PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
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PRESS BRIEFING OF MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ WITH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE-BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY DIRECTOR GERALD GLENN PANGANIBAN
OCTOBER 3, 2023 [12:05 P.M. – 12:30 P.M.]

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Magandang araw, Malacañang Press Corps, and welcome sa ating press briefing ngayong araw, October the 3rd.

During the sectoral meeting led by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. this morning, the Department of Agriculture presented a report on the proposed indicators of the current Executive Order 39 or the price ceiling on regular and well-milled rice.

To give us more details on this, we have with us the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Plant Industry Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban. Good afternoon, Director Panganiban.

BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Good afternoon.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Go ahead with the briefing.

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Just to brief the media on what happened this morning, we presented the status of our compliance to the EO39 and the indicators point that there are decreasing prices observed in market from our implementation starting last month until today; and then we are expecting an increased supply of our local harvest coming this last quarter – for October, November and then the rest of the year. And the favorable factors externally has been reported, a drop in the export prices of rice in the global market has also been reported.

So that's about it. And we are expected that DA and DTI to have collaborations in order to further monitor and survey the prices so that it will not, again, increase drastically. So, that's what we are doing and we are working with all agencies of the government, not only the DA but also the DTI and DILG to implement whatever measures and guidelines we can do so that the consumers and of course our stakeholders/the farmers will also benefitted.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Before we get to the questions, maybe we can talk about the graphic that we're posting.

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Yeah, okay. So for September, of course it's already done. For October, as I've mentioned, we are expecting almost 1.9 million metric tons of rice for this month. So that will jump our days-to-last or our supply of rice to 74 days, it increased from 52 last September. So because we are expecting a more bumper harvest for coming October and November, the public can expect that we will have a stable supply of our main staple.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Chona Yu, Radyo Inquirer.

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: Good morning. Sir, lifted na po ba ang EO39?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: As of now, not yet. But again, that's why we met – the DA and the DTI, as well as the sectoral council net so that we can recommend and the President will be the one who will be deciding on it.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Maricel Halili, TV-5

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Hi, sir, magandang tanghali po. So, sir, how soon do we expect the lifting of the price ceiling?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Since we already have those indicators ready and… I cannot say the duration but the indications point to that so we will just keep you updated as soon as there will be a decision.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: But, sir, you mentioned kanina na since noong in-implement iyong EO last month up until now nagkaroon na ng decrease of prices. Can you give us a rough estimate as to how much iyong decrease noong prices, average?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Yeah. We were—at the start of the implementation, there is always ano eh, concern about these changes. But as we monitor, 80 to 90 percent compliance ang ating mga retailers sa price cap na inilagay – P41 for the regular and P45 for the well-milled. So iyon nga, nag-increase iyong compliance natin and then we have seen or we have received the reports from our regional offices, our PhilRice Institute about our bumper harvest coming. So we expect, iyon nga, iyong stable supply and hopefully makapag-decide na tayo on the price cap.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Alexis Romero, Philippine Star.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Director, you mentioned, prices are going down but the EO on the price cap has yet to be lifted. So, what are we waiting for? Ano ba iyong mga circumstance na tinitingnan pa ngayon that's, you know, preventing you from finally lifting the policy?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Of course, all of the decisions that should be made should be with complete staff work ano. So we are just verifying so that we can be sure na kapag may decision na na ia-arrive ay talagang ano tayo … everyone would be benefiting from it.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: But, mayroon pa bang certain conditions that have yet to be achieved that's why we are not yet lifting the policy?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Well, iyong three basic indicators lang naman iyong naibigay ko sa inyo ano; there are other indicators that may be considered. So let us just wait for this decision. Actually ang DA, ang DTI and all other agencies of the government naman ay nandiyan while it's still being implemented, we are continuing with our support from the DA side to the farmers, from the production to DSWD and to DILG, and to other government agencies.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Thank you, Director.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Allan Francisco, PTV-4.

ALLAN FRANCISCO/PTV-4: Hi, sir, good afternoon. I understand, sir, itong price cap – ang sabi ng mga na-interview namin, talagang nakatulong para iyong kanilang mabibiling presyo ng bigas ay kumbaga naka-budget na sa kanilang araw-araw. Aside from that, sir, the implementation of price cap, ano pa po iyong mga nagawa ng administrasyon sa Agriculture Department in particular, sir?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Of course, from the budget itself, the DA almost doubled its budget ano simula nang umupo ang ating Pangulo bilang Department of Agriculture Secretary so that means interventions on production support, on machineries and of course for credit and other inputs for agriculture. So that's why as I mentioned earlier, tumaas ang ating projected harvest ano.

And not only that, I think it's the first time that a president has exported or opened the gates for export not only for domestic production, but ngayon nakakapag-export na tayo ng high-value crops natin like durian at the start of the quarter of this year; mangoes again, we opened a significant market for Australia; and ito lang, last weekend itong avocado. So, not only iyong domestic production mismo but the earnings from the exports, I think that already helped – that's aside from the President being there integrating all efforts of the government. Kung makikita ninyo, itong price cap, isang example lang ito, kumbaga tulung-tulong lahat – DTI, DILG, DSWD – so that not only the farmers ang ating bebenepisyuhan ano, the same way with the consumers kasi lagi namang binabalanse natin ito.

ALLAN FRANCISCO/PTV-4: Sir, follow up ko lang. Before when President visited Palawan, he mentioned particularly Metro Manila kaya doon ipinatupad particularly iyong price cap. So itong pag-decrease, sir, noong presyo ng bigas ay nationwide ba o partikular, sir, sa Metro Manila?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Well, dito sa NCR, lagi naman dito iyong hotspot kung may tataas ang presyo o bababa ang presyo. But actually, from the regional monitoring namin, may iba pa ngang regions na mas mababa pa ang presyo ano. So iyon nga nasasabi natin, it's not only from the production side that we are assisting our farmers and our stakeholders but even nga dito sa marketing; mayroon tayong mga marketing platforms din na para matulungan natin ang mga consumers natin na maka-access nitong bigas.

ALLAN FRANCISCO/PTV-4: Thank you, sir.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Pia Gutierrez, ABS-CBN.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Sir, on the part of the DA with the indicators that have been reported, is the DA recommending the lifting of EO39 to the President?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Well, iyon ang ano, iyon 'yung indication ano. From our parameters naman ay mukhang ready na. But of course, it's all upon the President to decide on it. Ang amin lang, ang focus namin and this is the instruction of the President from day one is to really support our farmers, the local produce. And again, for the third time I'm mentioning, tumaas ang ating production and that's because of the interventions that our President mandated to our agency. So lahat iyon, not only for rice but other staples and iyon nga nasabi ko, high-value crops natin.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Sir, ganito na lang po. The DA reported na decreasing na nga po iyong prices and we are expecting an increased supply from our local harvest. Does the DA still think that the implementation of the price cap is necessary at this point in time?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Well, nabanggit natin na iyong price cap ay temporary lang ano. It was done to really arrest iyong increasing prices at that time na it defied the logic kasi mayroon tayong supply. So, ang atin lang and this is… again, what the President wants is really to have a stable supply and that will being translate to stable prices in the market. So, kami sa DA, we continue with the production ano. I think the market will take care of itself but at that point in time, again, temporary measure lang naman siya. So we will see kung anong magiging decision ng Presidente.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Tuesday Niu, DZBB.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: Sir, follow up lang para maging klaro sa aming lahat. Categorically speaking, sir, nirekomenda ninyo na po ba kay Presidente na i-lift na iyong EO39 o hindi pa?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Ang ano kasi natin, ma'am, dito is DA and the DTI ang nag-aano. Again ang recommendation, of course dahil nga dito sa ating mga indicators na ito, I think positive

na maaari, maaari. But ang akin lang, again I cannot… hindi ko puwedeng pangunahan ang decision na iyon so—

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: Ibig sabihin, sir, ni-recommend ninyo pero si Presidente ang magdi-decide?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Not yet, not yet. Oo, hindi pa. Maghintay na lang muna tayo for…

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: So hindi pa siya… walang recommendation yet?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Well, ito nga, pinakita namin. We presented it to the sectoral and it would be up—

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: So recommended, sir, na i-lift na?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Ha?

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: So recommended, sir? Nasa sa kaniya na lang iyong decision kung kailan?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Oo. Ano naman iyan, joint naman iyan ng ating DTI and DA.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: Para lang malinaw, sir, baka mamaya *[laughs]*…

Q: [Off mic] Sir, what was the reaction?

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: No, there was a report that showing favorable factors. So we should wait.

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Hintayin na lang siguro natin.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: So, iyon na ‘yun.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Eden Santos, Net-25.

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Sir, good afternoon po. Kapag po ba na-lift na iyong price cap na ngayon ay pinag-iisipan ng Pangulo kung kailan niya ia-announce, mananatili pa rin ba iyong presyo na 41 at 45 pesos na bigas or mas bababa pa po doon sa presyo na iyon, iyong presyo ng bigas, since papasok na po iyong maraming harvest?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Kagaya ng nabanggit ko kanina, we will continue to monitor and survey iyong prices sa market ‘no, and then the DA naman, doon sa production side. Since mayroon tayong ini-expect na harvest this coming fourth quarter, iyon nga, kapag mayroon tayong supply eh di stable ang ating prices, kung maaari ay bumaba pa.

So iyon ang ating inaano but, of course, that’s the market that will work for you. But kami, the DA, the DTI will continue to monitor and survey para mapanatili natin o ma-calm natin iyong mga agam-agam ng ating mga consumers na baka tataas dahil ganito, mayroon tayong, again, itong season natin na holiday season na darating.

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Iyon nga po, sir, ang pinapangambahan ng ating mga kababayan, ano po. Kapag na-lift iyong price cap, baka mawala na rin iyong 41 at 45 pesos kahit na mayroon ng mga inaaning palay iyong ating mga kababayan.

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Ayun naman, ito naman ang aking ina-assure sa inyo, iyon nga, kausap lang namin ang DTI, at kami ay nagka-come up ng mechanisms para magkaroon ng, halimbawa, ano ba talaga iyong overpriced, ten percent and above? Ano ba iyong hoarding? Ilang araw ba nila iyan iki-keep, iyong supply? So, nandiyan na iyan. We are just finalizing and, of course, iyon nga, iyong enforcement natin ay lalo pa nating paiigtingin.

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Thank you po.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Sam Medenilla, Business Mirror.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Good afternoon, sir. Since tumataas na po iyong supply ng rice ulit, nag-i-slowdown na po ba ulit ang BPI sa pag-approve ng SPSIC for rice imports? At babalik na rin po ba sa dati na hindi na kayo nag-iisyu ng SPSIC dahil sa pa-harvest na po?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Kami sa Bureau of Plant Industry, of course, mayroon kasi tayong Rice Tariffication Act na talagang nagli-liberalize diyan sa atin. But, again, our support is always for the farmers. Whenever mayroon tayong harvest season na nandiyan, we are trying to manage it. And sa katunayan, iyong utilization naman ng SPSIC, hindi naman nayu-utilize. So maaari iyong mga nairi-report na mataas ang ating import masyado, we have to be critical din doon ‘no. Hindi naman porke naisyuhan ay ganoon na kaagad ang darating. So, I think, kaya nagda-dial down din iyong ibang mga nagri-report about the assumed importation natin na masyadong malaki.

Actually, ngayon, compared with last year, mas mababa ang ating ini-import kasi nga, ito, tumataas ang ating production ng ating palay.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Last na lang, sir. Kanina po, iyong sa meeting po, na-discuss din po ba iyong proposal ng mga economic managers na parang reduction sa tariff?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: I cannot comment on that kasi ang amin, more on the production. But on the tariff side, maybe we can defer that to the proper authorities.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Thank you, sir.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Alexis Romero, Philippine Star.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHIL STAR: Director, any timeline as to when the government or the Marcos administration will decide on whether to lift the price ceiling on the rice?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Iyon naman ang nasabi doon sa EO mismo. Kapag iyon nga—

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHIL STAR: So kailan iyong meeting kaya noon para mag-decide, iyong final?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Hindi ko pa masabi iyan kung kailan iyan ‘no. But, again, we are updating the Office of the President almost every day para naman mas maging dynamic at mas mabilis iyong atin … kung mayroon mang desisyon na kailangang gawin, basta complete staff work ang ating gagawin before …

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHIL STAR: Tapos, Director, we’re just curious, you mentioned, 80 to 90 percent compliance. What happened to the 10 to 20 percent of retailers?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: On the average iyon kasi iyong iba naman talaga, to start with, hindi sila nagbibenta noon ‘no. Iba-iba kasi iyong dynamics ng market. Iyong iba, siyempre, sa halip na magbenta sila, siguro hindi na sila nagbenta; mostly, ang focus nila is special rice. But ang atin naman dito is, I think, mataas na iyong compliance. Dito sa NCR, almost 95% ang aming nakita. So on the average lang iyon, iyong 90%. But mostly and majority is compliant with the said price cap, so I think maganda iyong naging effect ng ating EO 39.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Alvin Baltazar, PBS.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Director, magandang tanghali po. Medyo lilihis lang po ako nang kaunti. Because just recently, may mga napabalita na di-umano, may napili na pong Agriculture Secretary. Napag-usapan po ba ito kanina and gaano po katotoo ito?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Wala po akong makukumpirma sa inyo. Hopefully not dahil ang ating Presidente, I think he is doing a great job in the helm of the department. Again, sinabi ko nga po sa inyo kanina, iyong first part of the year, nakapag-export tayo; hanggang ngayon, nakakapag-export na tayo ng tatlong major commodities natin. And iyong mga problema natin sa Department of Agriculture ay talaga pong hinaharap ng ating Pangulo. I think that's his difference from the predecessors.

And him being in the helm, nandiyan lahat eh, nai-integrate lahat ng efforts ng government. Hindi na po namin puwedeng sabihin sa DA na, "Ay, trabaho ito ni ganito, ni ganiyan." Ganito po, kami pong lahat ay nagko-collaborate ngayon at even, ito nga, kinakausap namin kayo dito sa media para tayo ay magtulung-tulong dahil, again, iyong food security, hindi iyan trabaho ng isang ahensiya lang but all of us. But with the President there, and with the support we're receiving from the Department of Agriculture, I think he is doing a great job.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Chona Yu again, Radyo Inquirer.

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: Sir, what will happen to the financial aid distribution if and when the President decides to lift the EO?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: What do you mean?

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: Tuloy ba pa rin ba iyong ayuda sa retailers?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Iyon namang ating mga ayuda na ibinibigay, hindi naman iyan nalalayo sa ginagawa na ng ating mga ahensiya 'no, iyong sustainable livelihood program. Of course, iyong sa amin sa department naman, for the interventions, tuluy-tuloy naman iyon eh. It is just … nag-ramp up lang siya dahil dito sa ating kailangang assistance ng ating mga stakeholders.

So, again, ang ating Pangulo, laging support for local production, support for our consumers. So I think, tuluy-tuloy lang ang magiging assistance natin.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Jean Mangaluz, Inquirer.net.

JEAN MANGALUZ/INQUIRER.NET: Sir, medyo segue po from rice. May internal probe po ba ngayon iyong DA-BPI regarding the onion importation permits na naisyu noong January and August na hiningian ng show cause order iyong agency ninyo from those?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Yeah, we submitted that already to Congress, to the committee. And again, ang aming importation, it's based on, again, sa scientific basis and on our supply and demand. So hindi naman kami basta-basta nagbubukas ng importation. We always consider what the data shows and what the market also shows us. Kailangan kasi laging balanse eh – laging iyong for the famers, our support and then; for our consumers naman, iyong the right prices. So, iyon iyong ating—

JEAN MANGALUZ/INQUIRER.NET: Pero, sir, may investigation po ba sa loob ng agency kasabay ng sa House?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Well, oo, lagi naman kaming ganoon, again, complete staff work lagi. Sa amin naman, wala naman kaming itatago 'no. We always report this to the Office of the Secretary. And we always coordinate with the AMAS (Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service) and other agencies. Kasi, again, hindi lang naman kami ang ano dito; mayroon pa tayong

mga production units sa regions, mayroon tayong pricing sa AMAS. So, yeah, we always talk about it.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Nestor Corrales, Philippine Daily Inquirer.

NESTOR CORRALES/PDI: Sir, Secretary Balisacan earlier said that the NEDA is set to recommend alternative measures to the rice price ceiling. Was this discussed earlier? And on the part of the Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Plant Industry, what other options are you recommending or are you looking at in the event that this price cap is lifted so as to temper the rice prices in the market?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Kasi mayroon namang rice program, there's a rice program that's handling, well, the production dito sa atin, sa department. And we are always open to whatever recommendations from our economic managers. Of course, we have to balance that with the actual things happening on the ground. We don't just report things to you na hindi namin nabi-verify.

So, with regard to your question about the alternatives, of course, increase production ang atin laging hinahanap diyan. Of course, aside from the physical expansion of areas for rice production, we're using drought-tolerant varieties and other varieties na mas malaki ang puwedeng maging production. Of course, we are establishing rice processing and post-harvest facilities, of course, ito ay natulungan dahil iyon nga, nadagdagan kami ng budget ng ating Pangulo and then, of course, our legislators. And along the value-chain, iyan iyong kailangan nating ayusin din iyan.

Sabi nga ni President, nandiyan na iyong elements, we just need to integrate it. We cluster farms. We provide credit to those who are in need. And I think, kapag iyon ay na-integrate natin into one system or a framework, that can be adopted not only for the rice farmers but also other commodities baka pupuwedeng iyong framework na iyon ay magamit din natin.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Alvin Baltazar.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Director Glenn, kanina nabanggit ninyo po iyong tungkol doon sa exportation. Kumusta po iyong performance natin as far as exportation is concerned doon sa mga high-value crops like mangoes, avocados? And we heard, mukhang ang South Korea ay nag-i-export na rin sa atin eh.

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Yeah, of course, iyon nga, nabanggit ko, I think this is the first time, wala pang isang taon, the President opened three market access opportunities for our products 'no. Iyong durian, almost half a billion or more na ang ating kinikita, pesos, for this endeavor, for one market only. Iyong ating mangga, after 10 years na napahinga for exports sa Australia, we opened that up. Iyong ating avocado, just last weekend, iyon nga, nakapag-export tayo; we opened up market. That was negotiated for 14 years, and it took really, the President, the push of the President, of course, the efforts natin sa department.

So our export industries are still alive, of course, ang ating superstars diyan, iyon nga, iyong bananas natin, one billion dollars a year; pineapples; coconuts. So we are continuing to support that. Hopefully, ito, budget season, sana ano ho iyan eh, madagdagan pa kami doon sa aming programa, iyong sa high-value crops natin para really, we can support kung anuman iyong mga nao-open nating markets overseas.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Thank you very much—pahabol pa? One more, okay. Jean, go ahead – Jean Mangaluz.

JEAN MANGALUZ/INQUIRER.NET: Hi, sir. The Pulse Asia Survey says that the rice price cap was implemented around the time of their approval rating survey. Do you think it affected the results?

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: I cannot comment on that one. Ang akin lang, ang masasabi ko diyan, ang ating Pangulo is really committed to serving all. I think he is the President for all – not only for the farmers, but also for the consumers.

As for the satisfaction ratings, I think makikita naman natin at nararamdaman iyan ng mga tao. I think he is the first President who's really going to the grounds, meeting with the people. Even sa distribution nga ng bigas, nandoon siya eh. So I think nararamdaman ng tao ang ating Presidente and ang kaniyang plano at programa. So hopefully, iyon nga, ma-reciprocate natin iyon. Even for the media, hopefully you can help us, you know, promote the good news, not only iyong mga problema natin 'no but also itong ating mga nagagawa para sa ating mga kababayan.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: And to further drive your message, Director, the favorable result of the program has been reported today by the DA. So, it's looking very good. So, thank you very much.

DA-BPI DIR. PANGANIBAN: Salamat po.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Malacañang Press Corps. Have a good afternoon.

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