

Philippines expands rice distribution network to counter unreasonable prices

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Philippines Department of Agriculture (DA) is ramping up efforts to make rice more accessible and affordable for Filipinos by expanding the Rice-for-All program, opening additional KADIWA ng Pangulo kiosks in public markets and train stations, and collaborating with local government units (LGUs) nationwide to distribute rice at fair prices, including the P29 rice program for vulnerable sectors.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said these initiatives aim to combat “unreasonably high” rice prices and ensure equitable access, particularly for economically disadvantaged households. “We are ensuring that rice reaches every Filipino household at fair and affordable prices, starting with key markets in Metro Manila and, eventually, other regions,” he said.

Under the Rice-for-All program, consumers can purchase rice at P45 per kilo for 5% broken grains, P40 for 25% broken, and P36 for 100% broken (“Sulit Rice”). Meanwhile, the P29 rice program serves indigents, senior citizens, solo parents, persons with disabilities, and indigenous communities, with a 10-kilo monthly limit per beneficiary.

To further stabilize prices, the DA, in partnership with the Metro Manila Development Council, has engaged LGUs across NCR to sell National Food Authority (NFA) rice stocks at P38 per kilo. This move not only offers consumers an additional affordable option but also helps decongest NFA warehouses ahead of the palay harvest.

Starting January 20, the DA will impose a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of P58 per kilo for premium imported rice (with no more than 5% broken grains). The MSRP, which will initially be implemented in Metro Manila, will be reviewed

monthly, capping importers's, traders's, and retailers's profit margins at P10 per kilo. Sec. Tiu Laurel noted that global trends could lower the MSRP by February.

Retailers exceeding the MSRP must justify their prices to authorities. Should rice prices remain excessively high, the DA and Department of Trade and Industry will recommend to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. the imposition of a price ceiling, with strict penalties for violators.