

The Implications of Rice Tariffication Law to the Rice Trading Industry In a Highly Urbanized City in the Philippines

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Abstract

Rice is an essential commodity and a staple food in the Philippines; the implementation of the Rice Tariffication Law further aims to reform the rice sector and address the rice shortage. This research study aims to determine the implications of Republic Act No. 11203 or Rice Tariffication Law to the rice trading industry in Mandaue City, particularly in the rice retail sector, and know how it affects the three aspects: supply, demand, and price of rice. This research is a qualitative study utilizing the Phenomenological Approach. The researchers used a purposive sampling technique where participants were determined based on the already set qualifications by the researchers and interviewed ten (10) participants who were the rice retailers from Mandaue City. The gathering of data was in the form of an online semi-structured interview aided by a researcher-made interview questionnaire as a primary instrument used. The researchers then utilized Colaizzi's seven-step method for the data analysis. The findings revealed that the law provided positive and negative implications for the rice trading industry, particularly the rice retail sector. The positive implications, such as an increased rice supply and a wide variety of rice options, placed the participants at an advantage. In contrast, the negative implications revealed an intense degree of competition and low sales of local rice products. The law also affected the supply by having a lesser supply of local rice but more supply of the imported ones. In the aspect of demand, it causes an increase in the demand for imported rice, while in terms of price, it appears that imported rice is cheaper than the local rice.

Keywords: Rice tariffication law, rice-trading industry, qualitative-phenomenological, Mandaue City, Philippine,

Introduction

Rice is considered the staple food for more than half of the population in the world, wherein more than 3.5 billion people depend on rice in acquiring 20% of their daily calories. Global rice consumption remains strong, driven by both population and economic growth, especially in many Asian and African countries where 90% of global rice consumption accounts for Asia following the rise of total demand for rice (Ricepedia.org). In the Philippines, rice is one of the leading foods crops cultivated, and it is a vital commodity consumed by the majority of Filipinos. Rice is the most extensively grown crop in the country, and as a staple food, it accounts for 46% and 35% of the Filipinos' caloric intake and protein consumption. Furthermore, it comprised 16% of the total expenditures of the poorest and 30% of the population in terms of food spending (Bordey, 2010). In 1970, the country became self-sufficient in rice and was an exporter to neighboring countries. Still, due to the rapid increase in population and limited land resources, it slowly turned into a net rice importer, the second-largest rice importer in the world next to China (Tobias, 2019; Simeon, 2019). Although the country has approximately 4.2 million hectares of rice lands that produce 11.2 million Metric Tons (MMT) of milled rice, which suffice 90% of the population, it still imports rice from other countries, with Vietnam as its primary

supplier in 2019. In 2019, the country recorded the highest importation of rice, amounting to 3.131 MMT, but it has lowered down to 2.062 MMT in 2020, which equates to a 34.14% fall rate (Arcalas, 2021).

In relation with this, the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) has come to shape, also referred to as the Rice Liberalization Act or Republic Act No. 11203, titled "An Act liberalizing the importation, exportation, and trading of rice, lifting for the aim of the quantitative import restriction on rice and for other purposes, which amends the Agricultural Tariffication Act of 1996 that imposed tariff to the agricultural imports other than rice. It intends to lift the quantitative restrictions (QR) on rice imports, replace them with a general tariff, and modernize the agricultural sector to create a globally competitive world. The new law established different tariff rates as follows: 35% applicable for rice imports originating from ASEAN member states; 40% suitable for rice imports originating from non-ASEAN Countries and within minimum access volume (MAV) of 350,000 metric tons; and 180% applicable for rice imports originating from non-ASEAN countries and above the MAV (Vertudes et al., 2020). The law further created the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) to improve rice farmers' competitiveness and income. Consequently, it has Php 10 billion annual appropriations for the next six years that assist rice farmers with seeds, farm machinery, credit, and technical extension. As a result, traders could now herald vast volumes of rice at any time, and some big-time traders cornered a lot of profits from rice trade liberalization at the expense of several millers, farmers and other market players, who were swamped by the deluge of cheap and undervalued rice imports. Rice Tariffication Law extremely clipped the government's supervision over the rice industry and conclusively ceded control to the private sector. Doing so undermined its capacity to stabilize the rice market, safeguard producer and consumer welfare, ensure food safety, and sustain efforts toward food security (Montemayor, 2020). Rice Tariffication Law affects different players and participants in the community, especially on the side of the rice trading industries within the country. According to Briones (2021), benefits of rice tariffication were captured mainly through importers and retailers rather than of consumers, and according to a farmer federation, it further inflicted huge losses on farmers. Moreover, manufacturers and rice traders urged the government to implement safety measures under Rice Tariffication Law to address a continued drop in prices of the staple grain in the country. Under the RTL's implementing rules and regulations (IRR), special safeguard duties on rice will be imposed to protect the rice industry from sudden or extreme price fluctuations (Ison, 2019).

Therefore, with the aim and benefit of implementing the Rice Tariffication Law and that even though the government gives assurance that proper implementation and measures will be put in place, it is undeniable that different sectors have been affected positively and negatively which entails a gap in most of the literatures. By this instance, the researchers wanted to ascertain and find answers on how RTL affected the rice trading industry within their locality, which resulted in embarking on an effort to conduct a study that gives focus on knowing the possible implications of Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law to the Rice Trading Industry in Mandaue City, Cebu Philippines, specifically to the rice retailers, the rice trading industry comprise of people that are permitted to engage in rice trading practices. Consequently, this will be an excellent opportunity to assess, discover and consider the possible implications of the Rice Tariffication Law on the side of the rice trading industry in the locality to which they also play a significant role in the distribution of rice commodities and products.

Atheoretical Stance

The Literature Review of this study has been postponed in order to avoid subjectivities, while a temporary suspension of priori assumptions is also recognized in the conduct of a qualitative research. But in terms of conducting the data analysis and interpretations, the researchers will utilize the associated theories and related literature, and the same shall identify the critical approach when collecting and analyzing data.

Philosophical Stance

This study, anchor on the Philosophy of Pragmatism, focuses on outcomes such as the actions, situations, and the inquiry, which further implies that the significant aspect of the research is the problem studied and the questions asked these problems. Moreover, Pragmatism tended to advance beyond an individual's psychological realms towards an emphasis on the individuals and shared human experiences that further involve interpreting knowledge and beliefs that lead to action while reflecting on activities leads to new ways of acting and knowing. It additionally focuses on the practical implications of the research and emphasizes the vitality of conducting it that best addresses the research inquiries.

The ontological assumption under this philosophy perceived reality upon what works, what is valuable and practical. The researchers look to the "what" and "how" based on intended consequences. Researchers must have a clear view of reality to know and arrive at the right methodological choices. In this study, researchers gather data from various sources to grasp the overview of Rice Tariffication Law implemented in the country and formulated questions that would suffice the "what" and "how" of the problem.

This study aims to know the implications of the Rice Tariffication Law to the Rice Trading Industry in Mandaue City, which relates to the epistemological assumption of Pragmatism, where a significant underpinning stipulates that knowledge is based on experiences or practices. Since researchers will gather informants' insights and knowledge regarding their experiences working as rice retailers in any rice trading industry within the locale of the study, in the data gathering, researchers will consider the uniqueness and diversity of each informants' knowledge, insights, and ideas based on their unique experiences. Researchers will also consider the concept of intersubjectivity, meaning being subjective and objective simultaneously, as well as accepting the existence of one's reality and the key informants' multiple interpretations of this reality. In terms of the methods, the researchers under Pragmatism have the freedom of their own where they are free to choose the procedures and techniques that best meet their needs and purposes of conducting the research. The researchers have provided a researcher-made interview questionnaire as the primary instrument in gathering the knowledge, experiences, and insights of the key informants. Researchers were free to formulate the questions based on the problems that needed to evaluate in the domains of inquiry, and a qualified evaluator has validated the questionnaire before gathering of data.

Objectives of The Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess implications of Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law to the Rice Trading Industry in Mandaue City, Cebu Philippines, specifically to the rice retailers, the rice trading industry comprise of people that are permitted to engage in rice trading practices.

Methodology

Research Design

This is a qualitative study be utilizing Phenomenology with a questionnaire for an online semi-structured interview provided to the informants via online platforms. Further, to investigate The Implications of the Rice Tariffication Law to the Rice Trading Industry in Mandaue City, to determine as well whether it had produced a positive or negative implications and how does it affect the aspects given, such as the supply, demand, and price of rice.

Research Environment

This study was conducted at Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines. Mandaue, officially the town of Mandaue, is a first-class, highly urbanized city within the Central Visayas region of the Philippines. Per the 2020 census, it has a population of 364,116 people where the area is in the central-eastern coastal region. The majority of data gathering procedures was conducted in the Public Market adjacent to Mandaue Plaza and Mandaue City Hall, to which the address is commonly known as Centro, Mandaue City, where informants took part in the study. Furthermore, other barangays within the locality with rice trading business or industry in their area was also considered.

Research Key-Informants

For this study, researchers used the purposive sampling technique in which 10 selected qualified key informants more specifically those who are currently working as Rice Retailer located within Mandaue City, since they are considered as Rice Traders and also a part of the Rice Trading Industry.

The qualifications listed below were the basis of the researchers in finding viable key informants for the conduct of the study:

Table 1: Qualifications for Key-Informants

(1) Either male, female, or of any gender preference.

(2) At least 21 years old (or incoming 21 as of 2021) and above.

(3) Must have two (2) years and more of work experience as a rice retailer in any rice trading industry within Mandaue City.

Research Instrument

The study formulated the researcher-made Interview Guide/ Questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire involves profiling primary informants about their name (optional), age, gender, name of their workplace, and the number of years engaged in rice retail business. Furthermore, it includes an open-ended question, in which participants are not given a predetermined set of answers, instead allowing the participants to provide responses in their own words, and freely express their knowledge, experiences, and opinions.

Treatment of Data

Frequency and simple percentage, and Colaizzi's seven- step of data analysis was utilized to treat the collected information.

Research Procedure

Data Gathering

The needed procedures for conducting the study and gathering data: First, submit the proposed title to the research instructor, research coordinator, and Dean of the College of Customs Administration. The researchers will seek to find key informants located in Mandaue City with the help of the sampling technique and social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, etc., and a person who knows or is affiliated with possible primary informants for the researchers to approach virtually. After then, the key informants will undergo verification, if they qualify for an interview, they will be brief on what they should do and how to answer the interview questionnaire. In the questionnaire, profiling will include their personal information such as their name (optional), gender, age, name of the workplace, and the number of years engaged in rice retail business will also be included. Then the researchers will interview from any online platforms convenient for the key informants, which will answer the given questions while the researchers will retrieve their responses through audio recording. The researchers will analyze and elucidate all the data gathered to expound the study's insights, and conclusions, recommendations, or actions plans, if necessary, will be suggested based on the findings and outcomes of the study.

Results and Discussion

This chapter discussed the Presentation and Analysis of Data from the online interviews where the researchers of this study underwent several coding and recoding. The themes are as follows: Theme 1: Removal of Quantitative Restrictions and Removed the Monopoly or Control of NFA, Theme 2: Increased Supply of Rice and Wide Variety of Rice Options, Theme 3: Higher Profit on Imported Rice and Provide Rice Stocks for Loyal Customers, Theme 4: Intense Degree of Competition and Low Sales of Local Rice Products, Theme 5: Accumulation of Lesser Profit, Theme 6: Lesser Supply vs. Increase in Supply and NFA vs. Traders and Importers, Theme 7: Lesser Supply of Local/NFA Rice and More Supply of Imported Rice, Theme 8: Availability of Rice Stocks and Boost in Numbers of Customers, Theme 9: Slow Local Rice Production, Theme 10: Abundant Supply of Imported Rice and Addressed Rice Shortage, Theme 11: Increase Demand for Imported Rice, Theme 12: Increase Sales of Imported Rice, Theme 13: Massive Demand for Imported Rice and Limited Display of Rice, Theme 14: Suffice the Customers' Demand for Imported Rice, Theme 15: Imported Rice is Cheaper, Theme 16: No Effects on Rice Retailers, Theme 17: Locally Made Rice is Expensive, Theme 18: Hinders Too Much Price Increase.

Data Gathering Participant No.	Age	Gender	Name of Workplace	Number of Years Engaged in Rice Retail Business
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1	59 years old	Female	Queen Mary's General Merchandise	20 years
2	33 yearsold	Male	Dela Cerna Store	Almost 5 years
3	39 yearsold	Female	Claire Rice and Corn	Almost 8 years
4	63 yearsold	Male	RC Velasquez Wholly Grains Corner	11 years
5	40 yearsold	Female	Rice and Corn and General Merchandise	7 years
6	38 yearsold	Female	Junmar Store	18 years
7	25 yearsold	Female	Rice and Corn Business Retail or Merchandise	7 years
8	28 yearsold	Female	KingJun Store	10 years
9	38 yearsold	Female	Merl Rice and Corn Business	9 years
10	35 yearsold	Male	J&P Rice Trading	10 years

Theme 1 answers research question 2.1 on how knowledgeable the participants are about Rice Tariffication Law. Theme 2 responds to research question 2.2 on the positive implications of the Rice Tariffication Law on the rice retailers that the participants have noticed. Theme 3 addresses research question 2.3 about how the positive implications of the Rice Tariffication Law affect the participants. Theme 4 replies to research question 2.4 on the negative implications of the Rice Tariffication Law on the rice retailers that the participants have noticed. Theme 5 answers research question 2.5 about how did the negative implications of the Rice Tariffication Law affect the participants. Theme 6 responds to research question 2.6 about comparing the implications of the Rice Tariffication Law on rice retailers before and after the law was implemented. Theme 7 addresses research questions 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 about how the Rice Tariffication Law affects rice supply, particularly in the retail rice sector in Mandaue City, and the substantial changes in the supply of rice after implementing the Rice Tariffication Law. Theme 8 replies to research question 3.1.3 on how the changes in rice supply after implementing the Rice Tariffication Law affect the participants as rice retailers. Theme 9 answers research question 3.1.4 on the problems concerning the supply of rice before the Rice Tariffication Law was approved. Theme 10 responds to research question 3.1.5 about how Rice Tariffication Law addresses the problems with rice supply within Mandaue City. Theme 11 addresses research questions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 about how the Rice Tariffication Law affected the demand for rice, particularly in the retail rice sector in Mandaue City, and the substantial demand changes after implementing the Rice Tariffication Law. Theme 12 replies to research question 3.2.3 on how the changes in the demand for rice after implementing the Rice Tariffication Law affect the participants as a rice retailers. Theme 13 answers research question 3.2.4 on the problems with the demand for rice before the Rice Tariffication Law implementation. Theme 14 responds to research question 3.2.5 about how Rice Tariffication Law addresses the problems concerning the demand for rice within Mandaue City. Theme 15 addresses research questions 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 about how the Rice Tariffication Law affects the price of rice, particularly in the retail rice sector in Mandaue City, and the substantial changes in rice price after the Rice Tariffication Law implementation. Theme 16 replies to research question 3.3.3 on how the rice price changes after implementing the Rice Tariffication Law affect the participants as a rice retailer. Theme 17 answers research question 3.3.4 on the problems with the price of rice before implementing the Rice Tariffication Law. Theme 18 responds to research question 3.3.5 about how the Rice Tariffication Law addresses the rice price problems within Mandaue City.

Theme 1: Removal of Quantitative Restrictions and Removed the Monopoly or Control of NFA

The Republic Act No. 11203, or Rice Tariffication Law, was signed by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. After more than four decades of battling to reform the rice sector in the Philippines, the said law removed quantitative restrictions on rice imports, replacing them with a 35% import tariff and ended National Food Authority's monopoly (Ocampo & Pobre, 2021).

Removal of Quantitative Restrictions. Participants had mentioned that through implementing the Rice Tariffication Law, the quantitative restrictions on rice importation made it possible for traders, importers, or anyone who can freely import rice from other countries.

Removed the Monopoly or Control of NFA. Some participants narrated that the approval of the Rice Tariffication Law had removed the monopoly of the National Food Authority (NFA) on rice importation and its control on rice pricing. Prominent business people, traders, and importers have the right or freedom to import rice directly from other countries. Participant 4 mentioned how the law removed the monopoly of NFA where he stated,

The participants' responses revealed their ideas about Rice Tariffication Law and implied they already had background knowledge of the law before the interview. Tolentino and Dela Pena (2020) mentioned that after so many years of unsuccessful attempts to liberalize the rice sector in the Philippines, finally, on March 5, 2019, the Rice Tariffication Law was implemented and removed the monopoly of NFA, and the quantitative restrictions were substituted. To the participant's responses, implementing the Rice Tariffication Law had removed the quantitative restrictions and the National Food Authority monopoly, which resulted in traders having free rice importation from other countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Overall, it encompasses that due to the removal of quantitative restrictions and the monopoly of NFA, traders, and importers who can import rice can now freely or directly import rice from the other countries. It also entails that since there is a removal of quantitative restrictions and the monopoly of NFA, the Philippines now has an increased or abundant supply of rice.

Theme 2: Increased Supply of Rice and Wide Variety of Rice Options

As per participants, there is an increase in the supply of rice and a wide variety of rice brands to choose from following the implementation of the Rice Tariffication Law. **Increased Supply of Rice.** All the participants mentioned that the rice supply increased due to the enactment of the Rice Tariffication Law. There was a removal of quantitative restrictions resulting in free importation of rice. Participant 1 explained the increased rice supply, which addresses the hunger of the people in the Philippines.

Wide Variety of Rice Options. As per participants, because of the Rice Tariffication Law approval, there is more variety of rice in the market. The customers and consumers can now have the options about the brand and the quality of rice; they prefer to purchase mainly imported rice since they have much supply.

An increase in rice supply and a wide variety of rice brand options were the positive implications of the Rice Tariffication Law that the participants cited during the online interview. According to the Department of Agriculture (2020), after the passage of the Rice Tariffication Law, the Philippines have enough rice supply. By December 2020, the total projected rice supply would remain consistent, amounting to 17.994 million metric tons (MMT). It corresponds to our study and is based on the participants' responses that, following the Rice Tariffication Law's approval, the rice supply increased, and the Philippines have an abundant supply of rice in the local market due to the removal of quantitative restrictions. Additionally, the participants elucidated that a wide variety of rice brand options is noticeable after implementing the Law in the local market. Chua (2020) stated that aside from the price benefits of the Rice Tariffication Law, it has also expanded in the local market the availability of rice types and varieties, which provides consumers a more comprehensive range of choices depending on their budget and quality preference. In connection to our study, implementing the Rice Tariffication Law resulted in a wide variety of rice brands.

Theme 3: Higher Profit on Imported Rice and Provide Rice Stocks for Loyal Customers

Participants mentioned the positive implications of the Rice Tariffication Law and said that it provides higher profit when selling imported rice. They can be able to provide some stocks for their loyal customers.

Higher Profit on Imported Rice. The participants asserted that selling imported rice stocks can provide a higher profit considering that imported rice is cheaper than local rice.

Based on the participants' responses, they have gained a more significant profit when selling imported rice since it has lower prices than the local ones. According to Tobias (2019), imported rice is cheaper than domestically produced rice. The rice price in the market will decline with the influx of cheaper rice imports. It corresponds to our study because due to the implementation of the Rice Tariffication Law, the participants gained more profit since they could sell imported rice at lower prices. It means that rice retailers can gain more significant profit on imported rice than on local rice. Also, it further entails that imported rice is more saleable than local rice, knowing that the rice prices decrease.

Provide Rice Stocks for Loyal Customers. The participants mentioned that Rice Tariffication Law helped them provide a variety of rice stocks and supplies for their loyal customers, especially the imported ones. On the part of the participants, the positive implications acquainted with Rice Tariffication Law have provided advantages and affected them positively. Acosta (2019) mentioned that implementing the Rice Tariffication Law unregulated rice trades by allowing traders and importers to import rice stocks without limits considering that they will procure sanitary phytosanitary permits from the BPI. It matches the participants' responses that they can provide enough rice stocks for their loyal customers since they have opted to sell imported rice rather than local. In summary, allowing traders and importers to import rice stocks without limits will provide an abundant imported rice supply. Also, it entails that rice retailers can provide their loyal customers with a different variety of imported rice, considering that they have enough rice supply.

Theme 4: Intense Degree of Competition and Low Sales of Local Rice Products

Intense Degree of Competition. After implementing Rice Tariffication Law, Participants expressed how they were at a disadvantage. Participant 3 cited that even if the law is implemented for the rice to be imported freely into our country, there is still an instance that this law brought negative implications to the rice retailers.

Low Sales of Local Rice Products. Participants asserted that since Rice Tariffication Law emerged, the consumers can now acquire imported rice at lower prices, which disadvantages locally made rice. Participants also mentioned that local farmers had been adversely affected, resulting in lower-income and slow local production.

As part of the participant's experiences as rice retailers, they deal with the negative implications of the Rice Tariffication Law, such as going through an extreme degree of competition with other rice retailers in the local market and even some of the wholesalers and traders who tend to sell rice in retails. As Montesclaros (2019) stated, lifting import quotas to the rice importing countries means more competition for the available rice in the local market. In correlation to the participants' responses, due to the enactment of the Rice Tariffication Law, there is now intense competition since they have an abundant supply of imported rice. Aside from this, participants have also pointed out that following the enactment of RTL, an abundance of imported rice supplies can lower sales of the local rice products in the local market. According to Ragasa and Amewu (2020), when purchasing rice, the customers would prefer to buy imported rice since it has a good quality over the local rice. It associates with the participants' responses because they have low sales of local rice compared to imported rice, considering that imported rice has a good quality that the customers would buy repeatedly.

Theme 5: Accumulation of Lesser Profit

Participants mentioned that their profit subsided after the implementation of the Rice Tariffication Law. In connection to the intense competition, participants would not be able to gain more revenues since many retailers would be following the increase in rice supply, mainly imported rice. Participant 6 shared her thoughts about the decrease in profit.

Having lesser profit is one of the effects of the negative implications of the Rice Tariffication Law that has been experienced by the participants. According to Pettinger (2017), the profit will decrease if the markets have massive competition knowing that customers would only buy from the cheapest firms. In connection to our study, participants have justified that due to the intense competition around the local markets, they might be unable to acquire more profits.

Theme 6: Lesser Supply vs. Increase in Supply and NFA vs. Traders and Importers

Participants compared the implications before and after the Rice Tariffication Law was implemented, and they have commonly mentioned that there was a lesser supply of rice before. However, after implementing the law, the supply of rice increased. Participants asserted that NFA possessed the power and had control over prices and importation way back. However, today the traders and importers have inhibited the control over importations.

Lesser Supply vs. Increase in Supply. The participants have commonly noticed the comparison between having a lesser supply prior to implementing RTL, but when implementing the law, the rice supply plummeted. Before implementing the Rice Tariffication Law, the participants pointed out a lesser rice supply. However, after implementing the law, the supply of rice increased. According to the Department of Agriculture (2019), the Philippines is not self-sufficient in rice. Our country cannot produce enough supply of rice in the market. We are importing an average of 5% to 10% of our rice requirements. In addition, Statista Research Department (2021) stated that after implementing the Rice Tariffication Law, imported rice in the Philippines amounted to approximately 2.03 million metric tons in 2020. Vietnam supplied about 87% of different rice varieties in the same year. It corresponds to our study since the participants' answers showed that before implementing the Rice Tariffication Law, there was a lesser supply of rice in the market, knowing that the Philippines could not produce enough rice. Compared now that the rice supply increased due to free importation, the exporting countries can now supply different rice varieties to the importing countries like the Philippines. In totality, there was a lesser rice supply during the pre-RTL years, while in the post-RTL years, the rice supply surged following the increase of rice imports from other countries. Also, it further implicates that the supply of rice in the Philippines before was not sufficient for the population. The government intervention was to have a free importation to have enough rice supply.

NFA vs. Traders and Importers. Participants explained that before implementing the Rice Tariffication Law, the National Food Authority (NFA) controlled the importation and prices. However, in the present times, traders and importers now have the freedom to import rice, given a designated tariff for importation, which at the same time ended the monopoly of the NFA.

As per the participants' responses, during pre-RTL, the NFA has the authority to control the importation and prices, but during post-RTL, the traders and importers have the power to import rice and control prices. According to Pemintel (2019), before implementing the Rice Tariffication Law, the NFA had the power to control the importation of rice and the prices. However, after implementing the law, legitimate rice traders can import rice without asking for a permit from the National Food Authority. They need to secure import clearance and pay the appropriate tariff. It corresponds to the participants' responses that before when it came to the control of imports and prices, it was under the National Food Authority, but following the enactment of RTL, the control was handover to the traders and importers. To sum it up, before implementing the law, the control of imports and the prices were under the National Food Authority. However, after implementing the law, the power to import and control rice prices was transferred to the traders and importers. Also, it entails that the enactment of the Rice Tariffication Law ended the monopoly of NFA, and the right to import rice was transferred to the traders and importers, especially if they could pay the designated tariff.

Theme 7: Lesser Supply of Local/NFA Rice and More Supply of Imported Rice

Participants stated that in rice supply, the RTL provides a lesser supply of local or NFA rice while there is an increase of supply on the imported rice where the latter is most likely favored compared with the former.

Lesser Supply of Local/NFA Rice. After implementing the RTL, local or NFA rice decreased in supply and volume following the massive rice importation. The abundant imported rice caused the local or NFA rice less favored.

Participants justified that although RTL brought massive rice importation, which increased rice volume but also caused a depletion in the supply or volume of local or NFA rice. Simeon (2020) explained that in 2019, the Philippines continues to fail to produce enough food for its growing population. The country's rice self-sufficiency has declined to 79.8%, resulting in a higher import dependency on rice as the Filipino's main staple. It relates to the participants' assertion that the decline in the rice self-sufficiency in the country further

means the rice production of the local or NFA rice was just a few. Overall, RTL has brought significant changes in the rice supply, where it reduced local or NFA rice supplies and increased imported rice supplies. This further implies that massive rice importation, which increases imported rice volumes, has affected local rice supply since consumers are more eager to consume and purchase imported rice rather than locally produced rice.

More Supply of Imported Rice. The participants conveyed that due to the enactment of RTL, there is a high increase in rice importation, causing more imported rice supply. At the same time, it provided them with various rice brand options that they could purchase.

Participants' narration showed that RTL, which allows free importation of rice from other countries, increased the supply of imported rice. The Philippines became the world's largest rice importer at 2.8 million tons in 2019, exceeding its previous highest import level of 2.4 million tons in 2010 (Briones, 2020). It implies that in the same year when implementing the RTL, the country's rice importation plummeted compared to when RTL was not yet in effect. Massive rice importation created an avenue to increase imported rice supplies, giving consumers many options for different rice brands and avoiding rice shortages. It further provides the insight that rice importation plays a significant role in the country's aim of stabilizing rice supplies and stocks, making it enough for the growing demand and population.

Theme 8: Availability of Rice Stocks and Boost in Numbers of Customers

After implementing RTL, participants mentioned that it positively affected them that they have available rice stocks that they could sell and provide, increasing or boosting the numbers of local customers.

Availability of Rice Stocks. The participants showcased that rice supply has changed positively following the implementation of RTL since they currently have more than enough available rice supply.

On the part of the participants, Rice Tariffication Law positively affected them in terms of supply since it provided them with the availability of rice stocks. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) mentioned that the Philippines is estimated to remain the world's second-biggest buyer of rice in 2022 (Arcalas, 2022). Consequently, as Perez and Pradesha (2019) indicated, the lifting of QR has increased availability and access to more affordable prices. In relation, an increase in importation will also increase the volume of imported rice resulting in an abundant availability of rice stocks. It further provides cheaper options for imported rice to consumers. In summation, RTL allowed acquiring enough rice stocks to be available for display in the market without buying such in bulk or in larger quantities. It further appears that rice retailers are at an advantage since they can be able to provide for their customers' certain rice brands and at the same time avoid shortage or scarcity of such rice brands.

Boost in Numbers of Customers. Customers are the drivers to earn profit in the business. Since implementing the Rice Tariffication Law, rice retailers articulated that there would be many customers by having several kinds of rice supply.

In addition, participants also mentioned another advantage that following the RTL's implementation, which provides excellent and different rice brands, further boosted the number of customers who purchased from their stall. Consequently, the 2015 Family Income and Expenditure Survey suggest that since most households are net buyers of rice, most households benefit from the lower rice prices resulting from rice trade reform (Balie et al., 2021). This further means that the reduction of rice prices due to trade reforms imposed by the government allowed the increase in the number of customers. In totality, reduction of prices at the same time with an abundance of different rice brands are the drivers in boosting the number of rice customers in the local market. It further provides a notion that RTL's mechanism of providing lower rice prices increases the purchasing power of customers and even rice consumers.

Theme 9: Slow Local Rice Production

According to the participants, local rice production was relatively slow when the Rice Tariffication Law had not yet been effective. They also mentioned that rice harvesting is seasonal and that they need to wait for that specific month/s of the year.

As per the participants, one problem in rice supply was the slow production of local rice in the Philippines before implementing RTL. According to Adriano (2022), the rice productivity of the Philippines remains low,

averaging an annual growth rate of only around 1.4 percent from 2009 to 2018 as per data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, which is not even enough to meet the consumption requirements of the growing population of our country. It correlates with the participants' responses that our country has been experiencing slow production during pre-RTL years regarding rice commodities. In totality, the slow production of local rice has been a significant problem experienced by the participants prior to the enactment of RTL. There were not enough supplies of local rice available in the local market, and they should still wait for the harvest season to acquire new supplies and stocks of rice. Also, this further entails that the slow local rice production has contributed to a rice shortage where limited importation and supply cannot meet the needs and cannot satisfy the consumers' demand within the country.

Theme 10: Abundant Supply of Imported Rice and Addressed Rice Shortage

When asked about the solutions provided by Rice Tariffication Law, the participants mentioned that they had acquired an abundant supply of imported rice, which addressed the rice shortage.

Abundant Supply of Imported Rice. As specified by the participants, since National Food Authority has no longer the power to control the importation, big traders and importers can now import rice, resulting in an oversupply of rice in the market.

As asserted by the participants, Rice Tariffication Law addresses the problem by providing an abundant imported rice supply. The Foreign Agricultural Service of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) published that the Philippines assumed to import more rice in 2021-2022 due to improved economic conditions and sanitary clearances upturned (Reidy, 2021). It explains that the abundant imported rice supply would continue considering that the country is presumed to import more. RTL allowed the participants to acquire a much more abundant rice supply, mostly the imported ones. It further provided solutions that allowed them to provide enough rice stocks for some customers who will buy in the stalls at the local market.

Addressed Rice Shortage. Before the Rice Tariffication Law, Participants claimed that their rice supplies were insufficient to suffice for the population, considering that Filipinos are naturally rice eaters.

Participants mentioned that another solution provided by RTL was addressing the problems of rice shortages. RTL further address the urgent need to improve the availability of rice in the country. It also prevents artificial rice shortages, reduces rice prices in the market, and curtails corruption and cartel domination in the rice industry (Tobias, 2019). In relevance, Adriano (2022) stated that the most telling benefit of RTL is that we did not experience rice 'pila' during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 as well as 2021, and also during this recent Russian-Ukraine crisis with the world experiencing a global grain shortage. In connection, RTL further showcased its role in times of crisis, such as the ongoing pandemic and the Russian-Ukraine war, by providing enough rice stocks and avoiding rice shortages. All in all, RTL has been a solution to problems involving a shortage of rice, sufficing urgent demands and needs of the people. Furthermore, it plays a significant role in continuously avoiding rice shortages in line with the growing population and demand for rice commodities.

Theme 11: Increase Demand for Imported Rice

Participants asserted that due to the execution of the Rice Tariffication Law, there is an increasing demand for imported rice. Furthermore, many customers or consumers will demand what specific kind of rice they want to purchase, for example, Doña Conchita and Vietnam rice, where the imported rice is more in demand.

Participants' responses showcased that the increase in the supply of imported rice increased the demand for imported rice, where imported rice brands are most likely purchased, demanded, and favored by the buyers. In consonance with a Global Agricultural Information Network (Gain) report, the demand for rice in the Philippines for the market year (MY) 2021-2022 will increase slightly up to 14.6 million metric tons (MMT). It is due to higher domestic output and enormous demand for the staple (Arcalas, 2021). This data shows that there is indeed an increased demand for imported rice, considering that rice to be imported for the current year has also increased in volume. Consequently, the substantial change in demand after implementing the RTL shows that demand specifically for imported rice products has increased since consumers favored such over local ones. It further entails that in the following years, there is a possibility that the degree and volume of rice importation will increase in order also to meet the increase in demand.

Theme 12: Increase Sales of Imported Rice

The participants stated that the rice demand changes after implementing the Rice Tariffication Law affected them. Their sales of imported rice have increased because imported rice is saleable. The customers or consumers prefer to purchase imported rice considering the lower prices.

On the part of the participants, RTL allows consumers to choose based on their preferences for imported rice, which increases sales of such rice following lower prices. Agbetoyinbo (2020) eloquently stated that the imported rice market's marketing margin and efficiency were higher than local rice. The study findings revealed that local rice marketers and imported rice marketers earned 7% and 23%, respectively, from the amount paid by the consumer. It further provides that consumers favor imported rice commodities over local rice, allowing an increase in sales in the former. In summation, the increase in rice imports, which creates different rice brand options and reduces rice prices, allows the consumers to constantly purchase such rice products, contributing to plummeting sales in terms of imported rice. It further directs to an insight that consumers most likely favor and prefer imported rice products compared to the local rice.

Theme 13: Massive Demand for Imported Rice and Limited Display of Rice

Based on the participants' responses when asked about the problems with rice demand before implementing Rice Tariffication Law, they mentioned during the online interview that the demand for imported rice increased and limited the display of rice.

Massive Demand for Imported Rice. Some participants mentioned that before the Rice Tariffication Law, there was a demand for imported rice since they only had a few imported rice to display in the market, like Jasmine Rice. The customers would prefer to purchase imported rice rather than local rice.

Limited Display of Rice. As the participants mentioned during the online interview, they stated that the rice supply was minimal before the Rice Tariffication Law. They could not offer different rice varieties to their customers. It seems like local rice alone could not suffice the supply and demand in the Philippines.

As per the participants, there were noticeable problems during the pre-RTL years, such as massive demand for imported rice. Since the rice imports were limited in our country during those times, consumers tended to look for imported rice stocks in the local market. As quoted by Talavera C. (2021), the Philippines is presumed to import more rice a year from now to fulfill the rising need of the consumers as per the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Furthermore, Statista Research Department (2022) stated that in 2020 the overall volume of rice imported to the Philippines added up to around 2.23 million metric tons, comparable to an import worth of around 43.56 billion Philippine pesos. It connects to the participants' perceptions that consumers prefer imported rice, which results in high demand for imported rice. Reyes G. (2018) stated that the local NFA official in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines declared that their rice supplies were limited. If the rice retailers depended on them, it would not be enough for the people to consume. Furthermore, Ehiakpor et al. (2017) mentioned that the consumers' demand outpaced the rice supply production, which resulted in importation. With that, the limited local rice was not enough in the country, which resulted in rice importation which is now in high demand for people's consumption. Thus, consumers adore imported rice since it offers more than local rice. Since our population is increasing, the limited domestic rice resources result in a limited display of rice in the local market. Due to rice importation, people will get to know more about imported rice. They will look for it as they go to the market, prompting massive demand for imported rice. That is why it is dominant to have a variety of stocks and supply of local rice.

Theme 14: Suffice the Customers' Demand for Imported Rice

After the implementation of the Rice Tariffication Law, the supply of imported rice overflowed, sufficing the customer's demand for imported rice. On the part of Participant 3, she explained that the law partially addresses the problems in the demand since there is much supply. The demand of the customer for imported rice was sufficient, but it was not good since the local rice would be left out.

In proportion to the participants' insights, RTL had given solutions to problems in a way that suffices customers' demand for imported rice since there is an increase in the supply of imported rice. In accord with William Dar, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA), they remained consistent that the country's total projected rice supply by the end of December 2020 would be 17.994 million metric tons (MMT). At the

same time, the total projected demand would be 14.668 MMT which leaves a year-end inventory equivalent to 3.326 MMT (DA Communications Group, 2020). It relates to the participants' notion that the Rice Tariffication Law did great help in resolving the issue in demand for the imported rice since the RTL brings out more on imported that can suffice the demand of the customers. Furthermore, we cannot deny that RTL affects the rice retailers positively so that they can now cater more customers since they will be able to provide variety of rice that can satisfy consumers' demands. Since the RTL removed the quantitative restrictions on imported rice, traders can now bring in rice without limit, resulting in an oversupply that satisfies the customers' demand. However, local and NFA rice in the local market will be left out, which is not a good thought.

Theme 15: Imported Rice is Cheaper

The participants explained that when the imported rice supply became abundant after implementing the Rice Tariffication Law, it resulted in cheaper imported rice. In contrast, the price of local rice increased due to the machinery, equipment, and other resources that local farmers need to use, which will add up to the price of the final product.

On the part of the participants, Rice Tariffication Law has affected and provided a substantial price change. They have justified that it makes imported rice cheaper than domestic rice. As Tobias (2019) claimed, rice imports tend to be cheaper than domestically produced rice, whereas, under a free market, the price of rice in the market will decline with the influx of cheaper rice imports. It relates to the participants' thought that locally made rice was way more costly than imported rice since there would be an oversupply of imported rice from overseas that comes with a lesser price. Hence, the Rice Tariffication Law compels the imported rice to be cheaper as it is with lesser expenses in rice production. Since their rice production is through their high technology, wherein in the Philippines, we are still on manual labor using a lot of resources and equipment that would add to the expenses. Therefore, imported rice is less expensive than local rice, making it difficult for Filipino retailers, consumers, and customers to contend.

Theme 16: No Effects on Rice Retailers

Participants have mentioned that even though there are substantial changes with regards to the price after the enactment of the Rice Tariffication Law, still it has no raging effects on them since regardless of the price, the customers will buy rice products considering that it is an essential commodity and to consider that customers have now different kinds of rice to choose from.

Even though RTL had brought substantial changes in the aspect of price, in consonance with participants' experiences, it caused no effects on them as rice retailers considering that their sales continue whether rice prices increase or decrease. The poor people felt the impacts lopsidedly, who spent most of their finances for their family spending plan on essential food things, as indicated by Ocampo & Pobre (2021). It shows that poor people were affected negatively by this law because of the price of rice. Relatively, as Kusno et al. (2018) attested, since rice is a staple food with a high degree of need, each buyer will undoubtedly save a portion of their money to purchase rice regardless of the price. Rice retailers are hardly affected since consumers will likely buy rice despite high rice prices since it is an essential commodity for people. Even if the price rises, consumers still have no choice since it is a staple food. Even though there is a change in prices, whether it increases or decreases, rice retailers still will not be affected since they are the ones selling in the markets. They will not lower their prices to adjust to consumers' budgets. They will indeed increase their prices for them to have profits.

Theme 17: Locally Made Rice is Expensive

As stated by the participants, local rice tends to be expensive, which was a problem that they had noticed back then before the Rice Tariffication Law. Participants had justified that locally made rice or local rice products had higher prices way back when RTL had not yet come to shape, most especially if there are limited stocks or supply then the prices would likely increase.

One of the problems faced by participants during the pre-RTL years was that domestic or locally made rice was expensive due to limited supplies and stocks. Rivas (2018) specified that data published under the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) revealed the rapid surge of regular and well-milled rice prices as the NFA rice supply depleted. In terms of regular milled rice, the average price peaked in the second week of April 2018 at P39.97 per kilo which is 7.88% higher compared to the same period in 2017, while in terms of

well-milled rice, the average price reached as high as P44.11 per kilo in June 2018 or 5.58% higher year-on-year. In connection to the participants' intuition, local rice was pricier prior to the Rice Tariffication Law since there were quantitative restrictions on imported rice. Hence, almost all rice supplies and stocks were NFA. Furthermore, the RTL aids the rice prices in which consumers can now choose a variety of rice options at a lower price. Local rice was quite expensive even before the enactment of RTL until the present time, which makes the consumers want to buy imported rice since it is cheaper than local.

Theme 18: Hinders Too Much Price Increase

The participants asserted that Rice Tariffication Law addresses the problems by hindering too much increase in rice prices in the local market.

Participants had mentioned that the approval of RTL helps hinder too much price increase of rice within local markets where the rice prices are now stable. As pointed out by Department of Agriculture Secretary William Dar, consumers are now reaping the benefits of a lower price of rice which is the heart and soul of the Rice Tariffication Law or RTL. Filipino consumers can now breathe a sigh of relief as retail rice prices stabilize (DA Communications Group, 2020). As per participants' responses, rice prices are now stable due to the Rice Tariffication Law, which helps tame inflation. Moreover, with the implementation of RTL, consumers in our country can now savor the affordable and cheap price of rice since the law permitted and authorized the penetration of low-priced rice from a foreign country, which equilibrated and diminished rice prices. Thus, the Rice Tariffication Law has changed the many years-old systems of rice cost control, presenting rivalry and bringing down costs.

Conclusion

The study concluded that Republic Act No. 11203 or Rice Tariffication Law had brought both positive and negative implications that resulted in advantages and disadvantages to the Rice Trading Industry within Mandaue City, specifically on the part of the rice retailers who were the primary participants of the study. The positive implications were the increase in rice supply; at the same time, there is now a wide variety of rice for customers to have better choices. On the other hand, the negative implications appeared that there is intense competition in the market and low sales of local rice products. There were also comparisons between implications before and after Rice Tariffication Law was implemented, such as having a lesser supply of rice during pre-RTL and increasing rice supply during post- RTL. Additionally, the control of importations and prices transfers from the National Food Authority (NFA) to the traders and importers.

The study further conclude that Republic Act No. 11203 and Rice Tariffication Law had brought substantial changes and effects to the three aspects mentioned under the third domain of inquiry, such as the supply, demand, and price of rice within the locality. In terms of supply, there was an increased volume and supply of imported rice; however, it affected the supply of local or NFA rice, making it lesser in volume. The law addressed previous problems by providing the market with an abundant rice supply and eliminating rice shortages. In terms of demand, there is an increase demand on the part of imported rice since consumers prefer such a variety of rice products compared to the local ones. The law addressed previous problems by sufficing customers' demand for rice imports. In terms of price, imported rice which is abundant in supply, has cheaper or lower prices than the local rice that is more expensive to purchase, and the law addressed previous problems by hindering too much increase in rice prices.

Recommendations

Based on the result, the researchers proposed the following:

	RECOMMENDATIONS
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Rice Retailers	Results suggested that the new law harms the well-being of rice retailers. As a result of the new law, based on the majority of responses from the participants, imported rice is now cheaper than domestically grown rice resulting in reduced local rice sales and a decrease in the profit margin for rice retailers. For the rice retailers to have a deeper understanding of the Rice Tariffication Law, researchers suggested that they should actively participate and spare some time to attend whenever the local government conducts seminars and workshops, the Department of Agriculture, or any related agencies and entities. Aside from that, if they have their free time, they could also search the internet for available data and sources that could help them grasp much knowledge and have deeper discussions about the Rice Tariffication Law.
Rice Traders and Importers	The implications of the Rice Tariffication Law had considerable effects on the rice trading industry because after implementing Rice Tariffication Law, the National Food Authority (NFA) lost its power to manage imported rice prices and the supply of imported rice. Researchers suggested that the rice traders and importers should set favorable rates of percentage to settle prices
	of different types of imported rice based upon the tariff imposed by the government, whether it came from ASEAN or NON- ASEAN countries. There could be a group or association where the pricing should coincide with the suggested price of such rice products. Additionally, traders and importers could also provide incentives and discounts for rice retailers who will directly purchase from them to help the latter with maximizing their capital and increasing their profits.
Local Government	The researchers noticed that based on the participants' responses, the imported rice is still more profitable than the local rice; the participants may have enough knowledge of the law, but it is still better for them to be updated and educated again. Researchers suggested that the Local Government may conduct or organize a workshop such as the " <i>Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) Seminar and Workshop</i> " since they could be capable of conducting it considering that they have enough resources to hold such a workshop. The workshop's contents could embody discussions that will provide new learnings, ideas, and knowledge to the rice retailers; also, there are hands-on activities to engage with other participants. The workshop could help rice retailers gain much knowledge and fully understand the contents of the Rice

	Tariffication Law.
Department of Agriculture (DA)	One of the participants' main concerns is that they knew about the 10 billion annual allocation fund for the local farmers to enhance more in terms of the quality of the rice with the help of advanced technology. However, the participants seem to notice that our local farmers are still suffering in their situation; researchers suggested that the Department of Agriculture should provide a graph, data, and a list of how they allocate the money for transparency purposes. In addition, the Department of Agriculture could also impose benefits, incentives, or privileges that could be beneficial exclusively for the rice retailers that would help them carry on with their business or help increase their profit in selling rice products and commodities.
Consumers/Buyers	There is a discovery that the consumers prefer a high supply quantity of rice with various options. Consumers express their preferences for rice quality by paying a higher price for rice with the required characteristics; most consumers prefer imported rice over domestic rice, where the former has a more significant market share. As a result, most of the participants believe that
	imported rice is currently more saleable than local rice since imported rice is abundant in supply and comes in a variety of kinds, which is what consumers desire and where rice retailers acquire high profits. Researchers suggested that the consumers or buyers should try and consider purchasing local rice products so that they will be at par with the imported ones in terms of sales and not come behind or left out in the rice retail sector or industry. Moreover, the consumers or buyers could also browse the internet about the situation of the domestic rice sector of our country for them to feel the urge to support our local farmers by considering local rice as the primary kind of rice they will constantly

	purchase.
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