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## Marcos lifts rice price cap

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

**PRESIDENT Marcos Jr.** yesterday lifted the price cap on regular and well milled rice.

"Well, I think it's the appropriate time since namimigay tayo ng mga bigas (Well, I think it's the appropriate time since we are giving away rice). Yes, as of today, we are lifting the price caps on rice, both for the regular milled rice and for the well-milled rice," the President said at the sidelines of the distribution of smuggled imported rice to indigent families in Taguig City.

Marcos last month issued Executive Order 39 imposing a

temporary price cap of P41 per kilogram for regular-milled rice, and P45 per kilogram for well-milled rice starting September 5 to stop the rising prices of the staple grain in the market.

The President's announcement came a day after the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) recommended the lifting of the price ceiling amid the increase in supply due to high yield rice harvest and the dropping prices in the world market.

Marcos said the government will continue to monitor the rice situation, especially the prices, as well

as pursue measures to improve the agricultural sector.

"Tinatangal na natin iyung mga control pero hindi ibig sabihin basta't ganun na lang dahil kailangan pa rin natin ayusin ang agricultural sector, kailangan pa rin natin tulungan ang mga pinakamahirap, pinakagutom para kahit papaano makaahon sila (While we are removing the controls, it does not mean that we will leave it at that. We still need to fix the agricultural sector, we still need to help the poorest, and the hungriest to get them out of poverty)," he said.

The President said among the measures being undertaken by the

government are the implementation of the Rice Competitive-ness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Mechanization Program to help farmers in terms of the provision of tractors, dryers, and cold storage warehouses, among others.

The RCEF is funded through revenues from rice tariffication.

Marcos said the government has already generated P12 billion from rice tariffication. The P2 billion excess fund has been divided to various programs and assistance for farmers and fishermen.

He reassured the public that

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**Free rice.** President Marcos Jr., assisted by Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian, distributes sacks of confiscated smuggled rice to beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in Taguig City on Wednesday.

PHOTO BY RHOY COBILLA



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## MARCOS

there is enough supply of rice in the country, with a buffer stock of around 40 days. The DA said the buffer stock is at 52 days as of end September due to the recent harvest. It added rice farmers are expected to harvest 1.9 million metric tons of rice this month.

### NCR AID

The President said he has asked the House of Representatives to provide free rice to poor families in the National Capital Region (NCR) as he observed that the cost of rice in Metro Manila remains high compared to other parts of the country, with some already selling the staple grain at prices lower than the price ceiling.

He said he has already talked about the rice aid program with Speaker Martin Romualdez who is now coordinating with the 33 lawmakers from NCR.

"Ang gagawin is the 33 NCR congressmen will be giving the assistance na, magbibigay tayo ng bigas doon sa iba't ibang area dito sa Metro Manila, dito sa NCR (The 33 NCR congressmen will give the assistance, we will give rice in different areas in Metro Manila, here in NCR)," he said.

The President said the rice assistance in Metro Manila will be a "pilot" implementation of a rice aid program that is being formulated by the government, details of which have yet to be finalized.

Marcos led the distribution of 25 kilos of rice each to 1,000 Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries in Taguig City.

The rice is part of the 42,180 smuggled rice confiscated by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) in Zamboanga and which has been donated to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) after the importers failed to prove that the grains were acquired legally, and corresponding taxes were paid correctly.

The President had previously distributed smuggled rice in Tungawan, Zamboanga; Barangay San Roque, Zamboanga City; Barangay Santiago, General Trias; Iriga City, Camarines; San Andres, Manila; Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte; and Dinagat Islands.

The President reiterated that due process was observed in seizing the smuggled rice and the distribution of the grains proves that administration is committed in ending the smuggling, hoarding and other illegal activities that affect the supply and prices of commodities in the market.

He also again warned rice smugglers, hoarders and price manipulators, who he said have been destroying the flow of supply and demand in the market.

"Hindi tayo papayag na patuloy na mamayagpag ang mga mapagsamantalang pumipinsala sa ating kabuhayan at sa buong sektor ng agrikultura (We will not allow unscrupulous individuals who threaten our livelihoods and the agricultural sector to thrive)," he said.

Marcos said the government has filed charges against the San Pedro Warehouse and Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corporation, the F.S. Ostia Rice Mill, and the Gold Rush Rice Mill for violating the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, the Rice Tariffication Law, and the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016 (Republic Act No. 10845).

"Bagong Pilipinas na po tayo ngayon, at atin pong susugpuin ang mga hindi po lumalaban nang patas. Wala pong puwang sa lipunan ang mga nanlalamang at nang-aapi sa kapwa (We are now a new Philippines, and we will stop those who do not fight fairly. There is no place in society for those who take advantage and oppress others)," he said.

### URBAN FARMING

The President, meanwhile, urged other local government units (LGUs) to follow the urban farming initiative of Taguig City.

Marcos said urban farming is proof that Filipinos can cultivate farm produce even in the city.

He said examples of the initiatives in Taguig are found at the Bonifacio Global City (BGC) Community Farm and at the North Signal which was started by a student.

"Patuloy tayong magtulungan para sa kinabukasan na walang gutom at puno ng kaginawaan at pag-asa (Let us continue to work together for a future without hunger and full of comfort and hopes)," he said.





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## MARCOS NAMES 4 RICE SMUGGLERS

**PRESIDENT** Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday bared the identities of four rice importers charged with agricultural smuggling, saying the government's anti-smuggling campaign would spare no one.

In his speech during a rice distribution event in Taguig City, Marcos said San Pedro Warehouse, Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corp., FS. Ostia Rice Mill and Gold Rice Mill were charged with violating the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, the Rice Tariffication Law, and the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

"We cannot allow these opportunists to ruin our livelihoods and the agriculture sector to reign. I am warning those who sabotage our economy — you smugglers, hoarders

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## MARCOS

and syndicates — stop your nefarious activities," the President said.

Marcos, who is also the Agriculture secretary, said those who violate the law have no place in the "Bagong Pilipinas" (New Philippines).

"We are now in the Bagong Pilipinas; we will quash those who are not playing fairly. There is no place in society for those who take advantage of and oppress others," he added.

Marcos announced during the occasion the lifting of the price cap on rice.

"I think it's the appropriate time since we have been distributing rice. Yes, as of today, we are lifting the price caps on the rice both for the regular-milled rice and for the well-milled rice. So we removed all the control. But it doesn't mean we will leave it at that because we still need to fix the agricultural sector," he added, noting the government will continue providing rice subsidies to vulnerable communities.

The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry recommended lifting mandatory rice price ceilings in a sectoral meeting in Malacañang on Tuesday.

Marcos signed Executive Order (EO)



**FREE RICE** President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. helps distribute bags of rice at the Taguig City University on Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2023. PHOTO BY RENE H. DILAN

39 on September 5, setting a price ceiling of P41 per kilogram for regular milled rice and P45 per kilogram for well-milled rice around the country.

Affected rice retailers were given P15,000 to compensate for their loss, while seized smuggled rice has been distributed to vulnerable communities in the country to help them cope with the rising prices of rice.

Marcos said the government needs to find a permanent solution to the

volatile price of rice in the country.

"When we were looking at the statistics yesterday, the real problem is here in the National Capital Region, where the price of rice is high. But that's natural because we're in the city. It takes a long time for the rice to arrive here, and the transportation, storage, and processing fees become expensive. The price is rising here in the NCR because of that," Marcos said.

The President added he had already instructed Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez to launch a rice subsidy program.

The government will continue to watch "very closely" those who remain to be affected by the spike in the prices of rice, including local farmers. So, that is another measure that we are undertaking," Marcos added.

**CATHERINE S. VALENTE  
AND JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL**





## The 'unstoppable' hybrid rice movement

I MENTIONED in one of my past columns here at *The Manila Times* that one measure to ensure the local supply of rice is to plant in at least 1 million hectares of farmland the hybrid varieties. And over the medium to long term, the ultimate objective is to cover at most 2 million hectares of farms in the country with hybrid rice.

Hybrid rice is nothing new to the Philippines as the promotion of hybrid rice for wider planting in the country's around 4.8 million hectares of land devoted to the staple has been ongoing since the past administration. And **President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.**, also our Agriculture secretary, also favors hybrid rice for the country to attain a higher level of rice self-sufficiency.

I also see the current ecosystem for propagating hybrid rice in the Philippines as well-established. This is evidenced by a delegation made up of 50 representatives from the member countries of the Asia-Pacific Seeds Association (APSA) that left the Philippines on Sept. 23, 2023, very impressed with the country's milestones in hybrid rice seed production and close collaboration among the sector's stakeholders.

APSA is headquartered in Bangkok and is the largest regional seed association in the world with more than 600 members. Frisco Malabanan, a current APSA executive committee member, initiated the first field study tour in the Philippines to showcase our country's achievements in hybrid rice production and propagation.

Malabanan is also involved in the **Department of Agriculture's (DA)** Masagana Rice Industry Development Program, which is President Marcos' flagship program to make the Philippines attain a higher level of rice self-sufficiency through various policy and technology interventions, among many others.



### MOVING FORWARD

**WILLIAM D. DAR**

#### Viability of hybrid rice

Farmers who use hybrid rice report harvesting around 7 to 10 metric tons (MT) of palay (unmilled rice) per hectare compared to the average of 3.6 MT/hectare for inbred seeds. The national average for palay yield is 4 MT/hectare. I even hear of accounts and anecdotes of farmers getting as much as 12 MT/ha using hybrid rice seeds. So obviously, hybrid rice has a big edge in yield over inbred varieties.

Besides the DA, the private sector is actively involved in promoting hybrid rice technology, also investing heavily in research and development (R&D). Among the companies pushing hybrid rice in the Philippines are SL Agritech, Bayer Crop Science, Seed Works, Tao Seeds, Longping, BioSeeds, among many others.

Meanwhile, companies like SL Agritech have entered into partnerships with organized farmers for the production of hybrid rice for public consumption. SL Agritech also has partnerships in countries like India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vietnam for hybrid rice R&D and production.

The APSA delegates also visited last September 19 the seed facilities at the site of SL Agritech in Lupon, Davao Oriental, and toured the farms of SL Agritech, Tao Seeds, Longping and BioSeeds to see firsthand the actual hybrid rice parental lines of the seed companies in their flowering stages.

They also visited on the same day the farms of commercial seed companies Bayer Crop Science and SL Agritech in Barangay Ruparan, Digos City, and in Hagonoy, Davao del

Sur, and the hybrid corn farms in Kapaling, Davao del Norte, and Tagum of Bayer Science and Syngenta Phils.

The APSA study tour coincided with the 16th National Rice Technology Forum (NRTF) organized by the Rice Board in Hagonoy, Davao del Sur, that also showcased the demo farms of hybrid rice companies. The expertise of digital companies in agriculture was also witnessed by the APSA delegates.

Malabanan said the delegates were impressed on how the seed production companies were gathered into one site NRTF tour in Davao Sur, as this demonstrated the collaboration between government and private companies. APSA said that 15 delegates who joined the study tour represented companies in China, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines.

#### An excellent example of collective action

I can say that what the APSA delegates witnessed in their study tour to the Philippines is an excellent example of concerted collective action among stakeholders and a model private-public partnership that can be emulated in other industries.

But I also see a need for the public sector to get more involved in the efforts to promote and propagate hybrid rice in the Philippines, and the DA is heading in the right direction with President Marcos also favoring hybrid rice as a solution to increase the local production of the staple.

State universities and colleges (SUCs) and local government units (LGUs) can also play a bigger role in promoting and propagating hybrid rice with SUCs taking part in the R&D efforts and LGUs setting up demo farms or assisting farmers in their localities to adapt to hybrid rice.

And equally important are the private sector and the DA spearheading efforts to cluster and organize rice farmers to facilitate the transfer of hybrid rice and give them marketing assistance for their production.

I believe those can be undertaken the soonest as the current hybrid rice players and stakeholders in the country have demonstrated that they have a well-established ecosystem.

By the way it looks now, I can even say that the hybrid rice movement in the Philippines is already "unstoppable."



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## Rice price ceilings lifted after 1 month

President Marcos on Wednesday lifted the price ceiling on rice, citing the increasing supply, declining retail prices and easing import costs of the staple grain. He also promised to continue providing assistance to farmers and the most underprivileged families and pursue the government's crackdown on smugglers, hoarders and profiteers to put an end to all illegal activities in the rice market. —STORY BY JEROME ANING

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AS FRESH HARVESTS ENTER MARKET AND IMPORT COSTS GO DOWN

# MARCOS LIFTS RICE PRICE CAP, SAYS SUPPLY BOOSTERS IN PLACE

By Jerome Aning  
@JeromeAningINQ

President Marcos on Wednesday lifted the government-imposed price ceiling on rice, saying the move was timely as various measures were already being carried out to ensure ample supply and boost production of the staple grain.

"Yes, we are, as of today, lifting the price cap on rice, both for the regular-milled rice and for the well-milled rice," the President said in a media interview in Lower Bicutan, Taguig City, where he led the distribution of free rice to poor families.

At least 1,000 Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) each received 25 kilos of rice—part of the 42,000 sacks confiscated by the Bureau of Customs in a recent operation in Zamboanga City—during the distribution program.

Executive Order No. 39, which took effect on Sept. 6, set price caps on regular and well-milled rice at P41 and P45 a kilo, respectively, following the "alarming" increase in the retail prices of the grain.

"So we are removing the control but it doesn't mean that we'll be leaving it at that because we still need to fix the agricultural sector. We still need to help the poorest, those suffering

most from hunger, so that they can pull through somehow," said the President, who is concurrent secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Mr. Marcos noted that the declining prices in the domestic market, increasing supply of rice, and favorable external factors such as easing import costs were among the indicators that warranted the lifting of the price cap.

Based on the DA's monitoring, local regular-milled rice was being sold from P40 to P44 a kilo as of Wednesday, while local well-milled rice was priced at P44 to P48. Imported well-milled rice was selling from P45 to P48.

Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual said that they have also seen a notable reduction in the price of rice, noting that some retailers were selling the staple grain at P38 a kilo in Regions 2 and 3.

## Aid to the poor

Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor said the lifting of the price cap would encourage farmers to produce more palay since farm-gate prices would stabilize.

"As fresh harvests enter the market, we also expect retail prices of rice to go down without the need for price caps," Montemayor said.

The President promised to continue providing the assistance



ANY DIFFERENCE? Prices of many rice varieties remain high as seen in this stall in Quezon City on Oct. 4, the day the President lifted the price cap on the staple food. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

that the government has been extending to farmers and the most underprivileged families.

While the government could not control the market, he said his administration would continue carrying out such programs to cushion the impact of rising food prices on the poor and the most vulnerable.

Pascual also said that rice retailers who have yet to receive cash aid from the government due to losses from the implementation of the price cap would still receive financial assistance despite the lifting of the price control measure.

"We will finish (the payout) so it will be fair and so that we

can have a level playing field," Pascual said.

Citing data from the DSWD, the Department of Trade and Industry said that P217.2 million in cash assistance has been released as of Sept. 29 to 14,480 micro and small rice retailers, or 75.5 percent of the government target of 19,685 stores.

On the production side, Mr. Marcos said the government would continue to support the agriculture sector and strengthen the country's value chain.

He said the allotments to farmers from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Funds (RCEF) worth P10 billion have already been appropriated for

farm machineries and processing facilities.

The excess collection, which was estimated at more than P12 billion this year, would be allocated to the farm and fisheries sectors by buying general dryers for farmers and cold storage for fishermen.

The President said the government would also be focusing efforts in Metro Manila "because that is where the prices are most volatile and are highest," and that he would soon pilot a rice assistance for the poor project in coordination with the capital region's 33 congressmen.

## Crackdown to continue

On the government's drive against smugglers, hoarders and profiteers, the President said his administration would not just sit idly by and vowed to put an end to all illegal activities in the rice market.

In his speech, the President said the government has already filed smuggling charges against rice importers, which he identified as San Pedro Warehouse and Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corp., FS Ostia Rice Mill, and Gold Rice Mill.

He said the companies and their owners were charged with violations of Republic Act No. 10863 or the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, RA 11203 (rice tariffication law), RA 10845 (Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act), and RA 7581 (Price Act).

"We are in a new Philippines now, and we will suppress those who are not playing fair. There is no room in our society for those who take advantage of and oppress their fellow men," he said.

Mr. Marcos reiterated that the country has no problem regarding rice supply, pointing out that the current buffer stock was for more than 30 days and "is now rising and rising."

Once the current harvest season ends, he said the reserve could reach as high as 70 days.

"That's why we really do not have a shortage of rice. We have plenty of supply. But because of these smugglers, hoarders, and price manipulators, the supply is constricted and so the prices increase," he said.

The President pointed to the rice problem as the reason for his lower performance rating in the September survey of polling firm Pulse Asia Research Inc.

"It's not surprising. People are having a hard time. I completely understand it," he said.

"And that's why we're working very, very hard to make sure that this [will not happen] again. Not because of the survey—that's not important to me. What's important to me is that we make sure that people have enough to eat and that it is affordable to them," he said. —WITH REPORTS FROM ALDEN M. MONZON AND JORDEENE B. LAGARE INQ





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## BBM lifts rice price cap, vows aid for farmers

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Marcos has lifted the price ceilings on rice as he vowed to sustain efforts to help improve the life of farmers and run after smugglers of agricultural goods.

"As of today (Oct. 4), we are lifting the price caps on rice, both for the regular milled and the well-milled rice," Marcos said after distributing rice to beneficiaries of the government's cash transfer program in Taguig yesterday.

"We removed the controls, but it does not mean it will end there because we need to fix the agricultural sector. We still need to help the poorest, the hungry, so they recover somehow," he said.

To address the rising rice prices, the Marcos administration set price caps on the food staple through Executive Order No. 39, which took effect last Sept. 5.

Under the order, the price ceilings of regular milled and well-milled rice were P41 and P45 per kilo, respectively.

The government provided financial aid to small rice retailers affected by the price cap.

Nearly a month after the implementation of the price ceiling, the Department of Agriculture (DA) announced that the government is ready to lift the policy, citing the drop in prices of the staple in international and domestic markets as well as the expected increase in supply due to this year's harvest.

The agency is expecting some 1.9 million metric tons of rice this month, which will be sufficient for 74 days.

Last month, the supply of rice was only good for 52 days.

Marcos, who is also DA chief, said that while market movements are uncontrollable, the government could provide assistance to sectors hit by an increase in the prices of commodities.

He said the Rice Tariffication Law allocates P10 billion every year for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).



A worker arranges sacks of rice in a store in Quezon City yesterday. MICHAEL VARGAS

The RCEF was established to protect the livelihood of farmers affected by the influx of imported rice.

Marcos said the collection from rice tariff will be used to acquire farm machinery to boost production.

He said the collection, which has reached over P12 billion this year, would also be used to distribute equipment to farmers and fishermen.

"The RCEF, from the expenditure of only P10 billion, will now be P22 billion in that regard so we can fast-track the distribution of assistance to our farmers," Marcos said.

Despite the lifting of the price ceiling on rice, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said the distribution of financial aid for qualified rice retailers affected by the measure will continue.

At a press conference yesterday, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual noted that the government will complete the one-time assistance program despite the lifting of price cap.

### Metro Manila problem

Marcos admitted that rice prices in Metro Manila remain high.

"That's natural because we are in a city. It takes time before rice is trans-

ported here. The cost of transportation is high. There are storage (and processing) fees, that's why prices here in the NCR are increasing," he said, referring to the National Capital Region.

Marcos said he told Speaker Martin Romualdez that something must be done to address the situation in the metropolis.

"We are lifting the price cap but beside that, we are taking other measures to help farmers in terms of their equipment, their processing, et cetera. We are also concentrating on the NCR because that is where the prices are most volatile and highest," the President said, adding there is no problem in supply.

### Smuggling raps

Marcos bared that the government has filed charges against four rice smugglers as he warned that the government would not tolerate activities that sabotage the economy.

He said smuggling charges have been filed against the owners and operators of the San Pedro Warehouse, Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corp., FS Ostia Rice Mill and Gold Rice Mill.



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The respondents were charged with violations of the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, Rice Tariffication Law and the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

"We are now in a new Philippines. We will fight those who are not playing fair. There is no room in society for those who take advantage of and oppress their fellowmen," Marcos said in Filipino.

He said the government is serious in curbing smuggling, hoarding and other illegal activities that affect the supply and prices of goods in the market.

The lifting of the price cap on rice will encourage farmers to continue boosting local production and hopefully, bring down retail prices amid the harvest season, according to farmers' groups.

Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor said President Marcos' decision to lift the price ceilings on rice would provide another boost to farmers.

"It will stabilize palay prices during the ongoing harvest season and provide incentives for farmers to expand their production and reduce our reliance on imports. As fresh harvests enter the market, we also expect retail prices of rice to go down without the need for price caps," Montemayor said.

"The government will have to pursue its campaign against smugglers and price manipulators whose illegal activities depress farmgate prices even as they keep retail prices high for consumers," he said.

Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy Estavillo said the lifting of price cap coupled with local harvest could hopefully cut retail prices for consumers.

To help further cut down retail prices, Bantay Bigas reiterated its call to repeal Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law to allow the National Food Authority (NFA) to trade rice again.

"The mandate of the NFA in rice trading should be immediately re-

stored so that it can sell subsidized rice that it used to do at P27 to P32 per kilo," Estavillo said.

The group said the NFA should also increase its rice buying from farmers by buying fresh palay and "at least 20 percent of local production at a price of at least P20 per kilo in rice to ensure that the role is no longer just buffer stocking but to sell affordable rice in the markets."

Estavillo said the price cap was implemented without conducting a study.

"The government implemented the price cap just to say that it was doing something because during that time, there was discontent among Filipinos in the government, especially with the promise of P20 per kilo (of rice)," Estavillo said.

She said that traders, millers and importers were behind the price manipulation to justify the increase in the price of the staple.

The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) thanked Marcos for lifting the price ceiling on rice.

SINAG executive director Jayson Cainglet said there was no rice shortage and that price increase was due to hoarding, profiteering and smuggling.

Meanwhile, wholesale prices of rice have started to slide down as the palay harvest season starts to peak.

Rice traders at the Intercity Industrial Estate and Golden City Business Park in Bocaue, Bulacan, confirmed to **The STAR** that the prices of clean and dry palay average at P25 to P26 per kilo depending on quality and variety.

Processing palay into rice results in additional production cost at 60 percent milling recovery, and this translates to P38 to P40.63 per kilo, the traders said.

However, the production cost may go higher or lower depending on the milling recovery rate.

— With Danessa Rivera, Bella Carias, Catherine Talavera, Ramon Efren Lazaro





RICE DISTRIBUTION — President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' R. Marcos Jr. leads the distribution of sacks of rice to 1,000 beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) from Taguig City on Wednesday, October 4, 2023, at the Taguig City University Gymnasium. On hand to assist him is Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian (second from left) and Taguig City Mayor Lani Cayetano (fourth from left). (Noel B. Pabalate)

## PBBM lifts rice price ceiling, names alleged smugglers

By BETHEENA KAE UNITE and ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

President Marcos has lifted the temporary price ceiling on rice starting Wednesday, Oct. 4.

"Well, I think it's the appropriate time since namimigay tayo ng bigas (since we are giving out rice). Yes, as of today, we are lifting the price caps on rice, both for the regular milled rice and for the well milled rice," Marcos said in a media interview after distributing rice donations in Taguig City.

The government, he said, will, however, continue to provide assistance to Filipinos in need, especially the farmers and vulnerable communities.

"We will continue the assistance that we have been giving to farmers, also the assistance that we have been given to those most underprivileged ► 8





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families, yung sa pinamababang demographic economic class dahil talaga silang naghihirap (to the lowest demographic economic class because they are the ones suffering the most)," Marcos said.

The lifting of the temporary rice price cap implemented starting early September came a day after the Department of Agriculture (DA) recommended its lifting, considering the "positive indicators" they have observed during its implementation.

Agriculture Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban cited the decreasing prices observed in the market and the projected increase of rice supply amid local harvest coming from the last quarter of the year as indicators that could lead to the withdrawal of the price cap.

Marcos also cited these indicators when he announced the lifting of the price ceiling policy.

He also said that they are going to "watch very closely" those who will be affected by the withdrawal of the price cap policy.

Through Executive Order No. 39, the President set a price ceiling of P41 per kilogram for regular milled rice and P45 per kilogram for well-milled rice around the country to address the rising cost of the staple commodity in the market.

Affected rice retailers were given P15,000 to compensate for their loss while seized smuggled rice have been distributed to vulnerable communities in the country to help them cope with the rising prices of rice.

## Rice smugglers

President Marcos said the government has already filed cases against alleged rice smugglers as he renewed his vow to go after those who are supposedly manipulating the price of rice in the country.

The President said the government has caught three companies that violated the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, the Rice Tariffication Law, and the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

"Kaya po ay ngayon ay kinasuhan na natin ang (We have filed cases against) San Pedro Warehouse and Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corporation, ang F.S. Ostia Rice Mill, [at] ang Gold Rush Rice Mill ay kasalukuyang haharap sa patong-patong na mga kaso dahil sa kanilang mga ginagawa (they are facing charges for what they did)," he said.

Marcos said those who violate the law have no place in the "Bagong Pilipinas."

"Bagong Pilipinas na po tayo ngayon, at atin pong susugpuin ang mga hindi po lumalaban nang patas (We are now in the Bagong Pilipinas, we will quash those who are not fighting fairly)," he said.

"Wala pong puwang sa lipunan ang mga nanlalamang at nang-aapi sa kapwa (There is no place in society for those who take advantage of and

oppress others)," he added.

Marcos warned those involved in illegal acts that the government will go after them.

"Hindi tayo papayag na patuloy na mamayagpag ang mga mapagsamantalang pumipinsala sa ating kabuhayan at sa buong sektor ng agrikultura (We cannot allow those opportunists who ruin our livelihoods and the agriculture sector to reign)," he said.

"Binabalaan ko ang mga sumasabotahe sa ating ekonomiya: Kayong mga smuggler, kayong mga hoarder, at sindikato, tigilan na ninyo ang mga masama ninyong gawain (I am warning those who sabotage our economy: You — smugglers, hoarders, and syndicates — stop with your nefarious activities)," he added.

## Rice distribution program

Metro Manila lawmakers are now mulling a program that would provide rice assistance to cities in the National Capital Region (NCR), President Marcos bared.

Marcos said he ordered House Speaker Martin Romualdez to create a program that will benefit vulnerable communities in Metro Manila and those affected by the high prices of rice.

This, he said, is also among the steps the government is taking after the lifting of the temporary price ceiling on rice starting Wednesday, Oct. 4.

"I'm happy to announce na (that) I gave instructions to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Speaker Martin Romualdez. Sabi ko sa kanya (I told him), we have to do something for NCR," Marcos said in a media interview after leading the distribution of rice donation in Taguig City on Oct. 4.

"So, that is another measure that we are undertaking para naman hindi basta't pinabayaan na, basta't maayos na yung price cap, alisin na lang natin, tapos na. Hindi pa tapos 'to (so we don't neglect it. Just because we have removed the price cap, does not mean it is over. No, it is not yet over)," he added.

The President explained that the program will be intended for Metro Manila cities as higher prices of rice are observed in NCR, which is only natural, he said, as rice supply takes time to reach the capital region.

"We are also concentrating on the NCR because that is where the prices are most volatile and are highest," Marcos said.

He further said they will implement the program in 33 NCR districts for its pilot implementation.

"We'll pilot that project for the 33 NCR districts, NCR congressmen na makapagbigay uli tayo ng bigas (to give out rice anew)," he said.

The Chief Executive also said that other measures they are taking is to help the farmers by providing them equipment and help improve their production processes.

He is confident that rice supply in the country will continue to increase as harvest season is on.

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# Marcos removes cap on rice prices

By **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**  
and **Adrian H. Halili** Reporters

**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.** on Wednesday said he has lifted the cap on rice prices, a month after it was imposed to temper inflation.

Analysts said the decision — two days after a national survey showed a double-digit decline in Mr. Marcos' approval ratings — was more of a political move than an economic one.

"As of today, we are lifting the price caps on the rice, for the regular milled rice and for the well-milled

rice. So, we are removing the controls," Mr. Marcos told reporters on the sidelines of a rice distribution event in Taguig City on Wednesday.

The government imposed the price ceiling on Sept. 5, in a bid to rein in the spike in rice prices which the President had attributed to hoarding and collusion

among cartels. Prices were capped at P41 a kilo for regular milled rice and P45 for well-milled rice.

However, Mr. Marcos admitted the government still needs to address the staple grain's high prices in Metro Manila.

"When we were looking at the statistics yesterday, the real prob-

lem is here in the National Capital Region, where the price of rice is high," he said. "But that's natural because we're in the city. It takes a long time for the rice to arrive here, and the transportation, storage, and processing fees become expensive."

Mr. Marcos said he had instructed House Speaker Ferdi-

nand Martin G. Romualdez to create a program for the capital region, where rice prices are "most volatile." Thirty-three congressmen from Metro Manila would be tasked to distribute rice to poor people, he added.

*Rice, S1/5*



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Arjan P. Aguirre, who teaches politics at the Ateneo de Manila University, said the move only confirms that the administration's agriculture decisions, especially on rice issues, have been driven by politics.

"This hasty and sudden decision to lift the price cap can be explained by two things: they finally realized that the price cap is not really a sound policy and that they need to arrest the drop in the President's approval ratings," he said in a Facebook Messenger chat.

Mr. Marcos' approval ratings fell by double digits across all areas and socioeconomic classes, according to a Pulse Asia Research, Inc. survey conducted from Sept. 10 to 14, with economists attributing this decline to the high prices of basic commodities like rice.

Mr. Aguirre noted that Mr. Marcos' decision to appoint himself Agriculture secretary was meant "to target the largest political base in our society — classes D and E."

"They are the ones who are vulnerable to any changes in commodity prices and that most of them are invested in any industry attached to agriculture," he said.

Mr. Marcos, speaking at the chance briefing, said the decline in his approval ratings was "not surprising" since people are "having a hard time."

## 'WRONG POLICY'

"Of course, the lifting of the price cap is welcome," Action for Economic Reforms coordinator Filomeno S. Sta. Ana III said. "In effect, the government concedes that it was a wrong policy."

Mr. Sta. Ana said the announcement was not "transparent" enough since there are still questions on the real reasons behind the price cap order.

Mr. Marcos has been saying that the country has enough rice supply, blaming economic saboteurs — hoarders and smugglers alike — for the commodity's spiraling prices.

Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said the lifting of the price ceiling will stabilize palay prices amid the ongoing harvest season.

"And it will provide incentives for farmers to expand their production and reduce our reliance on imports... We also expect retail prices of rice to go down without the need for price caps," Mr. Montemayor said via Viber.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura Executive Director Jay-

son H. Cainglet estimated that with palay farmgate prices now at P23 to P25 per kilo the "retail prices of well-milled rice can be sold between P43 and P44 per kilo, way below the price cap."

The National Food Authority Council last month set a new purchase rate for dry and wet palay at P19-P23 and P16-P19 per kilogram, respectively. The previous buying price was P16 per kilo for wet and P19 per kilo for dry palay.

Leonardo A. Lanzona, an economics professor from Ateneo de Manila University, said that there was "no point" for the price cap as the harvest would have been enough to pull down prices and discourage hoarding.

"Rice is perishable so it is unlikely that these traders can keep their contraband for long," Mr. Lanzona said in a Messenger chat.

Philippine Institute for Development Studies Senior Research Fellow Roehl M. Briones said that supply of regular milled and well-milled rice had disappeared as retailers were just waiting for the lifting of the price ceiling.

"The lasting effect of the price ceiling spells a business climate where the policy environment is less predictable," he said in a phone call.

Former Finance Undersecretary Cielo D. Magno said to keep rice prices low, the government needs to ensure that the NFA has sufficient buffer stock and improve the productivity of the rice sector by providing them with adequate and efficient drying facilities and introducing them to more resilient and climate smart rice varieties.

"We have to be mindful of the effect of climate change on the rice sector," she added.

Meanwhile, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it will still give financial aid to small rice retailers who were affected by the price ceiling.

"It was just a one-time financial aid. We are going to continue giving the financial aid so that it would be fair for all," Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual told reporters in Filipino at a press briefing on Wednesday.

As of Sept. 29, only 14,480 out of the targeted 19,685 micro and small rice retailers nationwide have received financial aid.

Phillip D. Sawali, DTI Fair Trade Enforcement Bureau director, said the government was able to release P217.2 million worth of cash as of Sept. 29. — with inputs from **Justine Irish D. Tabile**



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## PBBM says ratings drop amid rice price hike 'not surprising'

BY SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA  
@sam\_medenilla

**P**RESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. linked the significant drop in his approval rating to the spike in rice prices last month. "It's not surprising. People are having a hard time...It involves rice. It's different from anything else, any other agricultural product. I completely understand it," the Chief Executive told reporters partly in Filipino in an interview after the rice distribution in Taguig City last Wednesday.

In a recent Pulse Asia survey,

the approval rating of the President dropped 15 percentage points from 80 to 65.

His trust rating also suffered a double-digit decline from 85 percentage points to just 71.

"You cannot blame the people [for the survey results]. They are really suffering," Marcos said.

The survey was conducted last month after the government recorded a surge in the price of rice, which prompted Marcos to issue Executive Order No. 39 imposing a P41 per kilogram (kg) price cap for regular milled rice (RMR) and P45 per kg for well-milled rice (WMR).

Prior to the issuance of EO 39, the price of RMR in Metro Manila reached as high as P42 to P55 per kg, while WMR it was at P47 to P56, according to the price monitoring report of the Department of Agriculture.

Likewise, the President also ordered concerned authorities to intensify their campaign against hoarders and smugglers, which he blamed for the spike in rice prices.

In his speech during the rice distribution in Taguig City, the President announced authorities have already filed cases against three companies suspected to be engaged in smuggling the food staple.

The said firms were San Pedro Warehouse and Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corporation, F.S. Ostia Rice Mill, and Gold Rush Rice Mill.

"We will eliminate those who are not competing fairly. There is no room in society for those who take advantage of others," Marcos said.

The United Nations recently warned that high prices for food, particularly rice, could lead to political instability in Asia and Africa.

A similar phenomenon occurred during the term of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, when high rice prices triggered mass demonstrations.



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## Lifting of rice-price ceiling made at 'right time'—experts

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS [@jearcalas](#)

**P**RESIDENT Marcos Jr.'s decision to lift the price ceiling on rice was made "at the right time" as the country starts its main harvest of palay, with some pundits claiming that the measure was "successful" in curbing "market collusion."

However, some economists pointed out that the lifting of the price ceiling prevented further domestic rice market distortions due to the sudden government intervention.

Agriculture Undersecretary for Rice Leocadio S. Sebastian said the one-month price ceiling was "successful" in "dampening" collusion among price speculators deemed responsible for pushing prices to "unreasonable" levels.

"The price cap was successful in dampening the collusion among price speculators that was pushing prices unreasonably high towards the end of August. This was despite the sufficiency of supply from local production and imports," Sebastian told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

"The lifting of the price cap is timely because we are now at the peak of harvest season and we are expecting a bountiful harvest," Sebastian added.

Agriculture Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Regulations

Mercedita A. Sombilla concurred with Sebastian, emphasizing that the price cap measure "stopped further manipulation" of domestic prices that was "creating fears of rice shortage" in the country despite abundant supply.

"The low inventory stocks is a usual pattern that comes during the third quarter. The good for 1.5 days stocks of [National Food Authority] was not properly understood since NFA is no longer responsible for keeping the country's stocks but only stocks for calamities - it added to the apprehension," Sombilla told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

Sombilla pointed out that the timing of the lifting of the price ceiling bodes well with the drop in export prices of rice from Thailand and Vietnam.

"There should be no apprehension on global supply," she said, while noting that the Department of Agriculture will continue to "closely" monitor the price move-



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ment of rice in the domestic market.

"The government is ready to continue to provide targeted support," she added.

However, Roehlano M. Briones, senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, pointed out that the price ceiling forced rice retailers to "hide" or "reclassify" their stocks to circumvent the mandated price cap.

Under Marcos's Executive Order 39, the price ceiling only covered regular-milled and well-milled rice, thereby exempting premium and special grade rice from the measure.

"Regular milled rice is being hidden or being reclassified as premium or special rice. What is being sold as regular milled rice is the poorest quality rice that traders and retailers are left with, which could be older stocks that they want to get rid of," Briones told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

"I believe these are being passed off as regular milled rice. And if there is well-milled rice that they want to dispose of, they would rather wait for the price ceiling to be lifted so that they can sell it at uncontrolled regular prices," Briones added.

Because of this situation, rice consumers were left to choose between a poor quality rice or a more expensive premium grade rice.

"What is left in the market is the expensive staple labelled as premium rice priced between P50 to P60 per kilogram. You cannot see regular milled rice, and if there is, *mangitim-ngitim pa*," he said. "I do not know if you call that conse-

quence as effective."

## 'Bad signal'

ASSOCIATE Professor Cielo D. Magno of the UP School of Economics emphasized that the imposition of the price ceiling on rice was an "inappropriate market control" in the first place that "sent bad signals to investors."

Magno explained that the state should not "unnecessarily intervene" in the market if it would just do more harm than good.

"It was an inappropriate policy that was recklessly implemented. It shows that the government can and will control the market and sacrifice the welfare of sellers even without concrete evidence it is beneficial to consumers," she told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

"Government should not unnecessarily intervene in the market if it will result in more inefficiencies," she added.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) supported the lifting of the price ceiling, but urged the Marcos Jr. administration to use the full power of the law in convicting hoarders, profiteers and smugglers, which it blamed for the recent spike in local rice prices.

"Hanggang ngayon, zero conviction *parinsa* hoarders, profiteers at smugglers. *Yunang habulin at pagkabalahan nila* [Until now, it's zero conviction for hoarders, profiteers and smugglers. They should focus on running after these]," the group said in a statement.



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# 'VOLATILE-PRICE' AREAS TO GET RICE AID—PBBM

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA ✕@sam\_medenilla

**A**FTER finally lifting the month-long rice price cap on Wednesday, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said the government will provide aid for vulnerable groups in areas where the price for the food staple remains "volatile."

The chief executive made the announcement in an interview with reporters after the distribution of rice in Taguig City.

"As of today we are lifting the price caps on the rice both for the regular milled rice and for the well-milled rice. So we are now removing the [price] control now," Marcos said.

Last month, the President issued Executive Order No. 39, which imposed a P41 per kilogram (kg) price ceiling for regular milled rice (RMR) and P45 per kg for well-milled rice (WMR).

Marcos said the measure aims to address the unusual surge in the price of rice during the period, despite the country's sufficient supply of the food staple. He attributed the trend to the price manipulation by hoarders and smugglers.

The lifting of EO 39 was recommended by the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)

and backed by the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

## Government assistance

HOWEVER, the President gave assurances that the government will continue to provide assistance to those who live in areas where rice price remains high, particularly the National Capital Region (NCR).

"When we looked at the statistics yesterday, the problem is really in NCR. It is here, where the price of rice is high. In other areas, when you look at the price [of rice], they are already lower than the price cap," Marcos said.

Based on the price monitoring of the Department of Agriculture in NCR, the price of RMR in the region ranges from P40 to P44 per kilogram (kg), while for WMR, it ranges from P44 to P48 per kilogram.

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## Rice...

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Among the interventions will be the Food Stamp Program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), which is currently under pilot implementation. To help boost rice production, Marcos said they will continue to tap the P22-billion Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) to provide farmers with tractors, dryers, harvesters among others.

He said they are also considering a portion of the fund for providing cold storage fishermen.

Under Republic Act (RA) No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law, the RCEF can only be used to improve the competitiveness and income of rice farmers.

### Congress-led rice distribution

THE President also said he instructed House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez to come out with a rice distribution program in NCR. "Now, what will happen is the 33 NCR congressmen will be giving the assistance—they will give rice in different areas in Metro Manila," Marcos said.

Currently, the President has been leading the distribution of rice to beneficiaries of DSWD's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries.

The distributed rice comes from the 42,000 sacks of smuggled rice, which were seized by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) from Zamboanga City. Some of the confiscated rice were already distributed in Tunggawan, Zamboanga Sibugay; San Roque, Zamboanga City; General Trias City, Cavite; Iriga City, Camarines Sur; San Andres, Manila; Dapa, Surigao del Norte; Dinagat Islands; and recently in Taguig City.

The rice distribution, Marcos said, will ensure the vulnerable groups will have sufficient food.

He said they will implement other measures to help maintain the price of rice and assist farmers.





## Envoy: Lithuania eyes biotech tie-up with PHL

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

[@sam\\_medenilla](#)

**L**ITHUANIA is keen on providing the Philippines with “technological solutions” for cyber security, green energy, and biotechnology, according to its envoy.

Lithuanian Non-Resident Ambassador to the Philippines Ricardas Slepavicius made this pronouncement to President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. during the

presentation of his credentials in Malacañang last Tuesday.

Slepavicius said Lithuania is seeking to strengthen its diplomatic ties with the Philippine

government.

“We are thinking about co-operation or partnership which could bring us together. And definitely, we do have some technological solutions, [that] could be interesting,” he said.

Among the said collaboration, he said, is on laser development and production, where Lithuania is a pioneer.

The President said he is open to such a partnership since it will bring in new technology and expertise to the country.

“I’m convinced that the solutions to the challenges that we’re facing would be technological, would come from technology,” Marcos said.

Slepavicius also proposed spe-



AMB. Ricardas Slepavicius

cial basketball projects between Lithuania and the Philippines.

In a related development, the

President also accepted the credentials of Guatemala Non-Resident Ambassador Manuel Estuardo Roldán Barillas last Tuesday.

During the meeting, they discussed possible collaborations on agriculture, climate action, and people-to-people relations.

Last September, Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo and Lithuania’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Gabrielius Landsbergis signed a memorandum of understanding which sought to strengthen the partnership between their countries.

“Although thousands of kilometers separate Lithuania and the Philippines, we see many global challenges similarly. The

signing of the Memorandum of Understanding is another step in strengthening our partnership with the Indo-Pacific countries,” Landsbergis said in a statement.

The heads of the Lithuanian and Philippine diplomacy also discussed threats posed by autocratic regimes to the international order and the necessity to join the international community’s efforts in countering them.

The Foreign Ministers also agreed on continuing dialogue during future visits and promoting more intensive cooperation in business, culture and other areas.

In 2022, Lithuania’s trade turnover with the Philippines went up by 80 percent.





## PBBM 'HINUBARAN' MGA RICE SMUGGLER

"HINUBARAN" ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. ang pangalan ng mga rice smuggler na umano'y sumisira sa daloy ng rice supply at demand sa merkado.

Sa isang rice distribution program sa Taguig City, isiniwalat ni Marcos Jr. na isinampa na ang kasong smuggling laban sa San Pedro Warehouse at Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corporation, FS. Ostia Rice Mill at Gold Rice Mill.

Kinasuhan sila ng paglabag sa Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, Rice Tariffication Law, at ng Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

"Kaya po ay ngayon ay kinasuhan na natin ang San Pedro Warehouse and Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corporation, ang FS. Ostia Rice Mill, [at] ang Gold Rush Rice Mill ay kasalukuyang haharap sa patong-patong na mga kaso dahil sa kanilang mga ginagawa," wika ng pangulo.

"Bagong Pilipinas na po tayo ngayon, at atin pong susugpuin ang mga hindi po lumalaban nang patas. Wala pong puwang sa lipunan ang mga nanlalamang at nang-aapi sa kapwa," dugtong pa niya. (Aileen Taliping/Prince Golez)





## Abante NEGOSYO

### Price cap sa bigas tinanggal ni BBM

INALIS na ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. ang ipinatupad na price ceiling sa bigas.

Ang pag-alis sa price cap ay inianunsiyo ng pangulo matapos mamudmod ng libreng bigas sa mga benepisyaryo ng Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) sa Taguig City nitong Miyerkoles nang umaga.

"We are lifting the price cap but besides that we are taking other measures para tulungan ang ating mga farmer in terms of their equipment, their processing, etc.," anang pangulo.

Binigyang-diin ng pangulo na hindi problema ang supply ng bigas sa bansa dahil tumataas ang supply dahil panahon ng aniha.

Matatandaang nagtakda ang gobyerno ng price ceiling sa bigas noong Setyembre sa pamamagitan ng Executive Order No. 39 upang makontrol ang mataas na presyuhan sa mga pamilihan at ipinako sa P41 at P45 ang regular at well-milled rice, ayon sa pagkakasunod. (Aileen Taliping)





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## LIFTED

**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has lifted the implementation of Executive Order 39, which imposes a mandated price ceiling on regular milled and well-milled rice.**

Marcos announced his decision on the sidelines of the distribution of rice to beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in Taguig City on Wednesday.

"I think it's the appropriate time since namimigay tayo ng bigas (we are distributing rice). As of today, we are lifting the price caps on the rice, for the regular milled rice and for the well-milled rice. So, tinatangal natin 'yung mga kontrol," he said in a media interview.

Marcos' announcement came a day after the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) recommended the lifting of the mandatory rice price ceilings in a sectoral meeting at Malacañan Palace in Manila.

EO 39, which took effect on Sept. 5, imposes a price cap of PHP41 per kg. on regular milled rice and PHP45 per kg. on well-milled rice.

Despite the lifting of EO 39, Marcos said the government still needs to address the issue of the higher price of rice in

Metro Manila.

"Noong tinitignan naming kahapon 'yung statistics, ang problema talaga ay dito sa NCR, dito mataas and presyo ng bigas," Marcos said.

"But that's natural dahil nasa city tayo. Matagal bago dumating ang bigas dito at nagiging mahal and transportation, storage, processing fee. Dahil doon kaya naman tumataas and presyo dito sa NCR."

The President said he had already instructed House of Representatives Speaker Martin Romualdez to launch a program that would task the 33 congressmen from the country's metropolis to distribute rice to affected individuals.

He added that the government would continue to watch "very closely" those who remain to be affected by the spike in the prices of rice, including local farmers.

"We are lifting the price cap but beside that, we are taking other measures," Marcos said. "We will continue the assistance that we have been giving to farmers, also the assistance that we have been giving to those most underprivileged families, 'yung sa pinakamababang (those in the lowest) demographic economic class, dahil talagang sila ang naghihirap."





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### **Price cap sa bigas, binawi na ni PBBM**

Binawi na ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang Executive Order 39 na nagtatakda sa presyo ng bigas sa mga palengke.

Nakasaad sa EO 39 na nasa P41 ang kada kilo ng regular milled rice habang nasa P45 kada kilo ang well-milled rice.

Nilinaw naman ng Pangulo na hindi nangangahulugan ng pagbawi ng kautusan ay pababayaan na ang sektor ng agrikultura.

Ang anunsyo ay ginawa ni Marcos sa Taguig matapos mamahagi sa mga benepisaryo ng Pantawid Pamilyang Program ng 1,000 sako ng bigas na nakumpiska ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) sa Zamboanga.

Iginiit pa ng Pangulo na tuloy din ang pagtulong ng pamahalaan sa mga magsasaka, mahihirap at mga nagugutom na Filipino.

Patuloy din umano na babantayan ng pamahalaan ang presyo ng bigas para matiyak na hindi magsasamantala ang ilang negosyante.

Aminado naman si Marcos na hindi makokontrol ng gobyerno ang merkado subalit maari namang mabantayan.

Nakipag-ugnayan na rin si Pangulong Marcos kay Speaker Martin Romualdez para tiyakin na may gaging tulong ang Kongreso sa mga apektado ng price cap.

Nakipag-usap na rin umano si Romualdez sa 33 kongresista sa Metro Manila para magkasa ng programa na magbibigay ng bigas sa mga mahihirap.  
(Gemma Garcia)



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### **4 bodega sa rice smuggling, hoarding pinangalanan ni PBBM**

Pinangalanan na ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang apat na bodega na kinasuhan ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) dahil sa hinihinang sangkot sa hoarding at smuggling ng bigas.

Tinukoy ng Pangulo ang San Pedro warehouse; Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corporation; FS Ostia Rice Mill at Gold Rice Mill matapos na mamahagi ng smuggled na bigas sa Taguig City.

Sinabi ni Marcos na ang mga nabanggit ay sinampahan ng patong patong na kaso kabilang dito ang paglabag sa Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, Rice Tariffication Law at Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016 o Republic Act No. 10845.

Dahil dito kaya muling binalaan ng Pangulo ang mga indibidwal at mga grupo na nagmamanipla ng supply at demand ng mga produktong agricul-

tural sa bansa.

Giit ni Marcos, tuluy-tuloy ang laban kontra smuggling at walang puwang sa kanyang administrasyon ang mga nagsasamantala at nalamang sa kapwa.

Matatandaan na sinalakay ng mga tauhan ng BOC ang mga bodega ng bigas sa Bulacan kasunod na rin ng pinaigting na kampanya kontra smuggling at hoarding. (Gemma Garcia)





## Rice price cap binawi na ni PBBM

**BINAWI na ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. simula ngayong araw ng Miyerkules, Oktubre 4 ang rice price cap.**

Sa isang panayam, sinabi ng Pangulo na ito na ang tamang panahon para i-lift ang rice price ceiling lalo pa't namimigay na ng bigas ang pamahalaan.

"Yes as of today's we are lifting the price caps on the rice both for the regular milled rice and for the well milled rice. So tinatanggal na natin yang mag-control," aniya pa rin.

Iyon nga lamang ayon sa Pangulo ay kailangan pa ring ayusin ang agricultural sector, kailangan pa ring tulungan ang mga pinakamahirap at pinakagutom

na kahit papaano aniya ay makaahon ang mga ito.

Matatandaang, nito lang nakaraang buwan ng Setyembre, inaprubahan ni Pangulong Marcos ang kautusan na nagtatakda ng limitasyon o "ceiling" sa presyo ng bigas sa buong bansa. Hinikayat din ng Palasyo ang publiko na isumbong ang mga nagtitinda at negosyante na hindi susunod.

Sa pinirmahang Executive Order No. 39 ni Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, nakasaad na inaprubahan ni Marcos ang rekomendasyon ng Department of Agriculture at Department of Trade and Industry sa pagtatakda ng price ceilings sa bigas sa buong bansa.

Sa regular milled rice, P41 per kilo ang itinakdang sagad na presyo, habang P45 per kilo naman sa well-milled rice.

Inilabas ang naturang kautusan matapos mabahala si Marcos sa sumisirit na presyo ng bigas sa bansa na umaabot ngayon sa P45 hanggang P70 ang bawat kilo.

Sa ilalim ng Section 7 ng Republic Act No. 7581, nakasaad na may kapangyarihan ang Pangulo na magpatupad ng price ceiling sa mga pangunahing produkto batay sa rekomendasyon ng implementing agency, o ng Price Coordinating Council.

Nakasaad din sa EO na manatili ang itinakdang price ceilings sa bigas hangga't hindi inaalis ng Pangulo, batay sa rekomendasyon

ng Price Coordinating Council o ng DA at DTI.

Inatasan din ni Marcos ang DA at DTI na tiyakin ang maipatutupad ang naturang kautusan.

Kasama rin sa EO ang direktiba sa Department of the Interior and Local Government, pati na ang Philippine National Police, na tulungan ang DA at DTI sa pagpapatupad ng kautusan.

KRIS JOSE



# REMATE

## ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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**REMATE OPINION**

### FIRING LINE

NI ROBERT B. ROQUE, JR.

## 'YAN TULOY, MR. PRESIDENT

MISTULANG nasagad na ang pasensiya ng mga Pilipino sa ipinangako n'yong murang bigas, Mr. President. Puno na ang salop. Kaya naman lumagapak ng 15 puntos ang approval rating n'yo nitong Setyembre, kasing sakit nang lagapak ng basang sako ng bigas sa mukha.

Nangako kayong ibababa ang presyo ng bigas sa P20 kada kilo noong nangangampanya pa kayo, pero 'eto tayo ngayon, makalipas ang halos dalawang taon, sumirit pataas ang presyo ng bigas simula Agosto. Isinisi n'yo pa nga sa economic saboteurs ang taas-presyo ng bigas, 'di ba?

Pero may dahilan kung bakit inangkin ninyo ang portfolio ng Agriculture Secretary simula nang maging Presidente; at ang mga ipinakita ninyo sa mga nakalipas na taon ay mistulang nagpalawig pa sa pamamayagpag ng agricultural smugglers.

Hindi lamang ito tungkol sa bigas, o nakalimutan n'yo na ba ang sibuyas, bawang, asukal...? Hindi ko na itutuloy ang litanya kong ito, Sir, dahil nakakapagod — pero dapat itong mag-udyok sa inyong umaksyon!

Kaya bumagsak din ng 14 na puntos ang inyong trust rating. Para bang sinasabi ng mga Pilipino, "Ipinagkatiwala namin sa 'yo ang pagresolba sa problemang ito, pero sa mga ginagawa mo ay lalo lang lumalala."

Malinaw na umabot na sa sukduhan ang maagang pagpapagitna sa krisis ng inyong administrasyon. Matagal nang nagpapasensiya ang mga Pilipino, na nagbigay pa nga sa inyo ng pagkakataon, sa kabila ng madilim na nakaraan ng inyong pamilya sa larangan ng pulitika.

Maging ako, sa isang split second, ay napaisip kung naluklok ba kayo sa puwesto upang bumawi sa mga naging pagkakamali ng nakalipas; para masakshin lang kayong nag-eempake ng mga bag nang higit pa sa 12 beses kada taon para bumiyahe palabas ng bansa. Mistulang sa inyo rin talaga ito, Mr. Marcos.

Panahon nang tuparin ang inyong ipinangako at tumupad na rin sa inyong tungkulin. Umaapaw na ang kumukulong sinaing, at hindi n'yo maaaring sisihin ang kalan sa bagay na ito.

### MAGBAGO KA NA, INDAY!

HUWAG nating kalimutan ang pangalawang bersiyon niPBBM, si Vice President Sara Duterte, na hindi rin nalalayo sa kanya ang kapalaran. Pasadsad ang kanyang approval ratings, mas mabilis pa sa pagbulusok pababa ng lobong may lead, at hindi na ito nakakagulat para sa isang nilustay ang kanyang P125 milyon confidential at intelligence funds sa loob lamang ng dalawang linggo.

Panahon nang maging responsable naman sa paggastos, VP Sara. Mainit na tinututukan ng publiko ang inyong expense reports at ang inyong nakakalulang paraan ng paggastos ng pondo ay umaani ng mas maraming pag-irap kaysa palakpakan. Hindi ang imaheng ito ang magbibigay-katuparan sa inyong ambisyon sa 2028. Ang tamang recipe para sa iyo ay ang pagbabago.

\* \* \*

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## Rice smugglers pinangalanan ni PBBM

UPANG ipakita ang kan-  
yang malakas na "political  
will" na tapusin ang rice  
smuggling sa Pilipinas,  
isiniwalat ni Pangulong  
Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.,  
araw ng Miyerkules, ang  
mga pangalan ng mga rice

smugglers na sumisira sa  
takbo ng 'rice supply and  
demand' sa merkado.

Sa naging talumpati ng Pa-  
ngulo sa isinagawang distribus-  
yon ng bigas sa Taguig City, si-  
nabi ng Pangulo na naghain na  
ng smuggling charges ang gob-

yerno laban sa San Pedro Ware-  
house and Blue Sakura Agri-  
Grains Corporation, FS. Ostia  
Rice Mill, Gold Rush Rice Mill  
at iba pa.

Ang rice smugglers, ayon sa  
Pangulo, sinampahan ng pagla-  
bag sa Customs Modernization

and Tariff Act, Rice Tariffication  
Law at Anti-Agricultural Smug-  
gling Act of 2016 (Republic Act  
No. 10845).

"Bagong Pilipinas na po tayo  
ngayon, at atin pong susugpuin  
ang mga hindi po lumalaban  
nang patas. Wala pong puwang  
sa lipunan ang mga nanlala-  
mang at nang-aapi sa kapwa,"  
aniya pa rin.

Ang pahayag na ito ng Pa-  
ngulo ay binanggit niya sa pama-  
mahagi ng bigas sa Taguig City  
University Gymnasium, General  
Santos Avenue, Lower Bicutan sa  
Taguig City kung saan tiniyak niya  
sa mga mamamayang Filipino na  
desidido ang gobyerno sa hakbang  
nito na tiyakin ang food security  
sa bansa.

Sa kabilang dako, ang ipina-  
mahaging bigas sa mga residente  
ng Taguig ay bahagi ng smuggled  
rice na nasabat sa isang operas-  
yon ng Bureau of Customs sa  
Zamboanga City.

Binigyang-diin ng Punong  
Ehekutibo na nais niyang mag-  
paabot ng "strong warning" la-  
ban sa mga rice smugglers na  
ang administrasyon ay hindi  
lamang uupo at walang gaga-  
win para tuldukan ang kani-  
lang ilegal na gawain na labis

na nakasakit hindi lamang  
sa ekonomiya kundi maging sa  
mga mamamayang Filipino.

"Una, upang mamahagi ng  
bigas para sa ating mga benepi-  
yaryo. Pangalawa, upang big-  
yang-diin ang ating pagsisikap  
sa pagsulong ng seguridad ng  
pagkain sa bansa. At ang pang-  
huli ay upang iparating sa inyo na  
seryoso ang pamahalaan sa pag-  
supgo sa smuggling, sa hoarding,  
at iba pang ilegal na gawaing  
nakaaapekto sa supply at presyo

ng bilingin sa merkado," ayon kay  
Pangulong Marcos.

"Binabalaan ko ang mga  
sumasabotahe sa ating ekonomi-  
ya: Kayong mga smuggler, kayong  
mga hoarder, at sindikato, tigilan  
na ninyo ang mga masama nin-  
yong gawain," aniya pa rin.

Samantala, sinabi naman  
ni Pangulong Marcos na ang  
rice smugglers ay kakasuhan ng  
paglabag sa Republic Act No.  
10845 at Republic Act No. 7581.

KRIS JOSE



**ASSISTANCE PAYOUTS PARA SA 1,370 BENEPISYARYO SA BIÑAN**- Pinangunahan ni Senate Majority  
Leader Joel Villanueva ang Department of Social Welfare and Development Assistance to Individuals in  
Crisis Situation at Department of Labor and Employment Tulong Panghanap-Buhay sa Disadvantaged/  
Displaced Workers payouts sa Biñan, Laguna para sa 1,000 solo parents at 370 displaced workers na sinak-  
sihan nina Biñan City Congresswoman Len Alonte, Vice Mayor Gel Alonte at Sta. Rosa Congressman Dan  
Fernandez at mga opisyal at empleyado ng DSWD at DOLE.





## Rice prices to fall post EO 39



A file photo shows a man operating a crane lifter to carry sacks of rice in Pasay City, Sept. 17, 2018. (Reuters Photo)

BY IRMA ISIP

TRADE Secretary Alfredo Pascual said with harvest and imports boosting supply, the price of rice could even fall below the previously set price caps on regular milled rice (RMR) and well-milled rice (WMR).

The price caps of P41 and P45 per kilogram for RMR and WMR, respectively, imposed under Executive Order (EO) 39 were lifted by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. yesterday.

Pascual said in a press conference the price of rice has gone down to below these caps, some as low as P38 per kilogram in rice-producing areas like Regions 2 and 3 where logistics is not needed.

Pascual also said the Philippines' level of rice self-sufficiency is now at 95 percent, with 5 percent to be fulfilled by imports.

Phillip Sawali, director of the Fair Trade and Enforcement Bureau, said the price of rice is now near the price caps, at P41.05 for

RMR and P45.31 WMR.

"Market forces will now play when the prices are no longer mandated. DTI has a continuing role post EO 39. We will continue to monitor the prices of rice. We will continue to do our job. We have a mechanism to monitor supply and prices," Sawali said.

Sawali said as of September 28, the compliance rate on the price caps is a high of 81.46 percent.

These are all indications of a stable supply of stocks.

Sawali added world prices are declining and imports are expected to arrive to augment local harvest which would lift inventory levels.

Data from the BPI's National Plant Quarantine Services Division, as much as 2.62 million metric tons of imported rice has arrived in the country as of September 28.

Bulk of the said volume at 2.35 million MT equivalent to 89.7 percent of the total shipments were from Vietnam.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said the lifting of the

price ceilings will stabilize palay prices during the ongoing harvest season and provide incentives for farmers to expand their production and reduce our reliance on imports.

The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura said farmgate price of play is now steady between P23 and P25 per kg while retail prices of WMR can be sold between P43 and 44 per kg.

Gerald Glenn Panganiban, director of the Bureau of Plant and Industry, earlier said the Philippines is expected to harvest 1.9 million metric tons (MT) of rice this month which will boost national buffer stocks of the staple to 74 days from 52 days at present.

Based on monitoring by the Department of Agriculture on public markets in the National Capital Region as of yesterday when price caps were lifted, the price of WMR is between P44 to P48 per kg; and RWR range between P40 and P44 per kg.

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# Malaya Business Insight

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## RICE

The price of imported well milled rice is at P45 to P48 per kg.

Imported rice ranged from P53 to P60 for special variety and P52 to P58 for premium.

For local rice, special variety was at P54 to P62 per kg and premium at P47 to P60 per kg.

Meanwhile, Pascual also said the DTI will complete the cash assistance program to retailers affected by the month-long imposition of the price ceiling.

Sawali said 5,738 micro and small retailers have yet to get their P15,000 cash aid under the

Department of Social Welfare and Development's Sustainable Livelihood Barangay.

About P217 million has been released to 14,480 qualified recipients which is 73 percent of the target of 19,695. - *Jed Macapagal*





■ Farmers and representatives from the Department of Agriculture-Region 2 office plant coffee seedlings in Sanchez Mira, Cagayan, as part of the efforts of the agency to promote coconut-coffee intercropping in the province. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## Cagayan towns bet on coffee intercropping

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

**T**HE Department of Agriculture-Regional 2 (DA-Region 2) office is pushing for the intercropping of coffee in coconut plantations in Cagayan province, asserting it could almost double the income of farmers.

Enrique de la Cruz, High-Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) focal person, highlighted the viability of cultivating coffee in coconut plantations. The HVCDP is a program under the **Department of Agriculture (DA)**.

"Coffee is the biggest commodity in the world and its demand continues to increase in the market," de la Cruz said.

"The income from coffee is big, reaching P400,000 per hectare. By growing coconuts, you can double your income and it will be a big help in your livelihood," he added.

The DA-Region 2 office recently launched the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan (CFIDP) in the towns of Sanchez Mira and Pamplona with the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) and other partner-agencies. The event highlighted the planting of coffee seedlings in coconut farms in the area.

Encouraging farmers during the event, DA-Region 2 Officer

in Charge Director for Operations Roberto Busania shared the advantages of coconut-coffee integration.

"We have to produce more coffee and utilize the resources by intercropping coconut with coffee, as well as raising chicken and growing vegetables," Busania added.

The event also included the turnover of agricultural inputs and the signing of a tripartite agreement on Coconut-Based Coffee or Cacao Enterprise Project with farmers cooperatives and associations, and the two local government units.

Sanchez Mira Mayor Abraham Bagasin thanked the DA-Region 2 office headed by Officer in Charge Executive Director Rose Mary Aquino for choosing his town as the recipient of the CFIDP.

"This is a welcome development for us since Sanchez Mira is known as the main source of coconut in the province and supplying not only Cagayan Valley but other





regions," Bagasin said.

"With this project, we are hoping to further grow the coconut industry that will help elevate the lives of our countrymen," the mayor added.

## Assistance given to farmers

During the event, Manolito Leonardo, president of the Sanchez Mira Coconut Tall Farmers Inc., received P1.345 million worth of agricultural inputs including coffee seedlings to be planted under coconut trees, fertilizers and cutters.

Leonardo assured the DA-Region 2 office that the assistance given to his association will not go to waste.

Dennis Andres, PCA Region 2 manager, explained that the coconut program is in line with the plan of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., also the concurrent Agriculture secretary, to ensure farmers' productivity through integration.

"The potential of planting other crops under coconuts is so great that is why we are introducing this technology," Andres said.

Carol Albay, HVCDP Region 2 coordinator, also challenged the group to make their coconut farms more productive.

"This is just the beginning of our partnership. We still have a lot to

do because the CFIDP is not just a one-time activity but will continue to be carried out for years to come," Albay said, adding that the farmers of Sanchez Mira are fortunate to be part of the CFIDP in Cagayan.

In Pamplona, the Curva Farmers Association received 2,500 pieces of coffee seedlings, 11 bags of controlled release fertilizer and 28 bags of organic fertilizer as assistance.

Also, the Atta Tappa Tribal Association received 8,500 pieces of coffee seedlings, 38 bags of controlled release fertilizer and a brush cutter worth to P687,000; and the Pamplona Isnag Tribe received P621,000 worth of coffee seedlings, controlled release fertilizer, organic fertilizer and a soil auger.

Furthermore, the Bagu Coconut Planters Association received P617,500 worth of agricultural inputs while the Santa Cruz Farmers Association received the same interventions worth P194,000 from the DA-Region 2 office.

Pamplona Mayor Digna Antonio, represented by the members of the municipal council, Municipal Agriculturist Maxon Panaga, and other municipal and barangay officials, and farmers groups also thanked the DA-Region 2 office for the assistance given to their farmers.





## Partnership to develop vaccine for tilapia virus

THE Department of Agriculture-National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (DA-NFRDI) and the Chung Yuan Christian University (CYCU) have signed an agreement for a two-year partnership to develop an oral subunit protein vaccine to combat the tilapia lake virus.

This project, which harnesses the innovative Baculovirus Expression Vector System, is funded by the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development. The research will evaluate the vaccine's safety, effec-

tiveness and production costs within controlled laboratory conditions.

Casiano Choresca Jr., Scientist I, serves as the project leader. He is the chief of the DA-Fisheries Biotechnology Center and serves as the officer in charge at NFRDI's Brackish Fisheries Research and Development Center.

Lilian Garcia, DA-NFRDI executive director, emphasized the role of tilapia aquaculture in ensuring food security and the industry's responsibility to provide a consistent and sustainable food supply.

"The issue of food security is critical, not only within the Philippines but globally. Climate change,

the pandemic and geopolitical events have disrupted food security. Additionally, the status of our coastal areas adds complexity to the situation. In this context, prioritizing aquaculture is imperative due to its potential in food production," she said.

For ng-Yuan

Wu, head of the Genetic Engineering Laboratory and dean of the College of Science of CYCU, expressed optimism on the potential for cooperation with DA-NFRDI in addressing various fisheries-related challenges, drawing connections to solutions found in rice and tilapia science. TMT





## ASF state of calamity declared in Candon

Candon City in Ilocos Sur is under a state of calamity due to the outbreak of African swine fever (ASF).

Mayor Eric Singson issued the declaration even as he ordered a ban on the sale, movement and entry of pork and its by-products for 15 days to prevent the spread of the swine disease.

"Lockdown for 15 days. No butchery, no sale... no pork will leave and enter barangays so that piggeries not affected will be preserved," Singson said in an interview over dzBB.

He said 20 of the 42 barangays in the city

were affected by ASF.

Singson said around 2,000 hogs had been culled to prevent the spread of ASF.

He said slaughterhouses in the city were ordered to stop their operations.

"We need to sacrifice or else it will spread further and will affect all the barangays. We will not be able to eat pork during Christmas. There will be no *lechon*. We appeal to our constituents not to eat pork for the next 15 days," Singson said.

He said the city government is offering indemnification to encourage piggeries to report cases of ASF.

"We are offering P7,000 for hogs weighing 100 kilos, P5,000 for below 100 kilos and P4,000 for below 50 kilos. For public markets, retailers will be given P5,000," Singson said.

After 15 days, he said the city government would invite representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) to conduct testing to determine if the city can be declared ASF-free.

The BAI said 17 provinces, 45 municipalities and 117 barangays in nine regions remain affected by ASF.

— Bella Cariaso



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## EYES WIDE OPEN

IRIS GONZALES

### Today's menu: Chicken pork adobo inflation

So which came first – higher prices of eggs or higher prices of chicken? Like most chicken-and-egg situations, this is a puzzle. What is clear is that prices of both poultry products and eggs have skyrocketed and they remain high.

But for chicken prices alone, it's not difficult to understand why prices are actually higher than they should probably be. A quick check of prices in smaller neighborhood convenience stores and the bigger retail chains would show this is not as puzzling.

It may be because some big retailers sell their chicken products at much higher prices compared to smaller community convenience stores.

Simply put, bigger retailers have bigger mark-ups amidst this high inflation environment.

These bigger retailers or supermarkets sell chicken at around P205 to P230 per kilo while smaller convenience stores sell their products at P150 to P180 per kilo.

This means that even if they get their chicken products at cheaper prices especially for imported chicken – at P87 to P90 per kilo for instance, these bigger supermarkets have a mark-up of more than 100 percent.

The Department of Agriculture monitoring for chicken, meanwhile, showed prices at P185.17 per kilo for whole chicken, based on prices from Sept. 18 to 22.

Clearly, even with imported chicken in the market, retail prices of chicken products have not gone down.

#### Local vs imported

Against this backdrop, it's easy to understand why local poultry producers are crying foul because the cheaper imported chicken continues to be available in the market and yet prices have not gone down significantly.

Consumers also don't realize that some of these products have been frozen for some time.

I've been to cold storage facilities of importers (not chicken) and I learned that some imported meat products stay in the freezer for months and yes, even years.

One also can't help but notice some of these imported chicken parts appear big and plump but they shrink when they are cooked.

This is because they are injected with more water and additives to make them plump and heavier to adhere to standard size and weight when shipped. As I wrote in a previous column, British newspaper *The Guardian* has published an investigative report on this years ago.

The downside of this is that these chicken parts inevitably lose their flavor when cooked in hot frying oil.

On the other hand, local chicken remains fresh, or at least as fresh as local logistics would allow.



#### Pork

Prices of pork are also higher in the bigger retailers; smaller stores sell them at roughly P290 to P340 per kilo while the bigger chains' tabs show a hefty P385 or more per kilo.

The DA's monitoring showed that pork *kasim*, the favorite part used in adobo, is at P296 per kilo from P287 per kilo a year ago.

Those of us who do the grocery shopping ourselves know this for sure. Unfortunately, consumers are at the losing end in this profits game.

#### Inflation

There is no doubt inflation is a culprit for much of the ordinary Filipinos' daily economic misery but profiteering and hoarding by our traders are exacerbating the situation.

President Marcos needs to address these problems because Filipinos, as I said, are desperate for help.

For sure, it's one of the reasons Marcos' approval rating saw its sharpest fall since he became president last year.

A recent survey by Pulse Asia Research Inc. showed his approval rating decline by double digits or 15 percentage points to 65 percent in September from three months ago, based on a survey of 1,200 adults from Sept. 10 to 14 or shortly after the government reported that August inflation accelerated to 5.3 percent.

On Thursday, September inflation report will be out and analysts and economists expect a higher print as well.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that while the Philippine economy emerged strongly from the pandemic, the overall picture remains blurry, worsened by global shocks and inflation.

Against this backdrop, it now sees our economy growing slower due to persistently high inflation, with economic growth projected at 5.3 percent for the year, a decrease from its July estimate of 6.2 percent.

This adjustment follows a second quarter slowdown in growth and an anticipation of continued high inflation negatively impacting consumer demand.

The main downside risks to the outlook include persistently high global and domestic inflation, the IMF said late Tuesday.

The IMF expects inflation to average close to six percent for the year, before easing to approximately 3.5 percent in 2024.

It also said decisive monetary tightening by authorities helped mitigate inflationary pressures but core inflation remains elevated and inflation risks are tilted to the upside.

For sure, we're facing a complicated problem which calls for decisive solutions, including calling out retailers and hoarders; increased vaccination against swine flu; making supply chains more efficient and really supporting local growers to improve local supply, especially as many food exporting countries are resorting to food nationalism.

We really need to boost domestic production so we are not vulnerable when other countries decide they don't want to export their products for now. One way to do this is to boost infrastructure and bring farmers closer to the market. Subsidies should only be temporary as these hurt state coffers.

Big problems, indeed, call for big solutions. Until we resolve this, the top item on our menus will not be food but inflation.

\* \* \*

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## NDA, Taiwanese institute ink MOU on agri research

THE National Dairy Authority (NDA), an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA), recently forged a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for agricultural research collaboration with the Taiwan Livestock Research Institute (TLRI).

The MOU was signed by NDA Administrator Gabriel L. Lagamayo and TLRI Director General Jeng-Fang Huang last September 26 in Taiwan.

This milestone MOU, signed at the Livestock Research Institute in Taichung, Taiwan, paves the way for an enhanced working relationship between the NDA and TLRI. The agreement is founded on the principles of mutual cooperation,

with the aim of fostering a friendly and productive partnership that advances research and technology in agriculture, the NDA said in a statement.

During discussions surrounding the MOU, a range of vital topics were discussed. Conversations revolved around crucial aspects such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, innovative feeding practices, the integration of cutting-edge technology in dairy farming, advancements in robotics, the utilization of bio-informatics, and the exploration of genetic enhancements, among other pivotal themes.

"These discussions underscore the commitment of both parties to explore, innovate, and excel in

dairy research and development," NDA said.

The MOU outlines a comprehensive framework for collaboration, including the facilitation of joint research initiatives, the exchange of scientists and researchers, engagement with dairy growers and various stakeholders, cross-border study visits and training programs, active participation in scientific seminars and conferences, and the seamless exchange of scientific materials and valuable information.

"We are excited by the possibilities this collaboration offers. At the NDA, we are dedicated to fortifying our international partnerships, particularly in the realm of dairy

industry research and development," said Lagamayo.

"This strategic affiliation opens avenues for cross-border learning, enabling us to share insights and best practices with esteemed global partners. We are honored to include Taiwan Livestock Research Institute among our valued collaborators in Southeast Asia."

Several other agencies under the DA have demonstrated their commitment to the initiative, including the Philippine Carabao Center, Agricultural Training Institute, Bureau of Animal Industry, and the Philippine Council for Agricultural, Aquatic, and Natural Resources Research and Development.



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## ASF-hit hog raisers in Batac City get aid

**L**AOAG City—After declaring the province of Ilocos Norte free from African swine fever (ASF), the Batac City government through its Veterinary Office on Wednesday distributed one piglet and starter package each to 308 hog raisers.

"The starter package consists of dewormer, antibiotic, vitamins and starter feeds," City Veterinary Office chief Dr. Ramonito Baltazar

said in an interview.

He said the selected beneficiaries were previously hit by ASF.

To avail of the recovery aid from the city government, Baltazar said the beneficiaries underwent a seminar to educate them about successfully raising piglets.

"In case the piglet shows symptoms of sickness, we encourage our hog raisers to report it immediately to the City Veterinary

Office at the City Hall," he added.

The city's distribution of piglets and start-up packages is to boost the hog industry in the province.

Swine raisers in the province are gradually recovering from ASF infection through various government support.

Last September, the Department of Agriculture turned over PHP20 million to a farmer's

multi-purpose cooperative in Sarrat town to help speed up the repopulation program for ASF-affected livestock farmers.

Aside from the DA hog repopulation program, provincial veterinarian Loida Valenzuela on Wednesday reminded hog raisers to strictly practice biosecurity measures to prevent ASF.

The Provincial Veterinary Office said based on surveillance operations, people brought in the virus after visiting farms in other areas. *Philippine News Agency*





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## Searca pushes climate-smart agri

THE Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) conducted virtual learning sessions on climate-smart villages (CSVs) to enhance the capacities of participants to promote, disseminate and advocate for local platforms for scaling inclusive forms of climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and anticipatory climate adaptation.

Searca Director Glenn Gregorio said these learning sessions jointly offered with the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) from Sept. 19 to 20, 2023, via Zoom, were part of an eight-day blended course "Climate-Smart Villages as Platforms for Community-Level Anticipatory Climate Adaptation to Improve Food

Security and Resiliency."

A module was delivered virtually with 22 participants attending the sessions from academic institutions, nongovernment organizations, the private sector and government agencies from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Germany.

Other modules were provided onsite through a roving workshop from Sept. 25 to 30, 2023, where participants visited sites in Bailen, General Emilio Aguinaldo in Cavite; Pagbilao and Guinayangan in Quezon; and Los Baños, Laguna.

The six-day roving workshop allowed participants to witness firsthand how food systems-sensitive climate change adaptation platforms are established, sustained

and scaled at community levels.

On behalf of the Searca director, the webinar participants were welcomed by associate professor Joselito Florendo, Searca deputy director for administration. He highlighted the role of a village in scaling CSA, emphasizing that "it takes a village to scale up climate-smart agriculture."

During the online session, Emily Monville-Oro, IIRR-Asia acting regional director, provided an overview of the hybrid methodology used in the course covering various concepts on CSVs.

Packed with knowledge sharing and learning from both the speakers and participants, the online sessions with selected participants also discussed climate change interventions of their organizations, the challenges they encountered

and the lessons they learned.

Experts also made presentations on CSV, agrobiodiversity, nature-based solutions, food systems and community-based adaptation.

They included Julian Gonzales, IIRR senior advisor; Danny Hunter, Alliance Biodiversity International and CIAT senior scientist; Dindo Campilan, regional director for Asia and hub director for Oceania of the International Union for Conservation of Nature; Alice Ilaga, director of Climate Resilient Agriculture Office of the Department of Agriculture and Asean Climate Resilience Network focal point for the Philippines; Jessica Fanzo, University of Columbia professor in New York; and Magnolia Mosimo, IIRR operations director.

**LEANDER C. DOMINGO**





## US poultry breeder eyes Phl operations

Alabama-based poultry breeding company Aviagen Inc. is eyeing to set up operations in the Philippines as part of an agricultural technology trade mission with other US firms that are eyeing to invest in the country's agriculture sector to help contribute to food security.

Aviagen is considering expanding its distribution network and setting up operations in the country amid insufficient supply for its products, its Asia-Pacific business manager Rafael Monleon said in a press briefing Monday evening.

"We already have established customers over here that distribute our products. However, sometimes the availability in the supply of our products is insufficient. What we are considering is expanding our distribution networks, perhaps our own operation here. We are exploring possibilities on these," he said.

Establishing operations in the country would allow the US firm to address supply gaps for quality breeder stock by injecting capacity and volume in the local market.

"The Philippine industry has a very vibrant poultry industry, it has been growing very well over all these years and there is a demand for quality broiler breeding stock, which is what our company specializes in," Monleon said.

Currently, the US company is doing a feasibility study on its possible investment in the country.

"We do not have a timeline and what we are really doing is exploring the possibilities of entering this market and continuing to support our current distributors," the company official said.

Meanwhile, Northwest Missouri

State University is also looking to set up an exchange program through scholarship grants.

"For us, education is not something that, it's not like actual business. The power of knowledge is very important...When we look at the future, and where the Philippines is going, I think there is definitely going to be a strong return on investment on education. Our limitation is the cost and also the interest," NMSU director Thomas Merlot said.

Aviagen and Northwest Missouri State University are among the 10 US firms that joined the agritech trade mission in Davao City and Manila from Sept. 28 to Oct. 4.

"This agricultural technology trade mission injects innovation into this relationship, vastly expanding opportunities for Filipino farmers by connecting them to US technology solutions. Indeed, many of these companies already contribute to Philippine food security and play a critical role in our growing agriculture partnership," US Ambassador MaryKay Carlson said during the trade mission reception.

Agriculture cooperation is central to the US and Philippine economic partnership and trade, which the US Ambassador described as "strong, enduring, and growing."

"Bilateral trade hit all-time highs in 2021 and 2022, and we are on track for another new record this year," Carlson said.

The trade mission follows the five-day official visit of President Marcos to the US last May which yielded \$1.3 billion in investment pledges with the potential to create 6,700 jobs.

- Danessa Rivera





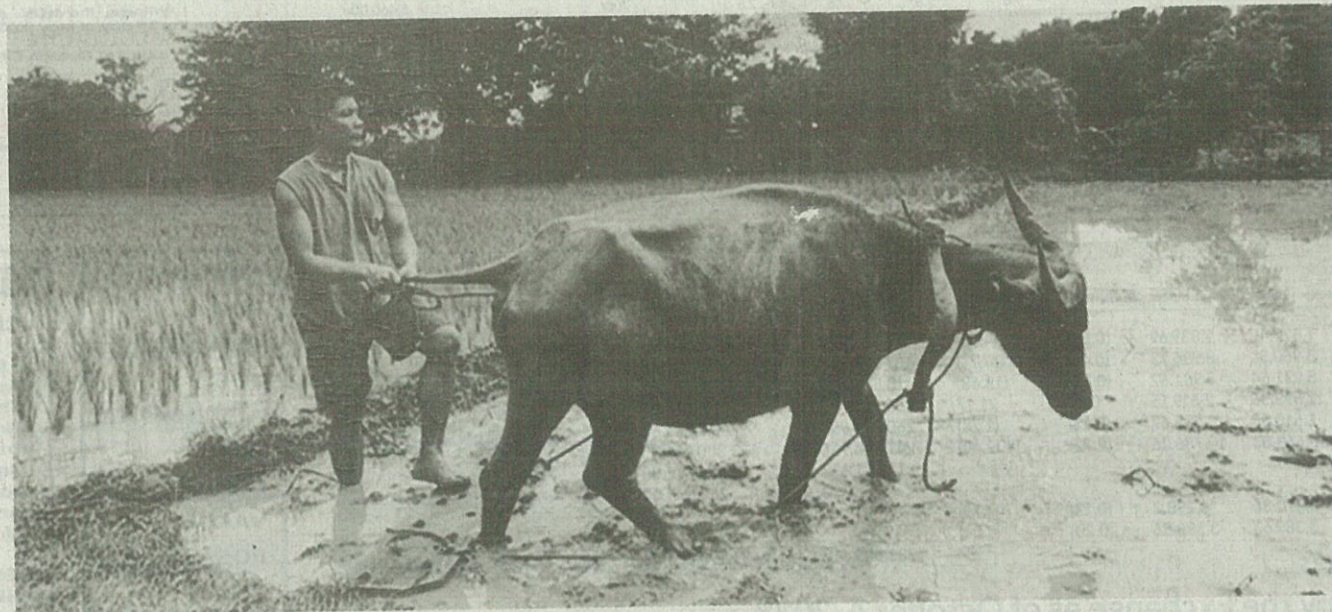
## Young farmer in Abra calls on youth to be part of agriculture

By JAMES TABABA

**L**auro Cacho is a farmer from Abra who has been involved in farming since he was young. In 2015, Lauro established the Kido Integrated Farm through hard work and dedication.

Lauro worked as a driver in Manila in 1992. Despite being away from the farm, Lauro's passion for agriculture remained strong, and he kept himself informed by regularly reading the Manila Bulletin Agriculture magazine and attending the Agri-Kapihan, a free forum for farming enthusiasts where farmers gathered to exchange their experiences, every Sunday. Through these gatherings, the AANI Mango Industry Association was formed, and Lauro became a member.

After acquiring valuable knowledge and technology about farming, Lauro retired from his job in Manila and returned to his hometown in Abra. Back in Abra, Lauro focuses on mango production and flower induction, while also tending to his rice farm.



Lauro Cacho is the owner of Kido Integrated Farm. (Photos from Kido Integrated Farm)





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However, the income from farming was insufficient to cover Lauro's children's education expenses. In 2008, he made the difficult decision to seek employment abroad in order to support his family. Upon returning to the Philippines in 2014, Lauro used the money he had saved from his overseas work to fulfill a lifelong dream — buying his own farm.

#### Pursuit of a dream

In 2015, Lauro initiated the development of his farm, which spans over 1.5 hectares. While the farm practices organic farming methods, it has not yet been officially certified. Lauro consistently attended training sessions and seminars organized by the Department of Agriculture.

Lauro did not return to mango farming due to the widespread use of chemical substances in the mango industry. Instead, he chose to explore organic farming methods. Additionally, in 2018, Lauro, together with the organic farming enthusiasts of Abra,

formed the Abra Organic Practitioner Agriculture Cooperative, reflecting their dedication to promoting organic agriculture practices within the community.

#### Essence of integrated farming

Lauro's commitment to sustainable agriculture extends beyond natural farming; he also practices integrated farming, incorporating both crop cultivation and animal raising into his agricultural endeavors.

Lauro has gained valuable insights into the significance of operating an integrated farm that encompasses multiple crops and farming components. This approach proves its worth when one crop faces challenges or fails, as there are other elements within the farm to help offset the expenses.

For instance, Lauro has included sugarcane in his farm, primarily used for vinegar production. Additionally, Lauro cultivates a diverse range of crops, including peanuts, sorghum,

white corn, and rice. After the rice season, he strategically plants low-land vegetables such as ampalaya, eggplant, and tomatoes. This diversity in crops ensures a continuous source of income and helps mitigate financial risks associated with crop failures.

Lauro's interest in sorghum was sparked by a video featuring the former Department of Agriculture secretary, Manny Pinol. Impressed by the potential of sorghum, Lauro ventured into its cultivation and now grows red, white, and Sudan grass varieties. Sorghum has garnered significant interest from others, leading Lauro to sell and deliver sorghum seeds. A regular customer specifically requests organic sorghum to use as feed for their hamsters and birds. Lauro appreciates sorghum's resilience, as it is both drought-tolerant and resistant to pests.

The same principle applies to the animal component of Lauro's farm, where they raise chickens, pigs, and goats. This diversified approach to farming not only offers financial security but also contributes to the overall resilience and sustainability of Lauro's agricultural endeavors.

#### Preserving indigenous crops and raising native animals

Lauro's farm includes the preservation of native peanuts, characterized by their small size and distinctive red color. Additionally, they cultivate heirloom rice known as Balatinaw, which is a black rice variety. Lauro's decision to grow black rice is based





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The height of sorghum can reach up to 15 feet or more.

on its superior nutritional value compared to white rice. Being unpolished, black rice contains higher levels of fiber and essential nutrients.

"I firmly believe that preserving native and heirloom crop varieties is essential," Lauro said. "Not only do they offer superior taste compared to the common commercial varieties, but they also have higher nutritional value, promoting a healthier lifestyle."

Initially, they raised Dekalb brown chickens, but due to susceptibility to illnesses, they transitioned back to native chicken breeds. Lauro also tends to native goats and pigs.

"What sets my approach apart is the diet I provide them, which isn't comprised of commercial feeds,"

Lauro said. "Through the Department of Agriculture's organic program, I was trained in producing our own animal feeds."

#### Advocating for natural farming

Lauro fondly recalls a valuable lesson from their grandfather during his youth – the collection and scattering of carabao manure. "Little did I realize at the time that these were valuable fertilizers," he said. "Over the years, I've come to understand that organic farming practices are like going back to these traditional methods."

Lauro recognizes that the use of commercial and synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, while potentially increasing crop yields, can have detrimental effects on both the environment and human health. This realization has motivated him to adopt organic farming practices, prioritizing the well-being of his family.

As an advocate for organic farming, Lauro emphasizes the importance of returning to natural farming methods to reduce chemical usage. "In today's world, where numerous health concerns are associated with the food we consume, this approach holds even greater importance," he said.

#### Passing on the legacy

Lauro's lifelong connection to farming has instilled a profound passion for it and he hopes to pass on to his children. "What I've noticed is that my children share a genuine interest in farming and are enthusiastic about helping me manage our farm, particularly when it comes to marketing our products online," he said.

He encourages the youth to explore farming and develop an interest in this essential field. He often pondered, "What will happen if farmers like us are no longer around, especially since most of the youth today are not interested in working on farms?"

Lauro urges his children to participate in agriculture, even if they have pursued degrees outside of the field because he believes that while many youths today may not be keen on farming, we truly need more of them to engage in agriculture.

In solidarity with fellow farmers practicing organic farming, Lauro expresses a heartfelt wish for others to gradually transition to natural farming practices. "By reducing dependence on harmful chemicals, farmers can not only contribute to a healthier environment but also lead healthier lives themselves," he said.





## Soybeans rebound

CANBERRA- Chicago soybean futures rose on Wednesday as the US dollar eased from 11-month highs, but prices remained near their lowest since 2021 amid signs of a better-than-expected US harvest and rapid planting of crops in Brazil.

Corn prices also gained but wheat fell.

"We are seeing more soybean supply coming in and putting pressure on the market," said Andrew Whitelaw at Australian agricultural consultancy Episode 3.

Most-active Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) soybean futures were up 0.6 percent at \$12.80-1/4 a bushel.

Prices have fallen around 9 percent in the last five weeks and slipped to \$12.57 on Tuesday, equaling an 18-month low seen in June.

Soybeans have been pushed lower by a stronger US dollar,

which makes dollar-priced beans more expensive for buyers with other currencies and can reduce demand.

The US harvest is well underway, boosting supply, and government data this week showed a slight improvement in bean condition ratings.

Commodity broker StoneX raised its forecast for the average US soybean yield to 50.4 bushels an acre from 50.1, estimating US production at 4.175 billion bushels.

While private sales of 265,000 metric tons of US soybeans to China suggested there are buyers in the market, basis values for soybeans shipped by barge to the US Gulf Coast and loaded for export were steady to lower on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, a report on Monday showed farmers in Brazil, the world's biggest soybean producer, were planting new crops at the fastest pace on record. *-Reuters*





## Current agrifood models wasteful, unsustainable—FAO

**T**HE Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) said the current ways in which foods and fibers are produced, consumed and distributed need “urgent change” if nations want to cut waste and achieve food security.

FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu said reducing food loss and waste represents a “triple win opportunity” with immediate positive impact on food security, climate benefits, and increased availability of nutritious food while improving the overall sustainability of agrifood systems.

“Business as usual is no longer an option, but this could only changed if all partners and players made a concerted effort to implement identified actions,” Qu said in his speech during a recent event to mark the International Day of Awareness and Food Loss and Waste.

Currently more than 13 percent of food produced

globally is lost in the supply chain from after harvest and prior to retail, and a further 17 percent is wasted in households, in food services and in retail, according to FAO and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) statistics.

At the same time, millions of people across the world are malnourished, and the world is off course to achieve most globally agreed nutrition targets. Healthy diets are an essential part of addressing this issue, yet more than 3.1 billion people were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021.

### Food loss app

TO monitor the progress and use data for continued improvement, FAO launched last September 29 a food loss app dubbed FLAPP. “This app will allow the crowd-sourcing of information from farmers to better understand where in the value chain losses occur, and to provide concrete solutions.”

The UN agency said much of its work on the ground focuses on the reduction of loss in

the supply chain, i.e. loss that occurs between harvest and the market, while UNEP’s role is to work more on waste at the retail and household level.

Among the areas in which FAO has been active is supporting micro-, small and medium enterprises in Thailand in pinpointing food loss hotspots and helping to put in place measures to mitigate the losses.

Elsewhere, FAO has introduced improved, sustainable bulk packaging along with good post-harvest management practice, to transport fresh produce in a number of countries in South and Southeast Asia.

In another initiative with partners, FAO is helping to provide training to fishers in Tanzania in new methods for handling and processing fish.

“Finally, FAO has developed a methodology to measure food loss and waste in the service industries of resorts in Small Island Developing States.”

### Shift to circular model

INSTEAD of the current

linear “take-make-discard” model, Qu said global agrifood systems “must be transformed to be more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient and more sustainable.”

FAO said priorities must be to prevent and reduce food loss and waste at source—in production, handling, processing, packaging, storage, and consumption; rescue, recover and redistribute surplus or unsold food that is safe and suitable for consumption and recycle and upcycle or repurpose by-products to keep them out of landfills.

In a message read on his behalf, Pope Francis said: “The food that we throw into the trash is torn from the hands of those who lack it and who also have the right to food.”

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said in a video message: “We need profound changes in the way we produce, handle, store, process and consume food if we are serious in tackling food waste.”





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## Australian cattle price falls to 9-year low as El Niño looms

**T**HE cost of Australian cattle has tumbled to the lowest level in about nine years and is likely to fall further as ranchers cull an expanded herd ahead of drier weather following the onset of El Niño.

The Eastern Young Cattle Indicator has slumped almost 60 percent this year and was near the lowest since December 2014 on Tuesday. The country's herd has swelled to the largest in a decade after three years of plentiful rainfall revitalized pastures, according to Meat & Livestock Australia.

Australia just posted its driest September on record and El Niño is expected to persist until at least the end of February, bringing warmer conditions and lower rainfall. Farmers are poised to ramp up sales and shun buying of new livestock as hotter weather bakes pastures used for feed, weighing on cattle prices.

The influx of cheaper Australian beef will allow the nation to recapture some market share in key Asian consumers such as Japan and South Korea from the United States, according to Matt Dalglish, the founder and director of Episode 3. "Our pricing is as competitive as it's ever been now compared to the US," he said.

US ranchers have been forced to send livestock to slaughter over the past few years due to drought and higher feed costs. However, cattle prices recently climbed to a record, which is expected to encourage farmers to retain more cows. The nation's herd is at the lowest seasonal level since 2014.

"The US will be not producing as much for an extended period of time and that will give Australia an opportunity," said Stephen Bignell, manager of market information at Meat & Livestock Australia. "US producers will hold on to their animals and try and build up their inventory and stock levels."

At least one large processor is preparing for more cows. Meat giant JBS SA last month announced that it would add more than 500 jobs at its Dinmore plant in Ipswich, Queensland, and increase processing in the first half of 2024.

The move will support increased market demand for red meat as herd sizes and availability of livestock im-

proves, JBS said in a statement. Dinmore is the largest beef processing plant in the southern hemisphere.

### California water reservoirs

CALIFORNIA'S reservoirs are still brimming from last winter's heavy rains and snow, even as El Niño raises the possibility of a second strong rainy season in a row, state and federal officials said.

The drought-prone state began its new water year October 1 with supplies in far better shape than last fall. California reservoirs run by the US Bureau of Reclamation currently hold more than twice as much water as the historic average for this date, said Regional Director Ernest Conant in a briefing Tuesday with reporters. It's a welcome turnaround after years of sparse winter precipitation that left many basins surrounded by bathtub rings of dry dirt and triggered conservation efforts across the nation's most populous state.

"This was as close to a miracle year as you can get," said Karla Nemeth, director of the state's Department of Water Resources. A cool spring and summer also kept record mountain snows from melting quickly, she said.

California receives nearly all of its precipitation from fall through early spring, with almost none falling in summer. The El Niño phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean typically brings California wetter-than-average winters, but State Climatologist Michael Anderson said it's still too soon to know if that will hold true this year.

"It may not be wet, but it may not be as severely dry as some of the years we've seen recently," Anderson said.

While last winter's storms ended the state's drought, they also triggered flooding that drove people from their homes and left part of the Central Valley submerged for months. Reservoir managers are now beginning their annual practice of letting some water out during the autumn to make room for winter rains.

The US Energy Information Administration expects California's hydropower generation to nearly double this year. **Bloomberg News**

