

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY JUNE 02, 2024

A. MANILA BULLETIN:

'Tanders na?': Aging Pinoy fishermen present food security problem, says Yamsuan

B. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Someone's gotta give

C. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA imposes ban on cattle, meat products from UK

Alarming': Yamsuan cites adverse impact on food security of aging fisherfolk

D. THE MANILA TIMES:

Fishers' group hits WPS militarization

E. BUSINESS MIRROR:

World crop trade eyes India as new govt may relax curbs

F. REMATE:

Cattle, meat products mula UK ipinagbawal ng DA

G. ABANTE:

Villar hinarang tapyas-buwis sa imported rice

MANILA BULLETIN:

'Tanders na?': Aging Pinoy fishermen present food security problem, says Yamsuan

BY ELLSON QUISMORIO

Jun 2, 2024 11:51 AM

AT A GLANCE

- For Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan, the Philippines' aging fisherfolk population presents a serious food security problem.



Fishermen from Masinloc, Zambales (Ellson Quismorio/ MANILA BULLETIN)

For Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan, the Philippines' aging fisherfolk population presents a serious food security problem.

“This is alarming. The fisheries and aquaculture industry, a major source of protein for our people, is vital to our food security,” Yamsuan said in a statement Sunday, June 2.

"Gayong pinagpupugay natin ang giting, dedikasyon at sipag ng ating mga mangingisda, tayo ay nababahala na baka dumating ang araw na magkulang na ang kanilang mga bilang kung hindi tayo kikilos agad para muling lumakas ang sektor at ma-encourage ang mga kabataan na humubog ng career sa fisheries and aquaculture," said the rookie congressman.

(While we salute the courage, dedication and diligence of our fisherfolk, we are concerned that there may come a time when their numbers would decline unless we act fast to strengthen this sector and encourage the youth to embark on careers in aquaculture and fisheries”)

Showing his concern over the situation, Yamsuan proposed that the government open more scholarships to young students to entice them to take up careers in aquaculture and fisheries.

The government should also step up the implementation of its post-harvest and marketing programs for the sector to make fishing and its related activities more appealing and profitable for young Filipinos, said Yamsuan, the newly designated chairperson of the House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries.

During the first hearing presided by Yamsuan as chairman of the committee, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) reported that of the 2.5 million Filipinos dependent on the country’s oceans and inland water bodies for their livelihood, about 24 percent, or 600,000 are above 60 years old; while another 21 percent, or about 525,000 are aged 51 to 60.

Yamsuan says this means that almost half or about 1.1 million are aging fisherfolk. Only 8 percent or about 200,000 are young fishers aged 21 to 30, while the rest are 31 to 40 years old.

The disturbing trend is reflected in the decline in production of the sector and the country’s growing dependence on fish imports.

In his report during the hearing, BFAR Assistant Director Zaldy Perez said that in the first quarter of 2024, the production of the Philippine fisheries industry dropped with a recorded volume of 987,193.69 metric tons (MT), which is 0.52 percent lower than the previous year’s 992,334.28 MT. The observed decline resulted in a decrease of 5,140.59 MT in the volume of locally caught and produced fish.

The decrease in the sector’s total production is the result of the 8.69 percent contraction of the municipal fisheries subsector, which provides the means of livelihood for small fishers.

Amid the increasing demand for fish and the decreasing domestic production, the country has relied on imports to fill the supply gap. BFAR’s mother agency, the Department of Agriculture (DA), had approved last April the importation of 25,000 MT of frozen fish to ensure sufficient supply of the food ahead of the closed-season fishing ban to be imposed in the last quarter of the year.

Yamsuan said the lack of cold storage facilities and reliable means of transport force fisherfolk to resort to turning their products into “daing” or dried fish, instead of storing it in

blast freezers and other similar equipment to preserve their quality and extend their shelf life.

In terms of providing scholarships to attract more young Filipinos to take up careers in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, Yamsuan noted that there appears to be few takers, despite BFAR's program that provides successful applicants with free tuition, a generous monthly stipend, book allowance, monetary support for thesis and research projects, graduation assistance and on-the-job training support.

Perez reported that only 1,384 students so far have been granted scholarships by the bureau.

In 2019, out of the 2,354 applicants, only 388 passed the scholarship criteria. In contrast, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) had close to 80,000 applicants for its science and technology scholarship program last year, of which over 9,000 students passed.

Yamsuan told BFAR seek the assistance of the congressional districts with coastal communities and launch an information campaign on social media to target more students interested in the scholarship program.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/6/2/tanders-na-aging-pinoy-fishermen-present-food-security-problem-says-yamsuan>

Someone's gotta give



HIDDEN AGENDA - Mary Ann LL. Reyes - The Philippine Star

June 2, 2024 | 12:00am

The Rice Tariffication Law of 2019, which replaced quantitative restrictions on rice importations with a tariff system, may have brought more harm than good.

A paper prepared by the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department (CPBRD) of the House of Representatives showed that at the onset of the RTL implementation, retail prices for all types of rice gradually declined from 2018 to 2021. In 2021, regular-milled rice was cheaper by P5.09 per kilo compared to the 2018 level. During the same period, the prices of well-milled and special rice were also lower by P4.05 per kg and P1.87 per kg respectively.

However, in 2022, retail prices started to increase, and the following year, prices were already higher than the 2018 level except for regular-milled rice which is still cheaper by 57 centavos per kilo. The law aimed to lower the prices of rice and improve farm productivity by benefitting both end-users and farmers.

In terms of the farmgate price of palay, the paper showed that in 2018, farmers can sell their produce at P24.36 per kilo for fancy palay and P20.06/kg for other varieties, the most profitable for farmers since 2010. However, in 2019, farmgate prices went down by P3.13/kg for fancy palay and P3.11/kg for other varieties. Farmgate prices slowly picked up until 2023 but still lower compared to 2018 prices, it said.

As to rice inflation rate, according to the CPBRD study, the price of rice has remained relatively stable in 2020-2022 but it started to climb in August 2023, spiking by 24.4 percent in March 2024, which the Philippine Statistics Authority

(PSA) said is the highest in 15 years. This also marked the 7th consecutive month of two-digit rice inflation that began in September last year.

The study noted that the impact of higher prices is even greater for the bottom 30 percent households as rice accounts for 17.9 percent of their consumption basket compared to 8.9 percent for all income households. In March of this year, rice inflation was recorded at 27.4 percent from only 2.6 percent in March 2023.

Meanwhile, the paper cited data from the PSA which showed that the share of imports in the total supply of rice in the country has generally been increasing over time.

At the start of the RTL implementation in 2019, the share of imported rice to total supply reached 20.2 percent which is higher than the 2018 level of 13.8 percent and the highest since 2010, it pointed out. In 2020, the share of imported rice went down to 15 percent but gradually increased, peaking at 23 percent of total supply in 2022.

In so far as rice stock inventory is concerned, the paper noted that the RTL was enacted in 2019 to address the surging inflation of rice prices during the last quarter of 2018 after the rice stocks of the National Food Authority (NFA) ran out. With the effectivity of the law, rice stocks posted the highest inventory for most of 2019, peaking with a year-end inventory of 3.1 million metric tons thereby ensuring that there would be enough rice supply all year round.

But four years after the RTL started, rice stocks recorded the lowest inventory for month of 2023. Rice inventory stood at 1.9 million metric tons in December of 2023, the lowest year-end stock both pre- and post-RTL implementation, it said.

On a positive note, one of the main objectives of the RTL is to improve the productivity and income of rice farmers. In 2019, the national average yield improved to 4.05 tons per hectare compared to the 2018 level of 3.97 tons per hectare. By 2023, farmers were already producing an average of 4.17 tons per hectare of rice, the highest since the law was implemented. During the same period, both irrigated and non-irrigated areas recorded yield production of 4.51 tons per hectare and 3.34 tons per hectare, respectively, the paper revealed.

The same study showed that in terms of palay production cost, in 2018 before the RTL was implemented, the cost of producing palay was P46,694 per hectare with a gross return of P79,670 per hectare or a profit of P32,976 per hectare for rice farmers. In 2019, profit went down to only P22,242 per hectare with production cost and gross return declining by 0.8 percent and 13.9 percent, respectively.

In 2021, the cost of production reached a high of P49,920 per hectare with a gross return of only P69,600 per hectare and a profit of P19,680 per hectare, way lower than the pre-RTL level, it added.

Just recently, President Marcos, renewed his call for Congress to pass an amendment to Republic Act 11203 or the RTL, which seeks to restore the price stabilization and supply regulation functions of the NFA. According to the President, he would certify the bill as urgent to bring down rice prices which currently stand at P50 to P60 per kilo.

The RTL amendment is expected to bring down the price of rice by P10 to P15 per kilo.

Improving palay prices and rice farmers' incomes and improving farm productivity and lowering production cost, while at the same time, making sure that consumers have access to affordable rice is difficult to achieve. Someone's got to give. Government should focus on reducing if not removing the layers of middlemen who while performing an important task of bringing farmers' produce to the market are getting bulk of the profits.

For comments, e-mail at mareyes@philstarmedia.com

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/02/2359638/someones-gotta-give>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA imposes ban on cattle, meat products from UK

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:44 AM June 02, 2024



Stock photo

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) temporarily banned the entry of live cattle and its by-products from the United Kingdom to prevent the spread of mad cow disease.

The DA has yet to upload a copy of Memorandum Order No. 20 imposing the importation ban on cattle, meat, meat products, bovine processed animal proteins and cattle semen.

But in a statement over the weekend, the DA said the directive aims to avert the spread of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease, to protect consumers and the livestock industry valued at P260 billion in the previous year.

“Mad cow disease can cause fatal nerve damage in cattle and its entry or possible spread in the country could undermine the livestock industry and compromise food safety,” based on the DA order dated May 30.

“Further, it is zoonotic in nature and causes Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans manifested through brain shrinkage and deterioration,” it said.

Amid the importation ban, all shipments that are already in transit, loaded or accepted unto port should be allowed, provided that the products were slaughtered or produced on or before April 10, 2024.

The DA said it would implement more stringent inspections of all arrivals of meat and meat by-products derived from cattle, including live animals and bovine processed animal proteins at the ports of entry to ensure only non-infected and safe commodities shall enter the country.

The memo was promulgated as British authorities informed the World Organization for Animal Health of an occurrence of classical strain, C-type BSE detected in South Ayrshire in Scotland on May 10.

The country purchased 273.6 million kilograms of imported meat in the three months ending March this year, according to the latest data from the Bureau of Animal Industry—an increase of 3.1 percent from 265.5 million kg in the same period a year ago.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1947321/da-imposes-ban-on-cattle-meat-products-from-uk>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

‘Alarming’: Yamsuan cites adverse impact on food security of aging fisherfolk

INQUIRER.net / 07:45 PM June 02, 2024



Bicol Saro Partylist Representative Brian Raymund Yamsuan

Bicol Saro Partylist Representative Brian Raymund Yamsuan has expressed deep concern over the increasingly detrimental impact of the Philippines’ aging fisherfolk population on the nation’s food security.

Yamsuan proposed that the government open more scholarships to young students to entice them to take up careers in aquaculture and fisheries.

The government should also step up the implementation of its post-harvest and marketing programs for the sector to make fishing and its related activities more appealing and profitable for young Filipinos, said Yamsuan, the newly designated chairperson of the House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries.

During the first hearing presided by Yamsuan as chair of the Committee, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) reported that of the 2.5 million Filipinos dependent on the country's oceans and inland water bodies for their livelihood, about 24%, or 600,000 are above 60 years old, while another 21%, or about 525,000 are aged 51 to 60.

Yamsuan said this means that almost half or about 1.1 million are aging fisherfolk. Only 8% or about 200,000 are young fishers aged 21-30, while the rest are 31 to 40 years old.

“This is alarming. The fisheries and aquaculture industry, a major source of protein for our people, is vital to our food security. Gayong pinagpupugay natin ang giting, dedikasyon at sipag ng ating mga mangingisda, tayo ay nababahala na baka dumating ang araw na magkulang na ang kanilang mga bilang kung hindi tayo kikilos agad para muling lumakas ang sektor at ma-encourage ang mga kabataan na humubog ng career sa fisheries and aquaculture,” Yamsuan said.

(While we salute the courage, dedication and diligence of our fisherfolk, we are concerned that there may come a time when their numbers would decline unless we act fast to strengthen this sector and encourage the youth to embark on careers in aquaculture and fisheries”)

The disturbing trend is reflected in the decline in production of the sector and the country's growing dependence on fish imports.

In his report during the hearing, BFAR Assistant Director Zaldy Perez said that in the first quarter of 2024, the production of the Philippine fisheries industry dropped with a recorded volume of 987,193.69 metric tons (MT), which is 0.52% lower than the previous year's 992,334.28 MT. The observed decline resulted in a decrease of 5,140.59 MT in the volume of locally caught and produced fish.

The decrease in the sector's total production is the result of the 8.69% contraction of the municipal fisheries subsector, which provides the means of livelihood for small fishers.

Amid the increasing demand for fish and the decreasing domestic production, the country has relied on imports to fill the supply gap. BFAR's mother agency, the Department of Agriculture (DA), had approved last April the importation of 25,000 MT of frozen fish to ensure sufficient supply of the food ahead of the closed-season fishing ban to be imposed in the last quarter of the year.

Yamsuan said the lack of cold storage facilities and reliable means of transport force fisherfolk to resort to turning their products into "daing" or dried fish, instead of storing it in blast freezers and other similar equipment to preserve their quality and extend their shelf life.

He agreed with fellow committee members Batangas Rep. Eric Buhain and ABONO Rep. Robert Raymund Estrella on the need to beef up the implementation of BFAR's post-harvest programs for the fisheries sector.

In terms of providing scholarships to attract more young Filipinos to take up careers in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, Yamsuan noted that there appears to be few takers, despite BFAR's program which provides successful applicants with free tuition, a generous monthly stipend, book allowance, monetary support for thesis and research projects, graduation assistance and on-the-job training support.

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Yamsuan suggested that BFAR seek the assistance of the congressional districts with coastal communities and launch an information campaign on social media to target more students interested in the scholarship program.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1947479/alarming-yamsuan-cites-adverse-impact-on-food-security-of-aging-fisherfolk>

Fishers' group hits WPS militarization

By Franco Jose C. Baroña

June 2, 2024

FILIPINO fishermen have spoken against the militarization of the West Philippine Sea (WPS), particularly the frequent joint military exercises conducted in areas they consider traditional fishing grounds, dealing a heavy toll on their livelihood.

Pablo Rosales, Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Mangingisda (Pangisda-Pilipinas) national chairman, said their group is against any foreign military activities in the WPS because it only makes neighboring countries "more aggressive" and the area "more dangerous" for Filipino fishermen.

"We are being dragged into this conflict that does not bring any good to the Filipino people," Rosales told The Manila Times in an interview.

"We are pleading with our government to please study and treat our conflict with China very carefully. We are dealing with an economic and military superpower who is also our biggest trading partner," he added.

Rosales said that every military exercise with the United States results in the banning of Filipino fishermen from fishing in disputed marine areas. An increase in China Coast Guard (CCG) patrols immediately follows every joint military drill in the area to prevent Filipino fishermen from going out farther into the sea.



Fisherfolk march along Recto Avenue in Manila on May 31, 2024, calling for the protection of fisherfolk against reclamation and the Chinese takeover of their fishing spots in the West Philippine Sea. The event also coincides with National Fisherfolk Day. PHOTO BY J. GERARD SEGUIA

"We, the fishermen, are the ultimate victims. Our fishermen are being exploited and used as the front liners by organizations aiming to heighten the issues," he said.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, including part of the area that the Philippines call the West Philippine Sea.

In response to China's growing influence, the United States has been bolstering alliances with the Philippines.

Washington and Manila are treaty allies and have deepened their defense cooperation since Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. took office in 2022. A big part of this cooperation is the frequent conduct of joint military exercises.

Rosales said local fishers, particularly those in Zambales, complain that the "no-sail zone" implemented during days-long military exercises interfered with peak fishing season.

According to Herman Tiu Laurel, Asian Century Philippines Strategic Studies Institute (ACPSSI) president, this was never a problem before the current administration's "Pivot to the US" that brought in the US military bases, naval live fire drills, and joint patrols with US gunboats.

Laurel said the desperate plea represents the economic crisis of 1.5 million Filipino fisherfolk.

"They face the damaging consequences of militarization, military and naval live fire drills, disruption of fishing access and routine, mounting tensions and fear, and fish breeding ground damage. All these reduce fisherfolk's catch and income," he said.

But the damage goes beyond the South China Sea to the national economy as investors "flee any place where geopolitical tensions mount," Laurel pointed out.

He noted that this is evident in the 63.6 percent crash of approved investments in the country in the first quarter of 2024.

Laurel said while Chinese investments are staying away from the Philippines, its electric vehicle companies invest \$1.44 billion in Thailand, \$1.3 billion in Indonesia, and \$10 billion in Malaysia.

On the other hand, the US, for its part, refuses to sign the free trade deal that the Philippines has been pushing for the past years, he said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/02/news/national/fishers-group-hits-wps-militarization/1949543>

World crop trade eyes India as new govt may relax curbs

Bloomberg News

June 2, 2024

Agricultural markets are on watch for potential shakeups in India's trade policies after a new government assumes office this month, which could have significant ramifications on global food prices.

The fifth-biggest economy has kept key crops like sugar and some major rice varieties off the global markets for more than a year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to ensure adequate domestic supplies and temper consumer costs ahead of national elections, walking back a pledge to "feed the world" in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It also refrained from cutting a tax on wheat imports to appease farmers, a large voting bloc.

Prices of some farm commodities have softened from their peaks, with state agencies also cracking down on hoarding and selling some grains from state reserves. That raises the chance of a shift in the restrictions after election results are announced on June 4.

A spokesperson representing both the food and commerce ministries didn't immediately comment.

Any relaxation in overseas sales could ease Asian benchmark rice prices that are trading near a 15-year high and add to a downturn in sugar. However, a rally in Chicago wheat could be further stoked if the administration accepts the industry's demand of cutting import levies to boost local supplies.

Rice

The nation has banned shipments of broken and white rice, besides imposing a 20-percent tax on the parboiled variety. The move, which has squeezed global supplies and helped boost world prices, was a big blow to some countries in West

Africa and the Middle East that rely on India for most of their requirements of the food staple.

“Indian rice millers are going to request the new government to allow broken and white rice exports,” said B.V. Krishna Rao, president of the Rice Exporters Association. The industry is fine with a levy, but restrictions should be lifted, he said.

Supplies are ample in the country and the forecast of an above-normal monsoon raises prospects for 2024-25 harvests, Rao said.

Wheat

The industry has been lobbying the government to reduce a 40-percent duty on wheat to make overseas buying viable, something India hasn't done at large scale since 2017-18. Local supplies have become tighter due to large purchases by state agencies for various welfare initiatives, and retail wheat and flour prices are up about 5 percent from a year earlier. Wheat futures in Chicago have jumped more than 9 percent so far this year.

The country needs to import 2 million to 3 million tons of the grain this year from overseas markets to improve its availability in the domestic market and create a buffer, said Navneet Chitlangia, senior vice president at the Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India.

The US Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service had predicted India wheat imports at 2 million tons in the season that began on April 1 on steady local demand.

Concerns of flour millers and bread makers about dwindling stockpiles will continue for months as sowing for the next crop will begin in October and November, while harvesting will start only in March 2025.

Sugar

The world's second-biggest sugar producer extended its restrictions beyond October. It introduced a new system in 2022-23 and limited exports to about 6 million tons, compared with unrestricted 11 million tons a year earlier. The nation is yet to announce this year's quota.

The country has enough reserves for local consumption as well as shipping 2 million tons this season, said Deepak Ballani, director general of the Indian Sugar and Bio-energy Manufacturers Association. “We expect the government to allow exports as requested by us,” he said.

Good pre-monsoon rainfall and the forecast for above-normal precipitation this year would not only ensure comfortable supplies for domestic consumption, but also sustain the ethanol blending program, he said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/02/world-crop-trade-eyes-india-as-new-govt-may-relax-curbs/>

REMATE:

Cattle, meat products mula UK ipinagbawal ng DA

June 2, 2024 10:10



MANILA, Philippines – Pansamantalang ipagbabawal ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang pagpasok ng live cattle at by-products nito mula sa United Kingdom upang mapigilan ang pagkalat ng mad cow disease.

Hindi pa nailalabas ng DA ang kopya ng Memorandum Order No. 20 na nagpapatupad ng importation ban sa cattle, meat, meat products, bovine processed animal proteins at cattle semen.

Ngunit sa pahayag ng ahensya nitong weekend, sinabi ng DA na layon ng direktiba na pigilan ang pagkalat ng Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), o mas kilala bilang mad

cow disease, upang protektahan ang mga consumer at livestock industry na nagkakahalaga ng P260 bilyon sa nakalipas na taon.

“Mad cow disease can cause fatal nerve damage in cattle and its entry or possible spread in the country could undermine the livestock industry and compromise food safety,” saad sa DA order na may petsang Mayo 30.

“Further, it is zoonotic in nature and causes Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans manifested through brain shrinkage and deterioration,” anang DA.

Sa kabila ng importation ban, ang lahat ng kargamento na ‘in transit’ na, naikarga o tinanggap sa mga pantalan at paliparan ay dapat na payagan basta’t ang mga ito ay kinatay bago o noong Abril 10, 2024.

Magpapatupad ang DA ng mahigpit na inspeksyon sa lahat ng mga dumarating na mga karne at by-products mula sa mga baka, kabilang ang buhay na hayop at bovine processed animal proteins sa mga ports of entry upang masiguro na ang mga non-infected at ligtas na produkto lamang ang papasok sa bansa.

Binuo ang memo matapos na mag-abiso ang British authorities sa World Organization for Animal Health sa pagkakaroon nito ng classical strain, C-type BSE na naitala sa South Ayrshire, Scotland noong Mayo 10.

Bumili ang Pilipinas ng 273.6 milyong kilo ng imported meat sa nakalipas na tatlong buwan o hanggang Marso ngayong taon, ayon sa pinakahuling datos ng Bureau of Animal Industry. Mas mataas ito ng 3.1 percent mula sa 265.5 milyong kilo sa kaparehong panahon noong 2023. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/cattle-meat-products-mula-uk-ipinagbawal-ng-da/>

ABANTE:

Villar hinarang tapyas-buwis sa imported rice

- Abante News
- June 1, 2024



Kinontra ni Sen. Cynthia Villar ang inisyatiba ni Finance Secretary Ralph Recto na pansamantalang ibaba ang taripa sa imported na bigas upang makatulong sa pagbaba sa presyo nito.

Katuwiran ni Villar, bababa rin ang ayuda na binibigay sa mga magsasaka sa ilalim ng Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

rin ang binibigay sa mga farmers natin na pantulong para maging competitive sila,” giit ng chairperson ng Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food sa interview ng DWIZ nitong Sabado.

Aniya, ang panukala ni Recto ay hindi rin umano kasama sa pinag-usapan nila sa Kamara de Representantes hinggil sa magiging laman ng panukalang pagsusog sa Rice Tariffication Law.

“We have to talk about it. Hindi iyan kasali sa usapan namin,” diin pa niya.

Ayaw ni Villar na mabawasan ang pondo sa RCEF dahil malaki raw ang naibibigay na tulong nito sa mga magsasaka tulad ng mechanization, pagkuha ng magandang binhi, training at pag-iwas na maging biktima ng ‘5-6’ loan shark.

Bukod dito, sa RCEF din kinukuha ang pondo para pambili ng gobyerno ng bigas sa abroad.

“Humihingi rin ang presidente ng fund para kung nagmamahal ang rice, mag-i-import sila ng government to government thru DA,” paglalahad ni Villar.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/06/01/villar-hinarang-tapyas-buwis-sa-imported-rice/>