



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Secretary
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D.A. HAS MORE MEASURES FOR ONDOY VICTIMS

The Department of Agriculture is carrying out more measures to protect consumers from possible food supply shortfalls in the aftermath of typhoon “Ondoy,” which had battered farms all over Luzon .

Agriculture Undersecretary and Chief of Staff Bernie Fondevilla said the DA will undertake market intervention programs through the National Food Authority, Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC) and Food Terminal Inc (FTI), involving five commodities: pork, chicken, vegetables, tilapia and bangus.

“Moreover, the DA has committed patrol boats of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to the Coast Guard and the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) as part of the Department’s contributions to the ongoing massive government efforts to help Ondoy victims in Metro Manila and other parts of Luzon,” Fondevilla said.

As part of the DA’s relief package for “Ondoy” victims, the DA is distributing short-gestation seeds to thousands of palay farmers affected by the typhoon.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said earlier this week that the farmer-beneficiaries will be using the direct or broadcast method of planting these seeds and are expected to harvest their crops by December.

At the same time, Yap directed the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) to work double time in settling claims made by farmers, which could reach a total of P95 million in four regions in Luzon devastated by “Ondoy.”

The affected farmers in the Central Luzon alone number about 20,000, Yap said, and “the DA is preparing short-gestation seeds for distribution, so farmers can immediately plant and still harvest the palay by December 31, 2009, using direct or broadcasting seeding method.”

Yap said that projected crop damages could fall below the preliminary estimates because a portion of the affected crops are ready for harvest and could still be recovered through proper drying with the help of the government’s postharvest facilities in the region.

In a report to Yap, PCIC executive director Jovy Bernabe said projected crop insurance indemnities due to typhoon “Ondoy” could reach P95 million, broken down as follows: Ilocos Region, P6 million; Cagayan Valley, P5 million; Central Luzon, P40 million; Calabarzon and Mimaropa, P28 million; and Bicol, P16 million.

Bernabe said upon Yap’s instructions, the PCIC is “going full blast in processing and adjusting claims so that we can settle them as soon as possible and will coordinate with the Office of the Secretary for the giving of checks.”

The initial DA initiatives for “Ondoy” victims include a P100-million emergency loan (in kind) for market vendors in still-flooded markets in Metro Manila.

Yap had also said the NFA is opening three relief centers that will accept donations from the public and possibly prepare ready-to-eat meals for people who have taken shelter in government evacuation centers.

There are also enough rice and sugar supply, he said, with stocks of the staple food totaling some 2.3 million MT, or equivalent to the national requirement for 67 days.

He said that of this rice inventory, commercial stocks total 372,000 MT, or enough for 11 days; households have another 728,000 MT good for 21 days; and the NFA has 1.2 million MT more that will last for 35 days.

Yap has set aside a P100-million emergency fund to help market vendors in still-inundated public markets in Metro Manila start selling goods again once the floods subside and these major retail outlets are ready for reopening.

Once these markets reopen, the DA will loan out commodities such as pork, chicken and fish to the vendors to help them recover and at the same time restore the easy access to these goods of consumers in the flood-hit communities.

In cooperation with the NDCC and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the NFA is turning four of its major warehouses in the metropolis as temporary relief centers that will accept donations—in cash or in kind—for the “Ondoy” victims, preferably essentials like water, rice, canned goods, ready-to-cook meal products, blankets and old clothes.

These NFA relief centers are the FTI in Taguig City , the ACA Compound in Valenzuela City , Kingswood, and the food agency’s warehouse along Visayas Ave. in Quezon City that is near the DA and NFA central offices. **### (DA Press Office)**