

Prices of bread, noodles may go down-DTI

by MA. ELISA OSORIO
Philstar.com

Prices of flour-based products like bread, pasta and instant noodles may go down as the cost of flour continues to fall, according to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The price of *pan de sal*, a breakfast staple of Filipinos, may also return to P1 apiece after flour millers agreed to look into the possibility of reviving the Tinapay ng Bayan program.

Last December, the Philippine Association of Flour Millers (PAFMIL) proposed the Tinapay ng Bayan program to the government to help consumers cope with the economic crisis.

However, problems with the implementing government agency forced the flour millers to abandon their plan.

The DTI said PAFMIL is again open to the idea of selling the cheaper *pan de sal*.

Officials met with the millers to discuss ways to maintain a rea-

sonable price for flour.

As a result, the flour millers combined their technologies and resources to produce a special blend of flour that is lower in cost yet high yielding.

At the same time, the DTI questioned bakers on why the price of bread remains high in spite of the significant decrease in the price of flour.

Trade Undersecretary Zenaida Maglaya announced that a meeting with the baking industry has also been set to discuss appropriate reduction in the price of bread, especially loaf and *pan de sal*.

"We want to find out why the cost of bread remains high considering that flour, its main ingredient, has gone down significantly," she said.

"When the price of flour rose by P13 per bag in August of last year, bakers raised the retail price of loaf bread by P1 and *pan de sal* by P0.25 per pack of 10."

"Now that flour prices have dropped considerably from P970 last August to its current price of

P880 to P760, what is stopping bakers from implementing a 'big-time' reduction?"

Maglaya has promised that the government will continue to keep tabs on flour millers and bakers in ensuring that prices of their products remain stable and reasonable.

"We called them because we are in the process of reviewing flour prices in order to determine if further price reduction is in order given the softening in wheat contract price and implementation of zero tariff," she said.

The price of wheat as of January this year stood at \$310 to \$332 per metric ton, almost the same as the August 2007 level when the price of local flour was at a high of P640 and a low of P620, Maglaya said.

International price of hard spring wheat began to slide in April and mid-May of 2008 where it stood at \$471.70 per ton or about 42 percent below the peak recorded in late February of \$818.70 per ton.

Meanwhile, local flour millers

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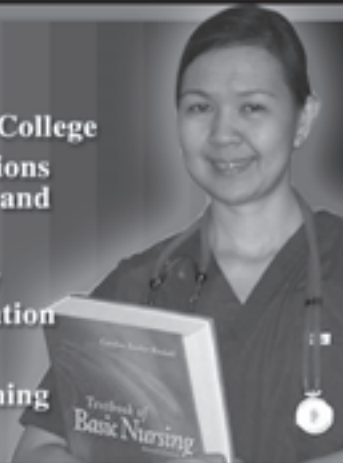
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