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MANILA BULLETIN:

Target importers, wholesalers instead of retailers in rice price issue—former DA chief

BY JEL SANTOS

Jan 12, 2025 03:58 PM



The government should shift its attention from rice retailers to the importers and wholesalers cornering the bulk of the market, former Department of Agriculture (DA) secretary Leonardo Montemayor said on Sunday, Jan. 12.

In a statement, Montemayor criticized the implementation of policies that seem to target retailers while allowing major players in the importation and wholesale sector to reap what he described as “windfall profits.”

“Why is government apparently focusing on the retailers’ end of the marketing chain instead of the importers-wholesalers component?” Montemayor asked.

He pointed out that Executive Order (EO) No. 62, issued by President Marcos on June 20, reduced rice tariff rates from 35 percent to 15 percent in an effort to encourage more imports and lower prices for consumers by ₱5 to ₱7 per kilo.

However, Montemayor noted that both the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) have reported that the EO has not achieved its intended objectives.

“Government has allowed the less than 20 big players reportedly cornering the bulk of imports to pocket around ₱13.5 billion in tariff savings, which are tantamount to ‘windfall profits,’” he said.

Starting January 20, the DA is set to implement a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of ₱58 per kilo for imported rice to help protect consumers. But, Montemayor questioned why similar measures are not being applied to importers and wholesalers.

“By the same token, shouldn’t there be a maximum suggested imported rice profit (MSIRP) for importers and wholesalers?” he said.

The former DA chief argued that cracking down on profiteering by a small number of importers and wholesalers would be easier than monitoring tens of thousands of small retailers whose pricing depends on the charges imposed by their suppliers.

“Profiteering by a relatively few importers and wholesalers should be easier to deter and prosecute, compared to running after tens of thousands of small retailers – whose daily sales and margins are dependent on their suppliers’ deliveries and corresponding charges,” Montemayor emphasized.

Earlier, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) criticized the government’s decision to impose a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of ₱58 per kilo for imported rice.

The group labeled the DA’s MSRP initiative a “band-aid solution.”

It emphasized that the policy sidesteps the root causes of soaring rice and food prices, such as the lack of support for Filipino farmers, reliance on neoliberal agricultural policies, the importation of low-cost rice that undermines local production, and the government’s failure to pursue genuine rural industrialization.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/12/target-importers-wholesalers-instead-of-retailers-in-rice-price-issue-former-da-chief>

MANILA BULLETIN:

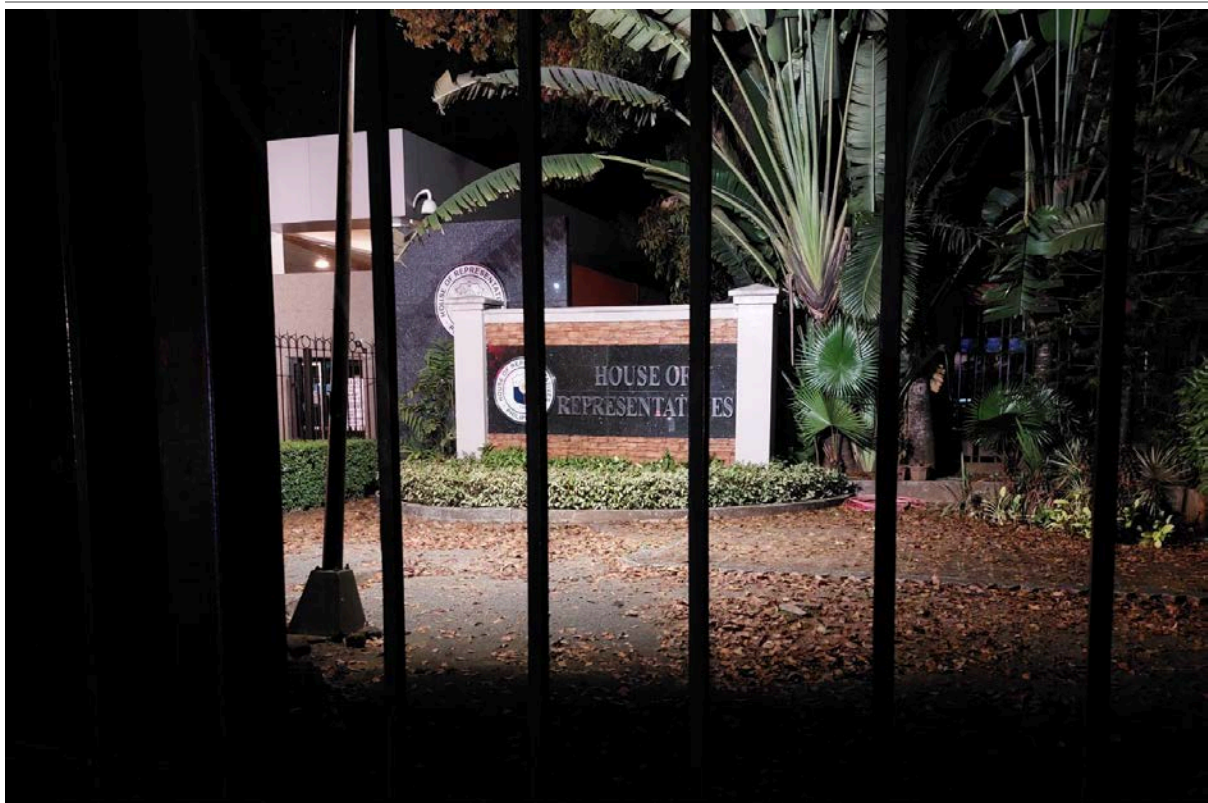
'May mako-contempt?': Quinta-comm chairman vows more serious probe on soaring rice prices

BY ELLSON QUISMORIO

Jan 12, 2025 10:13 AM

AT A GLANCE

- Ahead of the resumption of plenary sessions, House quinta-committee overall chairman, Albay 2nd district Rep. Joey Salceda has vowed to step up the joint panel's efforts to lower the price of rice--the Filipino staple food.



House of Representatives (Ellson Quismorio/ MANILA BULLETIN)

Ahead of the resumption of plenary sessions, House quinta-committee overall chairman, Albay 2nd district Rep. Joey Salceda has vowed to step up the joint panel's efforts to lower the price of rice--the Filipino staple food.

This, as the economist-solon noted the alleged overpricing on local rice by supermarkets.

"We will intensify our fight to lower rice prices. As of the latest data from the Food and Agriculture Organization, global rice prices are at around USD 427 to 500 per metric ton, which means landed price should be at around P34-36 per kilo," Salceda said.

"One of the main drivers of the uptrend, we suspect, is overpricing by supermarkets, which sell on a per kilo basis at as much as P70 per kilo. This is unacceptable," he underscored.

The problem became clearer when Salceda highlighted the price of the competition, which is imported rice.

"The highest quality Thai indica rice is just at P41 per kilo once landed and imposed all applicable duties and taxes," he said.

"The representative of the supermarkets in the quinta-comm hearings made an incorrect assertion that consumer preferences are driving prices up. The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) made a similar assertion on record. Clearly, based on import prices, even the best quality rice should not be at these levels," he explained.

Salceda also promised more no-nonsense hearings by the so-called Murang Pagkain Super-committee moving forward.

"I remind our resource persons that while I hesitated to cite invitees in contempt during the Christmas season, we are past that now," he said.

"The Department of Agriculture (DA's) proposed rice price cap of P58 per kilo would also still give sellers a handsome profit of P17 to 23 per kilo, so we will look into the right price as well," he further said.

The quinta-comm will also see to it that prices of other basic goods remain low.

"As for meat, we will ask the DA to brief us on efforts to keep meat prices low. Corn is a top concern, outpacing general inflation by 2.1 percentage points last December. This pulls meat prices up," he said.

"We will also aim for long-term efforts to keep vegetable prices affordable and stable – so that surpluses are not harmful to farmers, while deficits are addressed," noted Salceda.

"The Speaker (Martin Romualdez) has reiterated his instructions to the quinta-comm to do all that it can to reduce food prices for Filipino families. My goal is to ensure that overall food prices do not exceed the 2-4 percent inflation goal of the government, at any time this year," said the Bicolano.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/12/quinta-comm-chairman-vows-more-serious-probe-on-soaring-rice-prices>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Estrada sworn in as new FPA OIC

BY JUNEP OCAMPO

Jan 12, 2025 10:05 AM



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. swears in Deputy Executive Director Glenn DC Estrada as Acting Executive Director of the Fertilizer and Pesticides Authority last January 10 at the DA central office.

The Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) will have a new acting Executive Director. Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel formally inducted into office on January 10, 2025 Deputy Director Glenn D. Estrada as new acting Executive Director of the FPA, succeeding Julieta B. Lansangan who retired last month.

The FPA plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety, efficacy, and proper use of fertilizers and pesticides in the country. As the agency responsible for regulating the importation, distribution, sale, and use of these agricultural inputs, the FPA directly impacts the productivity and sustainability of the Philippine agricultural sector.

Under Estrada's leadership, the FPA is expected to further fulfill its mandate of fostering sustainable agricultural practices through innovative and science-based solutions.

Estrada's appointment brings a wealth of experience and a forward-looking perspective to the agency. A graduate of BS Agricultural Economics from the University of the Philippines Los Baños, Estrada has built an impressive career marked by his dedication to public service and innovation in agriculture.

His early professional years at the Philippine Rice Research Institute and the Department of Agriculture-Office of the Secretary provided him with substantial technical knowledge and operational expertise. During this time, he honed his skills in project management and developed strong networks across government and private sector stakeholders.

Estrada's work as a Planning Officer III and later as the Department's Legislative Liaison Specialist demonstrated his strategic thinking and his capacity to drive impactful initiatives. His role in crafting sectoral medium-term plans and commodity roadmaps showcased his ability to align policies and projects with the sector's evolving needs.

In 2023, Estrada earned a Master's Degree in Development Management, receiving accolades for academic excellence and leadership. His award-winning capstone project focused on integrating technology into the agriculture sector, a theme that has defined his recent work as Deputy Director of the National Rice Program and Director-Designate for Digitalization and Value Chain Development.

Last year, Estrada received the PMDP-Dangal Award from the Development Academy of the Philippines, recognizing his visionary efforts to digitize the Philippine rice sector and introduce innovative solutions to pressing agricultural challenges.

Estrada brings to the FPA a vision rooted in innovation and sustainability. "The future of Philippine agriculture lies in embracing modern technologies while ensuring that we remain stewards of our environment," Estrada shared in his address after the oath-taking ceremony.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/12/estrada-sworn-in-as-new-fpa-oic>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Metro Manila LGUs to resell NFA rice

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

January 12, 2025 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and Trade and Industry Secretary Cristina Roque inspect rice supplies and prices at the Murphy Public Market in Cubao, Quezon City yesterday. They also launched the 'Sulit Rice,' which will be sold at P36 per kilo, alongside the P40 per kilo rice at the Kadiwa ng Pangulo kiosks.

Miguel De Guzman

MANILA, Philippines — To widen the availability of affordable rice in markets, the National Food Authority (NFA) would sell some of its rice stocks to local government units (LGUs) in Metro Manila.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the NFA would sell its two-month old rice stocks at P38 per kilo to the LGUs, which, in turn, would resell it to the public at affordable prices.

Under Republic Act 12078, the NFA is mandated to dispose of its rice buffer stocks one month before the aging period starts. Rice starts to age at three months from date of storage.

Tiu Laurel, who also chairs the NFA Council, said the initiative would help the NFA dispose some of its stocks, in view of the purchases it will make in the next few months.

“This will help the NFA clear its warehouses in preparation for the upcoming harvest season. Our warehouses are filled to capacity, and I have directed NFA administrator Larry Lacson to have the rice milled immediately so we could saturate the market with (lower priced) rice as we make space for the palay we plan to procure,” Tiu Laurel said.

He added that the NFA would be buying clean and dry palay in the coming weeks at a minimum of P23 per kilo.

Lacson earlier said the NFA would not be able to procure newly harvested palay from local farmers if its warehouses remain full.

Noting its high procurement level last year, Lacson said the NFA achieved 95 percent, about 285,000 metric tons, of its procurement target of 300,000 MT.

“Only after the NFA (release) its rice stocks from warehouses could the agency procure from the local farmers,” he said.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/01/12/2413608/metro-manila-lgus-resell-nfa-rice>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Quinta comm to probe chicken, pork, vegetable cartels

[Jose Rodel Clapano](#) - The Philippine Star

January 12, 2025 | 12:00am



Customers visit the Pasig Mega Market in Pasig City to check on the goods that are put up for sale on July 31, 2024.

[Philstar.com](#) / Irra Lising

MANILA, Philippines — The quinta committee of the House of Representatives will investigate the cartels on pork, chicken and vegetable once Congress resumes its regular session this week, according to Albay 2nd District Rep. Joey Salceda.

Salceda, quinta comm chairman, yesterday said the committee would intensify its investigation on the high prices of rice in the country.

“We will intensify our fight to lower rice prices,” Salceda, who also chairs the House ways and means committee, added.

Citing latest data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Bicolano lawmaker noted that global rice prices are at around \$427 to \$500 per metric ton, which means landed price should be at around P34-P36 per kilo.

“One of the main drivers of the uptrend, we suspect, is overpricing by supermarkets, which sell on a per-kilo basis at as much as P70 per kilo,” he said, stressing that this is unacceptable.

He added that the highest quality Thai indica rice is just at P41 per kilo once landed and imposed all applicable duties and taxes.

“The representative of the supermarkets in the quinta comm hearings made an incorrect assertion that consumer preferences are driving prices up,” Salceda said.

He added that the Bureau of Plant Industry has made a similar assertion on record.

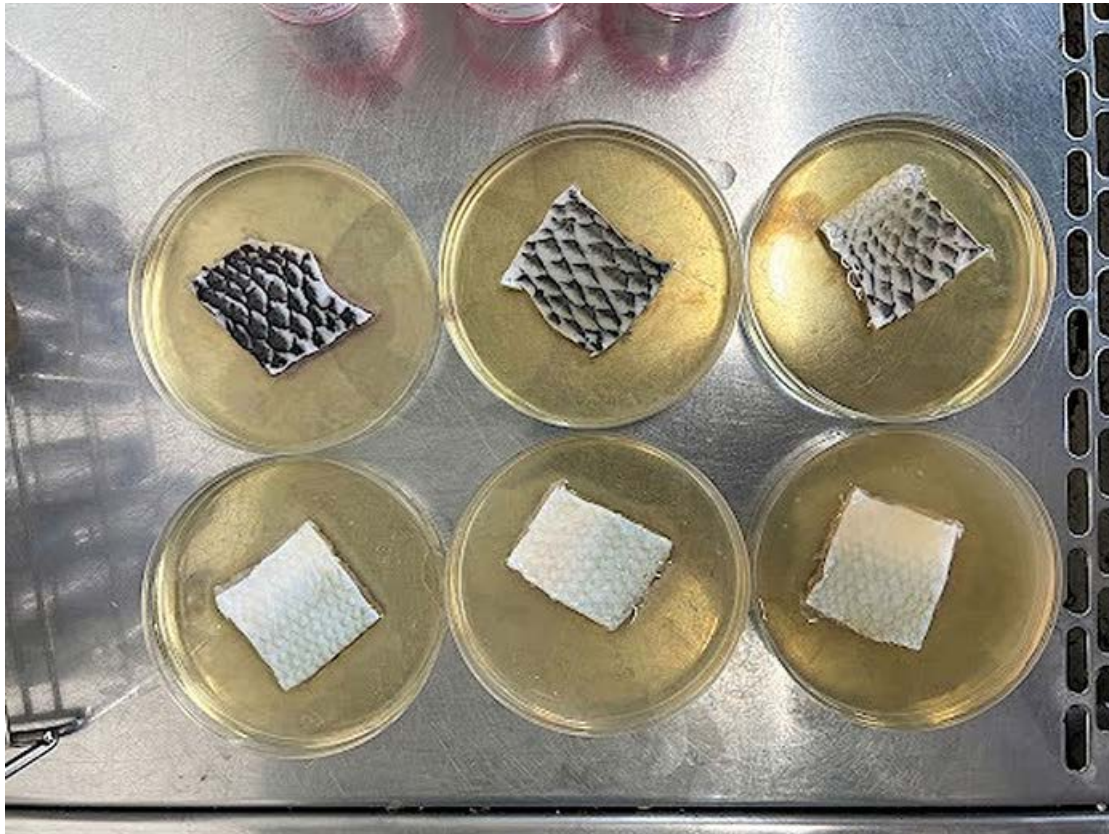
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<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/12/2413557/quinta-comm-probe-chicken-pork-vegetable-cartels>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Ateneo studies ‘bangus’ skin for burn treatment

Bless Aubrey Ogerio
January 12, 2025



SKIN samples from tilapia (top) and bangus (bottom) immersed in silver nanoparticle solution for sterilization in the laboratory.

WHEN a person suffers severe skin damage, doctors usually apply artificial skin to protect the injured area. But what if the skin of milkfish, a common byproduct of the Philippine fishing industry, is used, could it offer an effective and affordable medical solution?

Researchers from Ateneo de Manila University have discovered that the skin of the milkfish (*Chanos chanos*), locally known as bangus, could provide a low-cost option for treating patients with major burns and other serious injuries.

With bangus being widely farmed across the country, the team, led by Janice Alano Ragaza and Bianca Patrice Go from the Ateneo Department of Biology’s Aquatic and Fisheries

Resources Laboratory, expressed a belief that the skin could be used as a sustainable, locally sourced alternative for wound care.

The method, they said, not only reduces dependency on imported materials but also minimizes waste by utilizing fish skin that would otherwise be discarded.

“Among the economically significant fish species in the Philippines, bangus is one of the most widely cultivated. However, limited research has been conducted on the suitability of milkfish skin for wound care,” the researchers noted in their paper.

“Given its abundance and potential collagen content, milkfish skin presents a valuable opportunity to expand the donor pool for fish skin grafting,” they added.

In comparison

While fish skin is not a new concept in wound care, this is the first time that bangus skin has been explored locally for this purpose. Previous studies have mainly focused on tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) skin for similar applications.

The researchers compared “fresh, impurity-free” bangus and tilapia skin samples collected from Cubao Farmers Market.

After rinsing the skin with saline solution to remove blood and contaminants, they cut the skin into 3 cm by 2 cm strips. A total of 24 strips were prepared, with some being treated with a solution of silver nanoparticles (AgNP) for sterilization, while others were left untreated for control purposes.

Based on the results, untreated bangus fish skin strips showed an overwhelming number of microbial colonies on nutrient agar, making them difficult to count.

However, the AgNP-treated bangus skin strips demonstrated complete inhibition of microbial growth, with no colonies present.

A similar outcome was observed with tilapia fish skin strips, which also exhibited too many microbial colonies when untreated. AgNP-treated tilapia skin strips, on the other hand, prevented any microbial growth across all tests.

Prior applications

The use of fish skin for wound care dates back to the early 2010s.

Kerecis, an Icelandic biotechnology company, introduced fish skin-based xenograft products in 2013 for treating complex wounds like diabetic ulcers, burns, and traumatic injuries.

By 2016, the US Food and Drug Administration approved Kerecis Omega3 Wound, a fish skin product, for chronic and acute wounds.

Still, the research from Ateneo emphasized the importance of their research by demonstrating how milkfish skin can be sterilized and used in the same way as tilapia skin.

“This finding has the potential to transform wound care in underserved areas, improving patient outcomes in regions with limited access to advanced medical facilities,” the paper concluded.

Their paper, titled “Determining the Applicability of Milkfish (*Chanos chanos*) for Skin Grafting through Microbiological and Histological Evaluations,” was published in BIO Web of Conferences in November 2024.

Image credits: PHOTO CREDIT TO BIANCA PATRICE GO

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/12/ateneo-studies-bangus-skin-for-burn-treatment/>