Oil price shock pushes Philippine food inflation to 6.1%, DA responds with emergency measures

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The Philippine government is intensifying targeted interventions to contain rising food prices following a global oil price shock triggered by tensions in the Middle East, which has driven up logistics and transport costs and placed additional pressure on domestic food inflation.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said the Department of Agriculture (DA) is working closely with other agencies to cushion the impact on consumers while ensuring stable food supply across markets nationwide.

Latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that food inflation rose sharply to 6.1 percent in April, more than double the 2.7 percent recorded in March. The increase has disproportionately affected low-income households, with inflation among the bottom 30 percent of income earners accelerating to 8.5 percent from just 0.1 percent a year earlier.

Rice remained the primary driver of price increases, with inflation climbing to 13.7 percent from 3.5 percent in the previous month. Higher prices were also recorded for corn, fish, and vegetables, with cereals accounting for more than half of the overall rise in food inflation, underscoring the sensitivity of staple goods to supply chain disruptions.

Secretary Tiu Laurel noted that while supply levels remain stable, elevated fuel prices have significantly increased transport and distribution costs.

â??Clearly, this price shock is a knee-jerk reaction to the surge in petroleum prices. We have ample supply of rice, poultry, meat, vegetables, and other commodities, but logistics and transport costs have pushed retail prices upward,â? he said.

To address these pressures, the DA has implemented a series of immediate measures, including the reactivation of food lanes to expedite agricultural transport, removal of toll fees for agri-trucks, and reduced port charges to lower distribution costs. Fuel subsidies have likewise been provided to key transport stakeholders in the food supply chain.

The departmentâ??s Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division has also intensified market monitoring to ensure fair pricing at the retail level and to deter excessive markups.

In parallel, the government is accelerating food security programs such as the *Benteng Bigas, Meron Na!* initiative, which provides rice at â?±20 per kilo to vulnerable sectors, alongside the broader *Rice-for-All* program aimed at maintaining affordability for the general public.

Authorities are likewise prepared to impose a temporary price cap of â?±50 per kilo on imported rice should upward price pressures persist.

The DA said these coordinated interventions are part of a broader government strategy to mitigate second-round inflation effects, stabilize food prices, and ensure efficient movement of goods from farms to markets amid global energy market volatility.