

## CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY MARCH 01, 2025

### **A. MANILA BULLETIN:**

Increased investment on irrigation a must, says Alyansa bet Binay

NFA warehouse overload: LGUs urged to accelerate rice pickup

Romualdez dares poll bets: Make sure rice is affordable

P35-kilo NFA rice? Let's sustain it, says Enverga

Anitu Forest Farm's small-batch chocolates are the products of forest regeneration

Buy NFA rice, governor's group urges local execs

### **B. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

Bulacan traders agree to sell rice at P35/kilo

### **C. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

NFA pushes local governments to buy rice stocks

DA, Unicef team up to stop malnutrition

Romualdez to lawmakers, poll bets: Is rice available, affordable?

DA agency refining chicken import policy amid bird flu worries

### **D. THE MANILA TIMES:**

Rice cheaper; pork, fish up as of mid-Feb – PSA

### **E. REMATE:**

PBBM, nakatutok sa pagtugon sa tumataas na presyo ng bigas-Malakanyang

Pagtulong sa mga magsasaka at pagtiyak sa food security prayoridad ng "Alyansa" senatorial bets

### **F. ABANTE:**

Malacañang sa mga LGU: NFA rice ibenta ng P33 per kilo

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Increased investment on irrigation a must, says Alyansa bet Binay

**BY ELLSON QUISMORIO**

Feb 28, 2025 04:23 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- Alansya para sa Bagong Pilipinas senatorial bet Makati City Mayor Abby Binay batted on Friday, Feb. 28 for increased government investment on irrigation in a bid to strengthen food security in the country.



Makati City Mayor Abby Binay (Mayor Binay's office)

Alansya para sa Bagong Pilipinas senatorial bet Makati City Mayor Abby Binay batted on Friday, Feb. 28 for increased government investment on irrigation in a bid to strengthen food security in the country.

Binay--speaking in a press conference with fellow Alyansa candidates at Hotel Ssvano in San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan, said her proposal would also benefit local farmers.

According to her, a significant portion of the country's agricultural potential remains untapped due to inadequate irrigation systems.

“We need to put more money into our irrigation,” Binay said.

The Makati mayor cited a statement from Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. that over a million hectares of flatland still remains unirrigated.

“Imagine the potential of those lands for us to achieve food security and not rely on the importation of food,” she said.

The lady mayor also noted other challenges faced by farmers, among them post-harvest facilities critical to ensuring the quality and shelf life of produce. “Clearly, the support we are giving is not enough, especially in key areas,” she said.

“But I believe we should begin with the most basic necessity, which is irrigation,” added Binay.

Investing in irrigation will enhance agricultural productivity, reduce dependency on food imports, and secure the nation's long-term food supply, the Senate hopeful said.

[https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/28/increased-investment-on-irrigation-a-must-says-alyansa-bet-binay#google\\_vignette](https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/28/increased-investment-on-irrigation-a-must-says-alyansa-bet-binay#google_vignette)

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **NFA warehouse overload: LGUs urged to accelerate rice pickup**

**BY DEXTER BARRO II**

Feb 28, 2025 02:30 PM

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The National Food Authority (NFA) is appealing to participating local government units (LGUs) to accelerate their procurement of rice stocks as part of the mandate under the food security emergency on rice.

In a statement on Friday, Feb. 28, NFA Administrator Larry Lacson called on LGUs to aid the agency in expediting the decongestion of valuable storage space in its warehouses across the country.

"We appeal to LGUs to fast-track the pullout of rice reserves. This will open up space in our warehouses, allowing us to procure more palay and ensure that farmers aren't at the mercy of traders pushing down prices," said Lacson.

Earlier this month, the Department of Agriculture (DA) declared a food security emergency on rice as prices of the commodity remain high.

With this, the NFA is authorized to release rice buffer stocks to help stabilize prices.

Since the NFA is restricted from selling rice directly to the public due to the amended Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), the DA will oversee the selling of rice through the state-owned corporation Food Terminal Inc. (FTI).

The FTI, meanwhile, will distribute rice directly to LGUs, as well as the Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) program and other government agencies that want to participate.

These rice stocks will be sold to the public at ₱33 to ₱35 per kilo.

Last week, San Juan City started pulling out NFA stocks, with its initial purchase of 1,000 sacks of rice already soldout last Monday.

Navotas, Cotabato, and Camarines Sur are expected to follow suit, with pending orders for over 120,000 sacks of rice.

The urgent need to free up space stems from the NFA's intent to procure palay (unmilled rice) from local farmers in the upcoming harvest season, protecting them from alleged exploitation by certain middlemen and traders.

The agency has received reports that traders are buying palay for as little as ₱15 per kilo.

This is far below the NFA's purchasing price of ₱23 to ₱24 per kilo for clean and dry palay.

With the national average production of 4.1 tons per hectare, the agency estimates that every peso change in palay prices can significantly impact farmers' earnings, either adding or subtracting ₱4,100 per hectare.

Moreover, Lacson noted that clearing out existing rice stocks is crucial to meet the country's buffer stock levels, as indicated in the amended RTL.

Under the law, the NFA is required to maintain a buffer stock for 15 days.

This year, the agency must procure 545,000 metric tons (MT) of palay to sustain a nine-day supply. Meanwhile, 880,000 MT is needed to meet the 15-day target.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/28/nfa-wants-lg-us-to-speed-up-procurement-of-rice-stocks>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Romualdez dares poll bets: Make sure rice is affordable

**BY ELLSON QUISMORIO**

Feb 28, 2025 01:25 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- House Speaker Martin Romualdez urged on Friday, Feb. 28 the candidates in the 2025 mid-term elections to prioritize rice affordability.



House Speaker Martin Romualdez (Speaker's office)

Ensure the affordability of the rice for Filipinos.

This was House Speaker Martin Romualdez's challenge Friday, Feb. 28, to candidates vying for public posts in upcoming May 12 mid-term elections.

Following his pronouncement last week that controlling the cost of essential goods is paramount, the leader of the 306-strong House of Representatives, said the price of rice should be the primary focus of this effort.

"Alam natin na ang bawat butil ng bigas ay mahalaga sa bawat pamilyang Pilipino. Nakikita natin ang mga positibong hakbang ng gobyerno, pero hindi pa tayo dapat makampante," said Romualdez, also known as "Mr. Rice".

(We know that each grain of rice is important to each Filipino family. We can see the positive steps being taken by the government, but we shouldn't be complacent.)

"Marami pa tayong kailangang gawin para matiyak na abot-kaya ang presyo ng bigas para sa lahat (We still have a lot to do in ensuring that rice prices are affordable to all)," added Leyte's 1st district congressman and Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD) president.

Romualdez cited in particular the Department of Agriculture's (DA) declaration of a food security emergency, and allowing the release of the National Food Authority's (NFA) rice buffer stocks to stabilize retail prices and ensure consumer accessibility.

Additionally, the DA has set a maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P49 per kilo for imported rice starting in March, while NFA rice is being made available at P35 per kilo to support low-income consumers.

These measures aim to address the "extraordinary" hike in local rice prices, which have persisted despite reductions in global market costs and import tariffs.

The Speaker urged his fellow lawmakers and electoral candidates to engage directly with their constituents to assess the real-world impact of these policies. He emphasized the importance of on-ground verification to ensure that benefits of national policies are felt at the grassroots level.

"Hindi sapat ang mga numero at ulat lamang. Kailangan nating bumaba sa ating mga distrito, makipag-usap sa mga magsasaka, tindera, at mamimili. Dapat nating itanong: May bigas pa bang naisasaing ang ating mga kababayan? Paano natin mapapababa ang presyo nang hindi nalulugi ang ating mga magsasaka?" he added.

(We must not rely on reports and figures alone. We must descend and speak with the farmers, vendors, and consumers in our districts. We must ask: Do our countrymen still have rice to cook? How can we reduce its prices without adversely affecting our farmers?)

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/28/romualdez-dares-poll-bets-make-sure-rice-is-affordable>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **P35-kilo NFA rice? Let's sustain it, says Enverga**

**BY ELLSON QUISMORIO**

Feb 28, 2025 10:46 AM

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## **AT A GLANCE**

- Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga has underscored the need for more reforms in order to sustain affordable rice prices and protect both consumers and farmers in the long run.



Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga (Contributed photo)

A co-chairman of the House quinta-committee (quinta-comm) has underscored the need for more reforms in order to sustain affordable rice prices and protect both consumers and farmers in the long run.

Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga had this to say Friday, Feb. 28 in reaction to the government's decision to sell National Food Authority (NFA) rice at P35 per kilo.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) confirmed that at least 150,000 metric tons (MT) of NFA rice will be released over the next six months—half of its total 300,000-MT buffer stock.

This measure aims to bring retail rice prices closer to pre-July 2023 levels, or before supply disruptions led to sharp increases.

“Salamat sa ating quinta-comm, sa [DA], at sa lahat ng tumulong para maibaba ang presyo ng bigas. P35 kada kilo ng NFA rice ay malaking ginhawa sa mga pamilyang hirap makabili ng mahal na bigas,” Enverga said.



(I thank the quinta-comm, the DA, and to all those who have helped bring down the price of rice. The P35 per kilo NFA rice is a huge relief for families who can afford expensive rice.)

“Pero hindi tayo dapat huminto rito. Ang tanong ngayon: paano natin masisigurong hindi lang panandalian ang presyong ito? (But we shouldn’t stop here. The question now is: how can we maintain this price?)” he added.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the average price of well-milled rice remains at P45 per kilo, significantly higher than NFA’s subsidized price.

Enverga says that the quinta-comm or the Murang Pagkain Supercommittee continues to monitor these developments.

This super-panel was created under the instruction of House Speaker Martin Romualdez to combat smuggling, hoarding, price manipulation, and hunger.

“Ayaw nating maulit ang sitwasyon kung saan lumobo ang presyo ng bigas nang walang matinong paliwanag. Hindi tayo titigil hanggang hindi natin natitiyak na abot-kaya ang bigas para sa bawat pamilyang Pilipino,” the Quezon solon said.

(We don't want a repeat of the situation wherein there was an unexplained increase in rice prices. We will not stop until we ensure that rice is affordable for every Filipino family.)

Enverga noted that one of the most significant government interventions in lowering rice prices is Executive Order (EO) No. 62, which was signed in July 2024.

This measure reduced the tariff on imported rice from 35 percent to 15 percent, aiming to make rice imports more affordable and increase supply in the local market.

While the tariff cut helped reduce the cost of imported rice, its benefits have not yet fully reached consumers due to supply chain inefficiencies and price manipulation by certain traders.

As rice prices adjust in the coming months, Enverga assured that the government will remain vigilant in enforcing fair pricing, monitoring supply chains, and supporting Filipino farmers.

Enverga also called for regular price policy reviews to ensure that price regulations remain effective and do not unintentionally protect cartels.

“Kung hindi natin sisilipin taun-taon ang epekto ng mga polisiya natin sa presyo ng pagkain, baka hindi natin namamalayan na mas lalo nating sinusupportahan ang mga abusadong negosyante imbes na ang mamimili,” he warned.

(If we don't practice annual oversight on the effects of our policies on food prices, we may end up supporting abusive traders instead of the consumers without us knowing it.)

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/28/p35-kilo-nfa-rice-let-s-sustain-it-says-enverga>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Anitu Forest Farm's small-batch chocolates are the products of forest regeneration

**BY YVETTE TAN**

Feb 28, 2025 08:31 AM

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**AVANT GARDENER**



The Philippine cacao industry has been growing but still remains underdeveloped. Some local chocolatiers are trying to change this by offering tree to bar artisanal chocolates. One of them is Anitu Food Forest, a Bukidnon-based chocolate brand who sources its cacao beans from its own farm of the same name. The enterprise is run by Rogen Montecillo, while her husband, fourth generation farmer Marvi Montecillo, is in charge of their syntropic cacao and banana farm, which uses regenerative farming methods.

The farm has been featured in the magazine before, but I caught up with the couple to discuss new developments. The result is a three-part series of which this is the first one. The Anitu Food Forest brand was developed around 2021. The couple had wed the year before and because Rogen had an entrepreneurial streak, Marvi encouraged her to develop products from their farm for public consumption. “We must tap on both all our talents as much as possible... I really want to be a very good regenerative... cacao farmer [and] it so happens she's very interested in chocolate making,” Marvi said in Taglish.

Rogen started producing tablea and cacao trail mix. “We discovered while we were selling tablea that people wanted products they could consume right away, so we made trail mix using cacao nibs, muscovado suage, peanuts, and raisins,” Rogen said in Tagalog. “After that, the Department of Agriculture MAO — Municipal Agriculture Office — taught us winemaking, so we were able to make cacao wine.”

After winning the Young Farmers Challenge (Top 1 in batch two, Provincial) in 2022, she was able to attend workshops on artisanal chocolate making. Her winning grant was for chocolate and wine making, but after realizing that she wasn't suited for winemaking, she decided to focus on chocolates instead. This was the right move.

Now she attends trade fairs, where her small batch chocolate bars sell out. “We want to develop different products.”

“Our goal is to [support the farm's] reforestation. In terms of chocolate, [we want to] eventually have

machines,” Marvi said. “You can plant 12, 13 hectares of cacao [and] process chocolate on a large scale.”

Their product line has since increased to milk, white, and dark chocolate bars, cacao vinegar, and cacao tea. They received some help from the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) for their research and development (R&D), but the majority was done on their own.

All the chocolates are handcrafted in small batches in the Montecillo home, where half the space has been dedicated to chocolate processing and production.

Rogen also finds ways to improve her business acumen. The enterprise has been incubated at the Miriam College-Henry Sy Sr. Innovation Center (MC-HSSIC). The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the DA have also been very helpful by offering assistance such as bringing Anitu Food Forest to trade fairs all over the country.

The amount of production depends on the harvest and whether there’s an event or not. For example, they produce about 300 bars for trade fairs. “We process as much as we can with our small machines and when the events come, we try to sell as much as we can,” Marvi said.

The Philippines has a lot of potential when it comes to artisanal chocolates. “Most countries buy cacao from other countries. [In the] Philippines, we’re so lucky, we can actually grow... ferment our own cacao, dry, roast, everything. Usually, the chocolates we see abroad are single origin bean to bar. It means they bought the beans and processed the chocolate. In our case, we can actually start tree to bar kind of chocolate because we’re responsible for planting it from the very beginning, so for me, that’s what makes it special.”

And thankfully, many people are supportive of an enterprise with forest regeneration as one of its main goals. Anitu Forest Farm is hoping to scale up production in the near future in order to meet client demand. They’re also focusing on R&D. As of the interview, Rogen was in the middle of developing chocolate bonbons.

“Hopefully, when we have bigger machines, we can start our own cafe, that’s our dream, Marvi said.

“We also want our products to be available in malls everywhere so they’ll easily be available to customers,” Rogen added.

Anitu Forest Farm can be reached via their Facebook and Instagram pages. “We really want to make reforestation economically impactful,” Marvi said. “That’s our mission.”

Next week, I’ll talk about Anitu Forest Farm’s regenerative practices.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/28/anitu-forest-farm-s-small-batch-chocolates-are-the-products-of-forest-regeneration>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Buy NFA rice, governor's group urges local execs

**BY CHITO CHAVEZ**

Mar 1, 2025 02:25 PM

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Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) president Dakila ‘Dax’ Cua urged the local chief executives (LEC) to buy rice from the National Food Authority (NFA) and take advantage of its cheaper priced rice stock.

"This is an opportunity for us to provide immediate and much-needed relief to our constituents amid the high price of rice. Huwag po natin sayangin ang pagkakataong ito na makatulong sa ating mga komunidad at mga kababayan na umaaray na sa presyo ng mga bilihan (Let us not put this chance to waste that may help our communities and constituents who are suffering from the rising prices of prime commodities)," Cua said.

On Feb. 3, President Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos, Jr. approved the release of NFA rice stocks following the declaration of a food emergency.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) also announced that it plans to sell 150,000 metric tons of NFA rice stocks to local government units in a bid to free up NFA warehouses in time for the palay harvest season and to push down rice prices in the market.

The NFA rice stocks are priced at P33 to P35 per kilo through the DA's Food Terminals Inc. (FTI).

Cua emphasized the need for the LGUs to help out the national government in disbursing the rice, as failure to do so would result in the NFA being unable to purchase harvested rice from local farmers.

"Our help in purchasing these rice stocks is not only for consumers, but also for our farmers who won't be able to sell to the government," said Cua.

The ULAP chief and Qurino governor also urged the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to grant the DA's request to exempt from the election spending ban the NFA's sale of the rice stocks to LGUs.

Amid the public's financial woes, Cua called on the poll body to issue "a clarification as well on how LGUs can safely distribute the rice without violating the ban."

[https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/1/buy-nfa-rice-governor-s-group-urges-local-execs?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDFdleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHad0rtugovDkR5L72LDxcS1LOiSgtFn9kxAXIce5gM02hee\\_BPZLy3uyew\\_aem\\_L551fKltZ5tbcjz54WOHfQ](https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/1/buy-nfa-rice-governor-s-group-urges-local-execs?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDFdleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHad0rtugovDkR5L72LDxcS1LOiSgtFn9kxAXIce5gM02hee_BPZLy3uyew_aem_L551fKltZ5tbcjz54WOHfQ)

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Bulacan traders agree to sell rice at P35/kilo

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#), [Mark Ernest Villeza](#) - The Philippine Star

March 1, 2025 | 12:00am



The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Special Price and Supply Monitoring team conduct a joint inspection of agricultural basic necessities and prime commodities at the Trabajo Market in Sampaloc, Manila on January 21, 2025.

STAR / Edd Gumban

MANILA, Philippines — Rice millers in Bulacan have agreed to offer rice at P35 per kilo after meeting with National Bureau of Investigation Director Jaime Santiago, the NBI announced yesterday.

The agreement was reached during a meeting between Santiago and representatives of the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement (PRISM) of Bocaue, Bulacan on Feb. 27 at the NBI headquarters in Pasay.

Orly Manuntag, PRISM co-founder, said recent operations against rice hoarders and agricultural smugglers raised concerns among legitimate rice millers and importers in Bulacan, prompting them to seek the NBI's guidance.

Santiago assured the group that the NBI adheres to due process and will not exert undue pressure or harassment on legitimate businesses.

He also ordered that no operations related to rice or agricultural smuggling should proceed without review and approval from the agency's top officials.

Following a discussion on pricing, Bulacan rice millers agreed to sell rice at P35 per kilo in support of the government's campaign for rice stability and affordability.

At Santiago's request, PRISM members also committed to reporting any instances of rice smuggling or illegal activities in their area to the NBI.

### **Reference price stable**

The country's reference price for imported rice has been stable in the past two weeks with quotations from key Asian suppliers remaining below \$400 per metric ton (MT), according to data from the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

The BOC's latest memorandum showed that its reference value for imported five percent broken Vietnam rice has remained at \$385 per MT for the week of Feb. 26 to March 2.

The current reference value for imported Vietnam rice is a third lower than the \$579 per MT recorded in the same period of last year.

The BOC bases its reference prices for imported rice on the weekly reports provided by Platts, which is part of the S&P Global Commodity Insights.

An S&P Global report earlier pointed out that the price of five percent broken Vietnam rice in mid-February has fallen to its lowest level in at least 29 months since India, the world's biggest rice exporter, resumed exporting late last year.

The report attributed the softening of Vietnam rice prices to tepid demand from its major buyers including the Philippines.

Vietnam supplies at least 75 percent of the country's imported rice.

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) pointed out that the country's implementation of a maximum suggested retail price and the declaration of a food security emergency impacted Vietnam rice prices to fall.

Some local importers and traders have also canceled their contracts with Vietnamese exporters to take advantage of more affordable prices.

The BOC memorandum also showed that the reference price for imported five percent broken rice from other Asian sources has remained below \$400 per MT: Myanmar (\$384), India (\$391) and Pakistan (\$384).

The reference price for five percent broken rice from Thailand was pegged at \$409 per MT, based on the BOC document.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) earlier announced that the maximum suggested retail price on imported five percent broken rice, which is considered premium grade, would be lowered to P49 per kilo beginning March 1 from its current level of P52 per kilo, reflecting the easing in global rice prices.

### **Expedite NFA rice pullout**

National Food Authority Administrator Larry Lacson yesterday appealed to local government units (LGUs) to expedite the pullout of NFA rice stocks to free up storage space amid complaints from farmers of the agency's failure to procure palay from them.

Lacson said the sale of NFA rice stocks will enable the NFA to procure more palay from local farmers.

The food security emergency declared by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. allows the NFA to sell its rice stocks to LGUs. The LGUs can resell them at P35 per kilo.

Lacson noted that San Juan City has already started pulling out NFA rice stocks, with Navotas, Cotabato and Camarines Sur expected to follow suit. The Food Terminal Inc. reports that these three LGUs have pending orders for over 120,000 sacks of rice.

According to Lacson, clearing out existing rice stocks is crucial to meeting the country's new buffer stock levels, as mandated by the Rice Tariffication Law.

This year, the agency needs to procure 545,000 MT of palay to maintain a nine-day buffer supply, with a total of 880,000 MT needed to meet the 15-day target.

Meanwhile, chairman of the House committee on agriculture and food Rep. Mark Enverga lauded the government's decision to sell NFA rice at P35 per kilo, noting that it marked a major step in stabilizing food prices.

"We do not want to repeat the situation where the prices of rice had a very high increase without proper explanation," Enverga said in a statement.

On the other hand, Speaker Martin Romualdez urged candidates in the midterm elections to prioritize rice affordability, stressing that while recent government measures have yielded positive results, sustained efforts are necessary to achieve long-term solutions.

"Numbers and reports are not enough. We need to go down to our districts, talk to the farmers, vendors and consumers. We need to ask them if there are rice available for cooking for each Filipino family. How can we decrease the prices of rice without our farmers losing money," he said. — **Bella Cariaso, Jose Rodel Clapano**

[https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/01/2425010/bulacan-traders-agree-sell-rice-p35kilo?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDY5leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHc89Rg0jcLWShAIG5iUDmDtK1IRHp2ONkZgTScujW4XKX0ixh-TBoPF6w\\_aem\\_VanToWnDZtfZVg1zbn45w](https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/01/2425010/bulacan-traders-agree-sell-rice-p35kilo?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDY5leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHc89Rg0jcLWShAIG5iUDmDtK1IRHp2ONkZgTScujW4XKX0ixh-TBoPF6w_aem_VanToWnDZtfZVg1zbn45w)



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# NFA pushes local governments to buy rice stocks

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:50 AM March 01, 2025



INQUIRER FILE PHOTO / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

The National Food Authority (NFA) on Friday urged local governments to hasten their availments of [cheap NFA rice](#) so that it can continue to procure more rice and help bring down rice prices.

“This will open up space in our warehouses, allowing us to procure more palay and ensure that farmers aren’t at the mercy of traders pushing down prices,” NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said in a statement on Friday.

“This appeal comes at a critical time, as the summer harvest approaches. The NFA is aiming to procure as much palay as possible while ensuring there is enough storage capacity for future needs,” the NFA said.

With warehouses nearing their maximum storage capacities, Lacson said buying rice stocks would not only create additional space but also help the grains agency stabilize prices by preventing the exploitation of farmers by middlemen and traders.

The NFA cited reports saying that traders are purchasing palay for as low as P15 per kilogram, a decrease of about 34 to 37 percent from its buying price ranging between P23 and P24 for clean and dry palay.

“Given the national average production of 4.1 tons per hectare, each peso movement in palay prices can significantly impact farmers—either adding or subtracting P4,100 per hectare,” it said.

As of Feb. 26, local regular milled and well-milled rice retailed from P38 to P52 per kg, lower than the P49-P55 per kg recorded in the same period a year ago, according to the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) price monitoring of Metro Manila markets.

Imported regular milled and well-milled rice was priced from P36 to P46 per kg, also lower than P50-P55 per kg.

The DA started the release of NFA rice stocks to local governments last week after declaring a food security emergency on Feb. 3 to arrest rising retail prices of the staple food.

The declaration aims to address the “extraordinary” increase in retail prices and ensure the availability of affordable rice for the duration of this emergency, as recommended by the National Price Coordinating Council.

Local governments may purchase NFA rice from the Food Terminal Inc. at P33 per kg and sell it to the public at P35 per kg.

### **Likened to a race**

During a ceremonial turnover of NFA rice held earlier, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the distribution is a “race” as the grains agency needs to unload its stocks “as fast as possible” in time for the harvest season.

So far, San Juan City ordered another batch of NFA rice after it became the first local government to sell the commodity on Monday. The local government procured an initial 1,000 sacks.

In a message to the Inquirer, Lacson said Navotas is also selling NFA rice while Camarines Sur has placed its order. The three local governments have pending orders for over 120,000 sacks of rice.

Lacson said 67 local governments have signified their interest in buying NFA stocks, adding, “[There is] no deadline for ordering, as long as there is a food emergency, it is ongoing.”

Tiu Laurel has instructed the NFA and FTI to facilitate the quick release of rice stocks, including offering easier payment terms for local governments.

“This program will not only provide affordable, good-quality rice for consumers but will also help the NFA support local rice farmers,” he added.

The amended rice tariffication law authorizes the DA to declare food security emergency on rice to address supply shortages or extraordinary increases in prices by releasing NFA stocks to local governments and other government agencies.

[https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2039305/nfa-pushes-local-governments-to-buy-rice-stocks?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDe1leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHX5IsHktqbviyt6bv7UHJTxDuE7Sb96c-MdQPnqMvzveIZGimlI59lu1IQ\\_aem\\_V7QYEI7yULWVj36CQ3ZdNw](https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2039305/nfa-pushes-local-governments-to-buy-rice-stocks?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDe1leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHX5IsHktqbviyt6bv7UHJTxDuE7Sb96c-MdQPnqMvzveIZGimlI59lu1IQ_aem_V7QYEI7yULWVj36CQ3ZdNw)

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# DA, Unicef team up to stop malnutrition



BY JORDEENE B. LAGARE

MARCH 1, 2025



## NFA pushes local gov'ts to buy rice stocks

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) have joined efforts to address early childhood malnutrition through nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA).

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization defines NSA as a food-based approach aimed at overcoming malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies through nutritionally rich food, dietary diversity and food fortification.

Its overall objective is "to make the global food system better equipped to produce good nutritional outcomes," according to FAO.

The partnership between the DA and Unicef will focus on creating a comprehensive work plan to harmonize all activities and resources to combat malnutrition in children ages 0 to 5.

It has two components, with the first centering on policy formulation, particularly in creating training materials and guidelines to promote diet diversification.

The Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), the DA's training arm, will work on the capacity building of agricultural extension workers through specialized training programs, turning learning sites into diversified farms and food hubs.

“These programs will emphasize diet diversification, equipping trainers with the knowledge and expertise to support local communities,” the ATI said in a statement.

Aside from upgrading agriculture gardens into nutritionally diversified micro-techno farms and barangay nutritious food centers, the ATI will also roll out extension courses and seminars on diet diversification.

Unicef has already approved the initial funding and ATI’s 2025-2026 work plan to implement the initiative initially in regions with high rates of stunting and wasting. These areas will serve as test sites for establishing NSA systems and capabilities, allowing for the assessment of their impact on adjacent communities.

The agency will partner with other concerned agencies including the Department of Education, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Health and the National Nutrition Council to ensure the project’s success.

The ATI said the latest undertaking is aligned with the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024–2028.

“By targeting nutrition-sensitive agriculture and reinforcing systems and policies, this partnership is looking to bring long-term, positive change to the health and well-being of young children across the country,” the ATI said.

[https://plus.inquirer.net/news/da-unicef-team-up-to-stop-malnutrition/?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDgtleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHd-YXLui1OiGn5E7C-qXlaldvowM36vsfRRkD0Oskg\\_eC8ym3EWJpWlnFw\\_aem\\_UzdK2HTZxAAtZ92UxLZBIHw](https://plus.inquirer.net/news/da-unicef-team-up-to-stop-malnutrition/?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDgtleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHd-YXLui1OiGn5E7C-qXlaldvowM36vsfRRkD0Oskg_eC8ym3EWJpWlnFw_aem_UzdK2HTZxAAtZ92UxLZBIHw)

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Romualdez to lawmakers, poll bets: Is rice available, affordable?

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 01:26 PM February 28, 2025



NFA rice (File photo by RAFFY LERMA / Philippine Daily Inquirer)

MANILA, Philippines — Following the release of cheaper rice from the National Food Authority (NFA), House of Representatives Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez has called on lawmakers and poll candidates to visit their districts to check if grains are available and affordable.

Romualdez, in a statement on Friday, said that while the sale of NFA rice priced at P35 per kilogram is a welcome development, there is still a need to ensure that the people benefit from this government intervention.

NFA started selling rice at P35 per kilogram after the Department of Agriculture (DA) declared a food security emergency, as rice prices have gone upwards of P46 per kilo.

“We know that each grain of rice is important to the Filipino family. We saw the positive steps taken by the government, but we should not be complacent. We have to do more to ensure that the price of rice is affordable for all,” Romualdez said.

“Numbers and reports are not enough. We need to go down to our districts, talk to farmers, retailers, and consumers. We have to ask: do our people have the rice to cook? How can we lower rice prices without affecting the income of our farmers?” he asked.

Romualdez also noted that the House quinta committee, or the five panels that investigated the rising prices of basic goods and commodities, played an important role in the reduction of prices as the food security emergency plan was widely discussed in the hearings.

“The Murang Pagkain Supercommittee is one with all government agencies focused on bringing down rice prices to ensure that there is no abuse, that implementation of policies is efficient, and that action is quick,” he said.

The quinta committee, led by House committee on ways and means chairperson and Albay 2nd District Rep. Joey Salceda, focused on rice for several hearings. At one point, the DA said it would implement a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for premium grains, with the belief that making high-class varieties cheaper would also impact regular-milled rice.

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

However, lawmakers pressed the DA for more aggressive solutions, particularly regarding the overdue declaration of a food security emergency.

Last January 15, the National Price Coordinating Council said they are looking at possible measures that would allow the DA to declare a food security emergency to mitigate the rising prices of basic commodities.

But when the order was still not released by January 28, Salceda and Marikina 2nd District Rep. Stella Quimbo pressed the government agencies to make the order immediately, as Filipinos struggle to cope with expensive rice varieties.

Romualdez said that currently, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, the average farm gate price of dry palay was P20.69 per kilo in January 2025, a slight decrease from the P20.70 recorded in December. However, Romualdez said that this is still higher by 17.69 percent when compared to the average price in June 2022, which was P17.58 per kilogram.

“Based on these figures, we have seen the results of a balanced response from the government — market prices are lower, but we have ensured that farmers are not short-changed. We have done something right that we should continue,” he said.

Other lawmakers, like Quezon 1st District Rep. Mark Enverga, also thanked the executive branch for allowing the sale of cheaper NFA rice. However, Enverga said that reforms have to be initiated to ensure that the lower rice prices are sustained.

“We do not want a repeat of the previous situation where rice prices ballooned without any explanation. We would not stop until we can ensure that there is affordable rice for each Filipino family,” Enverga, chair of the House committee on agriculture and food and one of the heads of the quinta committee, said in a separate statement.

“Thanks to our quinta comm, the Department of Agriculture, and all agencies who helped bring down the price of rice [...] but we must not stop here. The question now: how can we ensure that these prices are not a temporary respite?” he asked.

According to Enverga, there has to be transparency in costs involving the rice supply chain, as prices over the world market have already gone down.

“It is clear that the price over the world market has gone down, while the tariffs according to EO (Executive Order) No. 62 also decreased, but why can’t we feel that the prices are lower?” he asked, referring to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive to cut the tariff on imported rice from 35 percent to 15 percent.

“We should be transparent on the price from the importation process up to the retail. When there is an SRP for wholesale price, we can stop the unabated profiteering by big businesses. We need to ensure that we have a proper basis for rice prices — from the declared purchase cost, wholesale price, up to the SRP,” he added.

<https://business.inquirer.net/509097/romualdez-urges-lawmakers-bets-to-visit-areas-to-check-if-rice-is-available-affordable>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# DA agency refining chicken import policy amid bird flu worries

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 10:11 AM February 28, 2025



## INQUIRER FILES

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) is refining the guidelines on the bilateral recognition of bird flu regionalization to ensure the safe delivery of imported poultry into the Philippines amid ongoing outbreaks in exporting countries.

The BAI is currently soliciting position papers and comments on the draft guidelines on recognizing the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) regionalization from concerned industry stakeholders until March 3.

Under this arrangement, the trade of agricultural products is allowed from designated regions that are free from the animal disease instead of imposing a country-wide import ban.

“The said draft guideline is aimed to ensure the safe trade of poultry (such as day-old chicks, parent stocks) during occurrences of HPAI from exporting countries,” the BAI’s advisory read.

The BAI said it has practiced the concept of zoning or regionalization for the local movement of poultry and poultry products from bird flu-free areas.

The draft circular covers an accredited country's application for the recognition of HPAI regionalization, allowing the export of live animals and their products, including meat, into the Philippines.

It said the demand for poultry products, such as day-old chicks, premium-cut poultry meat, and eggs, is expected to grow due to the projected increase in the world's population.

"The worldwide yearly occurrence of [HPAI] can impact global food security by affecting the poultry industry and restrict the international trader of live birds and poultry meat, and in turn affect prices and impact national economies," the proposed policy said.

"The occurrence of HPAI from exporting countries and the imposition of a whole country temporary ban limits the sources of day-old chicks, parent stocks and poultry meat, which in turn affects the prices," it added.

The draft policy is slightly different from Memorandum Order No. 22 issued by the BAI in 2023 for the same purpose, meant to facilitate the shipment of imported poultry while preventing the spread of avian influenza.

It is governed by the World Organization for Animal Health's guidelines on the recognition of areas (zones/regions) free of animal diseases through a bilateral process.

Chicken imports comprised 32.6 percent of the 1.5 billion kilograms of imported meat that entered the country in 2024, based on the data from the BAI.

Brazil is the country's leading chicken exporter, accounting for more than 50 percent of the 472.2 million kg of imported chicken, followed by the United States with over 33 percent and Poland with 5 percent.

<https://business.inquirer.net/509047/da-agency-refining-chicken-import-policy-amid-bird-flu-worries>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **Rice cheaper; pork, fish up as of mid-Feb – PSA**

By Giselle P. Jordan

March 1, 2025

RICE sold for less, while pork and fish were more expensive over Feb. 15-17, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said in a report.

Monitoring showed regular milled rice with an average retail price of P47.19 per kilogram (kg) at the national level, lower than P47.77/kg in the Feb. 5-7 phase. It was also lower than the P48.12/kg in Jan. 15-17.

Fresh pork meat with bones sold for P322.98/kg at the national level in Feb. 15-17, higher than the P317.57/kg in Feb. 5-7, and the P309.39/kg in Jan. 15-17.

Galunggong retailed at P231.24/kg, higher than P226.43/kg and P225.79/kg in the same comparative periods.

Tomatoes, meanwhile, were cheaper at P90.64/kg in Feb. 15-17, compared to P109.42/kg in the previous phase and P158.67/kg in Jan. 15-17.

Red onions, on the other hand, were more expensive at P182.47 in the same Feb. 15-17 phase compared to P162.69/kg in the previous phase, and P153.70/kg in Jan. 15-17.

A kilogram of carabao mangoes sold for P182.74, lower than the P191.19/kg and P200.40/kg in the same comparative periods.

Refined sugar sold higher at P86.38/kg than P85.61/kg and P84.23/kg in the same respective periods.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/01/business/top-business/rice-cheaper-pork-fish-up-as-of-mid-feb-psa/2064970>

## REMATE:

# PBBM, nakatutok sa pagtugon sa tumataas na presyo ng bigas- Malakanyang

February 28, 2025 16:28



MANILA, Philippines – NANANATILING committed si Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr., sa pagtugon sa tumataas na presyo ng mga pangunahing bilihan lalo na ang bigas.

Sa isang panayam, sinabi ni Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary at Palace Press Officer Claire Castro na kasalukuyang tinitingnan ni Pangulong Marcos ang posibleng ugat ng dahilan ng pagsirit ng presyo ng bigas.

“Sa food security, tinututukan iyan ng Pangulo. At inalam din kung saan ba dapat ang magandang paraan para ito ay ma-lesser kung may problema man diyan. ‘Yun naman ang laging ginagawa ng Pangulo,” ang sinabi ni Castro.

“Tututukan ito mabuti ng Pangulo kung ano ang nagiging problema kung bakit hindi pa yata bumababa sobra ang presyo ng bigas,” ang dagdag na pahayag ni Castro.

Nagbabala naman siya ng mabigat na parusa laban sa mga economic saboteur, lalo na sa mga smugglers at hoarders, na nagmamaniplula sa presyo ng mga agricultural products.

“Behind our back, may gumagawa ng ganiyang mga krimen. Hindi iyan makakalagpas sa Pangulo kaya iisa-isahin natin iyan,” ang sinabi pa rin ni Castro.

Sa isang sectoral meeting sa Palasyo ng Malakanyang noong Pebrero 18, sinabi ni Pangulong Marcos na hangad niya ang “unified” approach para maging matatag ang presyo ng pagkain at maging bagong polisiya para maging pananggalang ng mga consumers mula sa market volatility.

Sa nasabing pulong, tinalakay din nina Pangulong Marcos at ang implementing agencies ng Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act na putulin ang smuggling at patatagin ang presyo ng mga food products.

Samantala, idinkelara naman ng Department of Agriculture (DA) noong Pebrero 4 ang food security emergency para sa bigas para tugunan ang “extraordinary price increase” sa retail price.

Araw ng Miyerkules, inanunsyo ng DA ang pagbabawas sa maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) ng 5-percent broken imported rice sa P49 per kg. simula Marso 1. Ang MSRP ay unang itinakda sa P52 per kg., bumaba mula sa P55 per kg. noong Pebrero 15. *Kris Jose*

<https://remate.ph/pbbm-nakatutok-sa-pagtugon-sa-tumataas-na-presyo-ng-bigas-malakanyang/>

**REMATE:**

# Pagtulong sa mga magsasaka at pagtiyak sa food security prayoridad ng “Alyansa” senatorial bets

February 28, 2025 19:38



(c) Cesar Morales

**SAN JOSE DEL MONTE CITY —** Idinetalye ng mga miyembro ng administration-backed senatorial slate na Alyansa Para sa Bagong Pilipinas ang kanilang mga panukala para matulungan ang mga magsasaka, mapababa ang presyo ng mga pagkain at gawing food self-sufficient ang Pilipinas.



(c) Cesar Morales

Sa isang pressconference ng Alyansa sa Hotel Savano sa San Jose del Monte, Bulacan bago sila tumulak sa campaign rally na isinagawa sa City College of San Jose del Monte Grounds, Brgy. Minuyan, sinabi ni dating Senate President Vicente “Tito” Sotto na dapat bilingin ng pamahalaan ang

50 porsiyento ng mga produksiyon ng mga magsasaka at mga mangingisda sa presyong hindi talo ang mga ito.

“Government must buy 50 percent of all the outputs of all farmers and fisher folk in the country at their farmgate price. Doon, kahit sinong magsasaka ang kausapin mo ‘pag sinabi mo ‘yan hindi maaaring hindi matuwa. Pinag-aralan namin ‘yan,” ani Sotto.

Ganito rin ang sentimyento ni dating Senador Panfilo “Ping” Lacson, aniya, dapat nang alisin ang sobrang dami ng mga middlemen na nagiging sanhi sa pagtaas ng presyo ng mga pagkain.

“Mag-eliminate tayo ng katakot-takot na middlemen. Kikita ng maganda ‘yung farmers at saka ‘yung fisherfolk, at the same time bababa ‘yung presyo ng bilihin,” paliwanag ni Lacson.

Nais naman ni dating Senador Manny Pacquiao na ma-regulate ang produksiyon ng pagkain upang maiwasan ang pagmanipula sa mga presyo nito.

“Dapat i-regulate ng ating gobyerno ‘yung pag-release ng basic commodities sa market at dapat bibilihin ng gobyerno. Magkakaroon ng concrete program ang ating

government na bilhin ‘yong mga products ng mga farmers para hindi sila mag-worry at ma-encourage pa sila,” punto ni Pacquiao.

Itutulak naman ni dating Interior and Local Government Secretary Benhur Abalos ang isang decentralized approach’ sa mga local government units (LGUs), na naranasan niya habang alkalde pa siya ng Mandaluyong, sa ganitong sistema ay LGU mismo ang bumibili ng mga sobrang ani ng mga magsasaka mula sa Nueva Ecija.

“Isipin ninyo kung lahat ng LGUs gagawin ito, may ready market ka na agad for the farmers. Direkta na, at hindi lang ‘yun, ‘yung mismong puhunan galing na sa LGU itself,” wika ni Abalos.

Idinagdag pa ni Abalos na maaaring magbigay ang pamahalaan ng mga puhunan at mas kayang crop insurance para sa mga magsasaka.

Si Makati City Mayor Abby Binay, sinabing mahalaga ang irigasyon para sa produksiyon ng mga magsasaka.

“Kailangan din natin ng mas maraming irigasyon dahil base sa impormasyon ng Secretary of Agriculture, lampas sa isang milyong ektarya pa ng mga patag na kalupaan ang kailangan ng patubig,” sabi ni Binay.

“Imagine the potential of those lands for us to achieve food security and not rely on importation of food. Mukhang kulang na kulang ang suporta na naibibigay natin lalong-lalo na sa National Irrigation Administration. We should put more money on irrigation,” paliwanag ni Binay.

Si re-electionist Senator Francis “Tol” Tolentino, nais gawing mga propesyunal ang mga batang henerasyon ng mga agriculturists.

“Sa nagdaang Kongreso, nagpasa kami ng batas na iaangat ang estado ng mga agriculturist bilang mataas na lebel ng propesyon. Magiging certified sila. Bibigyan ng lisensiya, ang mga eksam ay isu-supervise ng PRC (Professional Regulation Commission),” sabi ni Tolentino.

“Di ba ‘pag abogado LLB ang nakalagay sa dulo; ‘pag doktor, MD. Dapat mayroon din ‘yung mga agriculturist,” dagdag ni Tolentino, na hinikayat din ang malalaking korporasyon na pumasok sa farming para mapanatiling mababa ang presyo ng mga pagkain.

Para kay Deputy Speaker Camille Villar, importante naman ang tama at mahigpit na pagpapatupad ng mga batas para maiwasan ang economic sabotage.

“Another way to control the prices in the long term is to implement properly ‘yung mga batas na mayroon tayo katulad ng Anti-Economic Sabotage Law that has stiffer penalties against rice traders, middlemen for profiteering. Kasi wala pa po tayong napo-prosecute,” pagtatapos ni Villar. Gail Mendoza

<https://remate.ph/pagtulong-sa-mga-magsasaka-at-pagtiyak-sa-food-security-prayoridad-ng-alyansa-senatorial-bets/>



**ABANTE:**

## Malacañang sa mga LGU: NFA rice ibenta ng P33 per kilo

Abante News

• March 1, 2025



Inabisuhan ng Malacañang nitong Sabado ang mga local government units (LGUs) na ibenta ang National Food Authority (NFA) rice sa halagang P33 per kilo imbes na P35 bawat kilo.

Tinukoy ni Presidential Communications Office (PCO) Undersecretary at Palace Press Officer Claire Castro ang inisyatiba ng San Juan City LGU na ibenta ang NFA rice sa kanilang residente sa original price ng P33 per kilo.

“Sa akin lang, para maramdaman ng taumbayan, diretso. Tatal, ang balak naman din ng LGUs like San Juan is P33, eh ‘di sana diretso na. Binenta naman nila ng P33 kada kilo. Idiretso na sa taumbayan na P33. Kasi kung idadaan pa iyan, may layer na naman, ‘pag dumaan sa system layer na naman, P35 ibebenta. Napamahal na naman ng P2,” wika ni Castro sa isang programa sa Radyo Pilipinas.

“Sa atin lang, ang advice ko sa LGUs, kung napakasipag niyo na at kung ang mayor niyo ay napakasipag, doblehin niyo pa ang sipag, para kung ang presyo mismo, kung P33 ang kuha niyo sa NFA, aba’y P33 niyo na ibenta,” giit pa ng opisyal.

Ibinebenta ng San Juan LGU ang bigas sa limang kilo hanggang sampung kilo bawat consumer imbes na isang sako na pumapalo sa P1,650 ang presyo.

Pinuri naman ni Castro ang naging hakbang ng San Juan LGU na magbenta ng lima hanggang sampung kilo ng bigas upang mas marami ang makabili kaysa sa mga mamahaling bigas na binebenta sa palengke.

“Kaya tama po ‘yung sinabi niyo kanina na dapat na mag-adjust. Sa akin lang, kung sisipagan lang din ng LGUs, kasi masipag na, kaunting sipag pa para mas masipag pa,” dagdag ng opisyal. (PNA)

[https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/03/01/malacanang-sa-mga-lgu-nfa-rice-ibenta-ng-p33-per-kilo/?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDkilleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHaVEfnTNDG4rdcWCT0IwPIYX02ESwoYPHOt3Fy2Kn-zZQZ3iXBuACDN2AA\\_aem\\_AzEJbl5Mg-ykM2OcRy-y3A](https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/03/01/malacanang-sa-mga-lgu-nfa-rice-ibenta-ng-p33-per-kilo/?fbclid=IwY2xjawIxDkilleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHaVEfnTNDG4rdcWCT0IwPIYX02ESwoYPHOt3Fy2Kn-zZQZ3iXBuACDN2AA_aem_AzEJbl5Mg-ykM2OcRy-y3A)