

# Belmonte says ASF suppressed in QC markets

**By Rio N. Araja**

QUEZON City Mayor Joy Belmonte on Friday said they were now coordinating with the Department of Agriculture's National Meat Inspection Service to look into the African swine fever-tainted frozen meat products at two supermarkets here.

Belmonte told a news conference she had instructed ASF Task Force action officer Emmanuel Velasco to meet with NMIS officials and inquire into the presence of infected meat products in the market despite NMIS certification.

"The source of the ASF did not come from us. We have already contained the ASF virus as early as in November [last year]," she cited.

But she was not inclined to sanction the two establishments that acted only in good faith.

"We cannot sanction them. Can you call them criminals? No, since they have cooperated well with us in our inspection. They did not hide their tainted products from us. In fact, they were willing to dispose of their inventory," she said.

She raised concern not only into the inspection of pork meat in popular supermarkets but also in small-time Chinese and Korean stores selling meat products, too.

"There is a lot of small stores here, such as those of China and Korea. I might have a meeting with them for them to cooperate with us," she said.

Meat products from SM Cherry Supermarket and an unidentified one located on Doña Carmen Avenue in Barangay Commonwealth were found positive of ASF infection.

Steven Cua, Amalgamated Supermarket Association president, cited the initiative of Belmonte to reach out to him and his members to be able address the problem of ASF.

"Quezon City is the first local government unit to take the effort in meeting with us," he said.

Belmonte said "I am drafting an executive order, and that I will invite them again [for them to see for themselves the content]. If it's already okay with them, I will sign the EO right in front of them," she said.