

DSWD chief assures small rice retailers of financial aid amid price ceilings

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is ready to provide cash assistance to small rice retailers who may incur losses due to the Malacanang-mandated price ceiling on rice which became effective Tuesday (September 5).

DSWD Secretary Gatchalian said he was directed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to use the department's Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) to help small rice retailers recover their would-be losses from the temporary price cap.

"Napag-usapan namin ng Pangulo kaninang umaga (Monday, Sept. 4) na gagamitin ulit 'yung Sustainable Livelihood Program ng DSWD para naman matulungan 'yung ating mga maliliit na retailers na naapektuhan nitong pansamantalang price cap sa bigas," Secretary Gatchalian told reporters on Monday.

(We discussed with the President that we will use the DSWD's Sustainable Livelihood Program once again so that our small retailers affected by this temporary price cap on rice can be assisted.)

Under Executive Order No. 39 signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on August 31, the mandated price ceiling for regular milled rice is P41 per kilo while the mandated price cap for well-milled rice is P45 per kilo.

The DSWD chief said the SLP currently has a Php5.5 billion budget which can be immediately used to help cushion the impact of the price cap on rice particularly among small rice retailers who have very small inventory.

The SLP is a capacity-building program that provides start-up

capital for those who wish to start a small business; capital build for cases similar to the effects of the E0 39 to small businesses; and employment grants.

The DSWD chief said the Department is just waiting for the list of qualified small rice retailers which will be provided by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“Hopefully by next week ay makapagbigay na tayo ng payout under the sustainable livelihood grant para sa ating mga apektadong rice retailers,” Secretary Gatchalian said in a radio interview Tuesday.

(Hopefully, by next week, we can conduct a payout for the sustainable livelihood grant to our affected rice retailers.)

To date, the DTI and the DA are currently coming up with a list of the affected rice traders and rice retailers who will receive the government’s assistance.

Secretary Gatchalian pointed out that the DSWD is ready to begin the nationwide payout to the qualified recipients of the financial aid amounting to a maximum of Php15,000.

“Bagamat kino-compute pa ng DTI at DA ang dapat matanggap ng bawat tatamaang rice retailers, ang maximum na ibinibigay ng programang SLP ay P15,000. One time big time,” the DSWD chief pointed out.

Also on Monday, the DSWD chief had a meeting with Speaker Martin Romualdez who vowed to raise Php 2 billion to help augment the SLP budget for the benefit of more small rice traders and retailers.

“I told Speaker Romualdez that the SLP’s Php 5.5 billion is enough to help the distressed small rice retailers. But I also welcome the additional budget as this would mean more Filipinos will be given assistance under the SLP,” Secretary

Gatchalian said. #