

DSWD chief, DTI execs to finalize details of SLP cash aid for small rice retailers

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rex Gatchalian met with the executives of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) at the DSWD Central Office on Wednesday (September 6) to discuss the finer points in the implementation of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) for small rice retailers affected by the imposition of price controls.

Secretary Gatchalian and DTI representatives led by Undersecretary Carol P. Sanchez discussed how the DSWD's SLP cash payout will be smoothly implemented in line with Executive Order No. 39 that set a price cap on regular milled and well milled rice effective September 5.

"We are going to use the program [SLP] to make sure that our retailers [of rice] are taken care of during this unforeseen time," Secretary Gatchalian said during the meeting, which was also attended by the DSWD Operations Group led by Undersecretary Josefina Romualdez.

Secretary Gatchalian also reminded the DTI to coordinate with the rice retailers' group following the instruction of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to ensure that all stakeholders are on board during the implementation of the cash aid from DSWD.

"In this case, the DTI was tasked to work with the rice retailers association to identify who the small rice retailers are. They'll pass on the list to us and on the ground we do payouts," the DSWD chief pointed out.

The meeting, according to Assistant Secretary for Strategic Communications Romel Lopez, was held to expedite the completion of the list of qualified small rice retailers across the country who are the target beneficiaries of the cash aid with a maximum of Php 15,000 per qualified retailer under the SLP.

"The completion of the master list of the intended beneficiaries is the meeting's top agenda in order to carry

out the actual payouts as soon as possible," Asst. Secretary Lopez, who is also DSWD spokesperson, said.

Asst. Secretary Lopez emphasized that while the DSWD is mandated to facilitate the distribution of cash aid, the DTI will be in charge of the grievance and complaints component of the program.

"The DTI will use their current grievance mechanism to address complaints from the ground," the DSWD spokesperson said.

Quezon Province 1st District Rep. Mark Enverga, Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture, also attended the meeting to discuss the House initiative to raise Php 2 billion from unprogrammed funds to be used as augmentation for the DSWD's SLP.

Also present in the meeting were DSWD Undersecretary for General Administration and Support Services Group (GASSG) Atty. Justine Orden; Asst. Secretary for Specialized Programs Florentino Loyola Jr., Director Rhodora Alday of the Policy Development and Planning Bureau (PTPB), and SLP-National Program Management Office Director Edmund Monteverde.

For the DTI, present during the meeting were Asst. Secretary Agaton Uvero and Director Phillip Sawal.

"The collaborative effort between DSWD and DTI underscores the government's commitment to provide immediate support to rice retailers affected by the rice ceiling policy," Asst. Sec. Lopez said.#