

Have a busted water pipe to report? See a pothole the size of a crater that you would want City Hall to notice? Tell us in text, photos or videos.

Visit [specials.sunstar.com.ph/tellittosunstar](http://specials.sunstar.com.ph/tellittosunstar)



Want a FREE Christmas Gift?

"Click here"

for you or for your love ones

[Home](#) [Local](#)

[News](#) [Business](#) [Opinion](#) [Sports](#) [Feature](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Entertainment](#) [SuperBalita](#) [Blogs](#) [Epaper](#) [Archiv](#)



- [Bacolod](#)
- [Baguio](#)
- [Cagayan de Oro](#)
- [Cebu](#)
- [Davao](#)
- [Dumaguete](#)



Type keyword/s to search

- [Iloilo](#)
- [Manila](#)
- [Pampanga](#)
- [Pangasinan](#)
- [Tacloban](#)
- [Zamboanga](#)

[Home](#) » [Manila](#) » [Local News](#)

# Senator: Cash-transfer program should require more backyard gardens

| [More](#) |

Thursday, November 3, 2011

THE Social Welfare and Development department should urge more beneficiaries of its Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program to plant backyard gardens to fight off hunger as food prices go up, Senator Francis Pangilinan said Thursday.

Pangilinan, chairman of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, made this call after a recent Social Weather Stations survey found 4.3 million families have gone hungry in the past quarter. The SWS survey also reported a rise in "overall hunger" in Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon.

[Plan your Sinulog week ahead and find out what's in store for Sinulog 2012.](#)

Iwan Azis of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Office of Regional Economic Integration has, meanwhile, has warned that rising food prices may be "the new normal."

In an article on the Vietnamese News Agency's Vietnam Plus website, Azis said "there are worrying signs that food price fluctuations are now taking place within a much higher band-width than ever before."

The ADB sees a 10-percent rise in food prices that will mean 64 million more people living in poverty. The rise in food prices has been attributed to production shortfalls from floods and droughts.

Rising demand in China and India for grain, oil, seeds, sugar, and livestock have also driven prices up, Vietnam Plus reported.

"If rising prices are the 'new normal,' then we cannot let rising hunger be part of this 'new normal.' It is unacceptable that people go on the entire day without any food to eat. We need to exhaust all means to find a creative solution," Pangilinan said, adding part of the solution can be found in "our own backyards."

"What we will need, especially for the short-term, is to increase coverage of the backyard gardening program under the government's 'Pantawid Pamilya' program (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, or the CCT), to give more poor and hungry families the chance to grow their own food and nourish themselves and their children. That's the first step to getting people out of hunger," the Senate agri panel chair said.

The CCT program offers beneficiaries money for meeting requirements like keeping their children healthy and in school. The Social Welfare department has been promoting backyard gardening to help poor families make sure their children are well-nourished.

"Self-sufficiency as a nation starts with self-sufficiency as a family, and it could very well start in our own backyards," he said.

Communities of CCT beneficiaries in Cagayan, Isabela, and Bohol have already put up backyard and communal gardens. In Kalinga, the CCT program requires beneficiaries to maintain backyard gardens and latrines. Gardening is also included in P28.96-million cash-for-work program that the Department of Social Welfare and Development launched in July for victims of calamities in Luzon.

Pangilinan said there is also a need for a long-term solution to hunger. "We need more people, especially the younger generation, to go back to farming in order to meet our food security goals. And government needs to pump in a lot of support for this sector in order for us to turn the tide around and be self-sufficient instead of relying on food imports. It's the only way for an agricultural country like ours," he said.

He said modernization, manufacturing, and new technology will mean little until the Philippines learns to feed itself.

"All our neighbors will be zooming past us, exporting their own agricultural products to the rest of the world, while we will be the Crippled Man of Asia, hands outstretched and always dependent on others," the senator warned. **(Jonathan de Santos/Sunnex)**