

**JOINT STATEMENT OF NFSP, CONFED, PSMA AND PANAYFED ON THE REPORTED ARRIVAL AT THE  
BATANGAS PORT OF IMPORTED SUGAR FROM THAILAND PRIOR TO THE ISSUANCE OF  
SRA SUGAR ORDER NO. 6, SERIES OF 2022-2023**

For the past two weeks, different sources have reported the arrival at the Batangas Port of 260 20-foot containers containing an estimated 5,000 metric tons (MT) or 100,000 bags of refined sugar from Thailand. This shipment worth around PhP400 million in the retail market, reportedly arrived on February 9, **before** the release on February 15 of Sugar Order No. 6, Series of 2022-2023 allowing the importation of 440,000 MT of sugar. That shipment has thus been publicly questioned as being unauthorized and therefore considered smuggled.

In response, the Bureau of Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service has reportedly asked the District Collector of the Port of Batangas to justify the release of the sugar by submitting copies of import clearances issued to the importer by the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

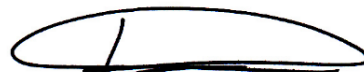
**As affected stakeholders, we are deeply concerned and wish to state the following:**

1. An open and transparent investigation must be quickly undertaken to establish the facts. If an order was issued to the Collector of the Port of Batangas to release the sugar, where is this order and who issued it? If, on the other hand, the sugar in question is not supported by a legitimate import authorization and Release Order from the SRA, that sugar should be seized by Customs, pursuant to existing laws.
2. The importer/s and official/s involved in the entry and subsequent release of this shipment should also be investigated, and if determined to be liable, should be made to answer to the full extent of the law.
3. We condemn in the strongest terms any and all acts of sugar smuggling, which constitute economic sabotage that wreak havoc on the livelihood of thousands of sugarcane farmers, 90% of whom are ARBs and marginal farmers who rely solely on sugar for their sustenance.
4. We urge the House of Representatives and the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee to conduct a full-blown investigation into this and other blatant cases of sugar smuggling. The public deserves to know who are responsible, and what concrete actions will be taken by the concerned government agencies to stop this nefarious practice.
5. It is our position that the sugar import program must not only be carefully calibrated in terms of volume and timing, so as not to severely affect millgate prices, it should also be open to all qualified traders and producers' groups through a process that is transparent, fair and equitable.
6. Lastly, we call on all sugar producers federations, unaffiliated associations and cooperatives, millers, labor groups and all affected stakeholders to join us in fighting for the survival of the sugar industry by exposing and opposing any blatant attempt at sugar smuggling.


Signed this 22nd day of February, 2023.



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