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MANILA BULLETIN:

Big discrepancy in rice importation records could betray deeper systemic woes--Suansing

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Jan 16, 2025 06:44 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Sultan Kudarat 2nd district Rep. Horacio Suansing Jr. is prodding the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) to conduct investigations to determine accountability and transparency in the rice importation process.



Sultan Kudarat 2nd district Rep. Horacio Suansing Jr. stands at the podium on the plenary floor. (Facebook)

Sultan Kudarat 2nd district Rep. Horacio Suansing Jr. is prodding the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) to conduct investigations to determine accountability and transparency in the rice importation process.

This, after Suansing exposed during the House quinta-committee (quinta-comm) the supposed big discrepancies in rice importation records involving Davao-based businessman Stewart Santiago and his companies, Nance II AgriTraders, and Davao Solar Best Corporation.

The quinta-comm, also known as the Murang Pagkain Super-committee, is currently probing rice importers amid concerns of irregularities that negatively affect market stability and government revenues.

Suansing's revelations were among the key points raised during Wednesday's hearing, where he highlighted mismatched data between the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

While the BPI issued Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSICs) for only 48,852 metric tons (MT) in 2022, BOC records showed that Santiago's companies imported a total of 348,011 MT.

"Per BOC records, Nance II and Davao Solar Best imported a total volume of 348,011 MT. But the problem, Mr. Chair, as per BPI data, they were only issued SPSICs for 48,852 MT. There is a discrepancy of 299,159 MT. Hindi ito nadeklara. May discrepancy (This wasn't declared. There's a discrepancy)," Suansing pointed out during the hearing.

The Mindanao solon underscored that such irregularities could reflect deeper systemic issues in import regulation, and potentially enable large-scale misdeclarations and abuse of government-issued clearances.

“Para sa akin, Mr. Chair, kailangang ayusin ito (For me, Mr. Chair, this must be fixed),” he stressed.

Suansing also asked Santiago on whether his companies were paying the correct taxes.

Records presented at the hearing showed that Nance II AgriTraders and Davao Solar Best paid P2.8 billion in duties and taxes in 2023, with smaller amounts in prior years.

Santiago claimed his companies operate on slim margins of P1 to P1.50 per kilogram of imported rice, relying on high volumes for profitability.

“Per our record, in 2021 and 2022, your two companies paid only P650 million in duties and taxes. In 2021, you paid P1.6 billion. In 2022, you paid P2 billion. In 2023, it’s P2.8 billion,” Suansing noted.

“Kung piso lang ang kita per kilo, patingnan natin sa BIR kung ang piso na ‘yan, deklarado (If only one peso was the profit per kilo, let us check with the BIR if that one peso was duly declared),” Suansing said, as he urged the tax bureau to verify the accuracy of the companies’ financial declarations.

BIR representatives assured the quinta-comm that they had been actively reviewing tax records of major rice importers and would recommend appropriate actions based on their findings.

Suansing also grilled the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the BPI for lapses in monitoring rice imports. The BPI is under the auspices of the DA.

He cited automatic SPSIC approvals during the previous administration as a potential enabler of irregularities, such as the recycling of import permits.

While DA officials acknowledged that automatic approvals may have contributed to discrepancies, Suansing dismissed this as an insufficient explanation for the significant mismatch in import data.

Giving an idea of Santiago’s influence in the rice market, Suansing noted that Nance II AgriTraders and Davao Solar Best collectively control about 10 percent of the country’s rice imports.

He called on the PCC to investigate potential anti-competitive behavior by the companies. The agency committed to review the companies’ activities and submit their findings to the committee.

In concluding his interpellation, Suansing underscored the importance of addressing these irregularities to protect consumers and stabilize the rice market.

The quinta-comm is expected to hold follow-up hearings to ensure proper oversight and formulate stricter policies on rice importation.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/16/big-discrepancy-in-rice-importation-records-could-betray-deeper-systemic-woes-suansing>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Government races to curb soaring rice prices with food emergency declaration

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Jan 16, 2025 03:36 PM

The Marcos administration is on the verge of declaring a food security emergency as rice prices remain stubbornly high despite government efforts to alleviate the situation.

The National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) approved a resolution on Thursday, Jan. 16, urging the Department of Agriculture (DA) to declare a “food security emergency” for rice as prices for the commodity remain high.

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Ma. Cristina Roque, chairperson of the NPCC, said this move is crucial given that rice prices continue to soar amid declining global rice costs and tariff reductions ordered by President Marcos.

The declaration would allow the National Food Authority (NFA) to release buffer stock rice to stabilize local prices.

Under this, Roque said the NFA will be allowed to sell rice through Kadiwa centers, local government units (LGI), and other government agencies.

“This declaration empowers the DTI to take decisive action in protecting consumer welfare while strengthening our nation's agricultural backbone,” said Roque in a statement.

As a result, the NFA would replace the disbursed stocks with locally-produced rice.

“By prioritizing the produce of hardworking Filipino farmers, we are fostering a resilient and self-reliant Bagong Pilipinas (New Philippines)—one that ensures stability, sustainability, and shared prosperity for both consumers and the agricultural sector,” added Roque.

The NFA currently holds 300,000 metric tons of rice in buffer stocks.

According to the NPCC, releasing these reserves would help decongest warehouses in preparation for the upcoming February harvest.

Under the Rice Tariffication Law enacted in 2019, NFA’s role has been curtailed to only procuring palay (unhusked rice) from local farmers and maintaining buffer stocks. The law removed the agency’s prior authority to regulate rice trading and sell directly to the public.

As such, declaring a food security emergency would temporarily expand its capabilities.

Department of Agriculture (DA) Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. gave his nod of approval to the NPCC’s resolution. He explained that this is a “critical move” in addressing rice affordability.

Laurel said he has yet to discuss the matter with the President, noting that he is still waiting to receive the full resolution.

The decision to declare an emergency stems from the unyielding high prices of rice, which have not responded as expected to government interventions such as tariff reductions.

Tiu-Laurel expressed concerns about potential profiteering within the rice market, indicating that some sellers may be taking advantage of the situation to inflate prices.

Notwithstanding, if the DA approves the declaration before the end of January, he said this would help lower rice prices by the first week of February.

“It’s additional supply to the market. To the laws of supply and demand, it’s only logical na bababa nang kaunti ang bigas (that rice prices will decrease a bit),” added Laurel.

The DA chief pointed out that affordable rice prices possess broader economic benefits for the country, given its impact on inflation and interest rate policies.

“Even if you don’t eat rice, lower rice prices help stabilize our economy,” he said.

Based on government data, rice accounts for nearly 10 percent of Filipino household budgets. For poorer families, this is doubled to 20 percent.

The declaration of a food security emergency is anticipated to bring some relief to consumers, with potential price reductions of P3 to P5. However, the government is not solely relying on this measure and is actively exploring other avenues to address the crisis.

These include expanding the capacity of NFA warehouses and implementing revised labeling requirements to ensure consumers are well-informed and protected from deceptive practices.

The DA and the DTI are collaborating closely to monitor and enforce measures aimed at controlling rice prices. The government is also considering a hybrid approach to tariff rates, potentially increasing them for specific types of rice to further manage the situation.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/16/da-urged-to-declare-food-security-emergency>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Are importers misdeclaring pork to avoid higher tariffs? Solon says it's possible

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Jan 16, 2025 02:51 PM

AT A GLANCE

- AGAP Party-list Rep. Nicanor Briones has raised concern over the alleged practice of unscrupulous importers who misdeclare pork as something else in order to avoid paying higher tariffs.



(Unsplash)

AGAP Party-list Rep. Nicanor Briones has raised concern over the alleged practice of unscrupulous importers who misdeclare pork as something else in order to avoid paying higher tariffs.

Briones attended the hearing Wednesday, Jan. 15 of the House quinta-committee (quinta-comm), also known as the Murang Pagkain Super-committee,

According to him, pork cuts are imposed with a 25 percent tariff; while fats, meat skin, and offals are imposed a five percent tariff only.

"Dine-declare na offals pero ang totoong dumadating, may possibility na tunay na pork cuts or tunay na karne just to evade paying right tariffs," the pro-farmer solon told the panel.

(They're declaring them offals just to evade paying right tariffs, but it's possible that what really arrived were real pork cuts or real meat.)

Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Constante Palabrica, who also attended the hearing, committed to investigate the matter.

ASF problem

According to him, African swine fever (ASF) is the primary challenge facing the local swine industry. Since 2019, ASF has drastically reduced the country's pig production by more than 50 percent, posing a significant challenge to the agricultural sector.

DA has initiated measures such as repopulating swine herds and rolling out an ASF vaccination program.

Palabrica disclosed to the quinta-comm that the DA secured 500,000 doses of ASF vaccines, which have been distributed to farmers to aid in repopulation efforts.

He added that the ASF vaccine is currently undergoing clinical trials. Once found that it meets surveillance and observation standards, the DA plans to seek approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for its regular distribution.

Palabrica also reported that the DA had established checkpoints in Metro Manila to prevent the spread of ASF from different regions.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/16/are-importers-misdeclaring-pork-to-avoid-higher-tariffs>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Government to implement \$24.9 milion pandemic fund

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 17, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — A ranking official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday said the government is expected to start implementation of the \$24.9-million Pandemic Fund in the first quarter this year after the Philippines was able to secure the grant to boost the country's campaign against future animal and human health threats.

“We expect to implement (projects under the fund) this first quarter or maximum of second quarter, so we are now coordinating with the Department of Finance and the National Economic and Development Authority,” DA spokesman Arnel de Mesa said in an interview.

De Mesa said the grant will be jointly implemented by DA through the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and the Department of Health (DOH).

“The funds are now with the World Bank. It's a joint project between DOH on human health, and then BAI, DA for animal health. We are now facilitating the release from the World Bank to the DA,” he added.

He said the funding will help the country improve laboratories and capacity building of veterinarians.

“It will help handle pandemic threats like African swine fever, transboundary diseases, avian influenza and the like,” De Mesa added.

The DA has said the Philippines is among 50 countries selected to receive a Pandemic Fund Grant, which totaled \$547 million.

The Pandemic Fund was launched in 2022 by the G20, composed of the world's biggest economies, as a direct response to the global vulnerabilities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/17/2414820/government-implement-249-million-pandemic-fund>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Government may declare food security emergency

[Alexis Romero](#), [Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 17, 2025 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. inspects rice prices at a public market in Pasig City yesterday.

MICHAEL VARCAS

MANILA, Philippines — There is sufficient basis to declare a food security emergency, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday, noting that rice prices remain high despite the imposition of lower tariffs on imported rice.

“The data was very clear when we presented it to the NPCC (National Price Coordinating Council),” Tiu Laurel told a press briefing at Malacañang. “We have solid data that show that it is really justified.”

He said he is waiting for the NPCC to formally transmit its recommendation to the agriculture department for the declaration of a food security emergency.

Once he receives it, Tiu Laurel said he would seek comments from President Marcos.

Under the newly enacted Republic Act 12078 or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, the Department of Agriculture (DA) – upon the recommendation of the NPCC – may declare a food security emergency to address supply shortages or extraordinary increases in rice prices.

A declaration of food security emergency would allow the National Food Authority to release its rice buffer stocks to the market and replace them with locally produced palay.

Only NFA rice stocks a month away from aging or have been untouched for two months in warehouses may be released and sold, under the law.

According to Tiu Laurel, a maximum suggested retail price of P58 per kilo has been set and will be subject to review every two weeks. He said the unloading of 300,000 metric tons of rice from the NFA warehouse to consumers would help lower the prices because it would augment supply.

“As of the moment there is a target of bringing it down to MSRP (maximum suggested retail price) P52, P50 by end of February,” he said.

“Of course, once the NFA rice enters the market... it is hard to say exactly... but P3 to P5 (reduction) is really possible in my opinion, especially now that world prices have dropped.”

Profiteering

Asked why rice prices did not decrease despite the tariff cut and the lower global prices, Tiu Laurel replied: “In my opinion, there was some profiteering.”

“We have been coordinating with the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) because the DTI has enforcement powers,” he added.

Trade Secretary Maria Cristina Roque said violation of the price ceiling is punishable by a fine ranging from P5,000 to P1 million.

“The DTI will continue to work closely with the DA and other concerned agencies to implement measures that will address the current rice situation. So, the Department of Trade and Industry will monitor and will also enforce the price of rice in coordination with the price set by the Department of Agriculture,” Roque added.

Tiu Laurel said the declaration of food security emergency is a critical move to address the high retail price of rice in the country. The DA chief also stressed the broader economic benefits of affordable rice prices, noting their impact on inflation and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas’ interest rate policies.

“Even if you don’t eat rice, lower rice prices help stabilize our economy,” Tiu Laurel said.

DTI’s Roque chairs the NPCC.

“This declaration empowers the DTI to take decisive action in protecting consumer welfare while strengthening our nation’s agricultural backbone. By prioritizing the produce of hardworking Filipino farmers, we are fostering a resilient and self-reliant Bagong Pilipinas – one that ensures stability, sustainability and shared prosperity for both consumers and the agricultural sector,” Roque said.

Based on monitoring by the DA of Metro Manila markets, imported special rice was still being retailed for P65 per kilo; imported premium rice, as high as P58; imported well-milled rice, P54 per kilo and imported regular milled rice, P48 per kilo.

At least 4.78 million metric tons (MMT) of imported rice arrived in the country in 2024.

Tiu Laurel said other initiatives are being done to bring down the retail prices of rice, including the imposition of maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P58 per kilo for imported rice, effective Jan. 20.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said aging NFA rice stocks have ballooned to 700,000 bags from the previous 600,000 bags in December 2024.

“As reported by (NFA) administrator Larry (Lacson), there are now 700,000 bags of NFA rice that are aging, 300,000 bags entered the category of aging (stocks) and the 400,000 bags will also enter the category of aging by next month,” De Mesa told The STAR.

He said the NFA will also ask the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to exempt the sale of NFA rice to local government units (LGUs) from the election ban.

“The NFA needs to get an exemption from the Comelec. It will be covered by the election ban because of the upcoming elections,” De Mesa said.

He said that under a food security emergency, the NFA can sell rice stocks to Metro Manila mayors, who are then allowed to resell them to prevent the stocks from rotting in warehouses.

Tiu Laurel said the NFA Council, which he chairs, is initially eyeing to sell the NFA rice stocks to LGUs, government-owned and controlled corporations, Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police for P36 per kilo.

At this price, the LGUs and the other government agencies would be able to retail rice for P38 per kilo.

“But by March we want to sell the NFA rice stocks at P33 per kilo so the LGUs and other participating government units can sell it to the market at P35 per kilo,” Tiu Laurel added.

The release of the NFA rice stocks is also aimed at decongesting warehouses in time for the upcoming dry season harvest.

“The warehouses are full, they have almost 300,000 metric tons of rice and harvest season is coming. If the warehouses are full, then the NFA will not be able to buy palay from local farmers at a good price,” Tiu Laurel said.

He also announced that the P40 per kilo of rice under the DA’s Rice-For-All program will be reduced to P38 per kilo starting today.

“This price reduction will take effect on Friday just ahead of the implementation of the maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P58 per kilo for five broken imported rice,” Tiu Laurel said.

Together with DTI’s Roque, Tiu Laurel conducted public market inspection in Pasig City yesterday.

The maximum SRP of P58 per kilo for imported rice will start on Jan. 20, initially for Metro Manila markets. The maximum SRP will be reviewed monthly.

He assured the public that the maximum SRP will cover other key cities nationwide.

“If world rice prices remain stable, we anticipate a reduction in the maximum SRP after the February review,” Tiu Laurel said.

FFF: No need for emergency

For Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) national manager Raul Montemayor, there is no reason for the DA to declare a food security emergency.

“I don’t think there is a national food security emergency on rice. There is no shortage in supply, there is no calamity, harvests will start again in March and prices, while still high, are actually slowly going down,” Montemayor said.

“What we have is a failure of the government agencies to run after and discipline profiteering importers, wholesalers and retailers. Instead of running after them, the government has instead opted to manipulate the law so it gives them the legal basis for releasing NFA stocks to LGUs in an attempt to lower prices,” he said, referring to the RA 12708.

Montemayor added that the 500,000 bags that NFA is considering releasing is only about 25,000 tons or about 66 percent of the country’s rice consumption for one day.

“Even if concentrated in Metro Manila, it will not have a large influence on overall prices,” he said.

Farmers’ group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) executive director Jayson Cainglet said the NPCC should also recommend the lifting of EO 62, which lowered the tariff on imported rice to 15 percent.

“We urge the National Price Coordinating Council to recommend to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) the repeal of EO 62 and revert rice and pork tariffs to 35 percent,” Cainglet said.

“The importer-traders only pocketed the savings in the tariff reduction, (now totaling) P16 billion as the consumers did not benefit from this,” he said.

“It should be the farmers who should receive assistance. Repealing EO 62 will provide additional revenues for the government that is earmarked to directly support our rice farmers,” he added.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/17/2414846/government-may-declare-food-security-emergency>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA backs resolution calling for food security emergency to lower rice prices

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

January 16, 2025 | 1:09pm



Rice retailers manage their stalls at Marikina Public Market on Jan. 7, 2025.

The STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) backed the National Price Coordinating Council's (NPCC) resolution urging the declaration of a food security emergency for rice.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement on Thursday, January 16, that the approved resolution is a “critical move” to ensure rice prices become affordable.

Both imported and local rice, regardless of grade, have reached alarming price levels ranging from P50 to P60 per kilogram in Metro Manila markets.

This price surge has raised concerns, prompting the House of Representatives to investigate agricultural smuggling, price manipulation and potential collusion between rice traders and retailers.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Cristina Roque, who chairs the NPCC, explained that the resolution would help protect consumer welfare while supporting local farmers.

“This declaration empowers the DTI to take decisive action in protecting consumer welfare while strengthening our nation’s agricultural backbone,” she said in a statement.

But what does this mean? Declaring a food security emergency would trigger the release of buffer stocks of locally produced rice from the National Food Authority (NFA) to stabilize prices.

This power was granted to the DA under Republic Act 12708, or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, signed into law on Dec. 9, 2024.

A buffer stock is the government's reserve of rice used for relief operations and to address food security emergencies. Under the new law, the DA can sell these stocks in areas facing rice shortages or extraordinary price increases.

To replenish the buffer stock, the NFA will source new rice from local farmers and cooperatives.

Since the passage of Republic Act 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law, the NFA's ability to regulate rice trading has been removed, and its role is now limited to procuring palay from local farmers and managing buffer stocks.

However, with the recent amendment to the Rice Tariffication Law, the DA has announced that the NFA's capabilities will be temporarily expanded in the event of a food security emergency.

“The NFA currently holds 300,000 metric tons of rice in buffer stocks. Releasing these reserves would help decongest warehouses in preparation for the upcoming February harvest,” the DA said.

Other efforts. The DA also plans to cap the price of 5% broken imported rice at P58 per kilogram starting January 20, as part of their efforts to reduce local rice prices while ensuring that farmers are still able to earn.

However, the House joint committee investigating the rice price hike has criticized the P58 price ceiling, calling it “unrealistic” during a hearing on Wednesday, January 15.

Lawmakers said that some markets are selling rice as low as P40 to P45 per kilogram, with Kadiwa outlets offering rice at P40 per kilo as part of a government program.

DA Undersecretary Asis Perez clarified that the P58 price ceiling would apply only to a pilot program in Metro Manila.

Despite this explanation, some lawmakers remained unsatisfied, arguing that the price ceiling is based on inflated market prices rather than actual production costs.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/01/16/2414645/da-backs-resolution-calling-food-security-emergency-lower-rice-prices>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

The hunger games



SKETCHES - Ana Marie Pamintuan - The Philippine Star

January 17, 2025 | 12:00am

This should give you an idea of the fleeting impact of aid dole-outs, institutionalized through the vote-buying national budget approved by Congress for 2025, with President Marcos' acquiescence.

For the entire 2024, self-rated involuntary hunger nearly doubled from 2023, with 25.9 percent of families experiencing, at least once in the past three months, hunger and not having anything to eat. This is according to pollster Social Weather Stations (SWS).

Poor nutrition has led to physical and mental stunting of millions of Filipinos, affecting academic performance, innovation and national competitiveness.

The involuntary hunger is nearly as worse as the levels in 2020, the first year (and strictest period) of the COVID lockdowns, according to SWS. That's a serious indictment; today the economic tsunami that hit the country as a result of the restrictions during that nightmare period is no longer around.

Hunger is supposed to be partly eased by the billions allotted to a wide range of ayuda, sourced from taxes including the consumption taxes automatically paid by those who need the handouts.

How are the dole-out programs being implemented? Did someone pocket the funds, or divert them to flood control?

The government has a supplemental feeding program for students in basic education. The food is fairly decent, including processed milk in cartons, champorado and arroz caldo. But this is for school kids. What about the food needs of the parents and other adult members of the family? Also, there are public schools that charge a subsidized fee for the food.

In the fourth quarter of 2024, obviously, pandemic mobility restrictions were no longer behind the lack of food for the poor. Instead the problem can be blamed on the limited means to ease hunger – a combination of low income and high food prices.

* * *

As all reputable surveys have shown, inflation remains the top concern of Filipinos. Food prices compete with transport costs for the high inflation rate. And food inflation continues to be driven by the retail prices of the most politically sensitive commodity under Marcos 2.0: rice.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel must be regretting leaving his quiet life as a successful businessman to handle a sector in which BBM performed disastrously in his first year in power.

Today, Tiu Laurel seems to be at his wit's end trying to bring down rice retail prices. Drastic measures have been tried, including a hefty cut in rice import tariff, to the dismay of local rice farmers.

A “maximum suggested retail price” of P58 a kilo is reportedly set to be slapped on rice imports. That's nearly triple the P20-a-kilo rice “aspiration” of the “Babangon Muli” campaign in 2022. And P58 a kilo is actually higher than the price of good quality imports from Myanmar and Vietnam at my suki rice dealer.

Not even the Kadiwa outlets have ever managed to sell heavily subsidized rice at P20 a kilo under BBM.

Yesterday, the National Price Coordinating Council recommended to the Department of Agriculture (DA) the declaration of a food security emergency. Apart from aiming to bring down rice retail prices, the declaration is a requirement for allowing the National Food Authority (NFA) to sell its aging rice stocks at P36 per kilo to local government units (LGUs).

The Federation of Free Farmers says there is no need for this declaration.

LGU executives should also know enough to check the quality of old rice from NFA warehouses before releasing the grains to the public. Filipinos are sensitive to the quality of their staple and would resent getting substandard rice.

Last Wednesday, there was talk of imposing a price cap on rice. A sigh of exasperation posted by Cielo Magno over a similar move in September 2023 led to her departure from the Department of Finance and return to the saner life of teaching economics at the University of the Philippines.

Yesterday, Tiu Laurel said the P40-a-kilo rice sold under the DA's Rice-for-All program would be cut to P38 per kilo beginning today. Kadiwa outlets will be selling the rice along with the cheapest at P29 a kilo.

* * *

As for the insufficient income to buy food, it will never be addressed by stop-gap ayuda, given when politicians need to buy votes. It can only be addressed through the creation of sustainable jobs and livelihoods.

Unfortunately, politicians – lawmakers, LGU and barangay officials alike – play a critical role in job generation, but their hearts and personal interests are not into alleviating poverty through sustainable employment.

As seen in the 2024 fourth quarter survey conducted among businessmen by the Management Association of the Philippines, LGUs pose major hindrances to investment. Corruption is the businessmen's top concern, according to the MAP survey.

While the survey didn't provide specifics, corruption is rampant across all branches of government, with some of the most notorious shakedown artists ensconced in Congress.

Even getting tax-funded ayuda suffers from the injection of politics. Coursing requests for medical relief through the office of epal politicians, for example, adds another layer of red tape in obtaining ayuda by those who need it ASAP.

The situation is bound to get worse. In its Global risks Report 2025, the World Economic Forum identified economic downturn and poverty as the top two risks faced by the Philippines in the next two years.

Without decent jobs and sustainable rather than seasonal sources of income, poor families are sure to continue experiencing involuntary hunger regularly, in between occasional dole-outs of ayuda.

This is the Hunger Games, Pinoy version.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/01/17/2414740/hunger-games>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Garin to DA: Defer maximum SRP for premium rice, study it first

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 10:51 PM January 16, 2025



INQUIRER FILES

MANILA, Philippines — Iloilo 1st District Rep. Janette Garin has called on the Department of Agriculture (DA) to defer its plan of setting a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for premium rice varieties, citing the need for the agency to study it further and explain the methodology used.

In an online interview on Thursday, Garin was asked if she plans to ask the DA to halt their MSRP of P58 per kilogram of well-milled grains, which the DA believes would be key to bringing the price of regular-milled rice down.

DA is set to impose this MSRP on Friday, January 17.

“Yes, first of all of course we will listen to their basis because the representative of DA said that they just got the prices from the market. There are varieties sold for P62, P63 [per kilogram] that’s why they decided to lower it a little bit by putting it, by pegging it at P58,” Garin told reporters in Filipino.

“But what we want to hear from [Agriculture] Secretary Laurel, maybe there is a basis or a different explanation for this. That is what we want to hear. Now if it is acceptable, we will accept that,” she added.

On Wednesday, at the hearing of the House quinta committee, the DA said they would try to lower prices of regular-milled rice by putting the MSRP on premium grains.

Agriculture Undersecretary Asis Perez said this after ACT Teachers party-list Rep. France Castro asked him regarding the P58 per kilogram MSRP, with the latter saying that it is not a solution.

According to Castro, rice prices have gone down already, with premium varieties sold at around P55 per kilogram, lower than the MSRP.

With the MSRP, Castro claimed that the government is only allowing traders and retailers to sell rice at a higher price, when they would already have a profit at P55 per kilogram.

Perez then explained that the idea is if the price difference between premium rice and regular-milled rice is not that big, consumers would pick the better varieties — forcing regular-milled rice traders to lower their prices too.

Garin and other lawmakers criticized the DA for supposedly pulling the P58 per kilogram MSRP out of thin air. Garin also asked DA from what planet it was able to get the figure.

Garin said that no matter what DA does, the issue remains the same: rice grains are being sold at a higher price in Metro Manila, compared to Mindanao.

“But the one million dollar question, the big question is still there: why are lower prices, including for premium rice, implemented in Mindanao and not here in the NCR and Luzon? When you look at it in terms of economies of scale, NCR and Luzon have a greater market size compared to Mindanao,” she pointed out.

“I think they have to study it. They have to study so that we can look at the basis,” she added.

Last January 11, Laurel said the government would impose an MSRP of P58 per kilogram for imported rice. He said the MSRP would start on January 20, with Metro Manila being the pilot area.

Laurel said the decision came after “extensive consultations” with industry players, as the government attempts to tame increasing rice prices, which have not gone down despite tariff cuts and drop in global prices.

The MSRP would then be reviewed monthly to consider factors affecting prices.

During the campaign season for the 2022 national elections, part of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s promise was to bring rice prices down to the P20 to P30 per kilogram range.

Despite rice prices skyrocketing in the middle of 2023 — which forced the President to impose a price cap on regular and well-milled rice — administration allies and Marcos himself maintain that attaining this goal is still possible.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2025442/garin-to-da-defer-maximum-srp-for-premium-rice-study-it-first>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Focus on the future

By: [Ernesto M. Ordoñez](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:14 AM January 17, 2025

If the Department of Agriculture (DA) focuses on the future, it must fully support the 2025 Department of Education (DepEd) school feeding program. This is a key solution to an impending disaster.

If our severe malnutrition is not immediately addressed, it would be a disaster that will inflict on our country a severely damaged workforce incapable of producing the goods we need. Most of our efforts today will be good for the short term, but rendered of little benefit for the long term. This is why. Two studies stare us starkly in the face. First, according to the United Nations World Food Program (WFP): “Nine of 10 children in the Philippines aged 10 years old are unable to read and understand the age-appropriated text. From being among the best in our region, our learning poverty rate (91 percent) is now much worse than the average in East Asia and the Pacific (35 percent).”

Second, in a Programme for International Assessment study of 15-year-olds in mathematics, science and reading, we ranked at the bottom—number 78 out of 78 countries in 2018 and number 77 out of 81 countries in 2022.

Workforce

We will soon have a globally incompetent workforce. We will no longer be able to send our people abroad to earn our needed foreign exchange. This is because other countries with a better educated workforce will be taking our place.

We will not be able to produce the quality goods required by the global economy. This means fewer exports, more imports, less employment and more poverty. All the good work we are doing now for the short term will be overshadowed by our bleak long-term prospects.^[1] So what can be the DA’s possible role in this? We must look at the school feeding program not just for the nutrition objective, but also as a catalyst for economic development. This follows Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto’s statement that his school feeding program would produce 2.5 million jobs. First and foremost, the food for this program should come from the community itself, instead of from imports or outside sources. Second, this food strategy—which includes

mobilizing people, technology transfer and business management—must be formulated and implemented at the barangay and municipal levels. It is the local government unit (LGU) agriculture extension workers who can best do this. The DA lost much of its influence when its extension functions were devolved to LGUs through the Local Government Code.

Consequently, without the proper preparation, many LGU workers are performing suboptimally. This is partly remedied by the Provincial Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Services, but the DA still has no presence at the provincial level.

DA's local presence

Last Dec. 23, the AgriFisheries Alliance or AFA (composed of coalitions from the three sectors of farmers and fisherfolk, agribusiness and science and academe) met with Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. Because of the weak link between the DA and the LGUs at the provincial level, they proposed that there be one DA extension worker for every 10 barangays. They can then work closely with the LGU extension workers. According to the DA: “The Agriculture Training Institute (ATI) is the capacity builder, knowledge bank and catalyst of Philippine Agriculture and Fisheries extension system.”

With physical presence at the local level, the DA-ATI can now work with the LGU extension workers to organize the farmers and fisherfolk. These farmers and fisherfolk can then provide the food for the feeding programs using the best technology and economies of scale. The initiative for this sector needs much support. The UN-WFP states: “For the first 1,000 days of a child, malnutrition can cause inevitable damage to future health and brain development.” But nutrition is also crucial from early to middle childhood when brain functions continue to develop.

The UN-WFP adds: “While investments are primarily focused in the first 1,000 days, the next 7,000 days have been widely neglected.” We must immediately address our nutrition issue, because it may mean either prosperity or disaster for our nation. Aside from its important work today, the DA must also focus on the future as it works with the LGUs and DepEd in making the school feeding program a catalyst for economic development.

<https://business.inquirer.net/501624/focus-on-the-future>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA eyeing Kadiwa outlets in Metro Manila public, private markets

By: [Dianne Sampang](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:14 PM January 16, 2025



File photo shows a Kadiwa Center in Quezon City selling rice at P29 per kilo (LYN RILLON / INQUIRER)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is calling for the establishment of Kadiwa stores in all public and private markets in Metro Manila where P29 per kilo [rice](#) can be sold to vulnerable sectors.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., during a Metro Manila Council meeting on Wednesday said that out of the estimated 150 markets in Metro Manila, Kadiwa stores are present in 20.

“First is the request of the DA that we’ll be allowed to put up Kadiwa ng Pangulo booths and stores in all public markets and private markets in Metro Manila,” Laurel said. during the Metro Manila.

Laurel added that the stores must “be placed in prominent area to gain maximum proximity so the general public, the consumer will be aware.”

He likewise asked cities and municipalities to help the agency in putting up the Kadiwa booths.

Laurel also announced that the [National Food Authority will sell rice for P36 per kilo](#) to local government units by February.

He also said that the agency will bring the price of rice down to P33 per kilo in March.

Meanwhile, he clarified that confiscated smuggled rice would be directly distributed to the public in line with the directive of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Vulnerable sectors such as senior citizens, persons with disabilities, single parents, or beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program can purchase P29 rice per kilo under the Kadiwa ng Pangulo program.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2025331/fwd-da-requesting-to-set-up-kadiwa-stores-in-all-public-private-markets-in-ncr>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

How can NFA sell 300K tons of ‘aging’ rice stocks?

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:32 AM January 17, 2025



Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. INQUIRER PHOTO / RICHARD A. REYES

MANILA, Philippines — Amid the high prices of rice, the National Food Authority (NFA) is burdened with some 300,000 tons of the staple food in its warehouses that are “aging” and must be disposed of soon.

However, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. must first allow the Department of Agriculture (DA) to declare a national food emergency since this is required by the rice tariffication law (RTL) before the NFA can sell its stock.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a media briefing that NFA warehouses were almost filled to the brim, and it would need to dispose of its old rice stock to give room for additional rice from the upcoming harvest season.

The DA defines “aging” rice as that which has been stored for an extended period, often for more than six months, when the quality may start to degrade but remains fit for consumption.

“The declaration of a food security emergency is a last resort or option for the DA,” Tiu Laurel said.

The interagency National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) already approved “in principle” a resolution pushing for the declaration of a national food emergency due to an “extraordinary” increase in rice prices.

“I haven’t received the official recommendation of the NPCC because the details are still with the working group. But once it comes to my table, the chances are we will declare [a food security emergency] so that we can release the stocks of NFA,” the agriculture chief said during a joint market inspection on Thursday.

As low as P33 a kilo

The DA is authorized by the law to declare a food security emergency in the event of a supply shortage or extraordinary price fluctuations upon the NPCC’s recommendation.

Once an emergency is declared, the DA may release and sell the NFA’s stockpile in areas where there is a supply shortage or an extraordinary increase in rice prices.

The DA said releasing the buffer stock would help bring down prices and at the same time decongest warehouses in preparation for the February harvest.

Since the RTL prohibits the NFA from selling directly to the public, Tiu Laurel said the stocks could be sold to local government units, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police, other government agencies and government-owned and -controlled corporations.

He said the NFA rice could be sold to national or local government offices at P36 a kilo next month and by March, the selling price can decrease to P33.

Lower price cap

Separately, Tiu Laurel implied that the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice would eventually be slashed to P50 a kilo depending on global rice price movements.

The MSRP for imported rice, currently set at P58 a kilo, will be enforced initially in Metro Manila markets starting Jan. 20.

Tiu Laurel admitted that the MSRP of P58 a kilo was on “the higher end” of the price range but noted that this was only an initial level, with plans to adjust the price ceiling.

“So basically, after two to three weeks, the plan is to set the MSRP at P55 per kilo. After another two weeks, maybe it will go down to P52. If world prices continue to drop, it could reach P50 soon. That’s the intention,” he told reporters.

As of Thursday, however, imported regular milled rice was already being sold from P40 to P48 a kilo, while imported well-milled rice was priced from P44-P52 as against P50-P58 a year ago.

Local regular milled rice ranged from P37 to P50 a kilo compared with last year’s P45-P53. Local well-milled rice retailed between P40 and P53 from P49-P55 last year.

Rice emergency doubted

Tiu Laurel also confirmed reports of “poor quality” rice being sold for P58 a kilo amid the government’s attempts to bring down rice prices, but said these were “isolated cases.”

He blamed profiteering by some rice traders for the failure of the DA to pull down rice prices, despite the ample supply due to the combined local and imported supplies plus the reduction of tariff on rice imports.

For Raul Montemayor, national manager of the Federation of Free Farmers Cooperatives, there is no national food security emergency on rice.

“There is no shortage in supply, there is no calamity, harvests will start again, and prices, while still high, are actually slowly going down,” Montemayor said in a Viber message on Thursday.

“What we have is a failure of the government agencies to run after and discipline profiteering importers, wholesalers and retailers,” he pointed out.

Montemayor asked the mechanism used by the NPCC to make this recommendation: “Has such a formula been devised? If so, why only now when the price spike started way earlier in the latter part of 2023 and peaked in early 2024?”

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2025455/how-can-nfa-sell-300k-tons-of-aging-rice-stocks>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA: RFA25 rice variety at P38 per kilo to take effect Jan 17

By: [Jown Manalo](#) - Reporter / [@jownmanaloINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:27 PM January 16, 2025



RICE IS LIFE / JANUARY 6, 2025
Rice vendor Eddie Pascual wait for customers at his stall in Marikina Public Market on Monday, January 6, 2025.
INQUIRER PHOTO / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Thursday said the price of its Rice-for-All 25 (RFA25) will drop from P40 to P38 per kilogram starting Friday.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the price cut precedes the P58 per kilogram maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) implementation for 5 percent broken imported rice effective Monday, January 20.

The RFA25 rice variety is available at Kadiwa centers and kiosks nationwide, along with the RFA5, which is 5 percent broken rice, priced at P45 per kilogram; and the RFA100, also known as “Sulit Rice”, priced at P36 per kilogram.

According to the DA, the MSRP will initially be implemented in Metro Manila markets and reviewed monthly to reflect global price fluctuations and tariff rates.

The agency also said it will enforce a stricter suggested retail price framework should imported rice prices frequently exceed the MSRP, with corresponding fines and penalties for violations.

Tiu Laurel further explained that the MSRP framework allows sellers to earn around P10 per kilogram on top of the imported rice’s landed cost, or the cost of bringing the rice into the country.

However, this pricing rule does not cover specialty rice varieties such as malagkit, Japanese rice, or black rice.

“If world rice prices remain stable, we anticipate a reduction in the MSRP after the February review,” he added.

The DA also noted that the current rice tariff, reduced from 35 percent to 15 percent, is “under evaluation.”

“This tariff policy mandates a review every four months, with the next assessment scheduled for March,” it added.

In November 2024, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered the expansion of the P29 RFA program and the establishment of additional Kadiwa centers nationwide.

Kadiwa is a market linkage facilitation program aimed at making agricultural products and other basic commodities “more accessible and affordable to vulnerable sectors.”

Expanded Kadiwa sites will offer Rice-for-All at P43 per kilogram or lower, with select locations selling P29 rice depending on stock availability.

“The Rice-for-All program is complemented by P29 rice to ensure even wider access to affordable rice varieties. These offerings are being expanded across public markets and Kadiwa centers to better serve Filipino consumers,” the DA said in a statement.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2025343/da-rfa25-rice-variety-at-p38-per-kilo-to-take-effect-jan-17>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Mobile Kadiwa stores can have bigger impact in barangays – Zamora

By: [Dianne Sampang](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 06:00 PM January 16, 2025

MANILA, Philippines — Mobile Kadiwa stores selling P29 rice per kilo and other basic commodities can have a greater impact in barangays, San Juan City Mayor and Metro Manila Council President Francis Zamora said on Thursday.

According to Zamora, mobile Kadiwa stores can be more accessible to the public, especially in larger cities like Quezon City.

“There is a regular Kadiwa that visits San Juan. We have it regularly at the city hall, and I believe it would have a greater impact if we had a mobile Kadiwa that could go around the barangays,” he said, partly in Filipino.

Kadiwa ng Pangulo stores, which directly sell producer-to-consumer goods, are stationed in some Metro Manila areas and neighboring provinces.

Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. also said on Wednesday that the agency is looking to set up Kadiwa stores in all an estimated 150 public and private markets in the National Capital Region.

Furthermore, Zamora said the plan to establish permanent Kadiwa booths in markets is “workable,” but areas like San Juan City cannot meet certain booth specifications.

“It’s workable, except that in some cases in San Juan, we don’t have space to dedicate a structure or building. So, I’m requesting a possible hybrid kind of store because sometimes, the people we’ve talked to have specific requirements for stores,” Zamora noted.

“For example, there are certain area and size requirements for Kadiwa that we can’t meet. Perhaps it can be set up not at the exact location, so we can still implement it even without the specified structures,” Zamora added.

Laurel echoed Zamora’s sentiments, emphasizing that the establishment of the stores depends on the location.

“Of the 150 markets, not all of them have ample parking, so we were given parking slots with enough space, so we put up pop-up booths or stores there,” Laurel said.

Vulnerable sectors such as senior citizens, persons with disabilities, single parents, or beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program can purchase P29 rice per kilo under the Kadiwa ng Pangulo program.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2025373/mobile-kadiwa-stores-can-have-bigger-impact-in-barangays-zamora>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Rice-for-All program to offer P38 rice

January 16, 2025 | 8:51 pm



A man arranges sacks of rice at a storage facility in Marikina City. — PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS

THE Department of Agriculture said it lowered the price of 25% broken rice sold by the Rice-for-All program to P38 per kilogram from P40 per kilo.

“This price reduction will take effect on Friday (Jan. 17), just ahead of the implementation of the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of P58 per kilo for 5% broken imported rice,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement on Thursday.

Rice-for-All is a component of the Kadiwa ng Pangulo program. Rice sold in KADIWA centers and stores also include a 5% broken grain variety priced at P45 per kilo, and 100% broken rice at P36 per kilo.

KADIWA centers also sell rice to low-income individuals for P29 per kilo.

“These offerings are being expanded across public markets and KADIWA centers to better serve the consumer,” the DA added.

The DA is looking to expand its KADIWA network to 1,500 locations by 2028, with a 300-outlet target by the second quarter.

To tame rice prices and control profiteering, the DA is set to impose an MSRP on imported rice with 5% broken-grain content at P58 per kilo, starting in Metro Manila markets.

The measure will be reviewed monthly to reflect fluctuations in global market prices and tariff rates, with plans to extend the program to other key cities nationwide.

The agency added that should importers exceed the MSRP, the DA will switch to a stricter suggested retail price scheme with fines and other penalties for violators.

Importers and retailers have agreed to a profit margin of P10 per kilo above the landed cost of imported rice. This deal excludes specialty rice varieties such as glutinous rice, Japanese, and black rice.

“If world rice prices remain stable, we anticipate a reduction in the MSRP after the February review,” Mr. Laurel added. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/01/16/647336/rice-for-all-program-to-offer-p38-rice/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

DA to declare food security emergency

January 17, 2025 | 12:34 am



Government officials inspect prices of rice at a market in Cubao, Quezon City, Jan. 10. The Agriculture department will implement a maximum suggested retail price for imported rice at P58 per kilo starting Jan. 20, 2025. — PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

By **Adrian H. Halili**, *Reporter*

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) on Thursday said it will likely declare a food security emergency for rice as prices of the staple grain remain stubbornly high.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said he expects the release of buffer stocks of local rice from the National Food Authority (NFA) by the first week of February, as it awaits the transmittal of a National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) recommendation calling for the declaration of a food security emergency.

“I don’t have the official recommendation from the NPCC yet, the details are still with the working group. But once it comes to my table, the chances are we will declare, so that we can release the stocks of the NFA,” he told reporters during a market visit in Pasig City.

“Once I receive it, I will also consult the President for his comments,” he added.

The NPCC has approved a resolution urging the DA to declare a food security emergency for rice, which would pave the way for the NFA to release buffer stock to stabilize prices.

Under Republic Act (RA) No. 12708 or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, the Agriculture secretary can declare a food security emergency in case of rice supply shortages or extraordinary price spikes.

Prices of rice have remained stubbornly high despite lower tariffs for imports.

According to the DA's price monitoring of Metro Manila markets as of Jan. 15, a kilogram of imported special rice was priced between P53 and P65 compared with the P58 and P65 per kilo a year ago.

The price of imported premium rice stood at P50-P60 per kilo as of Jan. 15 from P54-P62 per kilo last year.

On the other hand, imported well-milled rice is currently between P44 and P52, while imported regular milled rice is at P40 to P48 per kilo.

Trade Secretary Maria Cristina Aldeguer-Roque, who chairs the NPCC, said the resolution was made in response to the extraordinary increase in rice prices observed since 2023.

"All the markets must follow the directives of the DA to bring down imported rice prices for the consumers and, at the same time, also protect the wholesaler, the trader, and also the retailer," she told reporters.

Mr. Tiu Laurel said the DA needs to release the buffer stock from NFA warehouses, which have reached 300,000 metric tons, ahead of the harvest season.

"Harvest season is coming. So, if our warehouses are full, we won't be able to buy from farmers at a good price. We need to sell it immediately," Mr. Tiu Laurel said.

Once the NFA's buffer stocks are released, Mr. Tiu Laurel said the rice will be sold to local government units (LGU), Kadiwa, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police, and other government agencies.

The DA said last week that it is looking to sell some of the NFA's old rice stock to LGUs to free up warehouse space ahead of the rice harvest season.

The NFA would have a buying price for palay, or unmilled rice, ranging from P21 to P23 per kilo for clean and dry, according to the Agriculture department chief.

The NFA would set a selling price of P36 per kilo to LGUs by February and would be further lowered to P33 per kilo by March.

MAXIMUM

PRICE

Meanwhile, Mr. Tiu Laurel said that the maximum suggested retail price (SRP) on imported rice, which will be implemented in Metro Manila starting Jan. 20, would also address elevated rice prices.

The DA is set to impose a maximum SRP of P58 per kilogram on imported rice with a 5% broken grain content, a move it says will further lower the retail price of imported rice.

"Every two to three weeks the (maximum SRP) may be adjusted until March," Mr. Tiu Laurel told reporters.

"After two to three weeks we can adjust it to P55 per kilo, after another two weeks maybe at P52 per kilo. If world price goes down further, it could be just P50 per kilo soon," he added.

Mr. Tiu Laurel said that importers and retailers had earlier agreed to a profit margin of P10 per kilo.

“I actually also consulted the private sector on this, and we had a meeting with retailers, importers, DTI (Department of Trade and Industry), PCC (Philippine Competition Commission), BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue), and everybody,” he said. “This decision to peg it at P58 was a decision not made arbitrarily. It’s made through consultation.”

Asked to comment, Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said that there is no need to declare a food security emergency on rice due to ample domestic supply.

“I don’t think there is a national food security emergency on rice. There is no shortage in supply, there is no calamity, harvests will start again in March, and prices, while still high, are actually slowly going down,” Mr. Montemayor said in a Viber message.

He added that the government had failed to go after profiteering importers, wholesalers, and retailers.

“Instead of running after them, the government has instead opted to manipulate the law (RA 12708), so it gives them the legal basis for releasing NFA stocks to LGUs in an attempt to lower prices,” he said. In a Viber message, former Agriculture Undersecretary Fermin D. Adriano said that the limited stock of the NFA may not be enough to influence rice prices.

“Very limited stock compared to the hands of the rice cartel, which controls around 70% of total supply,” Mr. Adriano added. — *with inputs from* **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/01/17/647319/da-to-declare-food-security-emergency/>

REMATE:

Mga mangingisda sa Navotas binigyan ng bangka

January 16, 2025 14:30



PINANGUNAHAN nina Navotas Mayor John Rey Tiangco, Congressman Toby Tiangco kasama si BFAR-NCR Regional Director Noemi Lanzuela at iba pang opisyal ng lungsod ang pamamahagi ng NavoBangka sa mga rehistradong Navoteño fisherfolk bilang bahagi ng pagdiriwang ng 119th Navotas Day.

Umabot sa 22 pares ng mga mangingisda ang nakatanggap ng 30-footer fiberglass banca na mayroong 16hp marine engine at underwater fittings



Nasa 925 na rehistradong Navoteño fishing boat owners din ang nabigyan ng fishing nets.

Ang NavoBangka-buhayan ay programa ng pamahalaang lungsod, katuwang ang Department of Agriculture – Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. JOJO RABULAN

<https://remate.ph/mga-mangingisda-sa-navotas-binigyan-ng-bangka/>

REMATE:

Food Security Emergency sa bigas ipinadedeklara ng National Price Council

January 16, 2025 11:15



MANILA, Philippines- Upang matiyak ang mababang presyo ng bigas, inaprubahan ng National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) ang isang resolusyon para himukin ang Department of Agriculture na magdeklara ng “food security emergency” sa bigas dahil sa mataas pa ring presyo nito sa kabila ng bumababang pandaigdigang presyo at binawasang taripa na iniutos ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Sinabi ni Trade and Industry Secretary Ma. Cristina Roque na siya ring NPCC Chairman, ang deklarasyon ay magbibigay-daan sa National Food Authority na maglabas ng kanilang reserba ng bigas upang patatagin ang lokal na presyo. Papalitan ng NFA ang ilalabas na bigas ng lokal na produksyon upang suportahan ang mga magsasakang Pilipino.

“Ang deklarasyon ay magbibigay-kapangyarihan sa DTI para gumawa ng determinadong hakbang upang protektahan ang kapakanan ng consumer habang pinapalakas ang sektor ng agrikultura. Sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay prayoridad sa ani ng mga lokal na magsasaka, maaalagaan ang isang matibay at idependent na Bagong Pilipinas – na titiyak sa katatagan at kasaganaan para sa consumer at sektor ng agrikultura,” ang pagbibigay-diin ni Roque.

Kaugnay nito, malugod namang tinanggap ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ang resolusyon na aniya ay isang mahalagang hakbang upang matugunan ang mataas na presyo ng bigas. Tinukoy ng kalihim ang mga isinusulong na hakbang ng DA, kabilang na ang pagtatakda ng maximum suggested retail price (SRP) na P58 per kilo para sa imported na bigas, epektibo ngayong January 20. Ang hakbang na ito ang titiyak para manatiling kumikita ang mga magsasaka.

Nabatid na sa ilalim ng Rice Tarrification law, limitado ang papel ng NFA sa pagbili ng palay sa mga lokal na magsasaka at mag-imbak ng bigas. Hindi ito maaring direktang magbenta ng bigas sa publiko. Kapag nagdeklara ng food security emergency ay pansamantalang mapapalawak ang kakayayahan ng NFA.

Binigyang-diin ni Secretary Tiu Laurel ang mas malawak na pakinabang sa ekonomiya ng abot-kayang presyo ng bigas, at magkakaroon ng mas magandang epekto sa inflation at sa interest rate policies ng Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. “Kahit hindi ka kumakain ng kanin, ang mababang presyo ng bigas ay makakatulong upang mapatatag ang ekonomiya,” anang kalihim.

Sa kasalukuyan ay mayroong imbak na 300,000 metriko toneladang bigas ang NFA. Kapag ipinalabas ito ay makakatulong na mapaluwag ang mga warehouse nito bilang paghahanda sa nalalapit na anihan sa Pebrero. **Santi Celario**

<https://remate.ph/food-security-emergency-sa-bigas-ipinadedeklara-ng-national-price-council/>

REMATE:

Maximum SRPs para sa lahat ng klase ng bigas sinisilip ng DA

January 16, 2025 10:28



MANILA, Philippines- Sinabi ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na sinisilip nitong magpairal ng maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) para sa lahat ng rice varieties.

Ito ay ayon kay DA Undersecretary Asis Perez nang tanungin ni Iloilo Rep. Ferjanel Biron kung ang P58 kada kilong MSRP ng premium imported rice ay maaaring ipatupad sa iba pang rice varieties.

“That’s being considered. We only started at P58 [per kilo for premium imported rice] because we have no prior experience [on implementing MSRPs],” pahayag ni Perez sa House Murang Pagkain Super Committee.

“Since this is a pilot [program], we wanted to look at it and then analyze it further on how we can improve. But that [expansion] is part of the strategy. In fact, we’re even considering the price cap [on rice],” dagdag ni Perez.

Kinuwestiyon naman ni Biron ang desisyon ng DA na itakda ang MSRP sa P58 per kilo para sa premium imported rice sa kabila ng umano’y pagkonsumo ng maraming Pilipino ng locally produced rice.

“Don’t you realize that the majority of the country’s rice supply is dependent on domestic production which represents 75% of the entire consumption?,” tanong ni Biron.

“I agree that there has to be a better formula, that there must be a better way to address this, not just use the landed cost of imported rice as the basis for putting the MSRP. But we are still working on the formula,” tugon naman ni Perez.

Samantala, sinabi ni Director Cherryl Carbonell ng Department of Trade and Industry na nagpulong ang National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) noong Martes at sumang-ayon sa prinspiyong mayroong “extraordinary” increase sa presyo ng bigas alinsunod sa batas.

“The council (NPCC) met yesterday, and we are looking at the possibility of declaring that there is an extraordinary increase in rice prices,” wika ni Carbonell.

“We are still working on the resolution [for that action],” patuloy niya. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/maximum-srps-para-sa-lahat-ng-klase-ng-bigas-sinisilip-ng-da/>

REMATE:

Presyo ng RFA25 ibababa sa P38/kilo

January 16, 2025 10:45



MANILA, Philippines- Sinabi nitong Huwebes ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. na ang presyo ng 25% broken rice variety na ibinebenta sa ilalim ng Department of Agriculture's Rice-for-All program (RFA25) ay ibababa mula P40 hanggang P38 kada kilo.

Ayon sa Department of Agriculture (DA), ang MSRP para sa imported na bigas ay nakatakdang ipatupad simula sa Lunes, Enero 20, na unang target sa mga pamilihan sa Metro Manila.

Ang panukala ay susuriin buwan-buwan upang ipakita ang mga pagbabago sa mga presyo ng pandaigdigang merkado at mga rate ng taripa, na may mga planong palawigin ang programa sa iba pang mahahalagang lungsod sa buong bansa. Kung ang mga inangkat na presyo ng bigas ay madalas na lumampas sa MSRP, ang DA ay naglalayon na magpatupad ng mas mahigpit na Suggested Retail Price (SRP) na balangkas na sinamahan ng mga multa at parusa para sa mga paglabag.

Ayon kay Secretary Tiu Laurel, kasama sa MSRP framework ang nominal profit margin na humigit-kumulang P10 kada kilo na mas mataas sa landed cost ng imported na bigas, hindi kasama ang specialty rice varieties tulad ng malagkit, Japanese, at black rice.

“Kung mananatiling stable ang presyo ng bigas sa mundo, inaasahan namin ang pagbabawas sa MSRP pagkatapos ng pagsusuri sa Pebrero,” dagdag niya.

Kaugnay nito, ang kasalukuyang taripa ng bigas, na ibinaba mula 35% hanggang 15% sa ilalim ng Executive Order 62 ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. noong Hulyo upang mabawasan ang mga gastos sa bigas, ay nasa ilalim din ng pagsusuri. Ang patakaran sa taripa na ito ay nag-uutos ng pagsusuri tuwing apat na buwan, na ang susunod na pagtatasa ay naka-iskedyul para sa Marso.

Bilang karagdagan sa RFA25, ang programang Rice-for-All, isang kritikal na bahagi ng KADIWA ng Pangulo na inisyatiba, ay nagtatampok ng iba pang abot-kayang opsyon sa bigas para sa mga mamimili. Kabilang dito ang RFA5, na naglalaman ng 5% na sirang butil na nagkakahalaga ng P45 kada kilo, at RFA100, isang 100%. **Santi Celario**

<https://remate.ph/presyo-ng-rfa25-ibababa-sa-p38-kilo/>

ABANTE:

DA ilalarga P50 maximum SRP sa bigas

Abante News

- **January 16, 2025**



Nilinaw ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na ang P58 per kilogram maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) sa imported rice ay inisyal na presyuhan pa lamang nila dahil maaari pa itong bumagsak sa P50/kg sa Marso depende sa magiging presyo ng international market

Ang P58 per kilo MSRP ay ipatutupad sa Metro Manila simula sa Enero 20 para malabanan ang profiteering at mat-uldukan ang pagsirit sa retail price ng bigas.

Ayon kay Tiu Laurel, target nilang baguhin ang MSRP kada dalawang linggo upang maprotektahan ang kapakanan ng mga consumer at ang mga sangkot sa value chain.

“Ang target natin sa MSRP, umpisa lang iyong P58, hindi iyan nakapako. So, basically after two to three weeks, balak kong maging P55 na lang iyan. After two weeks, maybe maging P52 na lang iyan,” paliwanag ni Tiu Laurel.

“Kung bababa ang world prices, pwedeng maging P50 na lang iyan soon. So, iyan ang intensyon,” dagdag ng kalihim.

Samantala, Inaprubahan na ng National Price Coordinating Council ang resolusyong mag-uudyok sa Department of Agriculture na magdeklara ng food security emergency sa bigas para makapaglabas ng imbentaryo ng bigas ang National Food Authority (NFA).

Sabi ni Tiu Laurel, oras madeklara ang food security emergency, makapagbebenta ang NFA ng bigas sa mga Kadiwa stores, mga local government unit, at iba pa na dadagdag ng suplay sa merkado para bumaba ang presyo nito. (Eileen Mencias/PNA)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/01/16/da-ilalarga-p50-maximum-srp-sa-bigas/>

MANILA STANDARD:

DA backs food security emergency declaration



STAPLE GRAIN MONITORING. Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and Trade Secretary Cristina Roque lead a joint market inspection at the Mutya ng Pasig Mega Market in Pasig City on Thursday, January 16, 2025. Tiu Laurel said the P40/kilo rice under the DA's Rice-For-All program will be reduced further to P38/kilo. Manny Palmero

By Charles Dantes, Joel E. Zurbano, Othel V. Campos & Maricel Cruz
January 17, 2025, 12:55 am

Agri chief says move to bring down further rice prices

Agriculture Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is pushing for a “food security emergency” declaration before the end of the month to further lower prices of rice.

This as the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) approved a resolution urging the DA to declare a “food security emergency for rice” as prices of the grain remained high despite declining global rice costs and tariff reductions ordered by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

“Once it comes to my table, the chances are we will declare (the emergency) so that we can release the stocks of NFA (National Food Authority),” Tiu Laurel said in an interview on Thursday.

He said the declaration of a food security emergency will enable the NFA to sell rice stocks to local government units and other government agencies at a lower price of P36 per kilo by February, free up space in NFA warehouses, and help local farmers through palay procurement for the upcoming harvest season.

“The declaration will likely be by the end of January. We target to offer NFA stocks to LGUs and other government agencies in February,” he said in a separate interview yesterday at the sidelines of a council meeting with Metro Manila mayors and the MMDA.

He said the NPCC resolution was already “approved in principle.”



(From left) Metro Manila Council head and San Juan Mayor Francis Zamora, MMDA Chair Romando Artes and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. discuss the expansion of ‘Kadiwa Ng Pangulo’ kiosks and stores in all public and private markets in the National Capital Region on Thursday, January 16, 2025. Manny Palmero

Trade Secretary Cristina Roque underscored the urgency of the emergency declaration as it would ensure proper enforcement of reasonable rice prices against profiteers.

To date, the NFA has almost 300,000 metric tons of rice stocks, which can be sold to LGUs and other government agencies.

“With the harvest season approaching, we need to start buying rice from farmers at fair prices. But without sufficient storage space, this becomes a technical problem for us,” Tiu Laurel said.

He also said the price ceiling and the suggested retail price for NFA rice will be set at P35 per kilo starting in March.

“In March, we will reduce the price to P33 per kilo in Metro Manila and other major cities across the country,” he said.

The DA chief also announced a price reduction today (Friday) for the 25 percent broken rice variety sold under the Department of Agriculture’s Rice-for-All program (RFA25).

“This price reduction will take effect on Friday, just ahead of the implementation of the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of P58 per kilo for 5 percent broken imported rice that will begin on Monday, January 20, 2025,” he said.

A House leader on Wednesday criticized the DA for setting the MSRP for 5 percent broken imported rice at P58 per kilo, calling the figure “unrealistic” and “a disservice to consumers.”

Deputy Majority Leader and Iloilo Rep. Janette Garin expressed her frustration during the hearing of the Quinta Comm, also known as the Murang Pagkain Supercommittee.

Garin accused the DA of failing to address key issues in the rice supply chain that have driven up prices.

Panel chairman Albay Rep. Joey Salceda said the P58 per kilo MSRP was “too high.”

Initially, the new pricing scheme will be implemented in Metro Manila markets, with plans to expand the program to other key cities nationwide.

The MSRP will be reviewed monthly to reflect changes in global market prices and tariff rates.

For his part, Sultan Kudarat Rep. Horacio Suansing Jr. flagged significant discrepancies in rice importation records involving Davao-based businessman Stewart Santiago and his companies, Nance II AgriTraders and Davao Solar Best Corporation.

Suansing called on the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) to investigate the matter.

“Per BOC records, Nance II and Davao Solar Best imported a total volume of 348,011 metric tons. But the problem, Mr. Chair, as per BPI data, they were only issued SPSICs for 48,852 metric tons. There is a discrepancy of 299,159 metric tons. There’s discrepancy,” Suansing said.

Suansing noted that Nance II AgriTraders and Davao Solar Best collectively control about 10 percent of the country’s rice imports.

Editor’s Note: This is an updated article. Originally posted with the headline: “DA eyes food security emergency declaration amid high rice prices”

<https://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/314547478/da-backs-food-security-emergency-declaration.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Philippine agriculture in crisis (2)

FINER POINTS

By Fermin D. Adriano

January 17, 2025

PART I of this column argued that the Philippine agricultural sector is in crisis as the country has become highly dependent on imports for its food supply and raw materials such as rice, corn, meat and even sugar — goods that in the past were major exports. Agriculture is unable to produce enough food for the country's growing population.

We noted that the main reason why Philippine agriculture is a laggard in the region is that our policymakers have chosen to maintain ineffective policies and programs for almost half a century that, while boosting their political and economic fortunes, have led to the gradual demise of the sector.

Among these flawed policies and programs are:

- An obsession to attaining rice self-sufficiency with little productivity gains to show.
- Devoting around 60 percent of the agricultural budget annually to rice and in the process neglecting the development of other crops where the country has a comparative advantage.
- **A focus on production with little attention to solving problems along the agricultural value chain.**
- **Lack of strategic focus on areas where the highest productivity can be gained because of the practice of dispersing agricultural infrastructure projects to congressional districts.**

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- **Fragmentation of agricultural lands into uneconomic sizes.**
- **Increasing reliance on "ayudas" (aid) to millions of dispersed farmers without tying the assistance to productivity gains.**
- Highly inadequate investment in research, development and extension even if studies show that the highest returns can be gained from these activities.
- The institutional weakness of agencies mandated to promote agricultural development because of politicization of the appointments of key officials.

There should be a sense of urgency among policymakers to reverse the fortune of the agricultural sector given its strategic role in boosting the national development effort. Our Asian neighbors have shown us how to promote agricultural transformation and reap tremendous benefits. It is imperative that we learn from them rather than listen to anecdotes from politicians who claim agriculture success based on their experience tilling a few hectares of land.

China is the foremost country from which we can gain tremendous insights on how agricultural transformation is shepherded. An article by Prof. Jikun Huang of the China Center for Agricultural Policy, entitled "Agricultural Growth and Rural Transformation and Policies in China," is highly instructive because it provides an excellent insight on how China developed its agricultural sector.

Interestingly, Huang earned his Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Economics degree at the UP Los Baños in the 1990s. He is one of the experts sought by the Chinese government in crafting its strategy and policies in promoting the rapid transformation of their agricultural sector.

Huang identified three critical factors indispensable in promoting the transformation of China's agriculture. These are institutions, policies and investments, or IPI for short.

The Chinese government strengthened institutions mandated to promote agricultural and rural development by appointing highly competent officials and upgraded the capability of agricultural bureaucracy and farmers groups and associations. Many were sent to study abroad to gain new knowledge on how to raise farm productivity and income. Farmers cooperatives and associations' capabilities were upgraded by an effective extension service that brought the latest knowledge and technology to the tillers.

Competent leadership paved the way for the formulation of policies and programs based on scientific evidences. The strengthening of agricultural institutions also involved improving data-gathering and storage capability, which could then help in analyzing situations and in coming up with the right policy recommendations. This ensured that policies were products of rigorous analysis and solid empirical evidence.

The third was the shift of government investments from production support subsidies to the provision of public goods such as irrigation, roads, postharvest facilities, machinery, etc., that resulted in significantly raising productivity and income. This enabled China's agriculture sector to become efficient and competitive in the face of an earlier decision to liberalize agricultural trade.

Huang said that China's agricultural transformation evolved in four stages. Stage 1, prior to the 1990s, was dominated by staple grain production characterized by low farm productivity and income. It was at this point when China introduced a radical institutional change with the implementation of the "household responsibility system" wherein lands collectively owned by the state were distributed to individuals to form family-based production units. This triggered the development of Chinese agriculture along capitalist lines.

Quotas were assigned to individual farmers by the government and whatever surplus they produced was sold to the market. This encouraged greater productivity as higher yield meant a greater surplus to sell in the open market and thus a higher income for the family.

Stage 2 saw the diversification and further commercialization of agriculture, wherein the market became the driving force for further development. This witnessed the gradual phasing out of government procurement programs and significant state investments in national, regional and local infrastructure.

Agricultural trade liberalization was also pursued to encourage greater efficiency and competitiveness by accelerating the shift to the production of commodities where China has a comparative advantage.

Stage 3 witnessed the rapid shift of rural farmworkers' employment to nonfarm jobs and rising agricultural mechanization as a result of rising wages in the agricultural sector. This period saw the transformation of China's agriculture from a labor- to a capital-intensive industry as rural workers migrated to urban centers to find better paying jobs in manufacturing and services.

Starting in 2015 onwards, China's agricultural transformation reached its fourth stage. According to Huang, this period is characterized by the movement "into high-value with more efficient and greener agriculture, and integrated urban-rural development."

Stages 1 to 4 were attained by China within a relatively short period of 50 years. It took Western countries more than a century. This is why it is so critical to learn lessons from China's agricultural transformation experience if we are to shortcut the process of our agricultural modernization.

The formula, as Huang noted, involves strong institutions, correct policies and adequate investments as determined by overall development strategy and correct policies. Sadly, these are absent in the Philippines.

Part 3 of this column will examine a more recent case of agricultural transformation: the Vietnamese experience.

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<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/17/business/top-business/philippine-agriculture-in-crisis-2/2040063>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Lend to farmers, Concepcion urges financial institutions

By Catherine S. Valente

January 17, 2025

GO Negosyo founder Jose Maria Concepcion III has encouraged financial institutions to lend more to farmers to help them grow and make agriculture a "profitable" business.

Concepcion issued the statement as he witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the Land Bank of the Philippines (LandBank) and Yovel East Development Inc. (Yovel East) in Manila on Tuesday.

"We have so much land, so much talent; we just have to make it work and eventually change the mindset of many of our bankers that it's time to lend to farmers," Concepcion said.

"We have to show them that farmers can be profitable," the Go Negosyo founder added.

The agreement, signed by LandBank President and Chief Executive Officer Lynette Ortiz and Yovel East President and CEO James Amparo, will combine Yovel East's expertise in farm clustering under its We Will Rice program and LandBank's financial support through its Agrisenso Plus Lending Program.

Concepcion said it also "streamlines rice production, enhances profitability, and promotes sustainability."

He said the agreement also "aims to boost agricultural efficiency, economic growth, and food security."

"With this agreement, we give the farmers under Yovel East's management access to money, markets and mentorship, the three essentials of successful entrepreneurship, which we emphasize in our work at Go Negosyo," Concepcion said.

Among Go Negosyo's programs is the Kapatid Angat Lahat sa Agri Program (Kalap), which aims to integrate small farmers into the value chain of big agriculture corporations.

Yovel East is one of the pioneer big-brother companies of Kalap.

In her remarks, Ortiz said that financial assistance "is just one piece of the puzzle in addressing the challenges faced by the agricultural sector."

She said the We Will Rice Program exemplifies the potential for creating far-reaching impact, offering farmers access to vital resources, modern technologies, and an end-to-end production process that enhances farmers' livelihoods and competitiveness.

From only giving fertilizers to farmers with an after-harvest payment scheme, under its We Will Rice program, Yovel East was able to provide and finance the farmers, supplying everything from seeds, chemical inputs, fertilizers, machineries, and even daily cash and labor costs to help the farmers survive.

Eventually, Yovel was able to even buy back and market the produce. It now has thousands of farmers in its fold after only five years of operation.

"One of the difficult parts of being a farmer is the uncertainty," Amparo said.

"Uncertainties in weather, uncertainties in water, uncertainties of where they can get financing for their fertilizers, machineries, and the sad part, even the uncertainties of where to sell their produce when they harvest," he added.

Amparo said that the partnership would maximize the strength of each sector, with farmers being able to concentrate on farming, LandBank providing the capital, and the private sector, led by Go Negosyo, providing the management prowess to make the business sustainable.

"The idea of corporative farming needs the support of institutions like LandBank for them to scale up and continue what they do," Concepcion said.

LandBank said the Agrisenso Plus Program is "designed to deliver a full suite of support — featuring expanded eligibility, lower interest rates, and simplified loan process to provide broader access to credit and other support interventions for small farmers, fishers, and agribusinesses, and other players in the agriculture value chain."

The program targets 10,000 small farmers, fishers, and agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) to benefit from accessible credit assistance and capacity-building support to help improve productivity, enhance income, and advance sustainable growth.

LandBank said the enhanced Agrisenso Plus widens its scope to cover a broader range of beneficiaries, including small fishers, and micro, small and medium enterprises involved in the agricultural value chain.

Agrisenso Plus also provides small farmers and fishers and ARB borrowers with free life insurance and credit life insurance.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/17/news/national/lend-to-farmers-concepcion-urges-financial-institutions/2040203>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Food security emergency to let NFA sell rice buffer stock

Ada Pelonia

January 17, 2025



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and Trade and Industry Secretary Cristina Roque lead a joint market inspection at the Mutya ng Pasig Mega Market in Pasig City on Thursday (Jan. 16, 2025). The Agriculture chief also announced that the P40/kilo of rice under the DA's Rice-For-All program will be reduced to P38/kilo. Also on Thursday, Laurel told reporters the Department of Agriculture will declare a food security emergency to allow the National Food Authority (NFA) to sell rice buffer stock to agencies.

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will declare a food security emergency to allow the National Food Authority (NFA) to sell rice buffer stock to agencies.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued the statement after the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) approved a resolution urging the DA to declare a food security emergency as retail rice prices remained high despite declining global rice costs and tariff reductions.

“Wala pa sa akin yung official recommendation ng NPCC because nasa working group pa yung detalye. [I still don't have the NPCC recommendation because the details are still with the working group]. But once it comes to my table, the chances are we will declare [food security emergency] so the stocks of NFA can be released,” Laurel told reporters on Thursday.

Laurel noted that the grains agency is in a pickle with 300,000 metric tons (MT) of rice stored in its warehouses.

“Harvest season is coming. *Kung puno ang warehouse namin, hindi kami makakabili sa mga farmers sa maayos na presyo. So, kailangan namin maibenta kaagad yan* [If our warehouse is full, we cannot buy from farmers with the right pricing. So, we need to dispose of that promptly].”

He added that if stocks were released from the grains agency, these would be sold to local government units (LGUs), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and other government agencies.

By February, Laurel noted that they aim to offer the rice stocks to LGUs and other agencies at P36 per kilo, which the latter could sell to the public at P38 per kilo. By March, however, he said they intend to sell it at P33 per kilo, which the agencies could sell at P35 per kilo.

Earlier, the DA said that rice stored by the grains agency for at least two months would be sold to LGUs in Metro Manila at P38 per kilo in its bid to clear filled warehouses ahead of the upcoming harvest season.

With the food security emergency in place, however, Laurel explained that the NFA could sell its stocks even if these were not aging rice.

He also stressed the agency’s objective to dispose of the NFA’s stocks so it could purchase palay or unmilled rice at a “profitable” price of at least P21 to P23 per kilo.

Meanwhile, Laurel mentioned that the 25 percent broken rice variety sold under the agency’s Rice-for-All program will be reduced to P38 per kilo from P40 per kilo beginning today.

“This price reduction will take effect on Friday, just ahead of the implementation of the maximum suggested retail price [MSRP] of P58 per kilo for 5 percent broken imported rice,” he said.

Image credits: [Nonoy Lacza](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/17/food-security-emergency-to-let-nfa-sell-rice-buffer-stock/>

ABANTE TONITE:

Agri chief atat sa food security emergency vs mga sakim na rice trader

January 16, 2025



Ipinagtanggol ng Department of Agriculture ang pagdedeklara ng food security emergency upang mapigilan ang pagtaas sa presyo ng bigas sa bansa.

Sa press briefing sa Malacañang, sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na hinihintay na lamang nila ang opisyal na dokumento mula sa National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) na nagrerekomenda sa DA para magdeklara ng food security emergency.

Ayon kay Laurel, sa ilalim ng Rice Tariffication Law, maaaring magdeklara ng food security emergency ang kalihim ng DA kung mayroong shortage o hindi maipaliwanag na pagtaas sa presyo ng bigas na siyang nangyayari ngayon.

Sa kabila aniya ng mababang presyo ng bigas sa pandaigdigang pamilihan at binawasan na taripa ng imported rice ay patuloy na tumataas ang presyo nito sa bansa.

Sa sandaling makarating aniya sa kanyang tanggapan ang rekomendasyon ay agad na ipapadala ito kay Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. kung papayagan o hindi ang kanyang hakbang.

“As a cabinet member, I am under – my boss is the President so I have to at least tell him that this is what I plan to do,” ani Laurel.

Sinabi ni Laurel na ang nakikita niyang pangunahing dahilan ng mataas na presyo ng bigas ay ang sobrang tubo na hinahabol ng mga negosyante.

“No hoarding akong nakikita, it’s more of a profiteering,” dagdag ni Laurel.

Nilinaw naman ni Laurel na huling option ng DA ang food security emergency upang pigilan ang mataas na presyuhan ng mga negosyante sa kanilang ibinebentang bigas.

Bukod dito, marami aniyang nakaimbak na bigas ang NFA at kailangang ilabas at ibenta na ang mga ito upang lumuwag ang mga bodega at magamit sa darating na anihan sa Pebrero. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/01/16/agri-chief-atat-sa-food-security-emergency-vs-mga-sakim-na-rice-trader/>

ABANTE TONITE:

Davao rice importer pinasilip sa BIR, PH Competition Commission

January 16, 2025

Umapela si Sultan Kudarat Rep. Horacio Suansing Jr. sa Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) at Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) na imbestigahan ang importer ng bigas na si Stewart Santiago at mga kompanya nitong Nance II AgriTraders at Davao Solar Best Corporation.

Sa pagdinig ng Murang Pagkain super committee noong Miyerkoles, Enero 15, iginiit ni Suansing ang kahalagahan ng accountability at transparency sa importasyon ng bigas sa gitna ng hindi pagkakatugma ng datos ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) at Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

Ayon kay Suansing, nagbigay ang BPI ng Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSIC) sa mga kompanya ni Santiago para sa pag-angkat ng 48,852 metriko tonelada ng bigas noong 2022. Pero batay sa rekord ng BOC, ang ipinasok umanong bigas ng mga kompanya ni Santiago ay 348,011 metriko tonelada.

“Per BOC records, Nance II and Davao Solar Best imported a total volume of 348,011 metric tons. But the problem, Mr. Chair, as per BPI data, they were only issued SPSICs for 48,852 metric tons. There is a discrepancy of 299,159 metric tons. Hindi ito nadeklara. May discrepancy,” ani Suansing.

“Pag tinotal mo itong dalawang korporasyon, meron 299,159 metric tons na discrepancy. Para sa akin, Mr. Chair, kailangang ayusin ito,” giit pa nito.

Kinuwestiyon din ni Suansing si Santiago kung nagbayad ng tamang buwis ang mga kompanya nito.

Batay sa mga dokumentong iprinisenta sa pagdinig, ang Nance II AgriTraders at Davao Solar Best ay nagbayad ng P2.8 bilyong buwis noong 2023 at mas mababa sa mga naunang taon.

Sinabi ni Santiago na ang kanyang mga kompanya ay tumutubo lamang ng P1 hanggang P1.50 kada kilo ng imported na bigas.

“Per our record, in 2021 and 2022, your two companies paid only P650 million in duties and taxes. In 2021, you paid P1.6 billion. In 2022, you paid P2 billion. In 2023, it’s P2.8 billion,” sabi ni Suansing. “Kung piso lang ang kita per kilo, patingnan natin sa BIR kung ang piso na ‘yan, deklarado.”

Ayon sa PCC kanilang rerepasuhin ang mga nabanggit na kompanya at magsusumite ng ulat sa komite. (Billy Begas)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/01/16/davao-rice-importer-pinasilip-sa-bir-ph-competition-commission/>

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

‘Emergency sa bigas’ nakaamba

[Gemma Garcia](#)

January 17, 2025 | 12:00am



Muling nag-inspeksiyon si Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. sa mga palengke kung saan inanunsiyo niya na ang P40/kilo ng bigas sa ilalim ng Rice-For-All program ay ibababa sa P38/kilo.

Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — May sapat na datos at katwiran para magdeklara ang Department of Agriculture (DA) ng Food Security Emergency on Rice.

Sa press briefing sa Malakanyang, sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel na malaki ang tsansa na maaprubahan ng National Price Coordinating Council ang rekomendasyon na magdeklara ng emergency sa bigas.

Dagdag pa ni Tiu Laurel na dahil sa patuloy na tumataas ang presyo ng bigas kaya mahalaga na mailabas na sa mga warehouse ng National Food Authority (NFA) ang may 300,000 toneladang bigas.

Sa ilalim kasi ng Rice Tariffication Law, hindi maaring mailabas ang bigas sa mga bodega ng warehouse hanggat walang kalamidad sa bansa.

Paliwanag ng kalihim, na sa kabila ng mga ipinatupad na hakbang kabilang ang pagbaba sa 15% mula sa 35% ng taripa sa imported na bigas, ay hindi pa rin bumababa at nanatili sa P60 hanggang P64 ang presyo ng kada kilo ng branded rice sa merkado.

Hinihintay na lamang ngayon ni Laurel ang pormal na rekomendasyon ng NPCC bago konsultahin si Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.

Ayon kay Laurel, nasa P3 hanggang P5 ang ibababa sa presyo ng bigas oras na maaprubahan ang rekomendasyon ng NPCC.

Sinabi naman ni Department of Trade and Industry Secretary Maria Cristina Roque na nakahanda na ang kanilang hanay na bantayan ang mga mapagsamantalang negosyante.

Ayon kay Roque, P5,000 hanggang P1 milyong multa ang ipapataw sa mga negosyante na hindi susunod sa itinakdang presyo ng bigas.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2025/01/17/2414862/emergency-sa-bigas-nakaamba>