

# Self-sufficiency in fishery products

The Philippines has a total marine area of about 1.7 million square kilometers and yet, the supply of fish is insufficient to meet the demand for domestic consumption. The result is a continuous importation of fish products. In 1971 alone, the country imported 60 million kilograms of canned fish costing P143 million.

Confronted by this problem, President Marcos issued Decree No. 43, providing steps for the accelerated development of the country's fishery industry. Salient points of the decree, as explained by Assistant Secretary Rolando S. Estrella of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, include bigger capitalization for the industry through the opening of more credit facilities, manpower training, and intensification of research.

All government-lending institutions, under the presidential decree, are directed to give priority to fishing projects in the granting of loans. The Central Bank has been called upon to facilitate the granting of concessionary and preferential rediscount treatment rates of interest to loans involving the

industry.

On the international level, financing of fishing projects got a shot in the arm with the granting of a \$50 million loan to the Development Bank of the Philippines, which will allocate the amount to small and medium-scale ventures in the fishing industry. Also, an \$18.5 million project financed by the World Bank is being worked out and expected to be implemented late this year.

Over a four-year investment period, the government will provide credit facilities to finance the construction of fishing vessels, purchase of fish carriers and equipment, the establishment of ice-making facilities and slipways and the improvement of fish ponds all over the country.

To ensure the training of manpower for the industry, the Bureau of Fisheries was given P5 million for educational and training purposes. The curriculum of fishery schools will be revised to require the students to undergo on-the-job-training at sea or at the fishponds for one semester.

The Philippine Committee on Agri-

cultural Research has been formed to centralize and coordinate research in the agricultural field, including fishing. In the past, research in fisheries has been fragmented and disorganized.

Business prospects in the industry are also provided for in the decree. For a period of from 15 to 25 years, a corporation is allowed to lease 500 hectares of land for fishpond development, and 1,000 hectares if it engages in canning, whether for domestic consumption or for export. Another incentive is the lifting of the franchise requirement for the establishment of ice and cold storage facilities.

According to Director Felix R. Gonzales of the Bureau of Fisheries, the administration has embarked on a four-year expanded fish production program from 1971 to 1974. The overall objective of this program is to so accelerate the pace of fish production as to meet the domestic demand for fish and to develop an export market for the country's fishery products.

For this year, the target goal for fish products is 83,000 metric tons. Of this amount, 20 percent is expected to come from freshwater fisheries, 28 percent from brackish-water fisheries, 15 percent from municipal fishing and the remaining 37 percent from the catch of commercial fishing vessels.

The Bureau of Fisheries has lined up several projects to bolster the fish production program. These are the Eucheuma (seaweed) culture, the fish-

pen culture, the fish-estate concept, the settling of "Otoshi-ami" nets in strategic areas, the incorporation of fishery cooperatives and the development of oyster culture in western Pangasinan.

Eucheuma is commercially important and is in high demand among industrial users. From this algae is taken or extracted "carrageenin," a valuable substance used in producing ice cream, peanut butter, paints, cosmetics, textiles, and rubber products.

The fish-pen culture is an intensive method of catching fish in lakes and inland seas. This involves the setting up of an enclosure made of bamboo matting or nylon nets. One hectare of this enclosure can produce as much as 60,000 bangus.

The fish-net concept calls for the development of modern fishing villages in strategic places in the country. Basic infrastructures such as water and flood control systems, basic transportation system, housing units, schools and health centers will be set up in the proposed project areas. Within these areas will be constructed economic-sized fishponds. Fishermen will be encouraged to form cooperatives to assure them of financing and marketing facilities.

"Otoshi-ami" nets are large trawls weighing 20 tons each and are proposed to replace the "baklad" or fish corrals. These nets could withstand typhoons as they are set in deeper waters where big fish like tuna are available. LUIS F. VENERACION

# Happy days for the consumer

To the layman, there can be no better indicator of good or bad times than the prices of goods he usually buys at the corner store or the nearest market. These days, he has reasons to be happy. He no longer has to dig deep into his pocket to get the things he and his family need.

A substantial drop in price levels has been noted in Greater Manila, which in the past suffered acute shortages artificially caused by hoarders, profiteers and other price manipulators.

The reductions have been such that, in many cases, prices are actually lower than the ceilings set by the Price Control Council, according to a survey conducted by the Bureau of Commerce.

For instance, certain rice varieties like intan, C-4 and BE-3 are available

for as low as P2.60, lower than the PCC ceiling of P3. A kilo of sugar sells at five centavos below the maximum allowable price. The same is true for meat and fish. A kilo of first-class beef can be had at P8.50 as against the ceiling of P9 and fresh bangus at P4.50 as against P5. A pint of edible oil costs five centavos less than that allowed by PCC.

Non-perishable goods like construction materials are also cheaper these days. One example is a 70-pound roll of barbed wire, which sells at P55. The PCC ceiling is P62.

The arrest of the rise of prices is dramatically reflected in the consumer price index in Manila, which, according to Central Bank figures, soared by 14.6 percent in 1971 and dropped to 10.2 percent by December, 1972.

The sharp decline was particularly noted during the three months following the proclamation of martial law. In October, prices dipped by 3 percent (over September); in November, 1.3 percent; and in December, 8 percent.

For the most essential commodity — food items — the decrease in price is particularly heartening. The latest count in January showed a 10.8 percent decrease since September.

Stabilization of prices was effected not just in Greater Manila, but in all other parts of the country, according to the Department of Trade and Tourism.

Several factors brought about by martial law finally pulled down the prices to more reasonable levels.

One was the strict implementation of the Price Control Law (Republic Act No. 6361), which makes it a "national policy to prevent monopoly, hoarding, injurious speculation, manipulation and profiteering with respect to the supply, distribution and marketing of prime commodities." Violators were dealt with swiftly and accordingly. Unscrupulous traders were detained and their establishments ordered closed. Hoarded stocks, which accounted for the strange shortages before, eventually surfaced and prices began their descent.

Improved peace and order conditions made for easier distribution of goods, further cutting down costs.

The Green Revolution project of the First Lady, Mrs. Imelda R. Marcos, also produced dramatic results in the cities and the countryside, bringing about savings in the budgets of millions of housewives. In Greater Manila, there were instances when truckloads of greens from the provinces had to be returned because of a glut in the market.

Another significant factor was the government move to control the profits of public-utility companies by lowering or stabilizing the rates of electricity, telephone, and transportation. This substantially reduced production costs and, ultimately, the prices of consumer goods.

In a move to strengthen price stabilization efforts, the agencies involved in the implementation of the Price Control Law forged a "memorandum of understanding" aimed at integrating their activities. The memorandum was reached between the national Price Control Council, the military represented by the United Intelligence Group (UIG) and the Metrocom, and the PCC chapters in Greater Manila.

The national PCC exercises general supervision and control in the enforcement of laws and regulations on price control.

The price body also maintains stand-by enforcement teams to attend to complaints from the public and initiate prosecution of violators.

Operatives from the UIG are working closely with the PCC stand-by teams and Metrocom troopers with the local PCC enforcement teams.

The PCC chapters are to recommend the deputation of competent officials and citizens as price control officers who will compose the enforcement teams in their respective areas.

Each chapter maintains an office to receive complaints, effect immediate appropriate action and follow up such action as the need arises.

Each also submits to the PCC periodic reports of its activities and accomplishments, including the number of complaints received, cases filed with the fiscal's office and their status.



A metropolitan area grocery store: controlled, low prices.