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MANILA BULLETIN:

Seeds of change

BY [ATTY. GREGORIO LARRAZABAL](#)

Oct 30, 2024 00:12 AM

OFF THE BEATEN PATH



The same typhoons that can increase agricultural water supply and cause soil erosion improving its fertility, in severe and frequent measures, damage farm structure facilities. While we are yet to see the full impact of tropical storm Leon in our area of responsibility, something we ask the good heavens to never happen at all especially in light of what meteorologists identify as the Fujiwara effect, we answer the question of food security on a daily basis. In the vernacular, the phrase “malapit sa sikmura” fittingly describes how visceral the issue is and the resolutions, imperative. Nature, in its raw and indifferent power, can afford to be capricious; we do not. Areas that were historically spared from the wrath of typhoons are now vulnerable to their destructive force. Recognize that the massive floods, landslides, and mudflows that accompany these storms are not merely natural calamities. These tragic consequences of human-made decisions in terms of unchecked development, deforestation, and the destruction of natural ecosystems only substantiate the generally accepted view that there is no such thing as natural disaster.

A recent visit to Bontoc, Mountain Province provided me with the opportunity to engage with local farmers and gain firsthand insights into the challenges they face. Many of the elderly residents I spoke with still rely on traditional farming techniques and tools. While there is no denying that these methods have sustained communities for generations, dependence on approaches is inadequate in the face of climate change’s intensifying impacts. In contrast, many other countries have embraced technological advancements to improve agricultural productivity. I believe that the survival and prosperity of our agricultural sector hinges on the adoption of innovative technologies.

On the question of the needed modernization, local governments can do more by capacitating farmers and giving them technical assistance. The need to introduce Bio N, a microbial fertilizer developed by the University of the Philippines Los Baños-Biotech, to more avenues for distribution can be a good starting point. Dole-outs from an academic and practical standpoint ever fail to address food security concerns.

More than two decades ago, Republic Act No. 8435, known as the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act, laid down several reforms aimed at improving the agriculture and fisheries sector. If the avowed goal of this policy instrument is to enhance competitiveness of our own crops and products, the broad based provisions of the statute definitely rely on a diverse set of implementing agencies both from the public and private sectors.

Professor Herbie Docena, lecturer at the University of California Berkeley Sociology Department, asks us to look further. Not many of us know that much of Nueva Ecija/Central Luzon plains used to be forest, according to a 1973 PhD dissertation of Marshall McLennan entitled “Peasant and Hacendero in Nueva Ecija: The Socio-Economic Origins of a Philippine Commercial Rice-growing Region.” How we organize our societies spell much of the environment we pass on for the generations we will inevitably leave.

The seeds of discontent sown by neglect, mismanagement, and environmental degradation threaten to undermine our food security and ecological balance. #TogetherWe can act swiftly and decisively to address these challenges. By investing in sustainable agriculture, empowering farmers, and prioritizing environmental conservation, we can nurture a future where our food systems are resilient. Accountability and resilience are domains that are not mutually exclusive. Only the most informed choices can help us weather the typhoons, literal and otherwise, that come our way.

(Atty. Gregorio “Goyo” Larrazabal is a former Comelec commissioner. He is a pioneer of automated elections being a member of the Commission that successfully modernized Philippine elections in 2010. He remains involved in public service as an election lawyer. Email: pinoybikes@gmail.com)

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https://mb.com.ph/2024/10/30/seeds-of-change#google_vignette

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA to invest P2 billion to perk up Philippines coffee output

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

October 30, 2024 | 12:00am



That is the goal of the government as it seeks to reduce the country's import dependency for coffee by at least 20 percentage points in the next few years by pouring in P2 billion in investments to boost domestic productivity.

Pixabay

Malaybalay, Bukidnon, Philippines — At least four in ten cups of coffee are produced locally.

That is the goal of the government as it seeks to reduce the country's import dependency for coffee by at least 20 percentage points in the next few years by pouring in P2 billion in investments to boost domestic productivity.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the Department of Agriculture is committed to hiking the country's coffee self-sufficiency currently standing at a measly 10 percent of the total annual demand.

Based on his estimates, Tiu Laurel said the government would need at least P1 billion to boost self-sufficiency in coffee by 10 percentage points to 15 percent, thus the DA would require at least P2 billion to hike import dependence by 20 to 30 percentage points by end of 2027.

To achieve the goal, at least 80,000 hectares must be planted with coffee with an average yield of one metric ton per hectare. A 40,000-hectare land planted with coffee with such average yield would reduce the country's import dependency by 15 percentage points.

The agriculture chief said the budget for the coffee industry could come from an official development assistance (ODA) from the World Bank.

“It is actually a \$2-billion ODA and I already went to Washington for that. And we were actually given another \$12 million in grant but there are not specific details yet,” Tiu Laurel told reporters yesterday on the sidelines of the rollout of the Mindanao Robusta Coffee Project (MRCP) jointly undertaken by the DA and Nestlé Philippines here.

The ODA has been “more or less” approved, Tiu Laurel added. Furthermore, the agriculture chief said the other funding sources to improve the coffee industry could come from the DA’s high value crops fund and a realignment of its remaining 2024 budget.

Tiu Laurel said he is in initial discussions with the local government units of Sultan Kudarat and Bukidnon for the expansion of coffee production to at least 30,000 hectares in their provinces.

“More or less (we just need 10,000 hectares more). So, technically what we just lack is the money and the planting materials,” he said.

Nestlé executives welcome the plan of the government to boost domestic coffee production as it aligns with the multinational’s goal of purchasing more from domestic farmers and reduce their need to import raw materials abroad.

Nestlé’s coffee processing plant in Cagayan de Oro requires 40,000 metric tons of coffee annually but domestic production accounts for only 10 percent of its total requirement.

The DA and Nestlé yesterday distributed P4.464 million worth of fertilizers to 16 farmers associations and cooperatives in Bukidnon as beneficiaries of the MRCP. Mindanao accounts for at least 80 percent of the country’s annual Robusta coffee production.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/10/30/2396196/da-invest-p2-billion-perk-philippines-coffee-output>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘Rice prices remain high as retailers make a killing’

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

October 30, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he learned in a recent meeting with rice importers that the wholesale price of imported rice has already dropped to P38 per kilo.

Philstar.com / Irra Lising

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) will convene the leaders of large markets in Metro Manila next week to discuss and address why retail prices of imported rice remain above P50 per kilo despite the softening of wholesale prices.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he learned in a recent meeting with rice importers that the wholesale price of imported rice has already dropped to P38 per kilo.

He said the importers noted that the retailers could be making a killing as the retail prices of rice still range between P42 and P55 per kilo, depending on whether it is a regular-milled or well-milled variety.

Tiu Laurel said that at P38 per kilo at wholesale, the retail price of rice should be around P45 per kilo.

“We will tell them that if they are profiteering, then we will be forced to act,” Tiu Laurel said yesterday, noting that the rice retail price of P50 per kilo and above for imported regular-milled and well-milled rice could be considered profiteering.

Aside from the consultation, the agriculture chief also instructed concerned DA officials to conduct random inspections of public markets to collect price data and determine necessary actions, including measures permitted under the Price Act of 1993.

“Under this law, the DA is responsible for implementing price measures on various agricultural products, including crops, fish, fresh meat, poultry and dairy,” the DA said.

“If prices are deemed excessive or unreasonable, the DA can recommend to the President the imposition of a price ceiling,” the DA added.

The DA may also consider putting up Kadiwa stores that will sell rice at a cheaper price adjacent to the markets selling high rice prices to force them to bring down their prices.

“We will get to the bottom of this. Millions of Filipino consumers must not suffer from the greed of the few,” Tiu Laurel said.

President Marcos cut rice tariffs this year to a record-low 15 percent as part of the government’s bid to pull down elevated prices of the staple in the domestic market.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/10/30/2396213/rice-prices-remain-high-retailers-make-killing>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Kristine damage to agriculture reaches P3.4 billion

[Mayen Jaymalin](#), [Romina Cabrera](#) - The Philippine Star

October 30, 2024 | 12:00am



Damaged rice fields at Barangay Causip in Bula, Camarines Sur on Oct. 26, 2024.

The Philippine STAR / Noel B. Pabaleta

MANILA, Philippines — The amount of damage to agriculture caused by Severe Tropical Storm Kristine has reached P3.4 billion, according to the Department of Agriculture.

The DA gave assurance that farmers displaced by the storm would receive financial assistance.

Kristine destroyed 76,785 hectares of farm lands, with over a third or 28,885 hectares having no chance to recover.

Up to 174,087 tons of agricultural crops were lost to the storm, affecting 79,904 farmers.

Rice production incurred the highest amount of damage with P3.1 billion or 164,510 tons in volume losses.

The DA said over 28,000 hectares of high-value crops were wasted. Most of these crops were in reproductive and maturity stages and not due yet for harvest.

Corn incurred P43.34 million in losses and high-value crops P161.44 million.

Damage to irrigation facilities reached P26 million, with P43.36 million for other farm structures such as diversion dams, rain shelters, greenhouses, animal houses and administrative buildings.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said the DA is still assessing the damage to farm lands, especially rice fields.

He said 70 percent of palay had been harvested before Kristine arrived and destroyed the farms.

Food packs

Up to 200,000 food packs have been transported by the Department of Social Welfare and Development to victims of Kristine in Albay and Camarines provinces, according to DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian.

As of Sunday morning, a total of 61,742 boxes of food packs had been delivered to Albay, 41,553 to Camarines Norte and 78,613 to Camarines Sur.

In Camarines Sur, 19,000 food packs were turned over to the provincial government, 15,000 to Naga and 3,446 to Iriga.

Among the municipalities that received food packs were Baao, Bato, Bula, Calabanga, Camaligan, Canaman, Caramoan, Del Gallego, Gainza, Garchitorena, Magarao, Milaor, Minalabac, Nabua, Pasacao, Pili, Presentacion, Sipocot, Tigaon and Tinambac.

Food packs delivered in Albay were distributed in the cities of Legazpi, Ligao and Tabaco as well as in the municipalities of Camalig, Daraga, Guinobatan, Jovellar, Libon, Malilipot, Manito, Oas, Pio Duran, Polangui, Rapu-Rapu, Santo Domingo and Tiwi.

In Camarines Norte, the municipalities that received the most number of food packs were Labo with 9,402 and Mercedes with 6,900.

Food packs were also distributed in the towns of Basud, Capalonga, Daet, San Lorenzo Ruiz, San Vicente, Talisay and Vinzons.

Meanwhile, the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) yesterday received 500 tons of rice donation from Taiwan.

MECO chairperson Cheloy Garafil said the donation, which arrived on Oct. 15, was part of the 2,000 tons of rice donation facilitated by the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office last year. The next shipment is expected next month.

Garafil said a part of the donation would be given to typhoon victims in Luzon.

The donations were turned over to the DSWD for distribution to the most needy as well as victims of calamities in Mindanao.

Cash assistance

Cash assistance of up to P15 million has been allotted for Bicol residents whose homes were destroyed by the storm, according to the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development.

The DHSUD said its offices in Bicol are working with local government units hit hard by Kristine for the processing of the cash assistance for affected residents.

Funding for the assistance will be sourced from the DHSUD's integrated disaster shelter assistance program.

Under the program, the DHSUD can provide financial assistance of up to P30,000 to families whose houses were destroyed in the calamity.

Evacuee dies

Meanwhile, a typhoon victim died in an evacuation center in Batangas on Monday.

The woman, a resident of Agoncillo town, died at around 5 a.m. in a school in Barangay Coral na Munti that was converted into an evacuation center.

Authorities said the woman had been suffering from an illness. — **Sheila Crisostomo, Elizabeth Marcelo, Emmanuel Tupas**

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/10/30/2396254/kristine-damage-agriculture-reaches-p34-billion>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

'Kristine' inflicts P3.40 billion in agricultural damage, affects 79,904 farmers

[Dominique Nicole Flores](#) - Philstar.com

October 29, 2024 | 12:15pm



Damaged rice fields at Barangay Causip in Bula, Camarines Sur on Oct. 26, 2024.

The Philippine STAR / Noel B. Pabalete

MANILA, Philippines — Agricultural damage from Severe Tropical Storm "Kristine" (international name: Trami) now stands at P3.40 billion, the Department of Agriculture reported.

As of Tuesday, October 29, DA Regional Field Offices reported that damage to rice, high-value crops, and agricultural infrastructure reached P3.40 billion, equivalent to 174,087 metric tons of produce lost.

Of the 174,087 total volume loss, palay accounted for 94.5%. Other damaged crops include high-value crops (4.23%), corn (1.14%), cassava and fish (0.13%).

Rice suffered the greatest impact, mostly in the Bicol Region, with the DA estimating production losses at P3.10 billion and nearly four in ten hectares of affected palay totally damaged.

Following rice, high-value crops — mainly in Mimaropa — have incurred losses amounting to P161.44 million. Of the total affected land for these crops, 11.38% has been completely damaged.

According to the DA's Bureau of Agricultural Research, high-value crops in the country include bananas, mangoes, pineapples, cacao, coffee, rubber, garlic, onion, root crops and indigenous regional crops.

Corn losses are valued at P43.34 million, with 12.47% of the affected land completely damaged, primarily in Cagayan Valley and Calabarzon. Although only 58 hectares of cassava land were affected by the storm, 87.39% of this area is considered unsalvageable and can be found mostly in Eastern Visayas. The crop's production loss amounts to P7.50 million.

The storm's effects have also led to the loss of 3,009 livestock and poultry, valued at P4.35 million, mainly in the Ilocos Region and SOCCSKSARGEN.

In terms of fish catch, including tilapia, milkfish, shrimp, and crabs, the total loss is P11.20 million, with the majority having been incurred in Central Luzon.

The agricultural department also reported P69.36 million in damages to irrigation systems, including diversion dams, as well as farm structures like rain shelters, greenhouses and animal housing.

While heavy flooding affected 76,785 hectares of agricultural land, the DA said that around three-fifth of this area may still be salvaged.

A total of 79,904 farmers across 11 regions have suffered from these losses.

These regions include the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, SOCCSKSARGEN and Caraga Region.

Actions taken. Responding to the impacts of Kristine, the department has already provided farmers P541.02 million worth of agricultural inputs, which include rice, corn, vegetable seeds, and medicine for livestock and poultry. The National Food Authority has also issued 1,447 bags of rice stock to the local government units in Ilocos and Bicol regions. A quick response fund of P1 billion has also been allocated for the rehabilitation of affected areas, the DA said.

Farmers can also access loans of up to P25,000 at zero interest through the P500 million Survival and Recovery Loan Program.

The DA also expects total damage brought by Kristine to rise beyond P3.40 billion as its regional field offices continue to assess and validate affected areas this week.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/10/29/2396147/kristine-inflicts-p340-billion-agricultural-damage-affects-79904-farmers>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Agricultural damage due to Kristine climbs to P3.40B

By: [Faith Argosino](#) - Reporter / [@FArgosinoINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:17 PM October 29, 2024



Rains dumped by Severe Tropical Storm Kristine (international name: Trami) flooded several areas in the Eastern Visayas region, including the town of Catubig in Northern Samar, as shown in this photo taken on Wednesday, October 23, 2024. PHOTO COURTESY OF CATUBIG LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MANILA, Philippines — The damage sustained by the country's crop and fisheries sectors due to Severe Tropical Storm Kristine (international name: Trami) has climbed to P3.40 billion, the Department of Agriculture (DA) reported on Tuesday.

In its 8 a.m. bulletin, the DA said the report came from its regional offices in Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon,

Mimaropa, Bicol Region, Western and Eastern Visayas, Soccsksargen, and Caraga Region.

“Damage and losses have been reported in rice, corn, cassava, high-value crops, livestock and poultry, fisheries, and agricultural infrastructures,” the DA added.

The agency also disclosed that Kristine affected 79,904 farmers, and the damage covers 76,785 hectares (ha) of agricultural areas and the volume of production loss at 174,087 metric tons (MT).

DA said the production losses for rice and corn amount to P3.10 billion and P43.34 million, respectively.

Below is the breakdown for the damaged commodities:

- **164,510 MT for palay/rice**
- **1,981 MT for corn**
- **161 MT for cassava**
- **7,369 MT for high-value crops**
- **66 MT for fisheries**

The department will be providing the following items to affected communities:

- **P 541.02 million worth of agricultural inputs (rice, corn, and vegetable seeds, drugs, and biologics for livestock and poultry)**
- **Bags of rice stocks from the National Food Authority for distribution as relief by local governments, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and other agencies to families affected**

- **Deployment of Kadiwa stores to affected areas**
- **P1 billion Quick Response Fund for the rehabilitation and recovery of affected areas, among others**

The number of reported deaths due to Kristine climbed to 125, while the tally of affected individuals rose from over six million to 7,134,954, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

The NDRRMC said 111 of the deaths are still up for validation. It also reported that 115 were injured and 28 were missing.

Kristine left the country's area of responsibility over the weekend, but the state weather bureau is monitoring a new weather disturbance, Typhoon Leon (international name: Kong-rey), which entered the Philippine boundary last Saturday.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1998908/agricultural-damage-due-to-kristine-climbs-to-p3-40b>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

House to back relief efforts in Storm Kristine aftermath – Romualdez

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 12:57 PM October 29, 2024



Residents carrying their belongings waded through a flooded street caused by heavy rains brought about by Tropical Storm Trami in Bato town, Camarines Sur province on October 24, 2024. (Photo by ZALRIAN SAYAT / AFP)

MANILA, Philippines — Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez has assured the public that the House of Representatives will support relief and rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of Severe Tropical Storm Kristine (international name: Trami).

In a statement on Monday, Romualdez said lawmakers would not stop checking if the government's aid would reach the people affected by the storm.

Agricultural damage due to Kristine was estimated to be around P3.11 billion, according to the Department of Agriculture.

Meanwhile, the death toll from the storm has risen to 116, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council said.

“We will not stop until help reaches everyone who needs it. We would ensure that financial aid and relief goods would be obtained by families who lost their homes and livelihood,” Romualdez said in Filipino.

He also thanked Singapore for helping the Philippines, saying that Singapore is a true friend of the Philippines.

“We thank the Singaporean government, especially President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and her ambassador here in the Philippines, Ambassador Constance See, for their immediate help to our country,” he said in Filipino.

“The assistance they provided, especially the C-130 aircraft from Singapore Air Force, we can use this for the quick transport of relief goods to areas severely affected by the storm,” he added.

On Sunday, it was reported that military aircraft from Singapore and Malaysia arrived in the country on Saturday to assist with the ongoing relief operations following Kristine’s onslaught.

A C-130 cargo aircraft from the Republic of Singapore Air Force and a Eurocopter EC725 transport helicopter from the Royal Malaysian Air Force arrived at Col. Jesus Villamor Air Base in Pasay City on Saturday evening, the Philippine Air Force said.

“The woes brought by this cyclone is not a joke. Help from ally countries like Singapore gives strength to our bayanihan spirit of helping each other as we recover,” Romualdez said.

Previously, the House mobilized over P411 million in financial aid to 22 districts affected by the weather disturbance. It includes additional funds and relief goods such as 2,500

relief packs per representative, provided in partnership with the Office of the Speaker and Tingog party-list.

Ako Bicol party-list, in partnership with Romualdez, also launched a relief and rescue operation across the Bicol Region

“These tools were vital as we faced severe flooding that displaced thousands of our kababayans,” appropriations panel chairperson and Ako Bicol Rep. Zaldy Co said. “We are deeply grateful for Speaker Romualdez’s prompt action.”

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1998843/house-to-back-relief-efforts-in-storm-kristine-aftermath-romualdez>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Coffee industry targeted for yield improvement

October 29, 2024 | 8:29 pm



KELLY SIKKEMA-UNSPLASH

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is seeking to work with the coffee industry to improve crop yields and climate adaptability.

“We must rely on partnerships among multiple stakeholders to establish resilient and sustainable coffee value chains that support growers,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement on Tuesday.

He noted that the coffee yield improvement program is being conducted by Nestlé S.A., the German government, and the DA. The DA said that the project targets coffee yields of 2 metric tons (MT) per hectare by 2025.

The program has resulted in the growth of coffee communities in Bukidnon and Sultan Kudarat, now with 3,000 members.

“This collaboration has resulted in better bean quality and an increased average yield of up to 0.8 MT per hectare, up from a low of 0.3 MT. Consequently, farmers’ incomes have risen by 35% or more in some areas,” Mr. Laurel said.

Citing the Philippine Coffee Board, the Philippines produced 30,000 MT of green coffee beans in 2023, up slightly from a year prior.

The DA has distributed P6.5 million worth of assistance, including fertilizer and funding to establish coffee centers, to 16 farmers’ groups participating in the Mindanao Coffee Robusta Project. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/10/29/631539/coffee-industry-targeted-for-yield-improvement/>

MANILA STANDARD:

DA to meet heads of Metro markets on high rice prices



DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel

By Othel V. Campos

October 30, 2024, 12:30 am

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will convene a meeting next week with top executives of major Metro Manila markets to investigate the ongoing high rice prices, despite significant tariff reductions implemented by the President.

Recent price monitoring by the DA revealed that retail prices remain exceptionally high, leading them to suspect that some retailers are manipulating the market.

This, despite discussions with rice importers from Bulacan saying they have lowered wholesale prices to around P38 per kilo.

Agriculture secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. expressed frustration over the continued high retail prices, stating, “If importers’ claims are accurate, then retail prices should be around P45 per kilo.”

He emphasized the need for a thorough investigation to uncover the root cause of the issue.

The DA will conduct random inspections of public markets to gather price data and identify potential violations of the Price Act of 1993.

The law empowers the DA to take decisive action against price manipulation, including imposing price ceilings and penalizing hoarding, profiteering, and cartel formation.

Laurel vowed to hold accountable those responsible for exploiting consumers.

“We will not tolerate greed and price gouging,” he declared. “The Filipino people deserve fair and affordable prices for basic commodities,” he said.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314516920/da-to-meet-heads-of-metro-markets-on-high-rice-prices.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

PBBM says government making strides to reduce food poverty



WALANG GUTOM. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. presides over a sectoral meeting on the Walang Gutom Program led by Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian yesterday at Malacanang Palace. PPA POOL

By Manila Standard

October 29, 2024, 11:55 pm

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. announced Tuesday that the government has made strides in reducing food poverty, citing a significant decrease in the number of food-poor families.

“We are doing a better job of feeding people who need it,” Mr. Marcos said during a sectoral meeting at Malacañang.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) reported that the Food Stamp Program (FSP) has helped reduce the number of food-poor families from one million to 700,000 in the past year.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian explained that the program’s success has created “legroom” for further expansion.

The DSWD's report, based on Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data, noted that food poverty fell substantially between 2021 and 2023.

Implemented through Executive Order No. 44, s. 2023, the FSP aims to address involuntary hunger among low-income households.

Launched as a pilot in December 2023 and running until July 2024, the program provided P3,000 worth of monthly food credits to 2,366 households.

These credits, issued via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, allow recipients to purchase select food items at KADIWA stalls and other authorized retailers.

As of October 16, the program has enrolled 182,771 beneficiaries, with 89,772 households already redeeming food credits.

The government plans to expand the program in 2025, targeting an additional 300,000 households, followed by another 400,000 in 2026. By 2027, the FSP aims to support one million food-poor households across 10 regions and 22 provinces.

To show the administration's commitment to fighting hunger, President Marcos on Monday led the ceremonial signing of the Enhanced Partnership Against Hunger and Poverty (EPAHP) Joint Memorandum Circular.

The initiative builds upon a program initially started in 2016 by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to address hunger and poverty.

Expanded in 2019, the program has transformed into the EPAHP, now involving 34 national and international partners.

The partnership connects farmers, fisherfolk, and other food producers with larger markets and government feeding programs, aiming to increase income and ensure vulnerable communities access nutritious food.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314516909/pbbm-says-government-making-strides-to-reduce-food-poverty.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Rice prices 'stubbornly high'; DA eyes price caps

By Janine Alexis Miguel

October 30, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) warned on Tuesday that it could recommend the imposition of rice price caps if market prices remained high.

"Rice prices remain stubbornly high in many places," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement, despite significant tariff cuts on imports of the staple.

Under Executive Order 62 issued by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., duties on imported rice were slashed to 15 percent from 35 percent effective July 8. In a recent meeting with DA officials, traders from Bulacan said that they had already lowered prices to around P38 per kilo and that current market prices were set by retailers.

"If what importers claim are correct, then retail prices of rice should be around the P45 level per kilo," Tiu Laurel said. Price monitoring data from the DA showed that imported well-milled rice is being sold up to P55 per kilo, while regular milled rice at 48 per kilo. Prices of local rice, meanwhile, range from P41 to P54 per kilo. The department said that high rice prices were pressuring inflation, adding that around P9 of every P100 spent by the average Filipino consumer is used to buy rice — an amount that doubles to P18 for the poor.

Tiu Laurel ordered random inspections of public markets to determine necessary actions, including measures permitted under the Price Act of 1993.

"If prices are deemed excessive or unreasonable, the DA can recommend to the President the imposition of a price ceiling," the department said. The Price Act aims to protect consumers by stabilizing prices of basic goods and prime commodities. Under the law, the DA can recommend price caps for agricultural products including crops, fish, fresh meat, poultry and dairy. Practices like hoarding, profiteering and forming cartels can also be penalized.

"We will get to the bottom of this. Millions of Filipino consumers must not suffer from the greed of the few," Tiu Laurel said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/10/30/business/top-business/rice-prices-stubbornly-high-da-eyes-price-caps/1993601>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Crop damage surpasses P2B in Bicol Region

By Rhaydz B. Barcia

October 30, 2024

LEGAZPI CITY — Severe Tropical Storm Kristine left over P2 billion worth of damage to agriculture, affecting 37,795 farmers and fishermen across the Bicol Region, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said in an initial report on Monday.

DA Bicol regional spokesman Lovela Guarin told The Manila Times that the flooding — the worst in over five decades in Bicol — left damaged crops, livestock, fisheries and agriculture infrastructure.

Hardest hit were the provinces of Albay and Camarines Sur where flooding has not yet subsided, prolonging the agony of the residents. Both provinces have been placed under a state of calamity.



DESTROYED RICEFIELD Farmers in Libon, Albay, try to salvage what is left in their rice field flattened to the ground by massive flooding spawned by continuous rains dumped by Severe Tropical Storm Kristine. Over 33,000 rice farmers were affected by the flooding, more so in Albay which suffered the worst flooding in over five decades. **PHOTO BY RHAYDZ B. BARCIA**

Camarines Sur incurred agriculture and infrastructure damage amounting to P1,027,093,896.04, while Albay reported damage worth P403,850,234.29. Camarines Norte reported P226,268,327.29 losses, Masbate, P264,030,535.37, Sorsogon P108,055,744.50, and Catanduanes P70,983,850.17.

A total of 33,377 hectares of rice in all the region's six provinces are still submerged in deep flood, causing over P1.8 billion in losses.

Out of 33,377.07 hectares of palay, Guarin said that 9,864.09 were partially damaged and 23,369.74 totally damaged with 96,283.96 metric tons production losses equivalent to

P1.850,621,542.36. The highest number of affected rice farmers was in Camarines Sur with 19,859; followed by Albay with 4,468; Masbate, 4,432; Camarines Norte, 2,204; Catanduanes, 1,531; and Sorsogon, 1,436.

Bicol Region was heavily flooded as based on the data from automated weather stations installed by the DA regional office, it received rainfall from October 19-23, 2024 broken down to the following: Albay, 421.75 mm, Camarines Norte 574.6 mm, Camarines Sur 781.5 mm, Catanduanes 236.7 mm, Masbate 500 mm and Sorsogon 469.85 mm.

Guarin said that the DA Bicol is now stepping up measures after the devastating typhoon.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. together with Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and other Cabinet secretaries visited Naga City and Bula, Camarines Sur over the weekend to assess damages wrought by Kristine. The DA's command center in Bicol has been activated since Monday before the onslaught of Kristine. The DA Bicol Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Center headed by Lorenzo Alvina, OIC regional technical director for Research and Regulations, also helped in the rescue and relief operations in the different municipalities of Camarines Sur.

Ten DA vehicles were mobilized for the rescue and relief distribution efforts.

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources 5 mobilized ten boats for relief and rescue operations in different parts of the region. As of this writing, a total of 2,410 families/individuals were either rescued or assisted through the provision of water, food, clothing and other necessities. Four evacuation centers are being maintained at the DA regional office which can accommodate close to 200 persons.

Constant coordination with local government units (LGUs) and other agencies are being carried out for the validation of damaged areas and immediate positioning of rehabilitation assistance composed of rice, corn and vegetable seeds, drugs and biologics.

The DA Bicol Bantay Presyo team is also continuously monitoring the prices of agricultural commodities

Earlier, the National Food Authority, through the promise of Laurel, has delivered four truckloads of NFA rice to the provincial capitol of Camarines Sur for distribution to affected families.

Meanwhile, the National Food Authority in Bicol has provided an initial 2,664 bags of NFA rice to different LGUs in Albay, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte and Sorsogon. Acting NFA Bicol Regional Manager Julie Llenareas said that NFA Bicol has enough stocks for relief operations in the whole region.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/10/30/regions/crop-damage-surpasses-p2b-in-bicol-region/1993548>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA meeting market leaders on high retail prices of rice

[Ada Pelonia](#)

[October 30, 2024](#)



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will meet with market leaders amid the still elevated retail prices of rice despite the reduction in tariff on the country's staple food.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he ordered DA officials to talk to importers and confirm that they were selling wholesale rice prices at P38 per kilo.

The department said traders from Bulacan told DA Undersecretary Roger Navarro and Undersecretary and Chief of Staff Alvin Balagbag that they have lowered prices to around P38 per kilo, attributing the high retail prices to rice retailers.

“So, P45 should be the retail price but some retailers are selling at [P50 to P53 per kilo]. That’s where I detected an issue that it’s not right,” Laurel told reporters on the sidelines of the Mindanao Robusta Coffee Project (MRCP) update in Bukidnon on Tuesday.

It will be recalled that President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. issued Executive Order (EO) 62 which slashed rice tariffs to 15 percent until 2028 as part of the government’s bid to bring down retail rice prices.

The DA said high rice prices weigh heavily on the consumer basket, which determines inflation.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the DA said around P9 of every P100 spent by the average Filipino consumer is used to buy rice, which doubles to P18 for the poor.

Meanwhile, Laurel also instructed Navarro and the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service (AMAS) to conduct random inspections of public markets to collect price data and determine necessary actions, including measures permitted under the Price Act of 1993.

“Next week, that meeting will be set. We will talk to them and tell them, ‘if you’re profiteering, we will move under the price act,’” he said.

The Price Act aims to protect consumers by stabilizing prices of basic goods and prime commodities. Under this law, the DA is responsible for implementing price measures on various agricultural products.

If prices are deemed excessive or unreasonable, the DA can recommend to the president the imposition of a price ceiling. The law also penalizes price manipulation through practices like hoarding, profiteering, and forming cartels.

“We will get to the bottom of this. Millions of Filipino consumers must not suffer from the greed of the few,” Laurel said.

The price of imported well-milled rice ranged from P45 to P55 per kilo while regular rice stood between P42 and P48 per kilo as of October 28, based on the DA’s latest price monitoring.

The price of local well-milled rice stood between P43 and P54 per kilo while regular rice ranged from P41 to P50, according to DA.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/30/da-meeting-market-leaders-on-high-retail-prices-of-rice/>

ABANTE TONITE:

DA hihilutin mga nagbebenta ng mahal na bigas

Kakausapin ng Department of Agriculture ang mga namumuno sa malalaking palengke sa Metro Manila para malaman kung bakit nananatiling mahal pa rin ang presyo ng bigas sa kabila ng malaking pagbaba ng taripa nito.

“We will get to the bottom of this. Millions of Filipino consumers must not suffer from the greed of the few,” babala ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Sinabi ng mga economic managers na nagsulong ng Executive Order No. 62 na nagbaba ng taripa ng bigas na mababawasan ng P6-7 ang presyo ng bigas kada kilo.

Ayon sa DA, kinausap na nito ang mga rice importers sa Bulacan tungkol dito at sinisi ng importers ang retailers sa mataas na presyo ng bigas dahil binaba na raw nila ang presyo ng kanilang bigas sa P38 kada kilo.

Ayon kay Tiu Laurel, kailangang konsultahin ang mga market leader para malaman ang dahilan kung bakit nananatiling mahal pa rin ang bigas. Kung totoo ang sinasabi ng mga importers na binaba na nila ang kanilang presyo, dapat ay bumaba na rin ang presyo sa retail.

“If what importers claim are correct, then retail prices of rice should be around the P45 level per kilo,” sabi ni Tiu Laurel. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/10/29/da-hihilutin-mga-nagbebenta-ng-mahal-na-bigas/>