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## *DA chief extends issuance of import permits for galunggong*

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has extended the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) for the importation of *galunggong* (round scad) and other fish until Dec. 10, as only 14,637 metric tons of the 35,000 MT authorized volume have arrived.

Laurel issued Special Order 1451 giving importers eight more days to file SPSIC to be able to avail themselves of the Certificate of Necessity to Import on the importation of 35,000 metric tons of frozen round scad, bigeye scad, mackerel, bonito and moonfish.

"The period of issuance of the second tranche of the SPSICs under the CNI 35,000 metric tons 2023 shall be extended until Dec. 10, 2023," Laurel said in issuing SO 1451.

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) spokesman Nazario Briguera earlier told **The STAR** that at least 14,637 MT of imported fish arrived in the country amid the closed fishing season.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has allowed the importation of at least 35,000 MT of fish to prevent shortage in the supply during the fishing ban in the Visayan Sea and Zamboanga Peninsula from Nov. 15, 2023 to Feb. 15, 2024.

The volume of fish imports this year was 29 percent more

compared to the 25,000 MT allowed by the DA in 2022 amid the expected drop in the fisheries production this year.

Laurel has issued SO 1406 authorizing BFAR national director Demosthenes Escoto to approve and sign all SPSICs that will be issued under the Certificate of Necessity to Import the remaining 35,000 MT of frozen round scad, bigeye scad, mackerel, bonito and moonfish.

BFAR has issued Bureau Administrative Circular No. 255 on the three-month pause in sardines fishing activities in the Zamboanga peninsula.

The closed fishing ban covers East Sulu, Basilan Strait and Sibugay Bay.

According to BFAR, the adjustment of the implementation of the previous duration of closed-fishing season from Dec. 1 to March 1 was based on the result of a study conducted by BFAR's National Stock Assessment Program and the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute in Region 9, which shows that the spawning period of mature sardines peaks during the months of October until January.

Briguera said that the three-month fishing ban will allow the fish stock to repopulate, and that penalties await violators of the closed fishing season, including confiscation of the fish catch.

— Bella Cariaso



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# PH inflation continues downward trek

**BSP projects deceleration to 4-4.8% in November from 4.9% in October**

By **Ronnel W. Domingo**  
@RonWDomingoINQ

Lower prices of food and fuel may have slowed down overall inflation across the Philippines for the second month in a row, down to within the range of 4 percent to 4.8 percent in November, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

The entire range is below the 4.9-percent increase in prices of goods and services that the average Filipino household buys that was recorded for October 2023. The Philippine Statistics Authority will announce the official numbers by Dec. 5.

"Lower prices of vegetables and petroleum products along with the peso appreciation could [have contributed] to downward price pressures" on prices in November, the BSP said in a statement.

The central bank added that, on the other hand, higher prices of most agricultural commodities like rice, fruit, fish, and meat items as well as changes in electricity, LPG and toll rates were the primary sources of upward price pressures last month.

The expected downward trajectory of inflation in the Philippines is in tune with lat-



**BOON TO BUYERS** A customer buys fresh vegetables at a stall in Kamuning Public Market in Quezon City. According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, lower prices of vegetables and petroleum products along with the peso appreciation could [have contributed] to downward price pressures last month.

—GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

est readouts in economies that influence monetary policy across the globe.

## Global easing

These include countries in the Eurozone—such as Poland, France and Italy—which as a region and individually reported slower-than-expected inflation.

In the United States, latest data showed a further easing of the personal consumption expenditures price index, de-

scribed as the US policymakers' favored gauge of inflation.

In a report released earlier this week, BMI Country Risk and Industry Research said the Philippine government's move to ramp up private-sector imports and the prevailing risks from the El Niño climate phenomenon were keeping upward pressure on prices.

The Fitch group subsidiary was referring to a statement made by Agriculture Secretary

Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., who gave importers less than five weeks to use the permits granted to them—to buy an additional 1 million tons of rice from abroad to boost local stocks—or else these would be canceled.

## Import demand

BMI noted that the global market has stabilized somewhat since the government of India last July announced an immediate ban on nonbasmati white rice exports.

However, the ban did not cover government-to-government deals, which included an agreement to ship 295,000 tons to the Philippines.

"In the short term, expected import demand from Indonesia and the Philippines will support prices while crop conditions in north-eastern Thailand, downgraded to 'poor' at the end of October," it added.

Various analysts and think tanks have raised the flag about inflation in the Philippines remaining high in the coming months, especially with the expiration on Dec. 31 of Executive Order No. 10, which temporarily lowered tariffs on key exports like rice, corn and coal. **INQ**



P130M POSTHARVEST FACILITY IN ILOCOS

## RICE PROCESSING CENTERS SEEN TO SLASH GRAIN PRICES

By Jordeene B. Lagare  
@jordeenelagare

The days of drying palay (unhusked rice) on roads in farming villages may soon be over as the government starts building postharvest facilities in the regions, beginning with a P130-million complex in Dingras, Ilocos Norte province.

According to the National Food Authority (NFA), the goal of constructing such facilities is to eventually eliminate the traditional way of using national roads for drying palay, which affects not only the quality of local rice but which may also result in road accidents.

It said the lack of postharvest facilities, especially rice dryers, in farming areas had prompted the food agency to develop high-capacity dryers and modern rice processing centers across the archipelago.

The planned facility in Dingras town features four 30-metric ton batch recirculating mechanical dryers designed to improve local production, as well as boost rice and corn storage capacity.

The project will also improve existing warehouse infrastructure and auxiliary facilities, allowing the NFA to purchase more palay from Dingras and nearby towns, reduce postharvest losses, and ensure affordable prices of rice in local markets.

The NFA said the facility, part of the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Masagana Agri-Food Infrastructure Program, will be built for 10 months in time for the main rice harvest season next year.

This represents the first phase of the NFA's postharvest facility modernization program, aimed at setting up dozens of rice processing centers composed of high-capacity, industrial-grade mechanical dryers, grain silos and rice mills across the country.

"These centers will have the combined capacity to store rice and corn enough to cover national requirements for 30 days," it said.

### Support

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Laurel Jr. said this undertaking was a step toward

fulfilling President Marcos' aspiration of ensuring that Filipino farmers receive the necessary support not only before and during the harvest period, but more so after harvest.

"Through the Dingras postharvest project, we can boost our palay production to ensure that there is stable and sufficient supply of rice here in Dingras and in the whole of Region 1 (Ilocos region)," Laurel said during the groundbreaking ceremony on Friday.

The DA said mechanization had significantly reduced postharvest losses of palay to about 15 percent from 25 percent a decade ago but bringing it down further to single-digit levels would substantially augment local rice supply, control retail prices and reduce reliance on importation.

The NFA plans to build other 30 MT batch recirculating mechanical dryers in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan; Guimba, Nueva Ecija; and Molave, Zamboanga del Sur, as well as 10 MT per hour continuous flow dryers in Dumangas, Iloilo, and Maramag, Bukidnon.

The government has introduced different interventions to provide financial and technical assistance and distribute farm machines to palay producers in the hopes of improving farmers' income and productivity.

### Self-sufficiency

To date, the Philippines is not fully dependent on domestic production to meet its palay requirements.

The self-sufficiency ratio (SSR) for rice hit 77 percent last year from 81.5 percent in 2021, marking a downtrend for three consecutive years from 2020 to 2022, based on the data from the Philippine Statistics Authority. SSR refers to the extent to which local output can meet the country's requirements.

Figures from the PSA showed palay production slightly rose by 0.21 percent to 3.79 million MT in the third quarter of this year.

But the country had also imported 2.93 million MT of rice, mainly from Vietnam, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry's data as of Nov. 16.

INQ



COMMUNITY ACTIVITY Residents of Aguilar, Pangasinan, prepare to pack the palay that they dried along a road in Barangay Bocacliw. —WILLIE LOMIBAO



## Herbosa, Laurel pipigain ng mga cong, senador

Sasalang sa kumpirasyon ng Commission on Appointments (CA) sina Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa at Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. sa Disyembre 5, Martes.

Ito na ang ikalawang pagkakataon na sasalang si Herbosa sa CA matapos na maubusan ng oras ang komisyon noong Setyembre 26 para sa mga pagtatanong sa kalihim ng Department of Health (DOH).

Dahil sa kakulangan ng oras para sa kumpirasyon ng CA, na-bypass ang appointment ni Herbosa kung kaya't muli itong itinalaga ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Unang pagkakataon naman ito para kay Laurel na kailan lamang itinalaga ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. bilang kalihim ng Department of Agriculture.

Binigyang ng kapangyarihan ang CA sa ilalim

ng 1987 Constitution na aprubahan o ibasura ang appointment na ginawa ng Pangulo ng Pilipinas.

Ang mga appointment na ginawa ng Pangulo ay magiging epektibo lamang hanggang sa ibasura ito ng CA o hanggang sa susunod na adjournment ng sesyon ng Kongreso.

Ang sesyon ng Kongreso ay mag-a-adjourn sa Disyembre 16 at magbabalik sa Enero 22, 2024. **(Billy Begas)**



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## NFA pinoporma 24 pasilidad na 'bagsakan' ng bigas

Magtatayo ang National Food Authority (NFA) ng mahigit 24 na post-harvest facilities at pinasimulan na ito kahapon para sa apat na unit ng rice dryer sa Dingras, Ilocos Norte.

Ayon sa Department of Agriculture, ang proyekto ay bahagi ng Masagana Agri-Food Infrastructure Program at ang rice dryers sa Dingras na may kapasidad na 30 metric tons ang unang bahagi lamang ng post-harvest facility modernization program ng NFA.

Layunin ng NFA na magtayo ng dose-dosenang rice processing center na may malakas na kakayanan na mechanical dryers, grain silos, at rice mills.

Kaya ng mga itong mag-imbak ng bigas at mais na sapat para sa 30 araw na pangangailangan ng bansa.

Magkakahalaga ng P130 milyon ang proyekto sa Dingras

at 10 buwan itong gagawin. Inaasahang matatapos ang pasilidad bago magsimula ang bulto ng ani sa susunod na taon.

Sabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, ang proyekto ay pagtupad sa pangako ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na siguraduhin na makukuha ng mga magsasaka ang suportang kailangan nila, hindi lamang sa panahon ng anihan.

(Eileen Mencias)



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## DA starts issuing onion import permits

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

**T**HE Department of Agriculture (DA) through the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) has started issuing import permits for the importation of 21,000 metric tons (MT) of fresh onions for buffer stocking.

The Philippines is set to receive next month 17,000 MT of red onion and 4,000 MT of yellow onion from China, India, and the Nether-

lands. Issuance of the sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) for the importation of fresh onions started in November.

"This intervention of the government is to guarantee an ample supply amid the increasing demand by the forthcoming holiday season," the BPI said on Friday.

The volume of onions to be imported are based on the per capita

consumption of the country, the BPI explained. It will also serve as buffer stock to stabilize retail prices of the bulb prior to the peak harvest of local produce on March to April 2024.

Through the importation, the agency added that it will ensure that price increases would be avoided.

Latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the average retail price of

red onion reached P185.55 per kilogram (kg) during the second phase of October 2023 (October 15 to 17).

This indicates a decline of 2.4 percent from the average retail price of P190.16 per kg in the first phase of October 2023 (October 1 to 5).

BPI Director Glenn Panganiban noted that prices of onions should only range between P140 and

P160 per kg.

To ensure that imports will not compromise local produce, BPI gave an order stating "all imported fresh onions are required to arrive in the country on or before December 31, 2023."

However, BPI noted that the must-arrive date will still be subject to change depending on the available stocks and prices in the market.



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# 21,000 MT imported onions to arrive by yearend

By **BELLA CARIASO**

Some 21,000 metric tons of imported onions should arrive on or before Dec. 31, the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry (DA-BPI) said on Friday amid the spike in the retail price of the bulbs that has reached as high as P220 per kilo.

In a statement yesterday, the BPI said it would be issuing sanitary and phytosanitary clearance for the importation of onions.

"This intervention of the government is to guarantee an ample supply amidst the increasing demand by the forthcoming holiday season and to ensure the public that last year's scenario on the absurd increase in price would not be repeated," the DA-BPI said.

It added that the volume to be imported is composed of 17,000 MT of fresh red onions and 4,000 MT of fresh yellow onions.

"These volumes are based on the per capita consumption of the country and will serve as buffer to stabilize prices in the market prior to peak harvest of local produce on March-April 2024,"

the DA said.

The DA-BPI said the importations will be sourced from China, India and the Netherlands.

"All imported fresh onions are required to arrive in the country on or before Dec. 31, 2023 to guarantee our local producers that it will not coincide with the upcoming harvest," agency said.

It emphasized that extension of the must-arrive date will still be subject to change, depending on the available stocks and prices in the market.

According to the BPI, the importation of the bulbs was allowed to prevent a similar incident after the retail price of onions skyrocketed to P720 per kilo in December 2022.

The DA implemented a P250 per kilo SRP, but the price of onions went up amid the shortage in supply.

Based on monitoring of the DA on Friday, local red onion was sold for as high as P220 per kilo; local and imported white onions, P160 per kilo.

Meanwhile, in a separate statement yesterday, the DA announced that it has broken ground on four units of

large rice dryers in Dingras, Ilocos Norte, the first of more than two dozen post-harvest facilities that the National Food Authority (NFA) plans to build to enhance its procurement capability, increase rice yield and boost rice and corn storage capacity.

A project under the DA's Masagana Agri-Food Infrastructure Program, the Dingras facility consists of four 30-metric ton batch recirculating mechanical dryers.

It is part of the first phase of NFA's post-harvest facility modernization program.

The NFA said the multi-phase program aims to build dozens of rice processing centers composed of high-capacity industrial grade mechanical dryers, grain silos and rice mills across the country. These centers will have the combined capacity to store rice and corn enough to cover national requirements for 30 days.

The project will cost P130 million and will take 10 months to build, just in time for the main rice harvest next year, the NFA said.

— With Catherine Talavera

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## Govt allows importation of 21,000 MT of onions

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS

**T**HE Philippines will import 21,000 metric tons (MT) of red and yellow onions to augment its domestic supply and prevent a spike in retail prices amid rising demand for the commodity.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) will issue the necessary sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) to facilitate the entry of fresh onions starting this month.

The DA also emphasized they are undertaking the timely importation of fresh onion stocks to avert a "repeat" of what happened late last year until early this year when prices of the commodity skyrocketed to unprecedented levels.

"This intervention of the government is to guarantee an ample supply amidst the increasing demand by the forthcoming holiday season and to ensure the public that last year's scenario of the absurd increase in price would not be repeated," read a statement the DA issued recently.

According to the agriculture department, it would allow the entry of 17,000 MT of fresh red onion and 4,000 MT of fresh yellow onion. The commodities will be sourced from

China, India, and the Netherlands, according to the DTI.

The DA explained that it computed the total import volume based on the country's per capita consumption of onions. The imported stocks would also serve as a "buffer" to "stabilize" prices in the domestic market while awaiting the peak of local harvest around March to April of next year, it added.

"All imported fresh onions are required to arrive in the country on or before December 31, 2023, to guarantee our local producers that it will not coincide with the upcoming harvest. Extension of the must arrive date will still be subject to change depending on the available stocks and prices in the market," the DA said.

The Philippines has been consistently importing fresh onions since 1996 to be able to meet its annual demand for the commodity as local production remains insufficient, showed the historical data of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

For the first time in Philippine history, prices of onions zoomed to as high as P700 per kilogram early this year due to supply shortfall. The latter was pinned on stalled importation as government stood pat on its stance that local output was enough to meet the country's demand.

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21,000 MT BUFFER

## GOV'T ALLOWS ONION IMPORTS TO STOP 'ABSURD INCREASE' IN PRICES

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has authorized the importation of onions to ensure enough supply and avoid a repetition of the "absurd increase" in onion prices during the holiday season last year.

In a statement on Friday, the Bureau of Plant (BPI) said it began issuing sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) last month to procure 17,000 metric tons of red onions and 4,000 MT of yellow onions from China, India and the Netherlands.

"This intervention of the government is to guarantee an ample supply amidst the increasing demand by the forthcoming holiday season and to ensure the public that last year's scenario on the absurd

increase in price would not be repeated," the BPI said.

Onion prices surged to P600 to P700 a kilo during the Christmas season last year.

According to the BPI, onions to be sourced abroad will serve as the country's buffer ahead of the peak harvest of local produce between March and April next year.

Fresh onions must reach the archipelago on or before Dec. 31 this year to ensure it won't coincide with the upcoming harvest season.

The bureau said it arrived at the importation volume based on the per capita consumption of the Philippines, which is pegged at 17,000 MT per month.

Separately, the DA extended the period for issuing the second tranche of SPSICs for importing 35,000 MT of frozen round scad (*galunggong*), big-

eye scad, mackerel, bonito and moonfish until Dec. 10.

### Fish imports, too

In August, the DA announced another round of fish importation from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31 as it projected a decline in fish production due to the temporary closure of major fishing grounds based on historical data.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources pegged the demand at 827,285 MT, while the supply was estimated at 769,446 MT for the October to December period.

As per the directive, all imported fish should arrive not later than Jan. 15, 2024. SPSICs are valid for 45 days and expire after the deadline.

The agency released the first tranche of import clearances from Oct. 1 to 30, while the sec-

ond tranche was supposed to be given out from Nov. 6 to 30 but was subsequently adjusted to Dec. 10.

Based on the DA's price monitoring as of Friday, local red onion is priced from P130 to P220 per kilogram against P280 during the same period last year. Imported red onion is not available.

Markets sold local white onion from P100 to P160 per kg, while imported white onion retailed from P80 to P160 per kg.

Milkfish (*bangus*) is priced from P140 to P250 per kg compared to P180 per kg last year. Tilapia is sold from P115 to P160 per kg against P140 per kg previously.

Local round scad retailed from P200 to P300 per kg, previously from P240 per kg. Imported round scad ranged from P180 to P260 per kg against last year's P200 per kg. INQ

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## 130,000 kilo ng hot meat nasabat sa Navotas

Nakumpiska ng mga tauhan ng Department of Agriculture at National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) ang nasa 130,000 kilo ng hot meat mula sa dalawang cold storage sa Navotas City.

Ayon kay Den-

nis Solomon ng DA Inspectorate and Enforcement Team, isang buwan silang nagsagawa ng surveillance sa dalawang cold storage na nasa San Rafael Village kung saan nasabat ang kahun-kahong Peking duck, black

chicken, jellyfish, at iba pang uri ng isda.

Sinabi ni Solomon na isang tauhan nila ang naka-order ng peking duck na ipinagbabawal pa ring makapasok sa bansa.

Nabatid na walang kaukulang papeles

**NI DORIS  
FRANCHE-BORJA**

ang mga smuggled meat at nagsisimula nang mabulok.

"Pagpasok natin, tumambad satin yung amoy. Kung nakakaamoy lang ang mga camera natin,

pati mga cameramen natin masusuka," ani Solomon.

Paliwanag naman ni Dr. Jude Padasas ng NMIS, hindi dapat na ibinebenta ang smuggled agricultural products tulad nito

dahil sa panganib sa kalusugan.

"May karapatan po kayo sa malinis na karne. Ang mga [smuggled products na] ito ay hindi na dapat umaabot pa sa hapag-kainan," dagd-

ag pa ni Pasadas.

Umaabot sa P40 milyon ang halaga ng mga nakumpiskang agricultural products.

Ipinasara naman ng Navotas LGU ang nasabing pasilidad.

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**Para punan ang malaking demand sa Pasko...**  
**DA nag-angkat ng 21K tons ng sibuyas**

Nag-angkat ang Department of Agriculture (DA) ng aabot sa 21,000 metric tons ng sibuyas bilang dagdag suplay sa mataas na demand ng sibuyas sa panahon ng Kapaskuhan.

Ayon sa Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), 17,000 metric tons ng red onions at 4,000 metric tons ng yellow onions ang inangkat ng pamahalaan mula China, India at Netherlands.

Ang naturang volume ng aangkating sibuyas ay alinsunod sa dami ng nakokonsumo ng bawat katao.

Ayon sa DA, magsisilbi itong buffer stock para mapatatag ang presyuhang ng sibuyas habang inaanatay ang peak harvest ng sibuyas mula Marso Hanggang Abril 2024.

Takdang dumating sa Pilipinas ang inangkat na sibuyas bago magtapos ang buwan ng Disyembre.

Sa ngayon ay nasa P140 hanggang P180 ang per kilo ng pulang sibuyas. Kumpiyansa ang

BPI na asahang bababa na ang presyo dahil sa pagdating ng imported onions. (Angie dela Cruz)



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## Palay farmgate prices climb 18% in October

By XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS

**T**he farmgate price of palay or rice per kilogram picked up at a faster pace in October this year, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

PSA reported that the average farmgate price of palay in the country rose by 18.1 percent to ₱20.60 per kilogram in October from ₱17.44 in the

same month a year ago.

Month-on-month, the farmgate price of palay was also higher by 3.5 percent in October than in September at ₱19.91 per kilogram.

Of the regions, Northern Mindanao or Region 10 saw the highest farmgate price of palay in October at ₱23.56 per kilogram, up 9.3 percent from the previous month.

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

(BARMM) had the lowest average farmgate price of palay during the month at ₱17.36 per kilogram.

All regions, except BARMM, recorded increases in year-on-year growth rates of the average farmgate prices of palay in October. Region 10 posted the highest annual increase of 29.2 percent, while BARMM posted the lowest annual decline of 7.3 percent.

Meanwhile, on a month-

on-month basis, 11 regions saw increases in farmgate prices of palay, while decreases were noted in five regions.

The highest monthly growth rate of palay price was registered in BARMM at 30.5 percent to ₱17.36 per kilogram against the ₱13.30 recorded in September, while the highest decrease was posted in Region 13 (Caraga) which declined by 3.8 percent.



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# EL NIÑO THREAT

**SOME provinces are likely to experience drought in December due to El Niño, the weather bureau warned Thursday.**

Batangas, Cavite and Oriental Mindoro are forecast to experience drought, while areas in the Cordillera Administrative Region such as Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, Apayao are likely to experience

dry spells.

Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) weather specialist Joey Figuracion said other areas could also experience dry spells -- Ilocos Sur, La Union, Pangasinan, Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga,

Tarlac, Aurora and Palawan.

In a televised briefing, Figuracion said areas experiencing drought receive below-normal rainfall for five consecutive months, or way below-normal rainfall for three months.

"When we say way below normal, that means there's a 40 percent reduc-

tion in rainfall," he said.

Figuracion also cited that PAGASA was expecting higher temperature of up to 39 degrees Celsius in the country next month.

"This December will be warmer than normal. But we also expect cold surges due to 'amihan' season," he continued.

PNA