Philippines to distribute rice instead of cash grants to poor Pinoys

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The Philippines Department of Agriculture is coordinating with the Department of Social Welfare and Development to directly supply poor Filipinos with rice instead of giving them cash grants to ease market pressure on the national staple.

Agriculture Undersecretary for Operations Roger Navarro told in a news briefing in MalacaÃ±ang that the DA and the DSWD are working out the details of possibly converting some of the cash grants to 4Ps beneficiaries into rice so that poor Filipinos donâ??t have to buy higher-priced rice in the market.

Navarro said that by doing so, the government could ease demand for rice in the market by 20 per cent, lowering inflationary pressure.

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Food, beverage and tobacco account for 74.5 per cent of the basket of goods consumed by the bottom 30 per cent of Filipino householdsâ??the poorest of the poor who are the main beneficiaries of the governmentâ??s 4Ps program. Of that consumer basket, rice accounts for 17.87 percentage pointsâ?? double the weight in the basket of goods for all income households at 8.87 per cent.

Usec. Navarro said the Philippines has ample rice supply due to a bumper harvest last year and additional importations that arrived since January. But itâ??s difficult to reduce prices since the cost of the grain even in rice exporting countries like Vietnam and Thailandâ?? the Philippinesâ?? main rice suppliersâ?? are also elevated at P48 and P52 per kilo, respectively, he explained.

â??The challenge is not the price of rice but more of stabilising supply,â?• Usec. Navarro said. He noted that the Philippines consumes around 37,000 metric tons of rice per day and needs to import around 300,000 tonnes every month to supplement local production. As of Wednesday, Navarro has imported a total of 590,000 metric tonnes that will complement local output when harvest season starts in the coming months.