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If weather conditions prove favorable, we believe that next year's crop will be one of the largest since the war and that foreign importers will feel encouraged to place substantial orders if prices are not as high as during the last two years. All of this is important to our local tobacco as an important dollar-earning crop.

*Virginia Tobacco.* Some of the Virginia crop will be ready as early as January, according to data gathered by an important foreign firm which is deeply interested in the success of locally-grown Virginia. An early crop of between 55,000,000 and 56,000,000 quintals is expected from the Pangasinan, Ilocos, and La Union regions, and a later crop will increase this figure considerably. Some farmers have found difficulty in finding good Virginia seeds, but gradually this problem is being overcome. It is still too early to predict the future of locally grown Virginia, but this year's results will be very important in determining the future of a type of tobacco which until a few years ago was comparatively unknown here as a major crop.

*Cigar and Cigarette Factories.* The present un-stabilized situation of the Chinese retailers, due to certain new laws, has reduced the output of cigarettes of all brands, in spite of the fact that October is generally one of the best months of the year for the cigarette trade. Sales of cigars are on the increase, especially the expensive types, with the in-coming Christmas season.

## Rice

By CHARLES O. HOUSTON, JR.

*Director, Graduate School, University of Manila*

ON the 1st of October, the rice committee appointed by President Magsaysay to establish a floor price for palay, issued its report in which it recommended that ₱8.50, per cavan (44 kilos), was an equitable price for the staple to be paid to producers. Macan ordinario's ceiling, it recommended, should be set at 85¢ per ganta (with a possible increase to 90¢ upon recommendation of the PRISCO within 9 months). Effective January, 1955, price ceilings are to be set as follows: wholesale, macan, second class: 80¢; retail, macan, second class: 85¢; wholesale, macan, first class: 85¢; retail, macan, first class: 90¢; wholesale, elonelon or raminad: 95¢; retail, elonelon or raminad: ₱1.00; wholesale, wagwag, ₱1.05; retail, wagwag: ₱1.10. All these prices are considerably below levels which have prevailed during the past four months.

In addition, the committee defined the functions of various governmental agencies connected in one way or another with the rice industry as follows: (1) The ACCFA is to serve as a purchasing agent for the NARIC; (2) NARIC will provide warehouse facilities for rice storage for those farmers' cooperative marketing associations affiliated with the ACCFA, until such a time as the latter agency is able to establish its own warehouses, and will also purchase palay at the newly-established floor prices from these cooperatives; (3) PRISCO will act as the distributing agency for the NARIC in all provinces; (4) Municipal treasurers (and, or their deputies) will act as agents for the NARIC, and will act as disbursing agents in localities in which the NARIC cannot operate, provided there are bonded warehouses there; (5) the Constabulary will act in cooperation with other authorities in enforcing ceiling prices and handle the security of warehouses.<sup>1</sup>

It is immediately apparent, I believe, that this suggested program is little improvement over former similar "solutions". The NARIC will still continue to exist as a heavy drain on national wealth, confusion will soon be-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Manila Bulletin*, Vol. 160, No. 1 (October 1, 1954), p. 7-p.

come apparent over definition of "agents", as between the ACCFA and the municipal treasurers, PRISCO will assume the functions of the NARIC in distributing rice, the success of the program in areas in which the NARIC does not operate will depend upon the existence of bonded warehouses (highly unlikely under the situation at present), the Constabulary will act as enforcer (the previous function of PRISCO) and security agent, prices are set at levels which will be difficult to maintain in the face of any contingent shortage, and the basic price for palay is set too low to be of any benefit to small producers. In other words, the situation will remain unchanged, and confusion can be expected to increase.

The NARIC figured in the news again, with unnamed former officials accused (October 1), its "streamlining" ordered again by the President (October 5), its abolition recommended by the DeLeon Committee (October 6), which also suggested the creation of a "Cereal Stabilization Corporation", "with an entirely new personnel", both recommendations being approved by the President the following day (October 7), who also indicated he would ask Secretary Tuason to take steps leading to the prosecution of individuals involved in NARIC's anomalies, army personnel were assigned to the NARIC to study its operation, Government sources indicated that definite action would be taken toward the creation of this new stabilization corporation which would embody, an unnamed source said, "a completely new statistical system which will enable us to gauge more accurately... actual rice needs and production capacity..."

However, the NARIC continued to operate throughout the month, with characteristic inefficiency, and amid charges of collusion in foreign rice purchases, poor stocks, cornering of NARIC rice by retailers, crooked weights and measures used by "alien middlemen" to cheat the public, price-setting by the same, and the usual charges aired before a weary public for many years, none of them publicly substantiated by what any court would admit as reputable evidence, and all designed apparently to draw attention away from embarrassing corners.

Public attention was drawn, at the end of the month, to a proposed program to import American rice as part of President Eisenhower's program to export America's surplus stocks to countries in short food supply at very low prices (U.S. Public Law 480). Exact details on how to handle the program had not been worked out at the end of the month, although the Government expressed definite interest in the plan, and some again believed that a "solution" to the rice problem had been found.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Nov. 7 (Oct. 8, 1953), pp. 1, 11.

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Readers of this column may remember two recommendations made in our July issue (pp. 278-279): the establishment of regional distributing centers and the creation of pricing standards for various regions within the Philippines. This column is happy to note that at least one of these—the latter—has been adopted by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, which released, on October 28, pricing standards for some 80 municipalities, for the purpose of palay purchases. The lowest was ₱7.00 and the highest ₱8.15, a cavan, with a rather complicated, and even unfair, system for pricing for those municipalities not included on this basic list. (For the list, see Manila press for October 28, 1954; in the *Daily Mirror*, page 11). At least it is a start in the right direction, but small producers are still at a disadvantage under the scale.

Most prices during the month of October remained relatively stable. In general, producers suffered a lowering of prices for their palay, and, although there was a subsequent drop in prices to consumers, it was still not equitable with the loss suffered by the former. The appearance of the new crop from Mindanao and the Bicol, and the imminent release of Pakistan stocks brought about a gradual check to the increases of previous months. For the four weeks (September 27-October 23), in the price of macan, first class, there was a net drop of 50¢ in market quotations, the level for the first week being ₱4.20 over the same week in 1953, and the level for the last week was ₱2.50 over the same week in 1953, representing a net gain of ₱1.70. Prices, same variety, a ganta, dropped at a different level; for the first week, price was 15¢ over same week for 1953, and 79¢ over 1941, and for the last week, 12¢ over same week for 1953 and 76¢ over 1941. Prices paid for palay ordinario (a cavan) represented a loss to producers: for the first week they stood at ₱2.20 over the same week in 1953 and for the last week, ₱1.25 over the same week for 1953, representing a net loss to producers of 95¢. Prices, per ganta, for palay, for the first week were only 5¢ over same period, 1953, and only 41¢ over 1941, and for the last week, no change was registered.

It is quite obvious that small producers receive less proportionately than large producers and distributors, and unless the Government is able to solve this problem of a wide spread between prices to producers and prices charged consumers, the rice problem will increase in severity. The "aliens", again, are charged with culpability in this respect. However, the true picture is enormously difficult to clarify. On Tuesday evening, October 12, at the Manila Overseas Press Club, the Town Hall Philippines brought together groups and individuals interested in the problem to listen

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to Mr. Tang Tack, Secretary General of the Federation of Chinese Chambers of Commerce in the Philippines, who spoke on "Rice, and the Chinese." In the course of his remarks, Mr. Tang mentioned that in 1954 there were 141 licensed warehouses with a storage capacity of 758,000 sacks, of which 90 were owned by Filipinos and 51 by Chinese (the former's capacity being 400,000 sacks, the latter's, 350,000). He mentioned further a report of the Central Bank which indicated that the production of palay for the year 1953 had been 11% over 1952 and 29% over 1937, and he asked, "Why the rice crisis?" To the Chinese, he said, the problem is one of distribution, not production, to which many observers would agree. No one at the meeting, including representatives of the National Rice Producers Association, the Filipino Emancipation Movement, the Philippine Economic Independence Movement, the Philippine Nationalization Movement, and others, challenged the figures of Mr. Tang, although Director Chioco of the NARIC indicated his scepticism toward all statistics, public and private, with the exception, of course, of those of the NARIC. It is to be regretted, however, that Mr. Tang was not familiar with the Chinese participation in the rice industry, and was unable to answer any of the three following questions: How many Chinese rice dealers are there in the Philippines? How much rice is handled each month in Manila by Chinese dealers (wholesale and retail)? What is the actual extent of the Chinese participation in the rice market in Manila? Had these questions been answered, and were they answered at any time, a great deal of the fog clouding this issue might be cleared away.

AVERAGE prices for the month were:

Macan, 1st class: ₱22.75. Macan, 2nd class: absent from market. Macan, new crop (Cotabato): ₱22.50. Thai, 1st class: ₱20.00. Thai, 2nd class, absent from market. Wagwag, 1st class: ₱26.50. Wagwag, 2nd class: ₱25.25. Wagwag, Cotabato: ₱23.90. Wagwag, Davao: ₱22.65. Elonelon, new, Cotabato: ₱22.90. Palay, ordinario: ₱10.62 (44 kilos—all the rest, 56 kilos).

### Imports

By S. SCHMELKES  
Mercantile, Inc.

ALL figures are in kilos with the exception of those for foodstuffs which are given in package units.

Commodities:	September	
	1954	1953
Automotive (Total).....	2,389,649	1,436,807
Automobiles.....	198,540	268,968
Auto Parts.....	102,234	377,654
Bicycles.....	243	2,836
Trucks.....	60,957	128,872
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