), through its deputy chief, earlier reported a 100-percent success in the field trial of the AVAC ASF live vaccine.

### A vet's take

THE preliminary trial results of a Vietnamese-manufactured vaccine based on BAI's data look "promising," declared swine veterinary consultant Dr. Rolando Cruz, but he was quick to question the parameters used in the trial: "Is it just based on their perception of how to evaluate it?"

Cruz said some farms who already injected their pigs with the vaccine said it was good, while some said not.

"It's vague. You can't really conclude if it's really effective or not, so that's why I told everybody that we should give them more time to do the vaccine so that once they release it, it is already an effective vaccine. We don't need to rush," he told the *BusinessMirror*.

Among the four vaccine companies dwelling on the research and trials, Cruz revealed that most of them have unfortunately failed.

"That's how complex [the virus] is, so that's why we have to give them

more time and test to different animals. The more the better so that you can have a statistically significant result," he said.

For the swine veterinarian, the vaccine is 60 percent ready for commercial use but it should be at 100 percent and there have to be no gray areas.

"If effective, then we can use it right away in order for us to have a day one in producing more pigs," he said. However, if there is any skepticism towards the vaccine, "We have to slow down and bring all things in the table, and discuss again how to go about it. Otherwise, isang pagkakamali diyan malaki ang magiging impact [Otherwise, a single mistake could have a significant impact]," he said.

Assuming the vaccine has been approved and injected into pigs, Cruz said it has no effect on humans if they consume pork vaccinated against ASF.

He elaborated that the virus itself has no negative effects on humans, as it primarily affects pigs and spreads from pig to pig.

### Strategic biosecurity measures

WHEN asked if the vaccine is the only solution to stop ASF, Cruz firmly said "no."

"I'm happy to say that without the vaccine, we were able to survive 30 to 40 farms without the vaccine and still very stable now," he said.

Pushing for strategic biosecurity measures as an "efficient way to manage ASF," Cruz said having a disinfectant is not enough, and instead, companion steps must be taken, such as eliminating animals such as dogs and cats from roaming around farms—to prevent the transmission of the virus from one farm to another—and modifying buildings to be protected from contamination.

So also said biosecurity is important in farms: monitoring the movement of people, of the feeds, and those who enter the area.

"Biosecurity pa rin ang kailangan sa mga farm [Biosecurity is still needed in farms]," he stated.



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## To vax or not?

AT the end of the day, Cruz said the vaccine is "very important" and it will "prevent the spread of the disease."

However, hog growers must "be sure" and "use a very safe and effective vaccine" to avoid wasting money and the risk of introducing the virus to their farms; otherwise, as Cruz put it, "*Para kang nag-suicide non* [It's like committing suicide]."

He said those "serious" about producing pigs and implementing biosecurity measures will survive the virus until the vaccine becomes commercially available.

"For me, just secure your farms from contaminants and you'll be fine," Cruz stated.

It will be a big challenge for the bureau if they will approve the vaccines or not, said Cruz. "*Kasi* at the end of the day, *ang tanong dyan*, 'Who will be accountable?' Of course, the one who approved the vaccine [Because at the end of the day, the question is, 'Who will be accountable?' Of course, the one who approved the vaccine]."

## Govt mulls over subsidizing vax

AGRICULTURE Undersecretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano told the *BusinessMirror* they are mulling over subsidizing the ASF vaccines in the future, but also stressed the need to first ensure they are safe and effective. Should those under trial be proven effective, then it is "possible."

"The vaccine under trials must be proven to be safe, sterile and effective following all standards and universally acceptable protocols," Savellano said in his speech during the National Federation of Hog Growers Inc.'s general meeting, aimed at achieving the return of the "glory days" of the Philippine swine industry and repopulating amidst the threat of ASF.

He added that the Department of Agriculture's direction for livestock is toward prioritizing local production of livestock and products, minimizing importation to keep consumer market prices low, and ensuring profit margin for livestock farmers, thereby creating more livelihood opportunities.



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## DA: Damage to agri due to 'habagat,' two typhoons reaches P12 billion

**T**HE total amount of agricultural damage and losses incurred by 10 regions due to the south-west monsoon and the onslaught of typhoons "Egay" and "Falcon" has reached P12 billion, the Department of Agriculture (DA) reported on Friday.

In its final bulletin, the DA-Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Operations Center said bad weather has affected 437,032 farmers and fisherfolk in the Cordillera Region, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Soccsksargen, and Caraga.

It said 250,174 hectares of agricultural areas were affected and production loss was estimated at 279,289 metric tons (MT).

The affected commodities include rice, corn, high-value crops, livestock and poultry, and fisheries.

The damage and losses in rice amounted to P3.08 billion from 145,010 hectares and production loss was at 69,748 MT, or 0.35 percent of the 19.76 million MT total annual production target volume for rice.

For corn, damage and losses amounted to P2.37 billion from 91,506 hectares and production loss was at 126,757 MT or 1.36 percent of the 9.30 million MT total annual production target volume for corn.

Damage was also incurred in agricultural machinery and equipment, irrigation systems, farm and fishery facilities, and fishing gear and paraphernalia.

The DA-DRRM Operations Center noted that assistance was distributed to affected farmers and fishers on Thursday—P46.48 million worth of rice seeds in Central Luzon, Mimaropa, and Western Visayas; P10.08 million worth of corn seeds in Cordillera, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, and Western Visayas; P1.75 million worth of assorted vegetable seeds in Cagayan Valley; P51,000 worth of various veterinary drugs for livestock in Ilocos; and 12,790 bags of rice released by the National Food Authority (NFA) in Ilocos.

Aid made available for distribution to affected farmers and fisherfolk in Cordillera, Ilocos region, Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Soccsksargen, and Caraga are P69.75

million worth of rice seeds and fertilizers; P133.17 million worth of corn seeds and insecticides; P42.91 million worth of assorted vegetable seeds; and P5.43 million worth of animal heads and various veterinary drugs for livestock and poultry.

Also available for distribution are P35.74 million worth of fry/fingerlings for distribution to affected fisherfolk; P5.89 million worth of fuel assistance for fisher folk, specifically in Cordillera, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, and Central Luzon and P21.9 million worth of repair and maintenance for damaged boats and gill nets.

It also said P700 million worth of Quick Response Fund is being processed for the rehabilitation and recovery of the affected areas. **PNA**





## DA to revitalize carabao population for commercial dairy production

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is revitalizing the cultivation of Philippine carabaos nationwide to help generate income in the countryside and to support the Marcos administration's dairy nutrition program.

In an interview on Thursday, DA Undersecretary Deogracias Victor Savellano said towards this goal, the department has begun distributing several "packages" to select farmers' cooperatives.

He explained that each "package" consists of 25 live carabaos (*Bubalus bubalis carabanesis*), which farmers' groups can raise and eventually use for milking.

"Raising carabaos on a commercial scale offers Filipino farmers fresh livelihood opportunities. It also makes it possible to locally produce the milk needed to supply the President's milk feeding program for children," Savellano pointed out.

It was noted that President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. vowed during the last World Economic Forum in Davos,



Switzerland, that his administration would invest more in food production initiatives, particularly to feed children belonging to society's most disadvantaged segment.

Savellano said the DA's Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) has been tasked to lead the effort, by first repopulating the country's stagnant carabao population.

The PCC, he said, is now addressing genetics issues by further introducing a foreign breed of water buffalo, specifically, the Murrah buffalo, from the Indian subcontinent.

PCC Director Caro Salces, meanwhile, explained that the Indian buffalo species can easily be crossbred with local carabaos to produce a refreshed genetic stock that is better suited to support the dairy industry.

"Our native carabao is bred for work but they do not produce as much milk. On the other hand, the Murrah buffalo produces plenty of milk. By crossbreeding the two, we are able to produce animals that give out more milk while still remaining suited for working the fields," he said in Filipino. PNA



## DA SEES LOWER RICE IMPORTS THIS YEAR

THE Philippines is expected to import less rice, as it focuses on the local production of the staple, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said Thursday.

The DA's statement came after the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that the Philippines has overtaken China as the world's top importer of rice.

The USDA, in its latest "Grain: World Markets and Trade" report, projected that the Philippine rice importation will hit 3.8 million metric tons (MMT) in marketing year 2023-2024, while China's imports will drop to 3.5 MMT.

In a statement, DA Undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Leocadio Sebastian said the country's rice importation for 2023 is expected to be lower than the USDA's forecast.

"We expect to import much less than USDA's 3.8 MMT projected rice import in 2023. This indicates that the volume we imported in 2022 was much more than the deficit," Sebastian said.

"We also expect that with the intensified efforts to

produce more rice locally, we will import less than the projected 3.8 MMT in 2024. The uncertainty of depending on external sources for our staple and the high price of imported rice makes it imperative for us to produce more locally," he added.

Sebastian, in a Laging Handa briefing on Aug. 2, said the Philippines has a sufficient supply of rice, stressing that it is "more than enough" for the next few months.

In a sectoral meeting with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Aug. 29, the DA reported its projection that rice supply for the second semester would reach 10.15 MMT.

The DA noted that 2.53 MMT of the 10.15 MMT 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, according to DA report.

PNA





## Ilocos Norte farmer's coop gets P20-M DA aid to revive hog industry

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has released a P20-million grant to a farmer's multi-purpose cooperative in Sarrat, Ilocos Norte to help speed up the recovery of hog raisers affected by the African swine fever (ASF).

Teresita Castro, chairperson of the Baggak Multi-purpose Cooperative, said in an interview on Thursday that they were among the beneficiaries of the DA's Integrated National Swine Production Initiative Recovery Expansion (INSPIRE) program.

INSPIRE focuses on calibrated hog repopulation, the establishment of swine farms and facilities, and ensuring easy access to insurance and credit services for hog farmers to improve swine production and ensure the sufficiency of pork and pork products in the province.

"We are so happy and thankful for this opportunity to help our hog raisers who were severely affected by ASF," said Castro, adding that they will also act as a "big brother" in helping another farmer's group, the Sitio Matikas-Maumel San Juan Pasuquin Farmer's Association, on

their hog repopulation program.

Part of the three-year program is the provision of mixed interventions to jumpstart and revive the swine industry by clustering and consolidating strategies, specifically among small hog raisers to facilitate technical support services and biosecurity measures among others.

To date, hog raisers in the province are gradually recovering from the ASF virus through various government support.

Recently, at least 60 swine raisers from the municipality of Marcos and the city of Batac were given a total of 90 weaner pigs as part of the repopulation program of the DA for ASF-affected livestock farmers through the sentinelling protocol.

This protocol determines whether a virus or disease is still present in a location using a science-based approach.

As a result, the DA is dispersing weaner pigs in towns where there have been no documented cases of ASF for at least 90 days. Swine raisers were also provided with 30 bags of pre-starter, 90 bags of starter, and 90 bags of starter feeds. PNA



## BALISACAN, DIOKNO PRO-IMPORTER PINASISIBAK

IGINIIT ng iba't ibang grupo sa sektor ng agrikultura kay Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na sibakin sa puwesto sina National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan at Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno dahil sa pagkilang umano ng dalawang kalihim sa mga importer kung kaya't napapariwara ang mga magsasaka.

Naglabas ng joint statement ang mga grupong humihiling na sibakin sina Balisacan at Diokno na kanilang binatikos dahil sa pagsusulong umano ng mga ito sa pagbaba o pagtanggag ng taripa sa bigas na ikamamatay ng mga magsasaka.

"We stand together to oppose, in the strongest terms, the efforts of Secretaries Diokno and Balisacan to serve the death sentence on rice farmers and other industry stakeholders by cutting or eliminating tariffs—our last refuge," sabi ni SINAG Executive Director Jayson Cainglet sa pagdinig ng Tariff Commission kahapon tungkol sa hirit na ibaba ang taripa ng

bigas sa 10% mula 35%.

Sabi sa joint statement, kita ng mga importer ang pinangangalagaan ng panukalang pagbaba ng taripa sa bigas na kinukubli sa layuning pababain ang inflation, o ang bilis ng pagtaas ng presyo ng mga bilhin.

Ayon sa kanila, sa loob ng limang taong pagkakababa ng taripa ay hindi naman nagresulta sa pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas.

Anila, hindi makatutulong ang pagbaba ng taripa sa pag-ahon ng agrikultura na sinusuportahan ni Pangulong Marcos. Ang kailangan ngayon ay palakasin umano ang sektor ng agrikultura para mapalakas ang produksiyon at maging sapat ito sa pangangailangan ng bansa.

Nabastusan din umano sila kay Diokno nang sinabihan nito ang Pangulo na magbitiw na bilang kalihim ng Department of Agriculture (DA) para palitan ni Balisacan.

Tila hindi umano nakikinig sina Balisacan at Diokno sa sina-

sabi ni Pangulong Marcos na dapat palakasin ang agrikultura. Giit pa ng grupo na dapat panagutin ang dalawa dahil sa kanilang reklamo na hindi sila kinonsulta ng Pangulo sa pagtatakda ng price cap sa regular-milled at well-milled rice.

"They are not only misrepresenting the President. They are giving him a bad name. In view of the foregoing, we demand no less than the removal of Messrs. Diokno and Balisacan from the Cabinet," ayon pa sa joint statement.

Kabilang sa mga nanawagan na sibakin sina Balisacan at Diokno ay ang SINAG; Federation of Free Farmers; Philippine Confederation of Grains Associations; Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas; Pambansang Mannaloni, Mag-uuma, Magbabaul, Magsasaka ng Pilipinas at National Movement for Food Sovereignty.

Wala pang pahayag ang kampo nina Balisacan at Diokno sa panawagan ng mga naturang grupo. (Eileen Mencias)



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## FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

### Importer

**W**e have overtaken China as the world's biggest rice importer. That was inevitable.

The signs were clear for years. Our agriculture was growing at much less than our population. No one bothered to do anything about it.



The structural solutions involved a horizon of many years. Our politics was trapped in short electoral cycles. Each new administration characteristically abandoned the programs of the preceding government. Our institutions of governance simply did not have the capacity to do what needed to be done to save our agriculture.

What suited our institutions was allocating annual budgets for "farm-to-market" roads. Our agricultural budget consisted mainly of patronage-driven stuff: free fertilizers, free farm implements and free irrigation. Those yielded the short-term results required for our short electoral cycle.

Then there were the various superstitions that trapped our national conversation about agriculture. One equated the breakup of land as a form of social justice. Another imagined protectionist policies will help our farms prosper. Both produced only yawning rural poverty that drove millions into urban slums and created a large army of migrant workers.

Our bankrupt agricultural policies did not yield food security for our people. Today we import everything we ought to be producing: rice, sugar, onions, garlic, chicken, pork and even fish. Our grocery shelves are full of better-quality fish sauce from Thailand.

Each time a decision to import is made, we found some transient problem to blame: a storm, a contagious disease that forced us to cull pigs and chicken or a period of drought. No one bothered to zoom out and declare that our entire agriculture sector was failing the nation.

Today, everything comes home to roost.

After weeks of denying that our rice buffer stocks were thinning, we are going all out to import whatever rice we could get our hands on. If the economists get their way, the disastrous rice price caps will be abandoned with as much finesse as is still possible and, instead, tariffs on imported rice will be cut.

Tariff cuts will deal a heavy blow to our fiscal stability – but it could not be worse than doling out remuneration to small rice retailers threatened with bankruptcy.

One senator called for a public inquiry into the inconsistencies of this administration's rice policy. That misses the point. What we need is a public inquiry into why our agriculture is in free fall.

The Sugar Regulatory Administration just signaled that our sugar production will likely fall below expectation. Blame El Niño. Then import more.

The prices of vegetables are rising across the board, led by the lowly *siling labuyo* whose price more than tripled in a matter of days. Maybe we will import that, too.

As a response, the Department of Trade and Industry announced a meeting with manufacturers will be called. Our officials will cajole them into postponing price adjustments. That is another non-market response. We want our producers to defy the law of gravity – not just that suddenly controversial law of supply and demand.

There is more bad news on the horizon. Brent crude, the one we import, is now over \$92 per barrel. As we move into the winter months in the northern industrial economies, demand for oil will rise even as supply is kept in check by the cartel. That can only mean one thing: oil will likely rise above \$100 per barrel.

Again, we have a market-defying response for this. Government has begun distributing financial assistance to drivers of public transport. How far can we go doing this, throwing money at every aggrieved sector, without courting a fiscal disaster?

After months of decline, the inflation rate for August began rising again. We all expect a higher inflation rate for September. Faster inflation will cut into our final growth numbers for the year. Our economic managers are bravely foisting 6 to 7 percent GDP growth for the year. Most analysts I have talked to think we would be lucky to make 5 percent.

Because our agriculture is failing us, we will have to import more food. As it is, our gross international reserves fell below \$100 billion. The adequacy of our reserves is based on how long it could fund our imports. At the rate our imports are rising, our reserves might soon be deemed insufficient. This invites speculation against our currency.

Our need to import more of the food we need, and throw cash at everyone to delay contending with the full market impact, ultimately tells on our fiscal stability. The debt load we bear, reflecting all the emergency spending during the pandemic, could soon be unsustainable.

Again, because of our short electoral cycle, the tendency of every administration is to postpone crises rather than take them by the horns. This tendency brought us to where we are today.

We are suffering a crisis of agricultural failure that diminishes public access to food. This failure will contaminate every other dimension of the national economy – including our fiscal and foreign exchange stability.

We need a comprehensive and imaginative strategy to wiggle out of this situation of unbridled inflation and shortages of everything. That does not seem to be forthcoming. Instead, our government chooses to sleepwalk through this critical episode, applying superficial solutions such as price caps to delay the onset of market reality.

Ordinary consumers, stretching their budgets to cope with the price spikes, sense a crisis building. But our officials would rather window-dress the situation by controlling prices rather than working on the archaic production structures that create shortages.

★



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**REGIONS**

## In S. Cotabato, gov sees rice at P30/kilo

SURALLAH, SOUTH COTABATO—With the province expecting an average yield of 8 metric tons of palay per hectare this cropping season, Gov. Reynaldo Tamayo Jr. said the price of ordinary milled rice here could be sold at P30 per kilo and possibly even P25 per kilo in the next harvest. The provincial government has a program that provides local farmers with subsidy so they can improve their production. —STORY BY BONG S. SARMIENTO

**AG**



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# In South Cotabato, gov sees rice sold at P30/kilo

## Province's palay program shows promise of reducing staple's price through increased yield

By **Bong S. Sarmiento**  
@InqNational

**SURALLAH, SOUTH COTABATO**—The rice-producing province of South Cotabato is on its way to achieving an average yield of 8 metric tons per hectare of palay (unhusked rice), farmers and government officials said on Friday.

"Based on the crop cut estimates, the yield is between a high of 12 tons and a low of 10 tons," Gov. Reynaldo Tamayo Jr. said in Filipino during the Consolidated Rice Production and Mechanization Program (CRPMP) Farmers' Field Day and Harvest Festival here.

A crop cut estimate is done through sampling a square meter of harvestable palay for every hectare of farmland.

Last June, Tamayo told a visiting President Marcos that the province could produce 8 MT of palay per hectare, double the national average.

Tamayo said the different farms chosen for crop cut yielded at least a kilogram of palay per square meter. There are 210 ha of contiguous palay farms in this town in different stages of maturity under the CRPMP that seeks to achieve compact rice farming which, in turn, ensures economies of scale.

Across the province, some 1,600 ha of palay farms have already been consolidated, out of the 3,000-ha target, Tamayo said.

Given the projected bumper harvest for the current cropping cycle, Tamayo said the price of ordinary milled rice "could be sold at P30 per kilo and could be further brought down to P25 per kilo in the next harvest period."

"Our target really is to in-



**HARVEST** Farmers in the village of Dajay in Surallah, South Cotabato, harvest palay on Friday from farms under the consolidated rice production program of the provincial government.

—**BONG S. SARMIENTO**

crease the income of farmers to encourage them to continue planting and produce more so that we can lower the price of rice for the consumers," the governor said.

Tamayo noted that the province, with its 8 MT per hectare palay production, could be instrumental in helping bring down the price of rice to a level affordable to most Filipinos that, according to him, was the "dream" of the President.

### Fake news?

Early this month, Mr. Marcos imposed a price cap on rice at P41 and P45 per kilo for regular and well-milled rice, respectively, after retail prices breached the P50 per kilo level.

The issue has been high on the public's interest given the much touted goal of the administration to bring down the price of rice crop to only P20 per kilo, consistent with Mr. Marcos' campaign promise.

Such a vow has been widely reported by various news organizations following then-presidential candidate Marcos in the campaign trail.

But Tamayo, president of Partido Federal ng Pilipinas, the

political party of the President, has brushed these aside as "fake news" in a press conference following the speeches at the harvest festival.

But he expressed hope that the palay farming program of the province would be replicated in other parts of the country to help achieve rice self-sufficiency and contribute to bringing down rice prices.

If the target of consolidating 3,000 ha of palay farms will be achieved, Tamayo said the yield would be enough to feed South Cotabato's population of about a million for 10 months.

He conceded though that there are "players," apparently referring to rice cartels, who could spoil the target.

Henry Eslabon, chair of the Upper Valley Agriculture Cooperative, attested that a yield of 8 MT of palay per hectare was attainable.

"I have proven it myself in the past two years after I used hybrid seeds. The target of 8 MT per hectare, on average, is achievable. I've had excellent yields because the climate and soil here are suitable for the hybrid variety," Eslabon told the Inquirer.

He added that he harvested

such a volume of palay for six consecutive cropping seasons already.

### Hybrid seeds

Using hybrid rather than inbred seeds is costly, but the former gives a much better income, Eslabon, a former municipal councilor here, said.

Under the consolidated rice program here, farmers planted the Arize Bigante Plus, a product of Bayer.

Hybrid palay seed costs P5,000 per sack, while the inbred variety sells for only P1,600, Eslabon said.

Hybrid seeds cannot be replanted, unlike inbred, though the latter's yield volume drops the more these are replanted.

Eslabon noted that the government subsidy for the program—such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and land preparation, among others—was a big help to farmer-beneficiaries, whose equity, in the form of labor, was 30 percent of the total production cost.

Loel Nillos, Surallah municipal agriculture officer, told the Inquirer that the prevailing farm gate price of palay here ranged from P19 to P19.50 per kilo.

He said that a farmer was able to harvest 146 sacks of palay at an average weight of 63 kilos a sack, from a hectare of land.

That's about P175,000 for a production cost of P50,000, or a net income of P125,000, Nillos added.

"This only proves that a farmer can produce double the average production," he said.

Nillos said the program would run for three years or six cropping cycles. **INQ**



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## ₱42-M smuggled rice in Zamboanga forfeited in favor of gov't – BOC

By CHINO S. LEYCO

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) has confiscated over 42,000 sacks of rice in Zamboanga City.

In a statement, Customs said the bureau forfeited 42,180 sacks of Alas Jasmine Fragrant rice, valued at ₱42 million that were discovered inside a warehouse in Barangay San Jose Gusu, Zamboanga City.

The agency said the confiscation was a result of the owners' failure to provide proper import documents.

Last May 19, Customs, in collaboration with the Coast Guard Intelligence Group-Southwestern Mindanao, Task Force Aduana, and Marine Battalion Landing Team 11, conducted an inspection of the warehouse based on information regarding the presence of smuggled rice.

A Letter of Authority, signed by Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio, was issued to authorize the raid.

Subsequently, the owner's representative submitted import documents, which were verified and investigated by the Enforcement and Security Service-Customs Police Division and Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service.

"However, upon verification of documents submitted and investigation... it was found out that the subject confiscated goods were not covered by requisite Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC) from the Bureau of Plant Industry," Customs said.

The agency further said there were discrepancies between the actual seized goods and the contents declared in the documents presented by the owners.

"The proofs of payment submitted referred to a shipment of 'White Rice 15 percent Broken' while based on the actual examination, the seized sacks of rice were Jasmine Fragrant Rice," Customs said.

On Sept. 1, the Customs port of Zamboanga issued an Order of Forfeiture against the sacks.

District Collector Arthur G. Sevilla Jr. stated that the Port of Zamboanga will remain vigilant and take action on reports related to all forms of smuggling.

"This is pursuant to Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio's and President Ferdinand R. Marcos' marching order to go after hoarders and illegal importers of rice," Sevilla said.

The forfeited goods shall be disposed of in a manner provided for by law.



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## 800 metro rice retailers get cash aid

MORE than 800 small rice retailers in Quezon City and the Camanava area affected by the rice price cap have received cash aid from various government agencies.

The local governments of Quezon City and four cities of the Camanava (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela) area in the north and western parts of Metro Manila have reported the distribution of cash aid coming from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Quezon City Mayor Maria Josefina "Joy" Belmonte told *The Manila Times* that more than 400 qualified small rice retailers have already received their financial assistance from DSWD and DTI.

Aside from the cash aid, Belmonte said the city government will waive certain rental fees and provide discounts to rice dealers, wholesalers and retailers.

"Through this, it would help alleviate any challenges that they may face due to these price adjustments," she added.

In Caloocan, Mayor Dale Gonzalo Malapitan said some 200 affected rice retailers have received their financial aid from DSWD and DTI amounting to P15,000.

"On the part of the city government, we would also roll out the P5,000 cash assistance to the registered rice micro retailers," he said.

"The additional cash grant is just the fulfillment of my earlier pledge to the consumers and businesses alike with the implementation of Executive Order (EO) 39, or the rice price cap," the Caloocan

mayor added.

Navotas Mayor John Rey Tiangco said that the city government is expecting more qualified local rice retailers to get their financial assistance from DSWD and DTI aside from the first batch of 161.

"We will make sure that all affected and registered small rice retailers in the city will get their financial help from the national government as the city government is also preparing for whatever assistance it can extend to them," Tiangco said.

In Valenzuela, Mayor Weslie Gatchalian told *The Times* that the affected 200 rice retailers were from the city's 33 public and private markets.

"The city government will also shoulder the three-month stall rent of rice retailers to partially compensate for losses due to the government's rice price ceiling on regular and well-milled rice," Gatchalian said.

EO 39 mandates the price ceiling of P41 per kilogram for regular milled rice and P45/kg for well-milled rice. It took effect on September 5.

Also, Mayor Jeannie Sandoval of Malabon said the city government and concerned national government agencies conducted an extensive validation process that ensured that the beneficiaries were selling rice at the prescribed price ceiling.

Meanwhile, a total of 87 registered small rice retailers got their financial aid from DSWD and DTI aside from the assistance the city government would provide to them, Sandoval said.

**ARLIE O. CALALO**



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## Local farms to lose P87.76-B income on proposed tariff cuts on rice—FFF

BY ANDREA E. SAN JUAN

**L**OCAL farmers may lose P87.76 billion in income if the proposed tariff cuts on rice will push through, according to the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF). At a public hearing organized by the Tariff Commission on Friday, FFF National Manager Raul Montemayor unveiled the potential losses as well as the potential drop in farm income if the Foundation for Economic Freedom's (FEF) petition to reduce import tariffs on rice from 35 percent to 10 percent is granted.

"I'm a little bit disturbed by the fact [that we all know that this FEF proposal will have a big impact on farmers and the government because they based their petitions on the back-of-the-envelope computations...I hope you understand that what you are scribbling at the back of the envelope has billions of pesos of implication to small farmers. I hope you can do a more rigid analysis before you come up with your proposals," Montemayor added.

Meanwhile, he reported the implication of the proposed tariff cuts on tariff collections.

"Based on our study of BOC [Bureau of Customs] data, the average price of imported rice from January to August this year was about P27 per kilo or P27,335 per metric ton. There is no tariff for that yet, that is the landed CIF [cost, insurance and freight] cost," Montemayor said.

Assuming that the country will import 3 million tons, he said, "So at 35 percent tariff, we shall collect P28.7 billion; if it's only 10 percent, we collect P8.2 billion."

With this, he noted that the foregone tariff for

the government will be about P20.5 billion. Since the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) says that tariff collection exceeds P10 billion, all the excess will be given back to farmers.

In accordance with Republic Act No. 11203, or the RTL, "tariffs collected from rice imports go to the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund [RCEF]. Collections in excess of the P10 billion fund go to the Rice Farmer Financial Assistance or RFFA. The law took effect on March 5, 2019."

However, Montemayor pointed out that if the tariff goes down to 10 percent, "There is no more excess because we collect only P8.2 billion; unlike if it's at 35 percent, the excess that goes to farmers will be P18.7 billion in addition to their P10 billion under RCEF."

He stressed that the supposed P18.7-billion additional funding is on top of the estimated P88-billion potential income loss to farmers.

"The farmers' losses will be about P88 billion in terms of reduced income. Potential but it could happen and then they will even lose the P18.7 billion in additional funding," Montemayor noted.

FEF was one of, if not the first, to lobby for the reduction of tariffs on rice imports as a measure to temper and eventually pull down domestic rice prices.

"The immediate reduction of import tariffs on rice from 35 percent to 10 percent will be effective in reducing the demand-supply gap, tame food price inflation, and alleviate the plight of small retailers for the welfare of the general consuming public," FEF said during the TC hearing. (*Related story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/09/11/dof-wants-zero-tariff-on-rice-to-ease-prices/>*)





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## P42M ismagel na bigas, nasabat ng BOC sa Zamboanga

TINATAYANG nasa P42 milyong halaga ng mga ismagel na bigas ang nasamsam ng mga tauhan ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) Port of Zamboanga sa isinagawang pagsalakay sa isang bodega sa Brgy. San Jose Gusu, Zamboanga City.

Bitbit ang Letter of Authority na nilagdaan ni Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio, nagsagawa ng inspeksyon ang BOC sa bodega matapos makatanggap ng impormasyon na may mga smuggled na bigas sa isa sa mga stall doon. Na-

diskubre sa warehouse ang 42,180 sako ng Alas Jasmine Fragrant Rice.

Napag-alaman sa BOC na nakapagsumite naman ng import documents ang kinatawan ng may-ari ng bodega hinggil sa mga nasabing bigas alinsunod sa Seksyon 224 ng Republic Act No. 10863, mas kilala bilang "Customs Modernization and Tariff Act" (CMTA).

Gayunman, sa pagberipika sa mga dokumento ay natuklasang hindi sakop ng

requisite Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC) mula sa Bureau of Plant Industry ang mga nasabing bigas.

Bukod dito, may mga pagkakaiba sa aktwal na nasamsam na kalakal mula sa kung ano ang idineklara sa mga dokumentong ipinakita. Ang mga isinumiteng patunay ng pagbayad ay tumutukoy sa isang kargamento ng "White Rice 15% Broken", habang batay sa aktwal na pagsusuri, ang mga nasabat na sako ng bigas ay

"Jasmine Fragrant Rice".

Noong Setyembre 1, 2023, naglabas ang BOC-POZ ng Order of Forfeiture laban sa mga subject na sako ng bigas para sa paglabag sa Section 1113 (f) in relation to Section 117 of the CMTA of 2016, Rice Tarification Law, at Republic Act No. 10845, o mas kilala bilang "Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016".

Ang mga nasamsam na kalakal ay dapat i-dispose alinsunod sa umiiral na batas.

**JAY REYES**



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## Junk rice liberalization law -- Gabriela

**By Jester Manalastas**

**TIME to junk the Rice Liberalization Law.**

This was the call of Gabriela Women's Party-list Rep. Arlene Brosas following a report that the Philippines is now the world's top importer of rice.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) named the Philippines as the world's top rice importer for the marketing year 2022-2023.

"It is disheartening to see that we, who used to teach other countries how to develop their rice industry, are now heavily reliant on imports while our farmers continue to live in pov-

erty due to the government's lack of support to our local production," Brosas said.

"This situation further underscores the urgent need to scrap the Rice Liberalization Law, which has opened the floodgates for massive rice imports in our country, undermining the livelihoods of our farmers," she added.

"The Rice Liberalization Law has proven to be detrimental to our farmers and our food security. We call on the government to repeal this law and implement measures that prioritize the welfare of our farmers and ensure self-sufficiency in rice production," Brosas stressed. *Jester Manalastas*



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### **Rice retailers sa Valenzuela, aayudahan sa 3-buwang renta**

Matapos maapektuhan sa rice cap na ipinatutapad ng pamahalaan, tiniyak ng Valenzuela local government na kanila pang aayudahan ang mga maliliit na rice retailers para sa tatlong buwan na renta sa kanilang mga stalls o puwesto.

Ang paniniyak ay ginawa ni Valenzuela City Mayor Wes Gatchalian kasabay ng pagsasagawa ng payout sa mga rice retailer.

Ayon kay Gatchalian, ang 3-buwang ayuda ay bukod pa sa natanggap na P15,000 cash aid ng mga rice retailers mula sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Nabatid na nasa 200 na rice retailer na sa lungsod ang nakatanggap ng tig-P5,000 ayuda sa rental fee para sa buwan ng Oktubre.

Nakatakda namang ipamahagi ang ayuda sa susunod na buwan para naman sa November at December rental fee ng mga rice retailers.

Dagdag ni Gatchalian, naiintindihan niya ang sitwasyon ng mga rice retailer sa lungsod na nag-bebenta na ng palugi para makasunod sa price cap sa bigas.

Ipinaliwanag din ng alkalde na ang dahilan sa pagpapatupad ng Executive Order No. 39 ay upang mapigilan ang pananamantala ng mga rice hoarder at rice cartel.

Dagdag pa ni Gatchalian, ang Valenzuela LGU na ang pupunta sa tirahan ng mga apektadong rice retailers sa mga susunod na buwan upang ipamahagi ang nasabing ayuda. *(Doris Franche-Borja)*



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## Mga masustansiyang prutas na sagana sa Pinas

NARITO ang mga masustansiyang prutas na sagana sa ating bansa. Malaki ang benepisyo ng mga prutas na ito sa kalusugan. Ugaliing kumain ng prutas.

1. Ubas – Ang ubas ay may tannins at flavonoids na puwedeng makapigil sa kanser. Kumain ng ubas kung ika'y nagpapagaling sa sakit. At kapag kulang sa dugo at mahina ang katawan, kumain ng ubas para manumbalik ang iyong sigla.

2. Pakwan – Panlaban ang mga ito sa sakit sa bato at pantog (kidney at bladder infection). Ang pakwan at melon ay punong-puno ng vitamin C at potassium. At kapag tag-init, ang katas nito ang kailangan ng ating katawan.

3. Peras – Ang peras ay mayaman sa fiber at sorbitol na makatutulong sa pagdumi. Ang fiber ay nagbibigay ng hugis (o bulk) sa dumi. Ang sorbitol naman ay nagbibigay ng tamis sa peras at naghahatak ng tubig sa loob ng bituka para lumambot ang dumi.

## Doc Willie

NI DR. WILLIE T. ONG



4. Suha – May tulong ang suha para makaiwas sa kanser at para sa may diabetes. Ang balat ng suha ay may sangkap na bioflavonoid. Ito'y nakatutulong sa pag-iwas sa cancer, lalo na sa breast cancer. Kung ika'y may diabetes, puwede sa iyo ang suha at mansanas. Paalala lang na 3 o 4 na hiwa lang ang kainin.

5. Strawberry – Naniniwala ang mga eksperto na panlaban sa kanser ang strawberry. Mag-ingat lang kung allergic sa strawberry. Hugasang maigi ito bago kainin.

6. Saging – Mainam ang saging sa mga nag-eehersisyo at sa may sakit sa puso dahil may taglay itong potassium. Para sa hindi makatulog at stressed sa buhay, nakapagpaparelax din ang saging dahil sa sangkap nitong tryptophan.

7. Abokado – Ang abokado ay may taglay na good fats  
 (Sundan sa pahina 5)

## DOC WILLIE... Mula pahina 4

at healthy oils. Dahil dito, nakatutulong ito sa pag-iwas sa sakit sa puso at istrok. May sangkap din itong vitamin B6 at vitamin E na nagpapakinis ng ating balat.

8. Papaya – Mataas sa vitamin A at vitamin C ang papaya kaya nakatutulong ito sa ating kutis. Ang papaya ay may *papain*, isang kemikal na tumutulong sa pagtunaw ng pagkain at sa pag-regular ng ating pagdumi.

9. Pinya – Ang pineapple ay may bromelain na nagpapalakas ng ating resistensya. May sangkap din itong manganese at vitamin B na nagbibigay lakas

sa ating katawan.

10. Buko – Ang buko juice ay nakatutulong sa may kidney stones (bato sa bato).

11. Mansanas – May vitamin C at anti-oxidants ang mansanas. Mahalaga na kainin din ang balat ng mansanas dahil may taglay itong pectin na nagtatanggal ng dumi sa ating katawan. Panlaban ang mansanas sa mataas na cholesterol, arthritis at sakit ng tiyan.

12. Orange – Masagana ang orange sa vitamin C na panlaban sa sapon, ubo, hika at arthritis.





## Surging rice prices raise specter of Asian food scare, HSBC says

**R**ISING food prices are likely to prove an additional concern for central bankers trying to subdue inflation as the cost of rice—a staple food in Asia—surges the most since 2008, according to HSBC Holdings Plc.

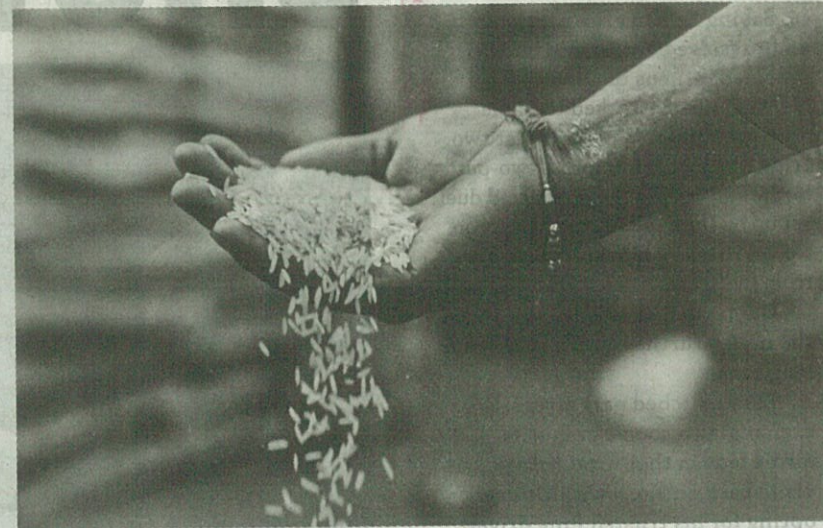
"The memory of the 2008 Asian food price scare sits deep," economists led by Frederic Neumann said in a research note on Friday. "Back then, rising rice prices in some economies quickly spilled over into other markets as consumers and governments across the region scrambled to secure supplies. It also lifted the prices of other staples, such as wheat, as buyers shifted to alternatives."

Export prices for rice from Thailand, a global benchmark, jumped to more than \$600 a ton, almost a 50 percent year-on-year increase. That's an issue for policymak-

ers because unlike tomatoes and onions, which tend to normalize quickly after a spike because of short harvest cycles, rice prices can stay elevated for much longer, according to Neumann.

Global rice imports as a share of consumption have roughly doubled over the past 25 years, and are up around 4 percentage points since the 2008 food price scare, the note showed. "This means that disruption in one economy could have much bigger spillovers into others than in the past," Neumann said.

Erratic rains and drought in many parts of the world are ham-



A WORKER holds white rice in a godown in Gurgaon, Haryana, India, on Friday, September 1, 2023. Rice prices in Asia rebounded on escalating concerns around supply as top exporter India implemented more restrictions on its shipments.

pering crops, reducing supply and driving up costs. Top rice exporter India has imposed curbs on overseas shipments to keep a lid on local prices, further constricting global supplies.

Malaysia and the Philippines are the two Asian economies most reliant on rice imports, followed by

Korea and Taiwan, Neumann said. Other economies such as Indonesia are exposed, too. Hong Kong and Singapore import all of their rice, though given their purchasing power they can readily secure supplies.

"Go easy on the curry," Neumann concluded. **Bloomberg News**