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## Gov't to expand DSWD's food stamp program

President Marcos announced that the government is looking into expanding the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Food Stamp Program (FSP) to other parts of the country starting this month, citing its successful launch on Sept. 29.

Marcos said this after he led the program launch in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte, on Friday.

In an interview following the event, the President said he was glad the FSP was proceeding smoothly.

"We will be upscaling it within the next month or so," he said. "We are aiming at the next phase of this rollout. We are already looking at 3,000 families to be beneficiaries," he added.

To date, the FSP has 100 beneficiaries na- ► **9**

tionwide. The DSWD pilot-tested the FSP on July 18 in Tondo, Manila.

On Friday, Marcos led the distribution of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, loaded with ₱3,000 food credits, to at least 50 beneficiaries in Siargao Island.

Even though the FSP had just started, the President thought it was giving promising results but said they must make it accessible to ordinary citizens, especially in the far-flung areas.

According to Marcos, they are carrying out the FSP to fight hunger and ensure the well-being of the beneficiaries through better food nutrition

through the EBT cards.

Meanwhile, Marcos thanked international sponsors such as the United Nations' World Food Programme, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the government of France for helping the Philippines in realizing the FSP.

The grant of US\$3 million came from France, ADB, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Next year's target would be 300,000 households.

The FSP aims to decrease the incidence of involuntary hunger through available and accessible nutritious food for less fortunate households

while helping address nutritional concerns.

It provides cash-based assistance in the form of EBT Cards.

According to the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), the DSWD submitted a draft executive order declaring the FSP as a government flagship program, directing all national government agencies, local government units, and government-owned or -controlled corporations to support its implementation.

"The draft is currently being reviewed by the Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for General Administration," it said. (Argyll Cyrus Geducos)





# Marcos OKs ₱12.7-B aid for 2.3 M rice farmers

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

**P**resident Marcos has approved and ordered the release of ₱12.7 billion for the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) to help about 2.3 million small rice farmers amid agricultural challenges in the country.

Marcos, who issued the order on Thursday, Sept. 28, said the RFFA would help the beneficiaries cope with the increasing production cost and sustain their productivity

in the face of challenges, including the looming dry spell.

Under the RFFA, each beneficiary registered in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) will receive ₱5,000 financial assistance. This was sourced through the excess tariff collection from rice importations in 2022.

Farm cooperatives associations (FCAs), irrigators associations (IAs), agrarian reform beneficiary organizations (ARBOs), small water impounding systems associations (SWISAs), and other farm groups

are among the RFFA beneficiaries.

The RFFA is an unconditional financial assistance for farmers tilling below two hectares of land as mandated under the Cash Assistance to Filipino Farmers Act of 2021. ► 9

assistance to small rice retailers and sari-sari store owners affected by the implementation of Executive Order No. 39, which imposed a price cap on regular milled and well-milled rice.

## No let-up in drive vs rice smugglers, hoarders

Meanwhile, President Marcos said he would not let smugglers and hoarders of rice get away with their illegal activities, stressing that the government was already implementing measures against them.

In a speech during the distribution of rice to beneficiaries in the Dinagat Islands on Friday, Sept. 29, the President reiterated that the Philippines has no problem with rice supply. However,

he said smuggling and hoarding are making the price of the staple grain go up.

"Wala tayo sanang problema sa presyo ng bigas kung hindi dahil sa biglang pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas at dahil sa laganap na smuggling at saka hoarding (We won't have a problem with the price of rice but it suddenly shot up due to smuggling and hoarding)," he said.

According to the President, smugglers and hoarders are "manipulating" the market by illegally importing sacks of rice and keeping them until the price of the staple increases.

"That's not right," he said. "The manipulation done by smugglers, hoarders, and other businessmen who

Around 78,000 beneficiaries are expected to receive ₱10,000 each.

On Sept. 29, President Marcos assured Filipinos that his administration will continue finding sustainable solutions to address the agricultural issues in the country.

"We're looking for concrete solutions to address the problems the agriculture sector is facing," he said. "Let us help one another to fix the agriculture sector."

Before this, President Marcos extended ₱15,000 in financial as-

are taking advantage of the situation are ruining our livelihood."

Because of this, Marcos said he would not let those individuals pass.

"That's what disheartens me and I cannot let them get away with it," he said. "That's why we're undertaking extreme measures to end these illegal activities."

According to the President, among the measures they are implementing are constructing the necessary infrastructure and providing equipment to farmers. They are also distributing rice but said this is a temporary measure.

He, however, renewed his commitment to ensuring the country's rice supply while going after those engaged in illegal activities.





## **Marcos OKs release of P12.7-B tariff aid for farmers**

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Marcos has approved the release of about P12.7 billion to help 2.3 million farmers cope with the challenges confronting the agriculture sector.

Marcos, who is also the agriculture secretary, ordered the release of the funding on Sept. 28 for the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance program, Presidential Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil said yesterday.

The program is an unconditional financial assistance for farmers tilling below two hectares of land as mandated under the Cash Assistance to Filipino Farmers Act of 2021.

Under the program, the government identified small

rice farmer-beneficiaries who are included in the registry system for basic sectors in agriculture as of June 30 this year.

Each beneficiary will be given P5,000 in financial aid, which came from the excess

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### **Marcos** From Page 1

tariff collection from rice importations last year, amounting to about P12.7 billion.

"(This would) help them cope with the increasing cost of production and sustain their productivity even in the face of challenges like the coming El Niño," Marcos was quoted by a Palace statement as saying.

The beneficiaries of the financial assistance program include farmers in farm cooperatives associations, irrigators associations, agrarian reform beneficiaries organizations, small water impounding systems associations and other farm groups.

Marcos has also approved the use of P700 million in excess tariff collections for the Palayamanan Plus, a conditional cash transfer under the household crop diversification program, Garafil said.

The move seeks to ensure that the farmers registered in the registry system for basic sectors in agriculture who are also covered by the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) will benefit from food and nutrition and achieve income security.

The 4Ps, which is being implemented by the social welfare department, provides relief and government health services to low-

income families who send their children to school.

Garafil said some 78,000 beneficiaries are expected to receive the Palayamanan Plus conditional cash transfer of P10,000 each.

The two proposed financial assistance packages support the administration's Masagana Rice Industry Development Programs.

The President issued the directives aimed at helping farmers as the government is dealing with the rising prices of rice.

To keep the food staple affordable to ordinary Filipinos, Marcos set price caps on regular milled and well-milled rice last month. The mandated price for regular milled rice is P41 per kilogram while the price ceiling on well-milled rice is P45 per kilogram. The administration has also provided P15,000 financial aid to small rice retailers and *sari-sari* store owners affected by the price caps.

The President has also led the distribution of thousands of sacks of rice to 4Ps beneficiaries in Tungawan, Zamboanga City; Brgy. San Roque, Zamboanga City; Brgy. Santiago, General Trias, Cavite; Iriga City, Camarines Sur and San Andres in Manila.





FUNDED WITH EXCESS TARIFF COLLECTION FROM 2022 RICE IMPORTS

## P13.4-B CASH AID COMING FOR 2.5M RICE FARMERS

**By Nestor Corrales**  
@NCorralesINQ

President Marcos has approved the release of a total of P13.4 billion in financial assistance to rice farmers to help sustain their productivity amid the El Niño phenomenon and other challenges faced by the agriculture sector, Malacañang said on Saturday.

In a statement, Presidential Communications Secretary Cheloy Velicaria-Garafil said the President had ordered the

release of P12.7 billion for the administration's Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) program, and P700 million under the Household Crop Diversification Program (HCDP).

### From excess collection

Under the RFFA, the government has identified about 2.3 million beneficiaries, mainly rice farmers listed in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) as of June 30 this year. Each ben-

eficiary will receive P5,000 in financial assistance.

According to Garafil, the funds for this aid package was sourced from the "excess tariff collection" from rice imports in 2022, amounting to P12.7 billion.

"[This would] help them cope with the increasing cost of production and sustain their productivity even in the face of challenges like the coming El Niño [phenomenon]," the Palace media office quoted the

President as saying.

The RFFA is an unconditional financial assistance program for farmers cultivating less than 2 hectares of land, Garafil said. It was instituted through Republic Act No. 11598, or the Cash Assistance to Filipino Farmers Act of 2021.

The beneficiaries include members of farming cooperatives and other organizations formed by irrigators, agrarian reform beneficiaries, and those who work for small water impounding

systems, among others.

### 'Palayamanan Plus'

Mr. Marcos also ordered the release of P700 million in excess tariff collections for the "Palayamanan Plus," a conditional cash transfer scheme under the HCDP.

It aims to ensure that RSB-SA-registered farmers, who are also enrolled in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development,

would "enjoy food, nutrition and income security," Garafil said.

About 78,000 Palayamanan Plus beneficiaries are expected to receive P10,000 each.

Last week, the President rejected proposals to temporarily reduce tariffs on rice imports to temper surging retail prices of the staple.

"It was not the right time to lower the tariff rates because the projection of world rice prices is that it will go down," he said. INQ





# Marcos OKs P12.7-B aid to rice farmers

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

**P**RESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has approved and ordered the release of P12.7 billion for the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) to help about 2.3 million small rice farmers amid some agricultural challenges in the country, Malacañang announced Saturday.

Presidential Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil said that Marcos made the order on Thursday in a bid to help farmers "cope with the increasing production cost and sustain their productivity."

"[This would] help them cope with the increasing cost of production and sustain their productivity even in the face of challenges like the coming El Niño [phenomenon]," the President said, referring to the government's RFFA.

Under the RFFA, each beneficiary registered in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture

(RSBSA) will receive P5,000 in financial assistance.

This was sourced through the excess tariff collection from rice importations in 2022, amounting to around P12.7 billion.

The RFFA beneficiaries include those in the farm cooperatives associations, irrigators associations, agrarian reform beneficiaries organizations, small water impounding systems associations, and other farm groups.

The program is unconditional financial assistance for farmers tilling below two hectares of land as

mandated under Republic Act (RA) 11598, or the "Cash Assistance to Filipino Farmers Act of 2021."

Meanwhile, the President also approved the utilization of P700 million in excess tariff collections for the "Palayamanan Plus" conditional cash transfer under the Household Crop Diversification Program.

The program ensures that RSBSA-registered farmers, who are also listed in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), will enjoy food, nutrition and income security.

Around 78,000 beneficiaries are expected to receive the Palayamanan Plus conditional cash transfer of P10,000 each.

The two proposed financial assistance packages support the Masagana Rice Industry Development Programs.

In his speech on rice distribution during the rice distribution in Surigao del Norte on Friday,

Marcos assured the public that his administration will not stop looking for sustainable solutions to address the agricultural issues in the country gearing toward a "New Philippines."

The President also emphasized that providing financial assistance to affected farmers is just one of the steps of the administration to sustain their source of income.

Aside from providing financial assistance to rice farmers, Marcos has also led the distribution of thousands of sacks of rice to 4Ps beneficiaries in Tungawan, Zamboanga City; Barangay San Roque, Zamboanga City; Barangay Santiago, General Trias, Cavite; Iriga City, Camarines Sur; and San Andres Manila.

Before this, the President extended P15,000 in financial assistance to small rice retailers and sari-sari store owners affected by the implementation of Executive Order 39, which imposed a price cap on regular-milled and well-milled rice.





## PBBM INAPRUB ₱12B AYUDA SA MGA RICE FARMER

INAPRUBAHAN ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. ang paglalabas ng P12.7 bilyon para sa Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) program ng administrasyon sa layunin na makatulong mga rice farmer na masustine ang kanilang produksyon sa gitna ng mga kinakaharap nilang problema sa pagsasaka.

"[This would] help them cope with the increasing cost of production and sustain their productivity even in the face of challenges like the coming El Niño [phenomenon]," paliwanag ni Pangulong Marcos.

Tinatayang 2.3 milyong small rice farmer beneficiaries ang nakalista sa Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) sa huling tala noong June 30, 2023.

Bawat benepisyaryo ay makakatanggap ng P5,000 financial assistance. Ang pondo sa ayuda ay kukunin sa sumo-brang koleksyon ng taripa sa rice importation noong 2022 na nagkakahalaga ng P12.7 bilyon.

Kabilang sa mga benepisyaryo ng RFFA ay ang mga farm cooperatives associations (FCAs), irrigators associations (IAs), agrarian reform beneficiaries organizations (ARBOs), small water impounding systems associations (SWISAs), at iba pang farm groups.

Ang RFFA ay isang uri ng unconditional financial assistance para sa mga magsasakang nagbubungkal sa lupaing hindi lalagpas ng dalawang ektarya alinsunod sa Republic Act (RA) No. 11598, o ang Cash Assistance to Filipino Farmers Act of 2021.

Inaprubahan din ng pangulo ang paggamit ng P700 milyon mula sa excess tariff collections para sa "Palayamanan Plus" conditional cash transfer sa ilalim ng Household Crop Diversification Program.

Hangarin nito na matiyak na ang RSBSA-registered farmers, na nakalista rin sa Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), "will enjoy food, nutrition, and income security."

Tinatayang 78,000 benepisyaryo ang makakatanggap sa Palayamanan Plus conditional cash transfer ng P10,000 bawat isa. Ang dalawang financial assistance packages ay pantukod sa Masagana Rice Industry Development Programs.





# 'AYUDA' FOR FARMERS

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. approved and ordered on Thursday the release of P12.7 billion for the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) program of the administration in a bid to help small rice farmers sustain their productivity amid some agricultural challenges in the country.

"[This would] help them cope with the increasing cost of production and sustain their productivity even in the face of challenges like the coming El Niño [phenomenon]," President Marcos said, referring to the government's RFFA.

Under the RFFA, the government has identified about 2.3 million small rice farmer beneficiaries who are registered in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) as of June 30, 2023.

Each beneficiary will receive P5,000 in financial assistance, which was sourced through the excess tariff collection from rice importations in 2022, amounting to around P12.7 billion.

The RFFA beneficiaries include those in the farm cooperatives associations (FCAs), irrigators associations (IAs), agrarian reform beneficiaries organizations (ARBOs), small water impounding systems associations (SWISAs), and other farm groups.



The RFFA is an unconditional financial assistance for farmers tilling below two hectares of land as mandated under Republic Act (RA) No. 11598, or the Cash Assistance to Filipino Farmers Act of 2021.

President Marcos also approved the utilization of PhP700 million in excess tariff collections for the "Palayamanan Plus" conditional cash transfer under the Household Crop Diversification Program.

It aims to ensure RSBSA-registered farmers, who are also listed in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) of the

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), "will enjoy food, nutrition, and income security."

Around 78,000 beneficiaries are expected to receive the Palayamanan Plus conditional cash transfer of P10,000 each.

The two proposed financial assistance packages support the Masagana Rice Industry Development Programs (MRIDP).

In his previous rice distribution, President Marcos assured the Filipino people that his administration will not stop looking for sustainable solutions to

address the agricultural issues in the country gearing toward a "New Philippines."

The President also emphasized that providing financial assistance to affected farmers is just one of the steps of the administration to sustain their source of income.

"Bilang inyong Pangulo at Kalihim ng Agrikultura, patuloy po tayong gumagawa ng mga konkretong solusyon upang matugunan ang mga problemang kinakaharap ng sektor ng agrikultura," President Marcos had said.

PCO





## FOOD STAMP PROGRAM TO BE EXPANDED

FOLLOWING the successful launch of the Food Stamp Program (FSP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte on Friday, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is looking at expanding it starting next month.

"I have to say that it's proceeding smoothly and we will be upscaling it within the next month or so. We are aiming at the next face of this rollout, we are already looking to 3,000 families to be beneficiaries," President Marcos told reporters in an interview on the sidelines of the rice distribution event in Surigao del Norte.

President Marcos led the launching of the FSP at the Teatro Nan Dapa in Dapa, Siargao Island where he distributed the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, loaded with PhP3,000 food credits, to at least 50 beneficiaries in the province.

While the FSP is still in the pilot stage, the President emphasized that it is so far giving promising results as he stood firm that it should conform to its purpose in the long run, which is to make it accessible to ordinary citizens, especially in the far-flung areas.

The chief executive extended his gratitude to international sponsors such as the United Nations' World Food Programme, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the government of France for helping the Philippines in realizing the FSP.

The grant of US\$3 million came from French Development Agency, ADB and Japan International Cooperation Agency. Next year's target would be 300,000 households.

"So far, maganda naman kasi. Maganda'yung programa na ginawa ng World Food Programme," President Marcos said.

The FSP is a flagship program of the DSWD that aims to decrease the inci-



**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. brings the smuggled premium rice confiscated by the Bureau of Customs to Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte for distribution to the beneficiaries of the DSWD's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) on Friday. Photo by JOEY RAZON/NIB-PNA**

dence of involuntary hunger by improving the availability and accessibility of nutritious food for less fortunate households while helping address nutritional concerns. It provides cash-based assistance in the form of EBT Cards.

It is a pilot program intended for 3,000 families in five areas, namely, Tondo, Manila; Dapa, Siargao; San Mariano, Isabela; Garhitorena, Camarines Sur; and Parang, Maguindanao.

The DSWD pilot-tested the FSP on July 18 in Tondo, Manila.

### GOV'T AGENCIES URGED TO SUPPORT FOOD STAMP

The President has urged all government agencies to support the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) implementation of the WALANGGUTOM 2027: Food Stamp Program (FSP).

"Inaatasan ko ang mga kinauukulang ahensyang gobyerno na magtulungan tungo sa mas mahusay na pagpapatupad ng Food Stamp Program naito. Tiyakinnatin na walang bahid ng anumang anomalyang

pamamalakad ng ating mga proyekto," Marcos said.

The President highlighted that the FSP does not only ensure poor Filipinos will be able to consume sufficient amount of food, but will also guarantee nutritious and affordable food items for its beneficiaries.

In his speech, Secretary Rex Gatchalian said the FSP "also seeks to make a significant dent in the country's malnutrition and poverty as a whole."

"We hope to provide meal augmentation to food poor families that would give them that extra push to capacitate themselves into finding jobs, becoming productive citizens who are able to contribute to nation building," Gatchalian said.

The DSWD is also working closely with national government agencies and private organizations to promote nutrition and behavioral change among beneficiaries.

The FSP is being implemented with the help of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TES-

DA), National Nutrition Council (NNC), Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), World Food Programme (WFP), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Pilipinas Kontra Gutom Movement, and the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP).

In a related event, Marcos and Gatchalian led the distribution of premium quality rice to Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries in Siargao Island.

Around 2,265 sacks of premium rice confiscated by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) were handed over by President Marcos and Secretary Gatchalian to 4Ps beneficiaries from the island.

According to Marcos, the distribution of rice to poor households is in line with the government's effort to end hunger in the country.

As the concurrent head of the Department of Agriculture (DA), the President also said part of his duty is to ensure food security and a good supply chain in the country by addressing the issues of hoarding and smuggling.

PCO Jester Manalastas



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## Food Stamp program inutos palawakin pa

Nais ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na palawakin pa ang Food Stamp Program ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Sinabi ni Marcos na dadalhin pa ang nasabig programang sa kasuluk-sulukan ng Pilipinas.

"I have to say that it's proceeding smoothly and we will be upscaling it within the next month or so. We are aiming at the next face of this rollout, we are already looking to 3,000 families to be beneficiaries," ayon pa sa Pangulo.

Matatandaan na nagtungo kamakalawa sa Siargao

si Pangulong Marcos para bigyan ang 50 benepisaryo ng Food Stamp Program. Laman ng Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards ang P3,000 na food credits.

Pinasalamatan naman ng Pangulo ang international sponsors tulad ng United Nations' World Food Programme, Asian Development Bank (ADB) at gobyerno ng France sa pagbibigay ng US\$3 milyong pondo para sa naturang programa.

"So far, maganda naman kasi. Maganda 'yung programa na ginawa ng World Food Programme," pahayag ni Pangulong Marcos.

Pilot program pa lamang umano ang ginagawa ngayon ng pamahalaan kung saan nasa 3,000 pamilya mula sa Tondo, Manila; Dapa, Siargao; San Mariano, Isabela; Garchitorena, Camarines Sur; at Parang, Maguindanao ang nabigyan ng ayuda.  
(Gemma Garcia)



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## P5K ayuda sa 2.3M magsasaka, aprub ni PBBM

Aprubado na ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang paglalabas ng P12.7 bilyong pondo para sa Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) program.

Layon ng nasabing programa na matulungan ang mga maliliit na magsasaka na mapataas ang

produksyon.

Ayon pa kay Marcos sa pamamagitan ng naturang programa ay makakatulong din ito para mapanatili ang produktibong at kanilang productivity kahit na hinaharap ang El Niño.

Nakasaad sa programa na nasa 2.3 milyong

magsasaka ng palay na naka-rehistro sa Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) ang mabibigyan ng ayuda.

Ang bawat benepisyaryo ay makakatanggap ng tig-P5,000 na pinansyal na ayuda.

Ang pondo para sa programa ay mangga-

**NI GEMMA GARCIA**

galing umano sa nakolektang taripa mula sa mga imported na bigas noong 2022 na umabot sa P12.7 bilyon.

Kabilang sa mga makatatanggap ng ayuda ang mga farm cooperatives associations

(FCAs), irrigators associations (IAs), agrarian reform beneficiaries organizations (ARBOs), small water impounding systems associations (SWISAs), at iba pang farm groups.

Napag-alaman na ang RFFA ay isang unconditional financial assistance para sa mga maliliit na magsasaka na mayroong dalawang hektarya pababa.

Bukod dito inaprubahan din ng Pangulo ang paggamit sa P700 milyong excess tariff collections para sa "Palayamanan Plus" conditional cash transfer na nasa ilalim naman ng Household Crop Diversification Program.

Layunin naman nito na matulungan ang mga RSBSA-registered farmers na nakalista rin sa Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) ng Department of Social Welfare and Development

(DSWD).

Tinatayang nasa 78,000 benepisyaryo ang

makikinabang dito, habang makatatanggap din sila ng tig-P10,000.



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## PCG, BFAR hold aerial patrol over Bajo de Masinloc

By MARTIN SADONGDONG

A maritime domain awareness (MDA) flight was conducted by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) over Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough or Panatag Shoal) several days after the removal of a floating barrier that prevented Filipino fishermen from accessing the resource-rich shoal, an official disclosed on Friday, Sept. 29.

Commodore Jay Tarriela, PCG spokesperson for West Philippine Sea (WPS), said the MDA flight was held last Sept. 28 over Bajo de Masinloc which lasted for "more than an hour."

Through the MDA flight, the PCG confirmed that the floating barrier installed by China Coast Guard (CCG) and Chinese maritime militia (CMM) vessels at the southeast portion of Bajo de Masinloc has already been removed by the CCG.

"I would like to inform everyone that upon verification for this particular MDA flight, there is no more floating barrier at the entrance of Bajo de Masinloc," Tarriela told reporters at the PCG headquarters in Port Area, Manila.

Tarriela also clarified that the PCG was not the one who removed the floating barrier, but the CCG themselves when they learned that the PCG managed to cut its anchor.

"The PCG or the Philippine government doesn't claim that we are the ones



Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Spokesperson for the West Philippine Sea (WPS) Commodore Jay Tarriela (right) shows members of the media the anchor that held in-place a set of floating barriers that was allegedly installed by Chinese vessels in Bajo de Masinloc. The anchor was retrieved by PCG personnel who dismantled the floating barriers last week. (Photo from the Philippine Coast Guard)

who removed the barrier. What we did is we cut the anchor of the barrier. The reason why you have to cut the anchor of the barrier is because for each end of the floating barrier, there are two anchors, one at each end, so it would not be dragged by the current and the wind. What we did is we cut the anchor on one end so it will be widely open and dragged," he explained.

"When they (CCG) learned that the floating barrier is no longer serving its purpose, that's the time that they recovered the floating barrier," he added.

When the PCG cut the anchor, Tarriela said a total of 54 Filipino fishing vessels took the opportunity to fish near Bajo de Masinloc and they were able to catch a total of 168 tons of fish.

### Chinese presence

But Tarriela admitted that it remains a challenge for Filipino fishermen to enter the lagoon of Bajo de Masinloc as it is still heavily guarded by the CCG.

In fact, the PCG and BFAR monitored three CCG ships and a CMM vessel at Bajo de Masinloc during the Sept. 28 MDA flight while the CCG also issued six radio challenges against them.

Two of the CCG ships were inside the lagoon of Bajo de Masinloc while the other one was patrolling outside the vicinity of the shoal.

There were also two Filipino fishing boats engaged in fishing activity near Bajo de Masinloc at the time of the MDA flight.



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## First batch of PH avocado exports set sail for S. Korea

By AARON RECUENCO

The Philippine government has started the exportation of a large variety of fresh avocados through a ceremonial send-off at the KTC Port Tibungco, Davao City, on Sept. 30, the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Plant Industry (DA-BPI) said.

DA-BPI director Gerald Glenn Panganiban said the first batch of the fresh Hass avocado, a large-sized avocado weighing 200 to 300 grams, is expected to arrive in Pyongtaek Port, South Korea on Oct. 8 and was exported through the National Plant Quarantine Services Division (NPQSD).

The exportation process, seen as a significant market access achievement, started on June 19 ▶ 8

through an agreement between the Department of Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency (APQA) of the Republic of Korea and DA-BPI. It came into effect on Sept. 8.

On Sept. 25, the Philippines, through the DA-BPI, officially expressed its intent to export fresh Hass avocado fruits to Korea, responding to the request of Dole Philippines.

Panganiban played an instrumental role in expediting the market access request by incorporating this agenda during the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) which was attended by several member countries, including the top management of APQA.

This exportation marks the beginning of a fruitful trade relationship between the two na-

tions as the people of South Korea can finally taste the creamy and nutrient-rich Hass avocados from the Philippines.

President Marcos remains committed to the acceleration of agricultural development by opening the country's doors to Philippine fruit exports. Under his leadership, the Philippines is continuously making progress in creating opportunities in the global market and solidifying its capability to trade top-quality agricultural products.

Present during the send-off ceremony were DA-BPI Assistant Director for Regulatory Services Ruel C. Gesmundo, DA-Region XI Director Abel James Monteagudo, Dole Philippines senior vice president and Stanfilco Division general manager Tetsuya Kitae.





## The DA-ATI and Villar Foundation's farm business school facilitators' training

First of two parts

**L**AST month, I took a break from my column because of some research activities. I also joined a 10-day training course on becoming a farm business school (FBS) facilitator, organized by the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) at its regional training center in Trece Martires City, Cavite province. The training was in partnership with the Villar Foundation's Social Institute for Poverty Alleviation and Governance (Sipag) Farm School and Tourist Farm on the boundary of Las Piñas City and Cavite's Bacoor City. So why and how did I get involved in this training when most of my known work focused on population and development, health, social science, and gender-related matters?

You see, my family has been engaged in natural rainfed farming in an upland area of Rizal province for over a decade now. We faced many challenges in maintaining this farm, and it does not earn sufficient revenue for its upkeep. It also does not have a farm-to-market or village road, so we often use a private stony, rough, narrow and often muddy road to get to the farm and bring down some produce. The lush and relaxing mountain view, clean air and occasional sea of clouds offered by this area have somehow compensated for these difficulties.

In 2017, our place became one of the integrated upland conservation guided farms of the Manila Bay Cleanup Rehabilitation and Restoration Project, per Supreme Court Mandamus ruling GR 17-1947-48, dated February 2011, under the supervision of the DA's Bureau of Soil and Water Management (BSWM), DA Regional Field Office 4-A and the



### VIEW FROM THE SOUTH

**DR. LALAY RAMOS-JIMENEZ**

Municipal Agriculture Office of Rizal's Tanay town in partnership with the Cuyambay Natural Farmers' Association. We underwent training on upland farming and conservation, organic farming, and coffee, coconut and cacao production. We also received seedlings and other inputs, as well as some small equipment from the BSWM and the MAO.

We were encouraged to apply to the ATI as a learning site for agriculture (LSA), but we only managed to submit our application form a few months ago, and we blame the coronavirus for this (we got infected late last year). The challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic have raised our need for a healthy environment and food security. We believed that our farm's development was essential to address it. I was informed by Ric Jason Arreza, the ATI's point person for Region 4-A, that our application form did not specify any enterprise, ATI training and the local government's endorsement. He then referred me to Honeylet Famillaran, a member of the staff of Sen. Cynthia Villar — founder of the Villar Sipag Farm School and chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food — who coordinates with the ATI on selecting FBS training participants and other related tasks. She asked me to join the last FBS training for this year because it was a requisite for the LSA 1 approval. Honestly, I was hesitant to join because it had been a long time since I was a student or trainee, and I was unsure

how the organizers would respond to a senior citizen during the training. My initial reluctance to join this intensive, live-in activity diminished after receiving Honeylet's encouragement.

I am glad I joined this capacity-building activity because I believe every prospective farmer — especially if one has no agribusiness management education like myself — should undergo this training before venturing into agriculture. (Our country has 16 regional ATI offices and an international training center at its central office in Quezon City that conducts scheduled FBS training.)

The training's opening took place at the Villar Sipag Farm School, while the rest of the course was held at ATI's Region 4-A center in Trece Martires City. I was amazed that the 4-hectare school was on prime land on the Las Piñas-Bacoor boundary. Since 2015, the school has trained many farmers and workers about social and community enterprises, including the production of rice, crops, livestock and fisheries, as well as on financial literacy and profitability, selling and marketing, and farm tourism.

Senator Villar welcomed 22 participants to the training. It was the first time most of us saw the lovely, petite and enthusiastic lawmaker who has authored many laws that support agriculture and fisheries. Her brief speech in Filipino and English summarized what was expected of us: "This is a 10-day training that focuses on strengthening the skills and knowledge of farmers and managers on how they will operate their farms as business enterprises. The goal of this training is to uplift the living conditions of our farmers by equipping them with necessary skills and attitude to become agri-entrepreneurs."

Her speech not only laid out the training's aims but also implied that we should share our acquired knowledge and skills with other farmers to help improve their lives and reconsider becoming agri-entrepreneurs themselves.

Villar said the FBS was created by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization to teach farmers how to manage their produce and optimize their profitability. Bookkeeping, market survey, product selling, costing and packaging were included in the training. She emphasized the importance of knowing the challenges posed by climate change and other issues related to market supply and demand.

She also said the timing of our training was good because of the growing number of farm tourism establishments and farm schools in the country. She added that we had many opportunities under the Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016, which she promoted and authored. An important provision under it is the role of the Department of Tourism and the DA in accrediting the establishment of farm tourism sites and farm schools.

She also talked about the allocation, under the Rice Tariffication Law, of scholarships for farmers and their families worth about P1 billion yearly — an amount collected from the tariffs on rice imports under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund. Of the amount, P700 million is allotted to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda), and the extension program of the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization, Philippine Rice Research Institute, and ATI get P100 million each. She also mentioned the

➤ **Ramos-JimenezA6**

provision for farm school scholarships under the Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act, which she also authored. Eight percent of the P5 billion fund created by this law is allotted every year for the training of farmers and their families listed in the Coconut Farmers Registry. This fund is divided between Tesda and ATI.

The Villar Foundation has four farm schools: those in Las Piñas-Bacoor and the city of San Jose del Monte in Bulacan province serve Luzon; the one in Iloilo City, the Visayas; and the one in Davao City, Mindanao. It also wants to help fishermen

be more competitive and the farmers be more committed to agriculture because these would lead to more accredited farm schools, of which there are currently 2,805.

She encouraged us to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the ATI, Tesda and DoT under the laws she authored. She hoped that our farms would turn into businesses so that we could help many farmers. After her speech, we were given a copy of the 2021 Directory of Farm Schools, Tourist Farms, Learning Sites and Tesda Agri Centers in the Philippines, as well as the list of laws she authored.

Dr. Rolando Maningas, the DA-ATI 4-A center director, thanked the senator and welcomed us to the training course. Milo delos Reyes, DA-Region 4-A field office executive director; Baron Jose Lagran, Tesda 4-A regional director; and other key regional officials also welcomed us. After some picture-taking, we responded to a pretest questionnaire and filled out other forms. Then we traveled to Trece Martires for the two-week training.

To be concluded next Sunday,  
Oct. 8, 2023





## The devastating effects of food inflation in the Philippines

**I**N recent years, the Philippines has been grappling with a growing crisis that threatens the very essence of its people's well-being — food inflation. The skyrocketing prices of essential food items have dealt a severe blow to the country's economy and have left millions of Filipinos struggling to put food on their tables. This article aims to shed



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light on the devastating effects of food inflation in the Philippines, examining its impact on individuals, families and society

as a whole.

### The daily struggle

For many Filipinos, each trip to the market has become an exercise in adversity. The increasing cost of rice, meat, fish, vegetables and other basic food necessities has pushed these items out of reach for countless families, particularly those living in lower-income communities. The consequences are dire, as individuals are forced to make difficult choices between putting food on the table or meeting other crucial needs, such as health care, education and shelter.

### Health implications

The implications of food inflation extend far beyond the economic realm, as it directly affects the health and well-being of Filipinos. With limited resources, families find themselves compromising on the nutritional value of their meals, resorting to cheaper, less nutritious options. This lack of access to proper nutrition has resulted in a rise in malnutrition rates, especially among children. The long-term impact of this crisis on the physical and mental health of future generations is a cause for grave concern.

### Education hindrances

Education is another casualty of the food inflation crisis. As families struggle to make ends meet, children often bear the brunt of the burden. Many are forced to forgo education in order to work and contribute to their family's income. The vicious cycle of poverty perpetuates as the lack of education limits their opportunities for a brighter future. The nation's potential for progress is stifled, hindering the development of the Philippines as a whole.

### Unmasking the causes

Understanding the root causes behind this dire situation is crucial in formulating effective solutions. Multiple factors contribute to the rising food prices in the Philippines. Climate change-induced extreme weather events have wreaked havoc on agricultural production, leading to reduced yields and increased vulnerability to pests and diseases. In addition, government policies, market monopolies and supply chain inefficiencies further exacerbate the problem. The Philippines' heavy reliance on food imports also leaves it vulnerable to global price fluctuations and supply disruptions.

### Perspectives and solutions

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue, it is essential to consider the perspectives of experts and stakeholders involved in addressing food security challenges. Food security organizations, economists and policymakers are actively working toward finding sustainable solutions. Their efforts range from promoting climate-resilient agriculture practices and supporting small-scale farmers to enhancing market transparency and implementing targeted social welfare programs.

### Government responsibility

The role of the government in mitigating the impact of food inflation cannot be undermined. It is imperative for policymakers to enact measures that prioritize food security and address the systemic issues contributing to rising prices. This includes investing in infrastructure to improve supply chains, implementing effective price control mechanisms and fostering inclusive agricultural policies that empower local farmers.

### Empowering local communities

Community-led initiatives also play a vital role in combating food inflation. Sustainable urban farming projects, cooperatives and community kitchens have emerged as sources of resilience, ensuring access to affordable and nutritious food for vulnerable populations. By empowering local communities and promoting self-sufficiency, these initiatives offer a glimmer of hope amid the crisis.

Food inflation in the Philippines is not just an economic concern but a humanitarian crisis with far-reaching consequences. It is imperative for all stakeholders to come together and address this issue head-on. The devastating effects of rising food prices on health, education and overall quality of life demand urgent action. By implementing comprehensive strategies and enacting supportive policies, the Philippines can pave the way toward a more sustainable and secure food future for its people.

*Janice Sabitsana is a registered financial planner of RFP Philippines. To learn more about personal-financial planning, attend the 104th RFP program this October 2023. To inquire, email [info@rfp.ph](mailto:info@rfp.ph) or text at 0917-624-8110.*





# HOUSE TIGHTENS SCREWS ON AGRI SMUGGLERS

**By Jester  
Manalastas**

THE House of Representatives has approved on third and final reading a measure that seeks to strengthen the existing Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act, or Republic Act (RA) No. 10845 by dangling the penalty of life imprisonment to agri-smugglers.

House Bill (HB) No. 9284, also known as the Anti Agri-Fishery Commodities and Tobacco Economic Sabotage

Act, got 89 "yes" votes.

The smuggling of rice and other agricultural products is classified as "economic sabotage" under the measure—a crime punishable by life imprisonment.

"Malapit nang matapos ang mga maliligayang araw ng mga smugglers, hoarders, atang mga nagca-cartel. Your days are numbered. Once this bill is enacted, we will use its provisions to the fullest in order to prosecute these evil-doers who made our kababayans suffer," Speaker Ferdi-

nand Martin G. Romualdez said.

Speaking to its importance, the advancement HB No. 9284 took place alongside the plenary debates on the P5.768-trillion General Appropriations Bill (GAB) or proposed national budget for 2024.

The measure's full title reads, "An Act declaring large-scale agri-fisheries commodities and tobacco smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, cartelizing, and other Acts of market abuse as economic sabotage, Amend-

ing for the purpose Republic Act No. 10845, otherwise known as the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016."

Romualdez earlier said that the hopes the measure would have a chilling effect on the individuals in the agriculture sector that take advantage of hapless consumers.

The House Committee on Agriculture and Food headed by Quezon Rep. Wilfredo Mark Enverga, endorsed for plenary approval the proposed agricultural economic sabotage law.