Food logistics action plan may require legislation, EO

A THREE-YEAR food logistics action plan is making its way up the approval chain and could require legislation or an executive order (EO) to implement, the Department of Trade and Industry said.

Trade Undersecretary Ruth B. Castelo said during Post-State of the Nation Address discussions in Pasay City late Tuesday that the plan will reduce logistics costs and improve the flow of agricultural products to their markets.

The action plan "has been presented to the economic development group. We hope (to gain approval) because we will need legislation or an executive order to do this," Ms. Castelo said.

Ms. Castelo said the action plan's six points include the upgrading of food terminals and the establishment of additional food hubs.

She also said "agro-industrial business corridors" could be organized around Baguio, Bataan, Clark, Cavite, and other areas, Ms. Castelo said.

The plan also features a proposal to impose moratoriums on pass-through fees and additional port fees and charges, as well as legislation to regulate high international shipping charges.

The strategy also calls for increasing investment in logistics infrastructure, including transportation and storage.

"We want a cold chain integrated distribution system. That is the full implementation of the system that is provided by the Philippine Cold Chain industry roadmap," Ms. Castelo said.

Ms. Castelo said the plan also calls for addressing gaps in the supply chain, including post-harvest management, market linkages, market information, and access to financing.

She added that another component of the plan is to step up enforcement against hoarding, smuggling, overstaying of food imports at the ports, and more comprehensive monitoring of warehouses or cold storage facilities. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**


BW FILE PHOTO

PPA approves rate adjustments at North Harbor, Dumaguete port

THE Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) approved a 9% increase in rates of 13 services at the Manila North Harbor.

In a memorandum circular, PPA said that the adjustment covers services such as the hustling of containers, lift-on or lift-off, the administrative fee, non-standard lifts, keeping cranes on standby, extra labor services, equipment rental, restowing of containers, weighing fees, lifting and closing of hatch covers, lids and supporting beams, gearbox handling, dangerous cargo area fee, and collection of garbage.

Hustling is the transport of unloaded cargo from quayside to the yard or container freight station.

The circular will take effect 30 days after publication in a newspaper of general circulation, or by Aug. 18.

The PPA also approved a 10% rate adjustment in cranage rates, which General Manager Jay Daniel R. Santiago said will take effect on Aug. 17.

Rate adjustments at the Dumaguete Port call for a 10% increase in cargo handling rates for domestic cargo, to take effect on Aug. 17.

The PPA also approved cargo handling tariff adjustments for foreign non-containerized cargo at Dumaguete Port, which will also take effect by Aug. 17.

Under Memorandum Circular No. 005-2023, non-palletized arrastre cargo will be charged P108.45 per revenue ton, while stevedoring cargo will be charged P27.

Palletized arrastre cargo will be charged P84.50 per revenue ton, while palletized stevedoring cargo will be charged P19.10 per revenue ton.

Separately, the PPA also approved a P5,000 fine for the unauthorized entry of trucks at the Manila International Container Terminal (MICT), to take effect on Aug. 17.

"To promote efficient use of the roads and speed up entry into the terminal, the PPA Board of Directors approved the imposition of an Unauthorized Entry Fine in the amount of P5,000 for trucks entering the MICT without valid transactions," the PPA said.

The Port Management Office of NCR South is directed to immediately install warning signs and rename the access road.

The PPA added that the fine "shall be shouldered by the erring truck driver and the trucking company and shall not be passed on to the shipper or consumer." — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Approved building permits rebound in Q3 2022

APPROVED building permits rose 7.1% in the third quarter, when the economy opened up further as the pandemic receded, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

Construction starts, as measured by building permit approvals, rose to 40,384 in the three months to September, according to preliminary PSA data.

This was a turnaround from the revised 2% decline posted in the second quarter of 2022. In the third quarter of 2021, the growth rate was 8.7%.

The projects covered by the building permits were valued at P106.06 billion — up 5.8% — with a floor area of 8.62 million square meters (sq.m).

"The pickup in this sector is tied largely to the reopening of the economy post lockdowns," Nicholas Antonio T. Mapa, senior economist at ING Bank N.V. Manila, said in an e-mail.

Residential construction made up the bulk of approved building permits, growing 9.2% year on year to 29,208. These projects were valued at P48.09 billion with a combined floor area of 4.43 million sq.m.

Single-detached homes accounted for 24,725 permits, followed by apartments


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(4,052), duplexes and quadruplexes (385), other residential projects (37), and condominiums (9).

Non-residential permits, which accounted for 18% of the total, expanded 14.9% year on year to 7,287. The projects covered by these permits were valued at P49.21 billion, with a combined floor area of 4.06 million sq.m.

The leading non-residential categories were commercial (4,972 buildings), institutional (1,162) and industrial (565).

Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon) led the regions with 10,866 permits during the period, followed by the Central Visayas (4,777) and Central Luzon (4,704). Altogether, these regions accounted for 50.4% of all approved construction permits.

By value, projects in Calabarzon were worth P24.11 billion, followed by those in the National Capital Region (P16.92 billion) and Central Luzon (P16.55 billion). These three accounted for 54.3% of the value of construction projects in the third quarter.

Inflation exceeded 6% during the three months to September 2022, with the Russia-Ukraine war affecting oil prices, which cascaded onto the prices of other commodities.

Mr. Mapa said that increased demand also forced construction prices higher last year.

Though inflation eased from its 8.7% high in January to 5.4% in June, Mr. Mapa said the high interest rate environment can still affect construction in the coming months.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas paused the benchmark rate at 6.25% for two consecutive meetings, with plans to keep it unchanged until later in the year.

"Given the rapid rise in borrowing costs we can expect the momentum to slow or even reverse as surging interest rates cap appetite for such outlays," he said. — **Bernadette Therese M. Gadon**