

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY JULY 25, 2024

A. MANILA BULLETIN:

DBM: P11-billion calamity fund still available

NDRRMC validating at least 4 deaths in Batangas landslide

‘Sana’ in SONA: Controlled inflation

B. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA chief: Marcos remains focused on agricultural sector

SONA: Asan ang food?

C. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DTI orders price freeze in Metro Manila amid state of calamity

D. BUSINESS WORLD:

Temperature-regulated hatchery in the works for *bangus* industry

E. MANILA STANDARD:

SONA for the immediate audience

F. THE MANILA TIMES:

Searca pushes agri research consortium

G. MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:

Indonesia plans widespread use of palm oil-based B40 biodiesel in 2025

Ample supply outlook halts rally in soybeans, corn

H. BUSINESS MIRROR:

Lalamove to set up typhoon relief operations for farmers in recently launched Baguio City serviceable area

Government may cut price of rice sold at Kadiwa-DA

I. REMATE:

Price freeze ipinatupad sa NCR

J. ABANTE:

Mga magsasaka, mangingisda hinirit ipatupad 'Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act'

MANILA BULLETIN:

DBM: P11-billion calamity fund still available

BY CHINO S. LEYCO

Jul 24, 2024 06:01 PM

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said that almost half of the government's calamity funds are still available to assist people affected by Typhoon Carina and the southwest monsoon.

According to Budget Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman, approximately P11.12 billion remains in the calamity fund out of the total allocation of P22.736 billion for this year, which includes a carryover amount of P2.236 billion from last year's budget.

Pangandaman said the budget carryover can be utilized for various disaster relief operations until the end of 2024.

“Our government is prepared. We are ready to support all operations for disaster rescue and relief with the necessary budget. Identified frontline government agencies may mobilize their Quick Response Fund (QRF) allocated in their respective budgets,” Pangandaman said in a statement.

The QRF is an allocated budget that serves as a pre-disaster or standby fund for agencies to promptly aid areas affected by disasters and emergencies.

The 2024 General Appropriations Act allocates calamity funds in the budgets of the Department of Education (P3 billion), the Department of Public Works and Highways (P1 billion), the Department of Agriculture (P1 billion), and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (P1.75 billion).

Other others with QRFs are the Department of Health (P500 million), the Office of Civil Defense (P500 million), the Bureau of Fire Protection (P50 million), the Philippine National Police (P50 million), and the Philippine Coast Guard (P75 million).

Once these agencies have used up at least 50 percent of their QRF, Pangandaman said they could ask the DBM for a replenishment.

Further, after the typhoon, if necessary, agencies may tap into the available National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (NDRRMF) under the FY 2024 GAA upon completion of damage assessment and recommendation by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), and following the approval of the President.

The NDRRMF may be used for aid, relief, and rehabilitation services to communities/areas; as well as, repair, rehabilitation and reconstruction works in connection with the occurrence of natural or human induced calamities in the current or two preceding years.

The NDRRMF also serves as additional funding source of the QRF agencies when the balance thereof has reached 50 percent, subject to the approval of the DBM.

From January to July 2024, calamity fund releases amounted to about P11.612 billion.

According to state weather bureau, “Carina” did not make landfall in the Philippines, but it has been affecting parts of Northern Luzon and enhancing the southwest monsoon.

As of writing, Metro Manila has been placed under a state of calamity.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/24/dbm-p11-billion-calamity-fund-still-available>

MANILA BULLETIN:

NDRRMC validating at least 4 deaths in Batangas landslide

BY MARTIN SADONGDONG

Jul 24, 2024 11:06 AM



Authorities recover the bodies of landslide victims in Sitio Manalao, Brgy. Subic Ilaya, Agoncillo, Batangas amid heavy rains on July 24, 2024. (Photo: Agoncillo LGU)

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said Wednesday, July 24, that it was confirming a report that at least four people died in a landslide that struck Agoncillo, Batangas amid a heavy downpour.

The bodies of the fatalities were recovered in Sitio Manalao, Brgy. Subic Ilaya on Wednesday morning, according to the local government of Agoncillo.

The local government said the fatalities included a six-month-old pregnant woman aged 28 and minors.

“We are verifying with our concerned regional office regarding this report,” the NDRRMC public information office said.

Part of the verification process is to determine if the incident was connected to the onslaught of Typhoon “Carina” which has also enhanced the effects of southwest monsoon (habagat) in many parts of the country, including Batangas.

882K individuals affected

In its latest report, the NDRRMC said that a total of 882,861 individuals (183,464) families have already been affected by the combined effects of Carina, habagat, and the former tropical depression “Butchoy” which already left the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) last weekend.

More than 612,000 individuals (123,000) families were displaced by the three weather systems since July 18.

A total of 423 areas across the country were submerged from gutter-deep to chest-deep floods, according to data from the NDRRMC.



A Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) personnel and a civilian rescue a fishermen who got stranded near the Bindow Dam in San Fabian, Pangasinan due to the effects of typhoon Carina and southwest monsoon (habagat) on July 23, 2024. (Photo: PCG)

In Pangasinan, a fisherman was rescued by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and bystanders after he got stranded near the Bindow Dam in Brgy. Bindow, San Fabian town on Tuesday, July 23.

The Coast Guard Station Pangasinan identified the rescued fisherman as Renato Ceralde, 57.

“[He] was caught off guard by the gradually rising water level of the dam,” the PCG said.

In Batangas, more than 200 residents living near a coastal community were evacuated by the personnel of Coast Guard District Southern Tagalog (CGDSTL) in Brgy. Maguihan, Lemery town.

Carina and habagat caused big waves which reached the coastal village, prompting authorities to evacuate the residents.

The CGDSTL also conducted another search and rescue mission in Sitio Pandan, Brgy. Parang, Calapan, Oriental Mindoro as the area was hit by knee-deep floods. The rescued residents were brought to Barangay Parang evacuation center.

In Romblon, the PCG deployed search and rescue personnel from the Coast Guard Sub-Station (CGSS) Looc to evacuate a family of five who got stranded due to the sudden increase in water levels at the Carolina Bridge in Sitio Sanggotan, Brgy. Poblacion in Looc town.

Accordingly, other members of the victims' families had already evacuated but they were left behind when the floodwater suddenly rose.

PCG personnel also helped seven stranded residents in Sitio Paraw, Brgy. Sto. Nino, Sablayan Occidental Mindoro to evacuate using rescue boats as the area was submerged in floodwaters.

Stranded

Meanwhile, a total of 354 passengers were stranded in various ports in Southern Tagalog and Bicol regions as Carina forced the cancellation of sea trips.

The PCG said the affected ports included Tilik Port, San Andres Port, Romblon Port, San Agustin Port, San Jose Port, and Real Port in Southern Tagalog; and Manaoagan Port, Port of Pasacao, Aroroy Port, Masbate City Port, Mobo Port, San Pascual Port, and Bulan Port in Bicol region.

Agri damage hits P9.7M

The NDRRMC said damage to agriculture due to Carina, habagat, and Butchoy has already reached P9,706,852.34, with 1,453 farmers and fisherfolk affected in Mimaropa (Region 4B), Western Visayas (Region 6), Zamboanga Peninsula (Region 9), Northern Mindanao (Region 10), and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

This is expected to further increase as the cost of damage in other regions have yet to be calculated by concerned agencies and reported to the NDRRMC.

Damage to infrastructure due to Carina was still being validated as of this writing.

A total of 245 houses were also either partially damaged or totally destroyed in nine affected regions.

Meanwhile, the NDRRMC has distributed P29 million worth of food and non-food items to 23,000 affected families.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/24/ndrrmc-validating-at-least-4-deaths-in-batangas-landslide>

MANILA BULLETIN:

‘Sana’ in SONA: Controlled inflation

BY DIWA C. GUINIGUNDO

Jul 25, 2024 00:01 AM

OF SUBSTANCE AND SPIRIT



To be sure, and we heard them from NewsWatch Plus, there were many “sanas” during the 3rd SONA (State of the Nation Address) of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Sana bumaba ang presyo ng bilihan. Sana dumami ang trabaho. Sana ipagtanggol ang West Philippine Sea. Sana ipatigil na ang POGO (Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators). The civil society demands a good scorecard from this government.

With a fine-tooth comb, NEDA as the planning authority should do the monitoring having been mandated to prepare the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028. It’s an excellent Plan because it formalizes a comprehensive roadmap complete with actionable policies and programs and sets for Congress an appropriate set of legislative priorities to address both short-term and medium-term issues. A good scorecard and monitoring system should lead to a good execution of public policy. Otherwise, the vision for this nation could just ossify on paper.

We focus on controlling inflation because it remains the most urgent concern of the Filipinos based on the latest Pulse Asia Survey for June 17-24 and Octa Survey for June 26-July 1. Around two-thirds of Pulse Asia and Octa respondents rated inflation control as the most urgent national concern.

Inflation is closely related to the other concerns like increasing workers’ pay, because higher prices weaken their purchasing power. Reducing poverty is also critical because prices are already high. Creating more jobs is a direct means of empowering people to mitigate their poor condition and weaker spending capacity. Finally, fighting graft and corruption is considered one big impediment to appropriate public policy to provide infrastructure and social services.

Table 1.1 of the PDP 2023-2028 provides us with the baseline of food and headline inflation at 5.7 percent and 5.6 percent for the period January-November 2022. For both indicators, the target was set at two to four percent for 2024 and 2025.

We consider three components behind the inflation management in the Philippines. One is appropriate monetary policy; two, is a set of strong non-monetary measures to manage the supply side; and three, responsible fiscal policy.

On monetary policy, we give high credit to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. In the last six months of the previous administration, the BSP was so behind the curve before it decided to tighten monetary policy. This was rather too late and too little. For as early as March 2022 onwards, actual inflation had already reached the 4.0 percent upper end of the target, with inflation forecasts also subsequently breaching their targets for both 2022 and 2023.

When the Marcos government took over on July 1, 2022 the new BSP leadership jacked up the policy rate by 75 basis points (bps) from 2.5 percent to 3.25 percent in an off-cycle meeting. That and more adjustments came, running a total of 450 basis points to address the surging inflation for both 2022 and 2023.

By December last year, the year-on-year monthly inflation fell within the target at 3.9 percent. For the first six months of this year, inflation averaged 3.5 percent. The new BSP leadership should also be commended for keeping its focus on price stability even as various quarters called for a monetary policy reversal in order to stimulate the credit market and stimulate economic activities.

It is not correct to suggest that today, the BSP should have eased monetary policy because one, it is using lagging indicators; two, monetary policy has lagged effects of about 18 months; and three, inflation data masks cumulative effects of previous price movements.

In reality, the BSP sets its monetary stance not by looking at the past, but by looking into the future based on its forecasts for the next two years. Whatever monetary steps taken today would not be felt tomorrow or the following week, but over a period of about 18 months. Previous inflation rates are monitored because they are useful in discerning how the previous decisions fanned out. Finally, because inflation eats into the purchasing power especially among the daily wage earners among us, the BSP has to be stubbornly committed to win the war against inflation. Due to dominant upward risks, the BSP was correct in keeping its tight monetary policy until today.

After all, the impact on growth has been quite manageable. High inflation discourages personal consumption which accounts for around three quarters of GDP.

Well, what the BSP could have avoided was its press statement on a possible early easing ahead of the US Fed that rattled the FX market and sent the peso past the ₱58 to a dollar exchange rate. Given the exchange rate pass through, and if prolonged, that could have some inflationary consequences. At the time, the BSP's risk-adjusted forecasts exceeded the target.

On non-monetary measures, high mark is impossible. Food, especially rice, production is not sufficient, farmers' productivity remains low. The ax should fall squarely on the Department of Agriculture, National Irrigation Authority, DTI and other relevant government agencies. We have yet to see a coherent food security program. No wonder for June alone, food inflation continued to be high at 6.5 percent, no farther away from the previous year's 6.7 percent. Rice inflation remained double digit at 22.5 percent.

There is an Interagency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook. Its mandate is clear: address supply and logistics issues including measures to combat immoral and illegal

profiteering. They have yet to deliver. For instance, it took eternity to get the tariff duties on imported rice reduced from 35 percent to 15 percent.

A few words about public finance. There was so much in the 2023 and 2024 national budgets that could have funded priority infrastructure in agriculture and industry as well as in research and development, education and skills retraining programs that could have easily translated into higher economic growth and perhaps better supply outcome, something good for inflation management. Fiscal consolidation is also crucial because the fiscal space is slim; excessive spending could reignite higher demand pressure. This could compromise price stability. For this metric, fair score is fair.

Sana...

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/25/sana-in-sona-controlled-inflation>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA chief: Marcos remains focused on agricultural sector

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

July 25, 2024 | 12:00am



Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos has proven himself on top of the situation when he acknowledged in his State of the Nation Address that prices of rice – ranging from P45 to P65 per kilo – remain high and that greater focus on the agriculture sector is needed, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday.

“The message of the President is clear. If you saw the details, it just shows how the President is on top of the situation. Although, we have a problem now, he saw all the aspects, from planting to harvest, until the selling, including the fisherfolk, ports are needed and all. He knows that we are focused on these things and the most important is the support of the President to the agricultural sector,” Laurel said during the post-SONA discussions.

In his speech, Marcos said that the hard lesson of last year had made it very clear that whatever is glowingly said about the Philippines including its being among the best-performing economy in Asia, means nothing to a Filipino, who has to deal with high cost of rice.

Tiu Laurel added that the Kadiwa program, launched during the time of the President's late father and namesake, was a very good program but was neglected for many years.

“Hopefully, we will try to achieve 1,500 sites in the next three years, to be able to serve almost all the municipalities and cities in the entire country,” Tiu Laurel pointed out.

He added the Department of Agriculture plans to make Kadiwa outlets run by cooperatives.

“This will ensure that the farmers and fishermen can go directly to the consumers, to increase their income and bring down the retail prices for consumers. That's the basic idea there and of course, it is also done in order to keep our retailers and wholesalers honest, to prevent profiteering if possible so that we can bring down inflation,” Tiu Laurel added.

He said the DA is on track to help Marcos in his advocacy of ending hunger in the country and improving the economy through timely and appropriate interventions.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/07/25/2372798/da-chief-marcos-remains-focused-agricultural-sector>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

SONA: Asan ang food?



VIRTUAL REALITY - Tony Lopez - The Philippine Star

July 25, 2024 | 12:00am

To deliver his third and best State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. walked for 65 seconds through a virtual gauntlet all by his lonesome self, only to emerge seemingly victorious into the cheers and applause of the 2,000-strong bejeweled crowd inside the cavernous session hall of suburban House of Representatives, on Monday, July 22.

The walk-through was also a metaphor for loneliness of leadership at the top, where the buck stops.

Grim-faced and unsmiling, the gladiator in Marcos Jr. went straight to tackling the monster of the moment – food security and its grating consequence, high inflation.

“Whatever current data proudly banner our country as among the best-performing in Asia means nothing to a Filipino who is confronted by the price of rice at 45 to 65 pesos per kilo,” he declared. Remarkable candor.

At P58.86 per dollar, a P65 rice is \$1.10 per kilo. More than 15 million Filipinos struggle on \$1 a day income, which cannot buy a kilo of rice.

In 2024, from a 5.5 percent growth in 2023, the Philippine economy is forecast by experts to grow 6.2 percent, the highest in ASEAN’s ten countries and the second highest in Asia. This statistic, while good, Marcos sneered, “means nothing to our countrymen faced with high prices of goods, especially food, rice in particular.” Remarkable candor.

But then the President put the blame on several factors, except his government – market forces, war in Ukraine and Hamas, climate change and El Niño (after La

Niña in March) which, he said, other countries also suffer from. Previously, he had blamed “smugglers, hoarders and price manipulators” for record-high rice prices that began rising in September.

“I feel your burden,” Marcos told his countrymen, “I cannot ignore your pain and suffering.”

The high price of rice is the main reason why inflation – the rate of increase in prices of basic goods – tripled, from 2.4 percent in 2020 to 7.2 percent in first half 2023, during the first year of the Marcos II presidency.

The high inflation in turn triggered a five-fold increase in the barometer (of cost of money), the 91-day T-bill rate, from 1.11 percent in 2021 to 5.40 percent, resulting in more costly production of goods and services and business failures, which cascaded into job losses.

Marcos’s solution to high rice prices: produce more rice. Indeed, palay output last year, he exulted, reached 20 million tons, the highest since 1987 (applause). This translates into just 13 million tons of rice, short by three million of the 16-million-ton annual demand for the staple. So imports must be resorted to, said the President.

Reports say Manila will import over four million tons of rice this year (4.7 million tons, according to the US government), up from the record 3.6 million tons imported in 2023, which made the Philippines the world’s largest rice importer.

“We continue to support the agricultural sector,” the President assured. In the last ten years, agriculture’s share of total economic production or GDP fell 30 percent, from 13.1 percent to less than 10 percent, equivalent to a loss of at least P1 trillion worth of food output yearly.

A rice or food shortage for Filipinos seems ironic. The Philippines has two of the best rice institutes in the world, the International Rice Research Institute in Los Baños, Laguna and the Philippine Rice Institute in Nueva Ecija. Filipinos taught other countries how to grow rice. And now we import rice in huge volumes from these countries.

You need five elements to produce enough rice: seeds, water, land, good weather and an able-bodied farmer. In all five, the Philippines comes short.

Little has been heard of new breakthrough rice varieties like the hybrid that propelled Masagana 99 rice boom under Marcos I, outside of new varieties that require plenty of chemical-based fertilizer, irrigation, no flooding and yet poison the soil after several plantings.

Even with new so-called popular rice varieties developed by IRRI and PhilRice, yields are not that spectacular, four tons per hectare on average in 29 of the country's 82 provinces, and at very high cost. China does six to 12 tons per hectare. Production cost per kilo is as high as P20, triple that of Thailand and Vietnam, thanks to higher hired Filipino labor and expensive fertilizer and electricity.

The Philippines has plenty of rainfall (20 typhoons a year) but not enough of it irrigates rice farms. Of the 4.8 million hectares planted with rice, only 3.29 million hectares are irrigated, leaving 1.51 million dependent on rainfall. Irrigation doubles, even triples rice yields; so instead of getting three tons per hectare, you should get six to eight tons.

Average rice landholding per farmer is 1.8 hectares. Land reform subdivided otherwise productive huge tracts of land, which were denied economies of scale and modernization. It also resulted in higher land rent. Today, the Filipino farmer, along with the fisherman, is the poorest Filipino.

The Philippines has 2.9 million rice farmers; at 60, all are aging and losing strength.

On June 20, 2024, President Marcos cut the tariff on rice, from 35 percent, to 15 percent.

EO 62 is to ensure the continuous supply of goods, temper inflation and protect the purchasing power of Filipinos, which modified the rates of import duty on various products, including rice.

Marcos said, "The tariff rates shall be subject to periodic review, with the Most-Favored Nation tariff rates for rice subject to review every four months to ensure the responsiveness of our policies to prevailing economic conditions. Meanwhile, consistent with the government's thrust to devote more resources to the agricultural sector, the tariff revenue collection from rice imports will be utilized to strengthen government efforts to boost the productivity and competitiveness of local rice producers."

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/07/25/2372730/sona-asan-ang-food>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DTI orders price freeze in Metro Manila amid state of calamity

By: [Alden M. Monzon](#), [Zacarian Sarao](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:58 PM July 24, 2024



A customer buys vegetables at a market in Manila on October 5, 2018. (Photo by TED ALJIBE / AFP)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on Wednesday ordered a price freeze on basic necessities in Metro Manila, after its declaration of a state of calamity due to the effects of Super Typhoon Carina and the southwest monsoon (habagat).

“The price freeze, effective immediately, aims to protect consumers from unjust price increases during this time of crisis,” said DTI Secretary Fred Pascual in a statement.

“We are committed to ensuring that basic goods remain affordable and accessible to all affected residents,” he added.

According to Pascual, the price freeze will be in effect during the state of calamity. He vowed that the DTI will closely coordinate with its Metro Manila office to monitor the situation and guarantee the availability of essential goods.

The DTI said the price control includes essential goods such as rice, corn, bread, fresh vegetables, roots crops, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, milk, coffee, sugar, cooking oil, salt, laundry soap, detergent, firewood, charcoal, candles, and certain medicines classified as essential by the Department of Health.

Stern warning

Pascual also issued a stern warning to businesses that may attempt to exploit the situation.

“Those found violating the law will face severe consequences, including imprisonment and substantial fines. We urge all establishments to comply with the price freeze and prioritize the well-being of our fellow citizens during this difficult time.”

Under the Price Act, prices of basic necessities are automatically frozen at their prevailing prices for sixty days once a state of calamity in an area.

Under the same law, penalties for price manipulation include imprisonment five to 15 years, with fines ranging from ₱5,000 to ₱2 million.

Meanwhile, those found violating the price ceiling will face prison time of one year to 10 years, as well as fines ranging from ₱5,000 to ₱1 million.

The government agency is encouraging the public to report any overpricing or violations to the DTI Consumer Care Hotline at 1-384 or to email them at consumercare@dti.gov.ph.

Support Typhoon Carina Victims

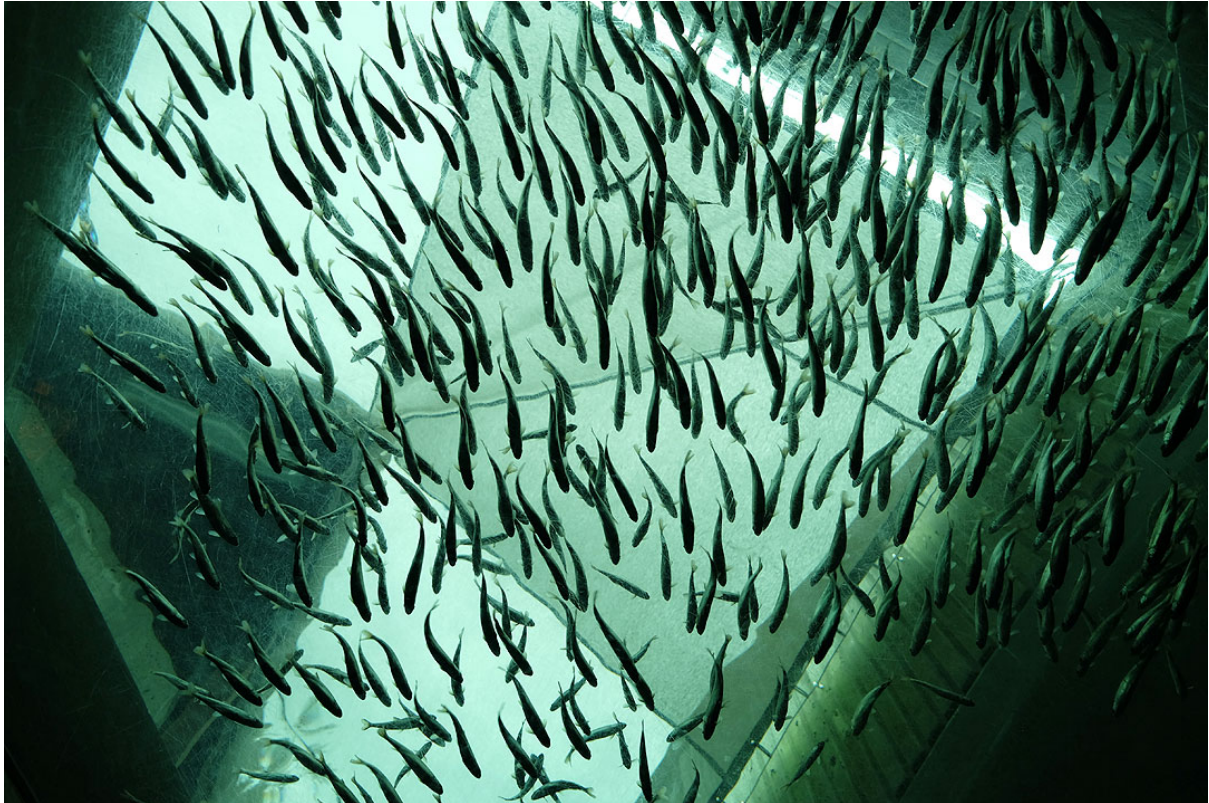
The Inquirer is extending its relief and fund drive to help families affected by Typhoon Carina. Donate to Inquirer Foundation Corp. at BDO Current Account No: 007960018860. For inquiries, email foundation@inquirer.com.ph.

<https://business.inquirer.net/471267/dti-orders-price-freeze-in-metro-manila-amid-state-of-calamity>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Temperature-regulated hatchery in the works for *bangus* industry

July 24, 2024 | 7:45 pm



BRUCE WARRINGTON-UNSPLASH

THE NATIONAL Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) said it hopes to seal an agreement with the Department of Science and Technology (DoST) to build a temperature-regulated hatchery for milkfish (*bangus*).

The NFRDI said that the P5 million hatchery project, to be pursued in partnership with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), will seek to address production challenges during colder periods.

“The production of milkfish in hatcheries in the Philippines is affected by seasonal variations, particularly during colder months when environmental changes result in lower or no egg production by the milkfish broodstock,” NFRDI Executive Director Lilian C. Garcia said in a statement.

The NFRDI said that the project is seeking to establish a cost-effective and reliable heating system to maintain optimal water temperature in broodstock tanks.

She said that the hatchery technology being considered is a Recirculating Aquaculture System (RAS) equipped with a heat pump and an electric heater, with automated water-quality monitoring.

“This intervention aims to create a conducive breeding environment for milkfish broodstock by maintaining optimum water quality in tank-based facilities,” Ms. Garcia added.

The project is set to run until June 30, 2025, and will be funded with a DoST grant-in-aid.

The selected site is a BFAR-National Fisheries Development Center in Dagupan City.

“The project is expected to benefit the aquaculture industry in the Philippines, consumers of milkfish, and metals, engineering and allied industries involved in aquaculture,” the NFRDI said. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/07/24/610141/temperature-regulated-hatchery-in-the-works-for-bangus-industry/>

MANILA STANDARD

SONA for the immediate audience

By Lito Banayo

July 25, 2024, 12:00 am

“For more than an hour, the SONA was filled with a recitation of achievements, some true, many still promises”

It started very well, with a candid admission high GDP rates mean nothing to people who are hungry and cannot cope with inflation, particularly in food and rice.

But the prescriptions were the staple of many previous SONAs and every agriculture secretary’s repeated pronouncements.

The issue is really in the implementation of all these prescribed solutions, which in the last two years, and even when our president was the agriculture secretary, was quite spotty.

Kadiwa where cheap rice and a sprinkling of vegetables are sold in a few outlets will be expanded all over the nation, our president promised.

Now with Typhoon Carina raising the requirement for relief to flooded communities, I wonder where the NFA and the DA will get the rice that they will sell at tremendous loss.

The farmers federation which is against the recent executive order granting “open sesame” for rice imports via a reduced 15 percent tariff, computed that if the 4P beneficiaries would be given 29 peso rice, the daily loss to government would amount to 220 million pesos, based on NFA’s buying price of palay.

Figure that out in a year, and wonder where the funds will come from.

But don’t worry, USDA estimates we will import 4.7 million tons of rice this year, far more than the 3 million shortfall the president said is standard. Hope that 45 to 60 pesos will go no higher with Carina now and other typhoons later in the year.

Still, DA spokesman ASec Arnel de Mesa the day after declared that the promise of 20 pesos per kilo is still forthcoming. Come on.

For more than an hour, the SONA was filled with a recitation of achievements, some true, many still promises.

Those that were implemented were not necessarily new initiatives; most were handed down by the previous two administrations and completed in the current leadership's term.

The newly signed procurement law intends to plug leaks that cause delays, shoddy products and projects, even promote corruption. Again it would depend on the implementation of the new law, as the "wa-is" in government will always find ways and means to go around the law.

As it was when PDAF was declared illegal by the Supreme Court after the pork barrel scam where invisible projects were turned into gold by senators and congressmen, many of them still in government, elected by voters who never learn and never discern or are hoodwinked by creative ads, pure name recall and even crazy dancing.

Worse, pork has been pre-fabricated into the "president's" budget because the DBM and the Cabinet prefer to talk turkey with powerful solons even before the NEB is submitted to Congress. Then during budget deliberations in both houses and in the bicameral conference committee, the insertions become larger and larger, transferring funds here and there, and into "unprogrammed" allocations.

Yet, as in the example of Philhealth funds where the president was eerily silent, "unused" monies as a result of non-feasance are now being shanghaied to fund unprogrammed allocations, e.g. pork.

The diplomats applauded the declaration that in the fight against illegal drugs, "extermination was never one of the policies." Nice soundbite.

Maybe because the pushers had been exterminated in the previous government, he he. But how come the illegal trade continues, and with many policemen back to their involvement in drugs and other crimes?

The firm resolve about the WPS, recited before foreign audiences before, was met with a standing ovation, preceded by one over-enthusiastic congressman starting the ovation.

Truly, it was a SONA for the immediate audience.

Still the day after, Beijing was disputing our DFA's interpretation of a modus vivendi where in truth and in fact, "coordination" means prior information to the "enemy" on our re-supply missions, short of asking permission.

Then the banning of POGOs, which met with even greater applause and prolonged ovation capped with cheers of “BBM!”. Predictably, Tuesday’s headlines were all about the “extinction” of the POGO invasion.

The morning after, the “masa” who do not care or even know little about this thing called POGO wonders how the SONA will uplift poverty and stave off involuntary hunger.

<https://manilastandard.net/opinion/columns/so-i-see-by-lito-banayo/314475718/sona-for-the-immediate-audience.html>

Searca pushes agri research consortium

By Leander C. Domingo

July 25, 2024

THE Philippine-hosted Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) is spearheading the effort to establish an agricultural research consortium with the convening of more than 100 stakeholders from Southeast Asia (SEA) at the center's headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna.

The objective of the Regional Stakeholders Consultation Workshop held at Searca in June was to discuss the establishment of a regional research consortium through the Consortium for Agricultural Development, Research and Extension in Southeast Asia (Cadre).

According to Searca, Cadre is a network of high-caliber, like-minded institutions with a unified goal of driving agricultural transformation toward sustainable and inclusive development in SEA.



Photo shows the participants of the Regional Stakeholders Consultation Workshop held last June at the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The participants represented government, academe, industry and private sectors, farmers and civil society organizations, research institutions and development partners.

Searca Director Glenn Gregorio said the workshop gathered inputs and recommendations from Cadre's potential members and partners, focusing on "establishing its operational strategies and activities, identifying its overall research agenda and developing its theory of change and impact pathways."

During the event, Nur Azura Binti Adam, Searca deputy director for programs, highlighted Cadre's commitment to research and knowledge extension and reiterated the workshop's objectives.

Presenting an overview of the consultation workshop, its purpose and the intended outputs needed to prepare the consortium for its pilot operations was Cadre's lead coordinator Bernice Anne de Torres, also the Searca's program specialist of Research and Thought Leadership Department (RTLTD).

Datuk Habibah Abdul Rahim, director of the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization secretariat, emphasized the critical role of agriculture in poverty alleviation and food security.

Habibah also cited the challenges of climate change, demographic shifts and malnutrition, emphasizing the need for regional initiatives to complement global efforts in achieving sustainable development goals.

Senior officer Pedcris Orencio, who represented Pham Quang Minh, head of the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Division of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) secretariat, underscored the importance of research and development (R&D) to address challenges and help formulate recommendations for a resilient agriculture sector.

ADVERTISEMENT

"Collaborative efforts will help R&D outputs align with the Asean economic community's vision for SEA to be a key player in integrated global food systems," Orencio said.

Singapore's Nanyang Technological University Prof. Paul Teng presented comprehensively the role of research, development and extension in agricultural transformation and the need for regional collaboration to address pressing issues impacting the SEA agriculture landscape.

RTLTD program head Gerlie Tatlonghari gave an outline of the consortium's framework, highlighting research, policy development, knowledge management, capacity building and partnerships.

Tatlonghari said Cadre is poised as a regional think tank and that "cross-sectoral collaboration is to provide research and extension support to address pressing and critical issues faced by the SEA agriculture sector."

Panel discussions

Facilitating a panel discussion on the current research gaps and priorities in the SEA agricultural sector was Roehlano Briones, Philippine Institute for Development Studies senior research fellow.

Panelists were Orencio of the Asean Secretariat (government perspectives); Kamaleswaran Jayarajah of the Sameo secretariat (academe); Tan Siang Hee of CropLife Asia (industry insights); and Ma. Estrella Penunia from the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (farmers and civil society lens).

Among the development partners were Bo Zhou of the United Nations-Food and Agriculture Organization, and Chrissa Marey Borja of Grow Asia, while Jongsoo Shin from the International Rice Research Institute and Delphine Larrousse from the World Vegetable Center represented research organizations.

The plenary discussion was followed by the first workshop focusing on identifying critical research gaps and priority issues in the region's agriculture sector.

With topics within the themes of crop improvement, crop and crop residue management, digital agriculture, regenerative production systems, human capital development and nutrition, the second workshop explored the theory of change and impact pathways for key research.

The third workshop defined Cadre's activities and programs, aligning them with the consortium's vision and mission. It emphasized five key components: collaborative research; policy and program development; knowledge management; capacity building; and technical assistance and partnerships.

Nur moderated the second panel discussion by representatives from the sectors that will play a crucial role in Cadre, which revolved around Cadre's operational methods and strategies, potential collaborations and the key roles of members to ensure resource transparency, accountability and consortium sustainability.

Together with the Searca director, the discussants were Tin Htut, deputy minister of Myanmar's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation; Warapa Mahakarnchanakul, director of Kasetsart University's Research and Development Institute; Ajay Kohli, deputy director general for research, International Rice Research Institute; Roland Treitler, project director of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH; and Rolf Christian Becker, global head of partnerships-academic institutions at Bayer.

Expressing optimism about future partnerships and the creation of the consortium through Cadre, Gregorio underscored the importance of multi-stakeholder commitment and collaboration, highlighting its pivotal, transformative role toward a resilient, inclusive and sustainable agriculture sector in Southeast Asia.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/07/25/business/agribusiness/searca-pushes-agri-research-consortium/1959601>

Lionheart Farms aims for 10,000 jobs

By Janine Alexis Miguel

July 25, 2024

AN agricultural firm operating in Palawan is aiming to create up to 10,000 jobs within six years as part of its overall plan to expand its product lineup and global reach.

Christian Moeller, Lionheart Farms co-founder and chairman, told The Manila Times in an interview of its ambitious plan to create thousands of new jobs from the company's expansion of its coconut farming and processing operations in Rizal, Palawan.

"We're already one of the biggest, if not the biggest, employers in Palawan. Creating 8,000 to 10,000 jobs in the south of Palawan raises the question of whether there will be enough people willing to work," said Moeller.



The Power of Slow is the latest product from Lionheart Farms. PHOTO BY JOHN ORVEN VERDOTE

The company started its operations in 2022.

At present, the firm operates a 3,500-hectare coconut farm with a processing facility in Palawan that currently employs 2,000 people who are mostly from the Indigenous groups in the area.

The plan is to increase the coconut farm area in Palawan and expand the reach of its value-added products that are manufactured in a facility also located in Rizal.

ADVERTISEMENT

Lionheart's products are made from cocosap and marketed under the CÓCOES brand, are all organic or from farms that do not use chemicals. Its current products are condiments and sweeteners that can also be purchased in bulk.

The company is also in the process of launching its newest product — The Power of Slow — a healthy beverage also made from cocosap. It won the Katha Awards for Food 2024 Best Beverage and received a Special Citation for Sustainable Practices during the 17th IFEX Philippines in April this year.

Moeller also sees more potential in replicating their business model in other communities instead of focusing in one area only.

Citing early stages of their operations in Palawan, the executive said that they also faced skepticism, especially from the locals. "Convincing locals to work with us wasn't easy. It took a lot of effort and the advantage of understanding Asian life to build trust and demonstrate the benefits of our program," said Moeller.

And as the company continues to grow its business, Moeller urged the government to collaborate more with the private sector, particularly in scaling the availability of planting materials.

Moeller said that in countries with better planting materials, coconut yields could be above 100 nuts per tree annually. In the case of the Philippines, the average yield is only 45 nuts per tree.

He emphasized the need for the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) to collaborate more in scaling up the availability of planting material. He said that limited availability of materials hindered reinvestment in replanting, which is important in sustaining the future of farming.

"I think [the PCA] should, to a larger extent, do what is done in many other industries, and that is work together with the private sector and really come up with solutions that can scale the availability of plant material," said Moeller.

Also, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. had personally put his weight behind that plan. "And I think that to further accelerate the implementation and the realization of that plan, there is an opportunity for more collaboration with the private sector," Moller said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/07/25/business/agribusiness/lionheart-farms-aims-for-10000-jobs/1959602>

Indonesia plans widespread use of palm oil-based B40 biodiesel in 2025

By Reuters

July 25, 2024



Palm oil fresh fruit bunches are seen at the collector site before being transported to CPO factories in Pekanbaru, Riau province, Indonesia, April 27, 2022. (Reuters photo)

JAKARTA- Indonesia is planning for the widespread use of the palm-oil based B40 biodiesel in 2025, replacing the current B35 blending, the energy ministry said in a statement.

The world's biggest palm oil maker currently has a mandatory 35 percent blend of palm oil-based fuel in biodiesel and is seeking to ramp up the new blend of 40 percent palm oil to cut its energy imports and increase consumption of the oil.

If implemented, the overall biodiesel consumption could reach up to 16 million kiloliters next year, the ministry said.

The ministry said late on Tuesday it had tested the biodiesel, mixed with 40 percent of palm oil, on a train for the first time earlier this week.

This year, the ministry also plans to test the B40 mix on agriculture machinery, power plants and in the shipping industry, it said.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/indonesia-plans-widespread-use-of-palm-oil-based-b40-biodiesel-in-2025/

Ample supply outlook halts rally in soybeans, corn

By Reuters

July 25, 2024

CANBERRA- Chicago soybean and corn futures fell on Wednesday, as a rally fueled by fears of adverse weather in parts of the United States ran out of steam and investors refocused on expectations of plentiful global supplies.

Wheat futures also fell, with grain from ongoing harvests in the United States and Russia hitting the market.

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was down 0.4 percent at \$10.71-3/4 a bushel, as of 0154 GMT.

The contract rose nearly 4 percent over Monday and Tuesday on fears that hot, dry weather in parts of the United States could shrink the crop.

CBOT corn slipped 0.4 percent to \$4.15-1/2 a bushel, having risen about 3 percent in the previous two sessions, while wheat fell 0.5 percent to \$5.40-1/4 a bushel.

Speculators anticipating ample supplies have amassed large net short positions in all three contracts and prices are near their lowest since 2020. Some of the gains of recent days have been fueled by their short-covering, traders say.

Joe Biden's decision to drop out of the US presidential race also lifted soybean and corn prices by reducing the chances of a Donald Trump victory and a renewed US China trade war, analysts said.

Despite the coming hot and dry weather in the US Midwest, conditions for soy and corn look pretty good, said Dennis Voznesenski, an analyst at Commonwealth Bank in Sydney.

Arid conditions in parts of the corn-producing Black Sea region are also unlikely to puncture expectations of ample supply, he said, adding that South American producers are shipping large amounts of corn and soy.

"It's hard to see a very supportive market in the near term," he said.

In wheat, agricultural consultancy Sovecon raised its forecast for Russia's 2024 grain crop to 130.5 million tons from 127.4 million tons, lifting its wheat estimate by around 100,000 tons to 84.2 million tons.

Cheap wheat supply from top shipper Russia has kept a lid on prices.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/ample-supply-outlook-halts-rally-in-soybeans-corn/

Lalamove to set up typhoon relief operations for farmers in recently launched Baguio City serviceable area

BusinessMirror

July 25, 2024

After recently launching its on-demand delivery services in Baguio City, Lalamove has been in talks with the local government to aid over 80 farmers during times of typhoon and produce oversupply. With the support of City Mayor Benjamin “Benjie” Magalong, the leading on-demand delivery platform aims to ensure farmers’ earnings are secured in times of crisis and to reduce produce waste.

As a critical hub for the distribution of vegetables from the Cordillera Administrative Region, Baguio City’s farmers are vulnerable to oversupply issues especially during typhoon season and “Ber” months.

Lalamove’s aid comes during crucial times when farmers’ produce are left unsold, spoiled, and thrown away, resulting to the farmers’ loss of earnings. According to Djon Nacario, Lalamove Philippines Managing Director, the platform is working hand-in-hand with the Baguio local government to support the farmers’ needs during such incidents.

“The agricultural sector is vital to the Philippines. Amid the typhoon season, we have discussed with Mayor Magalong that should the farmers need assistance, Lalamove is ready to rescue-buy their produce, which will be donated to repository markets and communities in need,” explained Nacario.

Magalong expressed his support, saying, “Lalamove’s support to the Baguio City farmers cultivates hope and growth for our community, contributing to a more sustainable agricultural sector in the region.”

Lalamove is determined to extend this initiative to more farmers and markets across Metro Manila in collaboration with LGUs and other parties interested to serve as repository markets for the rescued produce.

“Lalamove is not just about moving goods; it’s about moving lives forward,” said Nacario, adding, “As a testament to our commitment to continuously empower communities, this is just the beginning of the support we aim to provide to Baguio City and to the agricultural sector.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/25/lalamove-to-set-up-typhoon-relief-operations-for-farmers-in-recently-launched-baguio-city-serviceable-area/>

Government may cut price of rice sold at Kadiwa-DA

Ada Pelonia
July 25, 2024



The government could reduce the price of rice sold at Kadiwa stores if global market trends become favorable, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he expects a potential adjustment based on market trends, including expectations of India lifting its non-basmati rice export ban and improved production in countries like Thailand and Vietnam following El Niño.

“We will extend (the P29/kilo rice) program for as long as possible and hopefully—supply and global developments permitting—we could even lower rice prices for those who need this targeted government intervention the most,” he said in a statement.

The DA also made an assurance that vulnerable sectors in the country will have access to cheaper rice as it continues to expand the program's footprint nationwide.

The agency said Wednesday it added Kadiwa centers in Laguna and Cavite to sell P29 rice through its subsidized rice program.

DA Assistant Secretary for Consumer and Legislative Affairs Genevieve Guevarra said the rapid expansion of the cheaper rice program is a "well-considered" action.

"We're progressing ahead of schedule but with careful planning to maximize the program's impact on disadvantaged Filipinos."

Guevarra noted the "overwhelming demand" for subsidized rice from vulnerable sectors like indigents, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and solo parents in the cities of San Pedro, Laguna, and Bacoor, Cavite.

"Other LGUs are requesting that Kadiwa bring the P29 rice program to their areas but we have to do this on a calibrated manner. We want to ensure this program succeeds to extend its benefits to the most number of vulnerable Filipino households."

The DA said its P29 rice program facilitates the sale of affordable rice sourced from the National Food Authority (NFA).

Food Terminal Inc. (FTI), a government corporation under the purview of the DA, purchases the NFA's aging stocks and sells them through Kadiwa centers at subsidized prices. The program is now operational in 15 sites.

FTI President and CEO Joseph Rudolph Lo affirmed government support for DA's initiatives, including the Rice-for-All program aimed at offering well-milled and fancy rice at discounted rates through Kadiwa centers.

"Rice-for-All is already making strides in selected centers, with phased roll-outs planned to ensure its success."

The P29 rice program targets 6.9 million households, equivalent to about 34 million Filipinos, and is currently undergoing a large-scale trial to gather essential data on demand, supply, and logistics.

“In the first two weeks of the large-scale trial, more than 12.7 tons of rice were sold in Kadiwa centers than to more 25,000 households,” the DA said.

Last Monday, Laurel said the government is banking on Kadiwa stores to reduce food prices and temper inflation.

“[Kadiwa] ang pinaka epektibong paraan para ma-stabilize yung presyo at mabigyan ng mas murang bilihan,” he said in a radio interview ahead of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s State of the Nation Address (SONA).

He said the department plans to build at least one Kadiwa store per municipality. “Initially, we’re targeting about 300 [Kadiwa stores] hopefully by the middle of next year [...] every year *magdadagdag tayo and sana* by 2027 *meron na tayong* 1,500.”

Image credits: www.da.gov.ph

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/25/government-may-cut-price-of-rice-sold-at-kadiwa-da/>

REMATE:

Price freeze ipinatupad sa NCR

July 24, 2024 18:02



(c) Remate News Central File Photo

MANILA, Philippines- Inanunsyo ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) nitong Miyerkules na epektibo na ang price freeze sa lahat ng pangunahing bilihin sa National Capital Region (NCR) kasunod ng deklarasyon ng state of calamity ng Metro Manila Council (MMC) dahil sa hagupit ni Bagyong Carina at ng southwest monsoon o Habagat.

“The price freeze, effective immediately, aims to protect consumers from unjust price increases during this time of crisis,” pahayag ni Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual sa abiso.

“We are committed to ensuring that basic goods remain affordable and accessible to all affected residents,” dagdag ni Pascual.

Kasado ang price freeze habang umiiral ang state of calamity.

Sinabi ng DTI chief na mahigpit na nakikipag-ugnayan ang Trade Department sa regional office nito sa NCR upang bantayan ang sitwasyon at tiyakin ang availability ng mga pangunahing pangangailangan.

Saklaw ng price freeze ang mga pangunahing biling tulad ng bigas, mais, tinapay, sariwang gulay, roots crops, karne ng baboy, baka, poultry, itlog, gatas, kape, asukal, mantika, asin, laundry soap, detergent, firewood, uling, kandila, at ilang gamot na tinukoy na “essential” ng Department of Health.

“We have activated our monitoring teams to strictly enforce the price freeze. Those found violating the law will face severe consequences, including imprisonment and substantial fines. We urge all establishments to comply with the price freeze and prioritize the well-being of our fellow citizens during this difficult time,” wika ni Pascual.

“We understand the challenges faced by our kababayans in Metro Manila due to the typhoon. Rest assured that the DTI is working tirelessly to maintain price stability and safeguard the welfare of consumers,” dagdag ng Trade chief.

Hinimok naman ang consumers na isumbong ang overpricing o paglabag sa DTI Consumer Care Hotline sa 1-384 o mag-email sa consumercare@dti.gov.ph. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/price-freeze-ipinatupad-sa-ncr/>

ABANTE:

Mga magsasaka, mangingisda hinirit ipatupad ‘Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act’

- Abante News
- July 24, 2024



Sa kakatatapos na ikatlong State of the Nation Address (SONA) ni Pangulong Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos, Jr. inihayag ang mga naging accomplishment at mga susunod na mga plano nito para sa patuloy na pagpapaunlad sa bansa partikular sa sektor ng agrikultura.

Inasahan ni AGAP Partylist Rep. Nicanor Briones na babanggitin ni PBBM ang tungkol sa “Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act” na pumasa na sa Kongreso at Senado na si Briones ang isa sa Principal sponsor nito.

Nabigong banggitin ni Pangulong Marcos na maari ng isakatuparan ang nasabing batas para matapos na ang paghihirap ng mga Filipino farmers at consumers sanhi ng cartel, smuggling at iba pang katiwalian.

Ayon kay Briones layunin ng panukalang batas na ipawalang-bisa ang Republic Act No. 10845, o ang “Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act,” at magpataw ng matinding parusa para sa smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, at pagbuo ng mga kartel ng mga produktong pang-agrikultura at pangisdaan.

At mapapangalagaan ng nasabing panukala ang estado mula sa mga economic saboteurs at mapoprotektahan ang kabuhayan ng mga Pilipinong magsasaka.

At sa naturang bill na inihain ni Briones isinasaad ang pagkakaroon ng National Council under the office of the President na kasama sa council ang pitong sector ng magsasaka, may enforcement group na NBI, PNP at Coast Guard. May special prosecutors, at lifetime imprisonment ang parusa, 3x ang multa at non bailable ito. Maaari rin mag-file ng kaso ang private citizen at may rewards sa mga tipster o whistle blower mula P1M hanggang P20M o 20% whichever is higher.

Muli sinabi ni Briones na kahit anong gawing ayuda, pondong ibigay sa magsasaka walang mangyayari kung patuloy na pagsasamatalahan ng smugglers, hoarders, cartel at profitters. “We mean serious business,” pahayag ni PBBM sa mga Agri products smugglers nitong nagdaang SONA.

Pinakita nito ang kanyang galit sa mga smugglers, hoarders at price manipulators ng mga agricultural products, kaya patuloy nitong pinahahabol at pinahahabla.

Subali't para kay Rep. Briones mawawalang saysay lang ang utos ni PBBM na habulin at panagutin ang mga sangkot sa smuggling ng agri products sa bansa kung ang BOC pa rin ang magi-imbetiga at magsasampa ng kaso base sa walang silbing Anti Agricultural Smuggling Act at walang nasasampolan na maparusahan ng habambuhay na pagkalulong.

Kaya hiling ng sektor ng agrikultura kay Pangulong Marcos, maisakatuparan na ang naturang batas na ginawa niyang priority bill para sa “Bagong Pilipinas, Bagong Pagasa ng mga magsasaka at mamimili.” (Mina Navarro)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/07/24/mga-magsasaka-mangingisda-hinirit-ipatupad-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage-act/>