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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **NFA ensures readiness to supply rice for emergencies during holidays**

**BY JEL SANTOS**

Dec 28, 2024 05:01 PM

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The National Food Authority (NFA) has assured the public of its readiness to release NFA rice to relief-giving institutions in the event of emergencies and calamities, even during the holiday season.

NFA Administrator Larry Lacson made the announcement in light of the ongoing activity of Mt. Kanlaon and forecasts of intertropical convergence zones and rain showers in various parts of the country.

In a statement, the NFA chief said he has ordered field employees to promptly activate Operation Centers (OpCen) in areas impacted by floods, typhoons, and other emergencies, as well as to open hotlines to expedite coordination with relief institutions.

“Holiday season tayo ngayon ngunit ang aming tanggapan ay laging bukas upang tugunan ang pangangailangan ng ating mga kababayan. Kasama sa ating pagseserbisyo ang kahandaan sa anumang oras ng pangangailangan (It’s the holiday season, but our office remains open to address the needs of our fellow citizens. Being ready at any time of need is part of our service),” said Lacson.

To meet the demands for rice relief from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), local government units (LGUs), and legislators, the NFA has intensified its palay-buying efforts through its Price Range Scheme (PRICERS).

Such strategy ensures the agency can adequately respond to the needs of families and individuals in calamity-stricken areas, according to Lacson.

As of this year, the NFA has achieved 95 percent of its buffer stocking target, with a current inventory of 5.661 million bags of equivalent milled rice.

Lacson emphasized the importance of sustained coordination with local farmers and chief executives to ensure timely responses during emergencies.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/28/rice-for-emergencies-during-holidays>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Government eyes expanded P40/kilo rice program

Helen Flores, Jose Rodel Clapano - The Philippine Star

December 28, 2024 | 12:00am



Individuals line up for affordable rice sold at P29 per kilo at the Kadiwa store inside the National Irrigation Administration Office in Quezon City on July 5, 2024.

The STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — Affordable rice will soon be available in more public markets nationwide as the government eyes the expansion of its P40 per kilo program, Malacañang said yesterday.

“The Kadiwa ng Pangulo Rice-for-All program resumed Friday, Dec. 27, on its seventh day, targeting more public markets in time for the celebration of New Year,” the Presidential Communications Office said.

Rice retailers have started lowering prices following the successful implementation of the program led by the Department of Agriculture (DA), the PCO noted.

The staple, being sold at Kadiwa stores at P40 per kilo in some areas in Metro Manila, is cheaper by P3 to P5 compared to those being sold by market retailers.

The public may purchase up to 25 kilos of the affordable rice.

“Market retailers are currently reducing their prices to keep up with the lower price offered by rolling stores,” the PCO said, quoting a DA report.

So far, EDSA Balintawak Market distributed 110 sacks of rice; New Marulas Public Market in Barangay Marulas, Valenzuela City, five sacks and Malabon Central Market, 32 sacks.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said among the cities that agreed to allow the sale of P40 per kilo of rice in the markets are Quezon City, Pasay, Caloocan, Manila, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Malabon and Makati.

The current retail prices of rice range from P48 to P55 per kilo, the DA said.

The agency targets to open at least 1,300 more Kadiwa stores next year and 1,500 Kadiwa kiosks inside the markets, Tiu Laurel said.

He noted that the Office of the President has approved the allocation of P5 billion for the Rice-for-All and P29 per kilo of rice programs.

President Marcos has ordered the expansion of the government's rice programs and Kadiwa outlets nationwide.

### **Contract farming**

Meanwhile, Marikina 2nd District Rep. Stella Quimbo has asked the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to further study its contract farming program to achieve the government's target price of P20 per kilo of rice in local markets.

Quimbo made the call during a House quinta committee hearing before Congress went into Christmas break.

The committee, chaired by Rep. Joey Salceda, is probing alleged rice price manipulation by traders and rice importers.

Quimbo requested the NIA to present its findings at future meetings of the quinta comm.

At a recent quinta comm hearing, NIA administrator Eduardo Guillen said the agency collaborates with irrigation associations, providing funds equivalent to 50 percent of the target yield for farm inputs, with the remaining paid at harvest time.

Under the program, farmers are free to sell any surplus yield above the contracted target.

Guillen said P29 per kilo of rice reflects only 25 percent of the total yield under the contract farming program, with the remaining 75 percent being sold at higher prices.

The contract farming program, he said, is aimed at shifting the practice of planting rice only during the wet season, when farmers are guaranteed water for their crops.

Guillen said the agency can supply irrigation water during the dry season, which would allow farmers to harvest earlier, before the typhoon season begins.

If NIA managed to sell rice for P29 per kilo under the contract farming program, Quimbo said it could also achieve the target of P20 per kilo of rice.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/28/2410292/government-eyes-expanded-p40kilo-rice-program>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA urges consumers: Buy local fruits

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

December 28, 2024 | 12:00am



A vendor arranges round fruits for sale in Quiapo on December 26, 2024 in preparation for the upcoming New Year celebration.

Ryan Baldemor / The Philippine STAR

**MANILA, Philippines** — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is urging consumers to prioritize local fruits instead of imported fruits to help farmers as demand is expected to increase during the New Year celebration.

In a radio interview, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said that an increase in the retail price of round fruits is expected days before Jan. 1, 2025.

Preparing at least 12 or 13 round fruits on New Year's Eve is a tradition for many consumers as it symbolizes prosperity and good fortune.

“We are encouraging our fellow Filipinos to patronize local fruits instead of the imported fruits to help our local farmers,” De Mesa added.

Based on monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, watermelon ranged between P60 and P90 per kilo; pomelo, between P80 and P250 per kilo; melon, between P60 and P140 per kilo; avocado, between P300 and P600 per kilo; mango, between P150 and P300 per kilo; papaya, between P60 and P90 per kilo.

On the other hand, De Mesa assured the public of enough supply of pork, chicken and beef until the New Year celebration.

“For meat, we don’t see any problem. They (producers) assured us that the production and supply is good and we don’t see any problem with the volume of meat, whether it is beef, chicken or pork,” he said.

Based on the DA’s monitoring, the retail price of pork shoulder ranged between P290 and P370 per kilo; pork belly, between P330 and P410 per kilo; whole chicken, between P185 and P230 per kilo; beef rump, between P400 and P500 per kilo; beef brisket, between P320 and P460 per kilo and medium-sized eggs, between P6.50 and P8 per piece.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/28/2410293/da-urges-consumers-buy-local-fruits>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

## **DA mulls ‘food security emergency’ to rein in rice prices**

05:30 AM December 28, 2024



‘RICE FOR ALL’ CAMPAIGN Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa inspects the rice being sold at P40 per kilogram at the Kamuning Public Market in Quezon City, in a photo taken on Dec. 5. —Lyn Rillon

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is considering declaring a “food security emergency” early next year as it scrambles to rein in the prices of rice, a key staple and a major driver of inflation.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. told the Inquirer in a text message on Friday that he was scheduled to meet on Jan. 3 with key agencies under the DA, including the Bureau of Plant Industry and the National Food Authority (NFA), to assess the national rice situation.



“After that, there will be an announcement,” said Tiu Laurel, who broached the idea of declaring a food security emergency to drastically bring down rice prices.

The DA is empowered under the amended rice tariffication law to make such a declaration to allow the release of buffer stocks from the NFA to stabilize prices of rice, one of the biggest components of a Filipino household’s food basket.

### **Price manipulation, smuggling**

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda expressed support for Tiu Laurel’s move, saying that the combination of measures, including cracking down on hoarders could immediately bring down rice prices by as much as P6 a kilo.

He added that declaring a food security emergency was “what the Murang Pagkain Supercommittee has been asking the DA to do,” referring to the House quinta committee formed to investigate alleged rice price manipulation and smuggling.

“I urge him to follow through as soon as possible. We should see a price reduction of at least P6 per kilo as a result of stricter enforcement against hoarding,” said Salceda, who chairs both the House committee on ways and means and the quinta committee.

### **Brand labels removed**

Meanwhile, the DA has also ordered the removal of brand labels in imported rice as well as elimination of “premium” and “special” labels on imported rice, believing that some industry players are using them “to justify inflated prices.”

Tiu Laurel threatened to withdraw import permits if traders would be found “unwilling to follow our regulations,” such as in removing these labels on imported rice.

“Importing rice is not a right but a privilege,” he stressed.

The DA pointed out that prices of certain rice brands have remained high even though tariffs on imported rice had already been slashed to 15 percent until 2028 from 35 percent.

The DA has been able to sell well-milled rice under its Rice-for-All program at P40 a kilo.

But at the market, the DA's monitoring showed that local well-milled rice retailed between P40 and P52 per kilo, albeit already lower from P40 to P56 per kilo last year.

Local regular milled rice, on the other hand, ranged from a low of P39 to a high of P48 per kilo as of Dec. 23, compared with P43 to P52 per kilo on Dec. 22 last year.

Imported regular milled rice was sold from P44 to P45 per kilo. This variety was not available around the same day a year ago.

### **Other DA steps**

Imported well-milled rice was priced from P40 to P56 per kilo, from P58 per kilo last year.

According to Marikina Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo, domestic retail prices "should have stabilized" around P35 a kilo considering that the landed price of imported rice has already gone down by P11 a kilo year-on-year.

Instead, domestic retail prices have remained high, a clear sign of "abuse," said Quimbo, an economist and senior vice chair of the House committee on appropriations.

For the DA, rice prices can even be lowered, thus it is also considering allowing other government corporations, such as Food Terminal Inc., to import significant quantities of rice to directly compete with private importers.

The DA's legal division will also determine whether provisions of the Consumer Price Act could be activated to deal with possible profiteering at the expense of ordinary Filipinos struggling to buy rice.

### **Tax audit of traders**

Tiu Laurel likewise hinted at enlisting concerned government agencies, particularly the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), to audit the financial records of rice traders to ensure compliance with fair pricing practices.

The Department of Trade and Industry may also assist in monitoring prices of rice in markets and groceries, Tiu Laurel added.

Salceda also reminded Tiu Laurel that he has asked the DA to look into warehouses and work with the Bureau of Customs to do post-clearance inspections of imported stocks.

“We need action from the DA sooner rather than later, so I hope the study process doesn’t last beyond a few days,” he said.

In previous quinta committee hearings before Congress adjourned on Dec. 18, the panel members castigated rice importers and traders for allegedly colluding to manipulate rice prices despite tariff reductions, forcing consumers to shoulder the artificially inflated costs.

### **‘Possible collusion’**

Agap Rep. Nicanor Briones noted that two major importers—RBS Universal Grains Traders Corp. and Sodatrade Corp.—that collectively imported 273,000 metric tons of rice had shared ownership, “indicating that there is possible collusion here.”

According to the general information sheets of both companies, both have interlocking directorships: Corazon Barnuevo, Rosalie Barnuevo, Rosalyn Shimokawa and Bernard Barnuevo. RBS was incorporated in 2014 while Sodatrade was incorporated in 2015.

Salceda called on the BIR to look into the country’s top rice importers, which comprise 36 percent of the country’s total imports.

The Marcos administration is under intense pressure to address rice prices as inflation remains a top concern among Filipinos and the perceived failure in controlling inflation has dragged down President Marcos' approval ratings.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2019163/da-mulls-food-security-emergency-to-rein-in-rice-prices>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# PH, Pakistan see million-ton rice deal by June 2025

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:24 AM December 28, 2024

Manila and Islamabad are confident that they could seal a deal by June 2025 if not earlier, through which Pakistan will ship to the Philippines at least 1 million metric tons (MT) of milled rice to augment the archipelago's supply.

In a statement on Friday, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said it hopes a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between both parties will be finalized by the first half of 2025.

According to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., he met recently with Pakistan's Ambassador to Manila Imtiaz Kazi, who proposed such a volume "at a competitive price."

One million MT is about a quarter of the Philippines' rice import needs.

According to the DA, the Pakistani envoy sought confirmation on the continuation of the reduced tariff on rice imports, which Tiu Laurel said could be extended until 2028 "if deemed necessary."

## **15% tariff**

President Marcos signed last June Executive Order (EO) No. 62, which reduced import duties on milled rice to 15 percent until 2028 from 35 percent previously to manage food prices while tempering the inflationary pressure on various commodities.

EO 62 calls for a periodic review of rice tariffs every four months, as directed by the President. Depending on the assessment, the 15-percent tariff on rice may be retained, increased or decreased. But Tiu Laurel said recently the DA will not recommend raising the import duties on imported rice anytime soon. The announcement came after the DA disclosed it is negotiating with Pakistan and India to secure a "stable supply" of 2 million MT of rice, in a move to create a level playing field among rice-supplying nations.

“We want them to compete for our market,” Tiu Laurel said earlier, adding the agency was working on a similar arrangement with India.

Last November, the Pakistani envoy said that his country, the third-largest supplier of imported rice to the archipelago, sought to increase its share in the local rice market through a partnership with the Philippines on rice importation.

Back then, Kazi said traders from Pakistan seek “stability and certainty” on the quantity of rice to be shipped to the Philippines, citing fluctuating tariffs levied by the government and competitive global prices.

“We want to increase that share, provided we can also provide [a] stable good supply of rice and that depends on mutual concessions for each other, which means that the Philippines should guarantee us that they want this much rice every year,” he added.

Pakistan has been exporting rice to the archipelago since 2019, the year rice trading in the Philippines was liberalized.

The Philippines’ other sources of rice imports are Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, India, China, Japan, Cambodia, Italy and Spain.

Vietnam remains the leading exporter of rice to the Philippines with 3.44 million MT, accounting for 76.7 percent of the 4.48 million MT of rice sourced from abroad as of Dec. 12, data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed.

At the same time, Thailand and Pakistan supplied 567,913.22 MT and 244,859.48 MT, respectively.

<https://business.inquirer.net/498930/ph-pakistan-see-million-ton-rice-deal-by-june-2025>

**REMATE:**

## **NCR rice retailers nagpatupad ng tapyas-presyo para makasabay sa P40 ‘Rice-for-All’ ng DA – PCO**

December 28, 2024 11:34



MANILA, Philippines- Nagsimula nang ibaba ng mga rice retailer sa Metro Manila markets ang presyo ng kanilang bigas para makalaban sa nagpapatuloy na inisyatiba ng pamahalaan sa pagbebenta ng bigas sa mas abot-kayang halaga.

Sa katunayan, tinukoy ng Presidential Communications Office (PCO) ang Department of Agriculture (DA), sabay saging ang implementasyon ng Kadiwa ng Pangulo “Rice-for-All” program sa iba’t ibang lugar sa Metro Manila ay gumagawa ngayon ng “dent on the staple’s price.”

Tinuran ng Malakanyang na ang bigas ay mabibili sa Kadiwa stalls at ang retailer nito ay mas mura ng P3 hanggang P5 kumpara sa ibinebenta ng market retailers, nagresulta ng pagtaas sa benta sa pamamagitan ng mga rolling store sa kamakailan lamang na operasyon.

“Market retailers are currently reducing their prices to keep up with the lower price offered by rolling stores,” ayon sa PCO, tinukoy ang report ng DA.

Sa ilalim ng “Rice-for-All” program, ang DA ay nagbebenta ng well-milled rice sa halagang P40 per kilogram, na limitado lamang sa 25-kilogram kada tao.

Base sa price monitoring ng Agriculture Department (para sa panahon ng December 16-21), ang average price ng local well-milled rice sa NCR markets ay P46.86 kada kilo habang ang halaga naman ng imported well-milled rice ay P47.46 kada kilo.

Isang linggo bago pa ang paglulunsad ng P40 per kilo “Rice-for-All” initiative (December 2-7 period), ang presyo kada kilo ng local well-milled rice ay P47.05 habang ang imported well-milled rice P47.90.

Winika ng PCO na ang kabuuang 147 sako ng bigas ay ipinamahagi sa sumusunod na lokasyon ng Kadiwa sa Kalakhang Maynila:

- Edsa Balintawak Market (Southbound, Brgy. Balingasa, Quezon City) – 110 sako
- New Marulas Public Market (Along Market Road, Brgy. Marulas, Valenzuela City) – 5 sako
- Malabon Central Market (Along F. Sevilla Blvd., Brgy. Tañong, Malabon City) – 32 sako

Ang P40 per kilo “Rice-for-All” program ay isang inisyatiba sa ilalim ng Kadiwa ng Pangulo program —kolaborasyon sa pagitan ng Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service ng DA at Food Terminal Inc. (FTI). **Kris Jose**



**MANILA STANDRAD**

## ‘Rice-for-All’ program forcing retail prices down



*Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel and Trade Secretary Maria Cristina Aldeguer-Roque check bags of rice being sold at the KADIWA ng Pangulo rice-for-all kiosks during a visit at the Guadalupe Public Market in Makati City on December 19, 2024. (Photo by Jay Morales)*

By [Manila Standard](#)

**December 28, 2024, 12:55 am**

The retail prices of rice across Metro Manila have decreased as a direct result of the Kadiwa ng Pangulo Rice-for-All program, according to the Presidential Communications Office (POC).

In a statement, the PCO said that the Department of Agriculture (DA) and other stakeholders have confirmed that “the program made a dent in the staple’s price.”

The agency was not specific as to the average decrease in rice retail prices but indicated that retailers have adjusted to match Kadiwa’s prices.

It was explained that rice sold by the Kadiwa and DA-designated retailers is cheaper by P3 to P5 per kilo than those sold by private-sector retailers, thus creating government-spearheaded competition in the local market.

“Market retailers are currently reducing their prices to keep up with the lower price offered by rolling stores,” the PCO reported citing findings of the DA’s monitoring efforts.

Last week, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Laurel Jr. ordered the deployment of Kadiwa ng Pangulo kiosks to major public markets and even Light Rail Transit terminals to force rice retailers and unscrupulous traders who refuse to pass on to consumers the benefit of lower rice prices.

“We plan to expand this program to other parts of the country where prices of rice remain high, a situation that borders on profiteering,” he said.

Tiu Laurel revealed that President Marcos had earlier approved an additional budget of P5 billion to support the P29 and Rice-for-All programs.

This initiative underscores the DA’s commitment to ensuring food security and stabilizing rice prices across Metro Manila, he added.

So far, EDSA Balintawak Market (Southbound, Barangay Balingasa, Quezon City) distributed 110 sacks of rice; New Marulas Public Market (Market Road, Barangay Marulas, Valenzuela City), five sacks; and Malabon Central Market (F. Sevilla Blvd., Barangay Tañong, Malabon City), 32 sacks, based on government report, the PCO disclosed.

“The Rice-for-All program resumed Friday, its seventh day of implementation, targeting more public markets in time for the celebration of the New Year,” it said.

The DA rolled out the Rice-for-All program in collaboration with select local dealers, importers and wholesalers through designated public markets in the National Capital Region to provide affordable rice options for consumers and help curb high retail prices.

The program was envisioned to ensure the smooth distribution of affordable rice at PhP40 per kilo with a 25-kilogram limit per person.

[https://manilastandard.net/news/314540858/rice-for-all-program-forcing-retail-prices-down.html?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0DvIVXCusQH9Ly3lrbbZb3DPTY6OE1eDkxVONzM3UN82pYH9Di9KRJc5c\\_aem\\_ZIOIK\\_q2S-m29I67XKLOfQ](https://manilastandard.net/news/314540858/rice-for-all-program-forcing-retail-prices-down.html?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0DvIVXCusQH9Ly3lrbbZb3DPTY6OE1eDkxVONzM3UN82pYH9Di9KRJc5c_aem_ZIOIK_q2S-m29I67XKLOfQ)