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THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Congress urged to pass ‘half-cup rice’ law

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

December 3, 2024 | 12:00am



A vendor arranges his rice products for sale at a public market along M. Dela Fuente Street in Sampaloc, Manila on July 14, 2024.

STAR / Edd Gumban

MANILA, Philippines — With at least P3.6 billion worth of rice wasted annually, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is pushing for the revival of a proposed measure mandating restaurants, hotels, canteens and eateries to serve half-cup of rice.

At a press conference, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa yesterday noted that President Marcos himself was a proponent of half-rice servings during his stint at the Senate.

“For the record, the secretary wants to revive a bill offering half-cup of rice. In the 16th Congress, President Marcos filed such a bill when he was a senator,” De Mesa said.

He added that Tiu Laurel is ready to assist lawmakers in crafting the proposed measure.

“The secretary is really interested in helping revive and craft a new bill that hopefully will cater to the possibility of offering (half-cup of rice) as an option. At present, it is better if it will become an option, but of course, we defer to the legislators what could be the best scenario for this bill,” De Mesa said.

He cited the study of the Department of Science and Technology-Food and Nutrition Research Institute which showed that in 2019, at least nine grams of rice was wasted by each Filipino.

“That’s practically equivalent to two tablespoons but the 2019 (statistics) was old data. It dropped to 6.4 grams. The rice wastage (may have) decreased, but still, that translates to about 255,000 metric tons (MT) of rice wastage every year,” he added.

The country’s daily requirement of rice is pegged at 37,000 MT, according to the DA official.

“It will be a big help if half-cup rice service will be implemented to lessen the rice wastage of Filipinos,” he said.

He maintained the half-cup of rice serving will only be an option to the customers.

“The same choice should be accorded to those who want to avail the half-rice, although it is not mandatory but optional. If you serve one cup of rice and there will be leftovers, that is automatic wastage, not unlike if there is an opportunity to offer a half-cup of rice,” he explained.

A total of P1.6 billion in savings could be incurred if the government cuts the annual rice wastage to half, according to De Mesa.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute in 2023 also pushed for a half-cup rice law to avoid rice wastage.

Rice smuggling

A farmers’ group yesterday said that rice smuggling and hoarding have increased as the organization pushed for the review of Executive Order 62, which lowered the tariff on imported staple food to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent.

AGAP party-list Rep. Nicanor Briones said EO 62 failed to reduce the retail price of rice in the markets.

“EO 62 has a lot of loopholes, including its failure to control smuggling. It was implemented without consultations with farmers and fishermen,” he said.

The representative added that EO 62 allowed traders to import unlimited volumes of the staple, enabling unscrupulous businessmen to under-declare their imports and smuggle the rest of the product.

He added that the government has lost at least P12 billion in revenues because of EO 62 and the funding under the Rice Tariffication Law could have been used to provide assistance to the farmers and fisherfolk.

The EO has resulted in the country's dependence on importation and prevented the farmers from being more competitive, according to Briones.

"Retail prices of rice have yet to go down despite almost six months of its implementation," he said.

He noted that based on monitoring in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of well-milled rice ranged between P48 and P55 per kilo, while regular-milled rice ranged between P45 and P52 per kilo.

"Rice should only be at P41 to P45 per kilo because of the lower tariff. It is clear that some traders are taking advantage of the executive order," he said.

Briones called on the DA to name the top 10 rice importers in the country to check rice cartel, profiteering, hoarding and smuggling.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/03/2404601/congress-urged-pass-half-cup-rice-law>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA renews pitch for ‘half-cup rice’

By: **Jordeene B. Lagare** - @inquirerdotnet

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:50 AM December 03, 2024



File/DA-PhilRice Official Facebook page

MANILA, Philippines — Half a cup of rice, anyone?

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has revived its call for a national policy urging all restaurants and food establishments to serve rice in half-cup portions to curb wastage of the nation’s staple food.

“[Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.] wants to revive a bill to offer half a cup of rice to customers,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said at a press briefing on Monday.

De Mesa, also the DA’s spokesperson, clarified that the proposal was not to make half-cup rice portions compulsory but only to “encourage” establishments, particularly hotels, restaurants and “carinderias,” or eateries, to offer this option.

“In other words, it is not mandatory but optional, meaning restaurants will have the option to offer it... [because] if you give [customers] one cup of rice right away and they can't finish it, that automatically becomes wastage,” he said.

The planned bill or executive order (EO) seeks to reduce wastage while promoting better health, he added.

Data from the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), a government corporate entity attached to the DA, show that 255,000 metric tons of rice is wasted annually, as of November.

That amount can feed 2.79 million Filipinos, the agency noted.

The International Diabetes Federation reported that one in every 14 Filipino adults was diagnosed with diabetes in 2021, believed to be caused by higher consumption of white rice.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, diabetes is the fourth leading cause of death in the Philippines, with 36,039 cases recorded in 2023.

De Mesa pointed out that President Marcos himself was a proponent of a national half-cup rice policy.

As a senator, he introduced Senate Bill No. 1863, or the proposed Anti-Rice Wastage Act of 2013, which proposed fines of P20,000 to P100,000 on restaurants, hotels and other businesses that refuse to serve half a cup of rice.

The bill, however, was left pending in a Senate committee.

In gov't offices first

Last year, three House lawmakers filed separate bills mandating commercial establishments to serve half-cup servings of rice.

While waiting for the enactment of such legislation, PhilRice proposed that an EO be issued carrying out a half-cup rice policy in government offices next year.

Should the EO be found to reduce rice wastage significantly across the bureaucracy, then PhilRice may suggest that the policy be implemented nationwide, PhilRice head of development communication Hazel Antonio-Beltran told reporters in a Zoom interview.

Some 46 local governments have passed ordinances to allow food establishments to sell half-cup portions of rice. These include Quezon City, Manila, Davao City, Cebu City and Puerto Princesa City. —*with a report from Inquirer Research*

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2011736/da-renews-pitch-for-half-cup-rice>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Half cup of rice pushed as standard national serving

December 2, 2024 | 10:06 pm



FREEPIK

THE Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) said it is pushing for an executive order (EO) to eventually make the half cup of rice as the standard serving size.

Citing the need to minimize waste, PhilRice Head of Development Communication Hazel V. Antonio-Beltran said in an online briefing on Monday that it is proposing initially that food service establishments within government agencies be the testing ground for the half-cup policy, “Then we will now look at the impact that will have on waste,” she said.

The data will be the basis for expanding the standard to private restaurants.

“Right now we only have household data. We can use (the government test run) as reference to promote the initiative in all restaurants,” Ms. Antonio-Beltran said.

According to PhilRice, Philippine households waste about 255,000 metric tons of rice per year, or 19 to 20 kilograms per household. The amount of rice wasted is equivalent to the consumption of 2.79 million people.

She added that the PhilRice is also proposing penalties of between P3,000 and P10,000 for non-compliance.

She said that the Private Sector Advisory Council also supports the initiative and is awaiting approval from the President.

“They’re just waiting for the final approval. Then, maybe, we can start next year. When that happens, maybe after two years, we can make him a national,” Ms. Antonio-Beltran added.

PhilRice has said that 47 local government units have adopted ordinances requiring food establishments to serve rice in half cups. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/02/638815/half-cup-of-rice-pushed-as-standard-national-serving/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

PRDP Scale-Up to raise farm infra funding

December 2, 2024 | 9:55 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Agriculture said on Monday that its flagship Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) Scale-Up is looking to fund the construction of more agricultural infrastructure like cold storage facilities and slaughter-houses.

“The PRDP Scale-Up will focus on the (projects) that will create a bigger impact on agriculture. This would include slaughterhouses, cold storage facilities, among others,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa told reporters.

The PRDP was a World Bank-funded program, originally implemented in 2014, aimed at increasing rural incomes and enhancing farm and fishery productivity in targeted areas.

PRDP Scale-Up continues the original program by improving the access of farmers and fisherfolk. It has a funding of \$600 million from the World Bank awarded to the DA in November 2023.

“Scale-Up was designed to respond to the needs for investment mostly in agri-infrastructure and enterprises, beyond what was in the original PRDP,” Mr. De Mesa added.

The Scale-Up project is active in 82 provinces and is expected to benefit 450,000 farmers and fisherfolk, generating about 42,000 new jobs.

“The recently launched PRDP Scale-Up already has a portfolio of 75 approved infrastructure subprojects worth P11.44 billion... and 60 proposed enterprise subprojects amounting to P6.31 billion,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Operations and PRDP National Project Director U-Nichols A. Manalo said.

He added that 30 projects are under construction.

The original PRDP funded and completed 503 rural infrastructures worth P31 billion and 667 rural enterprises worth P2.93 billion, benefitting 3 million people, according to Mr. Manalo. — **Adrian H. Halil**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/02/638809/prdp-scale-up-to-raise-farm-infra-funding/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA wants revival of half-cup rice bill

By Janine Alexis Miguel

December 3, 2024

REVIVING the Half-Cup Rice Bill may help further reduce rice waste in the country, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) last week said the country saved P3.6 billion from reduced wastage of the staple. The savings were based on the current price of rice at P43 a kilo.

Senate Bill 1863, or the Rice Waste Reduction Act of 2023, penalizes restaurants and other food establishments with P20,000 to P100,000 in fines for refusing a customer's request to be served less than a cup of rice. The bill has yet to be signed into law. Lawmakers had previously supported similar initiatives and said reviving or crafting a new bill will encourage establishments, from restaurants to small eateries, to offer half-cup rice servings as an option.

"It's not mandatory but optional for restaurants to offer half-rice servings if the customer prefers it," Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said, pointing out that there are people who can't finish a full cup of rice.

Other people deliberately eat only half a cup, or even less, due to diet restrictions. Giving consumers the option to order less than a full serving of rice will thus reduce the amount of unfinished rice thrown away. Data from the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) in 2009 revealed 9 grams of rice per person are wasted daily, roughly equivalent to two tablespoons. By 2019, the number had decreased to 6.4 grams, yet still translates to 255,000 metric tons of rice wasted annually, de Mesa explained.

The wasted rice could have sustained 2.79 million people for a year, the FNRI said.

From its own data, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) said daily wastage per household averaged 53 grams of cooked rice from 2018 to 2019. Using the 2020 population as a reference, the DA estimated rice wastage has been reduced from 9 g per person in 2009 to 6 g in 2024. "Implementing a half-cup rice serving can still reduce this waste," he said, emphasizing the potential savings could reach P1.8 billion annually. The DA promotes alternatives to rice like sweet potatoes, cassava and corn. There is also a need for an educational campaign to teach proper rice consumption habits, the agency said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/03/business/top-business/da-wants-revival-of-half-cup-rice-bill/2014473>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

BFAR patrol in EEZ, high seas gets Canadian support

Malou Talosig-Bartolome
December 3, 2024



Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines David Hartman is joined by PAL Aerospace Chief Pilot Colby Mitchell, Sensor Operations Manager John Boyce, Director of Flight Operations Kirby Short, and Sean Wheeler, Chief of International Enforcement of Conservation and Protection at Canada's Fisheries and Oceans Department. On Monday, December 2, they presented Ottawa's findings from a 72-hour aerial patrol conducted over Philippine waters with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) over two weeks. The Canadian fisheries department deployed a Dash 8 patrol aircraft, spotting dozens of potential illegal fishing activities in the high seas east of the Philippines.

At least 88 suspected illegal fishermen were monitored when Canada and the Philippines jointly conducted an aerial patrol and capacity-building operation at the eastern coast of the Philippines up to the high seas near Palau.

In the two-week operation, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) officials boarded Dash-8 aerial surveillance aircraft of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and scoured 22,000 kilometers of the Pacific Ocean from Luzon to Visayas for 70 hours.

Of the 88 potential violators, 50 entail serious violations of fishing in enclosed areas, unregistered vessels, use of prohibitive gear and failure to be properly marked. There are also many fishing vessels which turned off their automatic identification system (AIS), which the Canadian satellite was able to monitor.

Dubbed “Operation Bantay Lawud (Sea Guardian),” the joint fisheries initiatives of both countries aim to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing.

Sean Wheeler, chief of the international enforcement of the Conservation and Protection of DFO, said they decided to launch this joint undertaking in the eastern seaboard of the Philippines as both countries are members of the High Seas Commission.

“Canada is working with the appropriate flag states to provide evidence of violations of international requirements, to support further investigation by flag-states and appropriate sanctions,” Wheeler said.

BFAR and DFO also coordinated with Palau and the Forum Fisheries Agency this operation. Two Palauan officers joined DFO fishery officers on the flight.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/03/bfar-patrol-in-eez-high-seas-gets-canadian-support/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

PhilRice pushing for sale of half-cup rice in bid to cut yearly 255K MT wastage

Ada Pelonia
December 2, 2024

THE Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) is pushing for the issuance of an executive order (EO) that will promote the sale of half-cup rice in food establishments of government offices to reduce wastage.

Citing data from the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), PhilRice development communication division head Hazel Antonio-Beltran said the Philippines wastes 255,000 metric tons (MT) of rice annually, which could feed around 2.79 million Filipinos.

At present, Beltran noted that 47 local government units (LGUs) in the country are implementing the half-cup rice through respective ordinances.

“The (ES) that we proposed through [Private Sector Advisory Council] to President Marcos Jr. is for roll-out first in the government offices soon,” Beltran told reporters on Monday, speaking in Filipino.

“Then when we see that it has a significant effect on wastage and it really reduced the wastage in our government offices, that’s the time we will recommend it for the private sector as well,” she added.

Beltran hoped that the EO would be released next year, adding that they would conduct a study under the order for two years.

She noted that once they gather the data, it can be applied as a reference to promote the policy in restaurants and eventually use it as a basis for creating a bill.

For as long as there's no available food wastage data from food establishments, "it will be hard to prove its impact," she said in Filipino, noting that the current data is based only on household wastage.

'Revive old bill'

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture (DA) called for the revival of the bill that would allow the sale of half-cup of rice.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. filed Senate Bill 1863 when he was a senator during the 16th Congress, which would penalize food establishments refusing to serve half-cup of rice.

DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is keen on reviving this bill.

"Secretary [Laurel] is really interested in helping, reviving, and crafting a new bill that will hopefully cater to the possibility of having an option [to avail this half-cup rice serving]," de Mesa told reporters on Monday.

In November 2023, Iloilo First District Representative Janette Garin filed House Bill 9536, which mandates restaurants and food establishments to allow serving half-cup portions of rice.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/02/philrice-pushing-for-sale-of-half-cup-rice-in-bid-to-cut-yearly-255k-mt-wastage/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA rural development plan now has cold storage, abattoir infra

Ada Pelonia
December 2, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) wants to expand farm infrastructure to include cold storages and slaughterhouses under its Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) scale-up program.

According to Agriculture Undersecretary for Operations Roger Navarro, the DA has many projects under the PRDP scale-up, which will run until 2028.

“The most important is the post-harvest facility for rice and corn and the other one is the cold storages for fishery and for consolidation of our vegetables,” Navarro told reporters partly in Filipino on the sidelines of DA-PRDP Scale-Up Exhibit on Monday.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa explained that the scale-up program is designed to respond to the needs for investment on agri-infrastructures beyond the existing ones.

“The original design of PRDP responded mostly to farm-to-market roads [and] bridges,” De Mesa told reporters on Monday, speaking partly in Filipino.

“With the scale-up program, it will be focused on other infrastructures that will create a bigger impact in the sector other than roads and bridges,” he added, noting that among these projects will be cold storages and slaughterhouses.

In his speech, DA Assistant Secretary for Operations and PRDP National Project Director U-Nichols Manalo noted the latest updates regarding the program’s implementation.

“In its decade-long run, the original PRDP has funded and completed 503 rural infrastructures worth P31 billion and 667 rural enterprises worth P2.93 billion benefitting more than 3 million Filipinos across the archipelago,” Manalo said.

“Meanwhile, the recently launched PRDP Scale-Up already has a portfolio of 75 approved infrastructure subprojects worth P11.44 billion, 30 of which are already under construction, and 60 proposed enterprise subprojects amounting to P6.31 billion,” he added.

For her part, World Bank Team Leader to the PRDP Mio Takada expressed the international organization’s support for the PRDP since its inception.

“The PRDP is one of the most important projects for the World Bank which is why we decided to continue with the Scale-Up. Today, we will see the massive innovations and day-to-day hard work of all the officials and PRDP team and how all these developments have changed the lives of farmers in the Philippines,” Takada said.

The DA, World Bank, and the European Union opened the PRDP Scale-Up Exhibit in Quezon City wherein 23 proponent groups of the program from North Luzon, South Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao will showcase their products, including heirloom rice, coffee, chocolates, coconut products, seaweeds, and vegetables.

The exhibit will run from December 2-6, 2024, which coincides with the wrap-up meeting of the 18th World Bank-European Union Implementation Support Mission to the DA-PRDP and the 3rd to the DA-PRDP Scale-Up.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/02/da-rural-development-plan-now-has-cold-storage-abattoir-infra/>

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

Marcos pilit pinababa presyo ng bigas, pero daming nananamantala - Briones

[Joy Cantos](#)

December 3, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Ipinaliwanag ni AGAP Partylist Rep. Nicanor ‘Nikki’ Briones, ang tungkol sa usapin sa imported na bigas na base sa Executive Order 62, ibinaba ni Pangulong Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos, Jr., ang taripa buhat sa 35% to 15% at bumaba ito ng 20% dahil sa kagustuhan nitong maibaba ang presyo ng bigas subali’t ang naging resulta hindi naman nagbago ang presyo nito sa merkado.

Ayon kay Briones, na malinaw na mayroon nananamantala at may kumikita dito na dapat nasa P41 to P45 per kilo lang ang bigas dahil sa pagbaba ng taripa (taxes) sa bigas.

Tahasan din sinabi ng Dept. of Agriculture (DA) na ang nakikinabang dito ang mga importer o traders at hindi ang mga consumer na umaasa na bababa ang presyo ng bigas. At naapektuhan din ang mga palay farmers sapagkat nawalan ng P12 billion mahigit na revenue ang gobyerno na dapat magiging pang suporta, ayuda at pangpagawa ng kailangan ng mga magsasaka ng palay.

Ayon kay Agap Rep., na dahil hindi nakinabang ang ating mga consumer iminungkahi nilang ituloy na ang pagre-review at kaagad bawiin ang pagbaba ng taripa at ibalik sa 35% ng importation ng bigas at tamang tama mayroon darating na anihan kapag ibinaba ang taripa bababa na ang preyo ng bigas sa merkado at sa international market hindi na mapagsasamantalahan ng mga importer.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/12/03/2404674/marcos-pilit-pinababa-presyo-ng-bigas-pero-daming-nananamantala-briones>