

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 611

Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT
AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALARMING
INCREASES IN THE PRICES OF BASIC COMMODITIES SUCH AS PORK,
FISH AND VEGETABLES, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF
IMPLEMENTING URGENT MEASURES THAT WILL CONTROL AND
MANAGE THE COST OF THESE BASIC COMMODITIES THAT POSE A
THREAT TO THE RIGHT TO FOOD OF FILIPINOS AND AFFECT THE
FRAGILE CONDITION OF MANY FILIPINO HOUSEHOLDS

1 WHEREAS, Article II, Section 9 of the 1987 Constitution mandates the State
2 to “promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and
3 independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that
4 provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of
5 living, and an improved quality of life for all”;

6 WHEREAS, Article XII, Section 1 of the same states that “[t]he goals of the
7 national economy are a more equitable distribution of opportunities, income, and
8 wealth; a sustained increase in the amount of goods and services produced by the
9 nation for the benefit of the people; and an expanding productivity as the key to
10 raising the quality of life for all, especially the underprivileged”;

11 WHEREAS, Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
12 states in part that, “[e]veryone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the
13 health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food...”;

14 WHEREAS, pursuant to Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on
15 Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), State parties recognize “the right of
16 everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including

1 adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living
2 conditions.” Under Article 11.2 of the ICESCR, States recognize that more immediate
3 and urgent steps may be needed to ensure “the fundamental right to freedom from
4 hunger and malnutrition”;

5 WHEREAS, a robust economy is founded on the sound decisions and effective
6 fiscal policies of the government which tend to benefit all citizens and businesses;

7 WHEREAS, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), “[t]he
8 COVID-19 pandemic, along with the associated lockdowns, mobility restrictions and
9 physical distancing rules, has not only led to a significant increase in unemployment
10 and considerable income losses for many people, but has also altered the spending
11 patterns of consumers and the level of price inflation that they face. In particular, the
12 lockdown measures have affected the supply of and demand for certain products and,
13 hence, their prices”;¹

14 WHEREAS, the crisis resulted in lower incomes and higher prices of some
15 foods, putting food out of reach for many, and undermining the right to food and
16 stalling efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: “Zero hunger”;

17 WHEREAS, in October 2020, the Philippines’ inflation rate went up to 2.5
18 percent, as food prices rose amid the coronavirus crisis. The Philippine Statistics
19 Authority (PSA) noted price increases in food, particularly meat, fish, and cereals, for
20 the month. Meat prices went up from 2.9 percent in September to 4.7 percent in
21 October, while fish prices jumped from 2.6 percent to 3.7 percent during the same
22 time period;²

23 WHEREAS, in December 2020, the increase in prices of basic goods was
24 sustained. The price of pork rose by 10 percent due to a surge in demand during the
25 holiday season as well as some supply limitations due to the African swine fever.
26 Agricultural products such as onions and tomatoes still led the 19.7 percent surge in
27 vegetable costs and fish prices also rose 3.1 percent in the said month compared to a
28 year ago;³

¹ International Labour Organization. (09 December 2020). *COVID -19 is driving up food prices all over the world*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/covid-19-is-driving-up-food-prices-all-over-the-world/>

² Rivas, R. (5 November 2020) *Meat, fish prices push inflation up to 2.5% in October 2020*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from: <https://www.rappler.com/business/inflation-rate-philippines-october-2020>

³ Luz, M. (5 January 2021) *Inflation faster in December at 3.5% as pork, vegetable prices sustain climb*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from: <https://cnnphilippines.com/business/2021/1/5/December-2020-inflation.html>

1 WHEREAS, the alarming surge in these basic commodities greatly affects the
2 country's poorest households or the bottom 30 percent income earners who are
3 anticipated to absorb an even faster spike in the cost of basic goods, which is
4 reported to climb 4.3 percent in December. This is faster than the general 2.6 percent
5 increase, and was felt through more costly food and drinks, transport fares, and
6 restaurant and miscellaneous goods;⁴

7 WHEREAS, the prices of agricultural commodities in the market continued to
8 climb as Filipinos welcomed the new year. The Department of Agriculture's (DA)
9 price watch showed increases in vegetable and meat prices by as much as 66 percent
10 from December 2020 as supplies across all food commodities have tightened for
11 several reasons;⁵

12 WHEREAS, DA Assistant Secretary for Agribusiness Kristine Evangelista said
13 prices might not stabilize until March or when the harvest season was expected to
14 begin and added that the DA was looking to strengthen Mindanao's production in
15 order to tame these surges;⁶

16 WHEREAS, as the national government shifts the public's focus and attention
17 on the implementation of its COVID-19 vaccination program, gut issues such as these
18 are relegated to the background. However, it is crucial that these price surges are
19 duly addressed as price volatility on these basic commodities adversely impacts the
20 very fragile condition and situation of many Filipino households given the economic
21 consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic;

22 WHEREAS, the dramatic slowdown in the economy, coupled with severe
23 restrictions on movement, has resulted in mass job losses over the last few months.
24 With no income or social support, millions of people cannot afford enough to eat –
25 many have been forced to beg on the streets for daily sustenance as they waited in
26 vain for government relief packages that either did not come or came too late. The
27 situation is compounded by many households also grappling with sharp drops in
28 remittance flows linked to a global rise in unemployment that have led many OFWs
29 to return home;

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Ocampo, K. (11 January 2021). *Vegetable, meat prices surged in January*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from: <https://business.inquirer.net/315550/vegetable-meat-prices-surged-in-january>

⁶ *Ibid*.

1 WHEREAS, increase in the prices of these basic commodities is an extra
2 burden for those whose income had fallen because of the economic shocks brought
3 about by the pandemic such as loss of employment and underemployment.
4 Undeniably, the pandemic has disproportionately affected those living in poverty.
5 UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed that, “those already living on a
6 knife's edge are being hit disproportionately hard by rising food prices, falling
7 incomes, interrupted vaccination programs and school closures.”⁷ Thus, increase in
8 the prices of basic commodities would exacerbate and intensify already fragile
9 conditions caused by conflicts, pests and weather shocks, – potentially leaving them
10 hungry, homeless and helpless;

11 WHEREAS, increases in the price of commodities can have a major impact on
12 the living standards of lower- income households, which generally spend most of
13 their income on food. Even a small increase can confront the members of such
14 households with difficult decisions. “Rising food prices and job losses triggered by
15 the COVID-19 pandemic have the potential to undermine progress towards the
16 Sustainable Development Goals and could even spark social unrest”, the ILO
17 stressed;⁸

18 WHEREAS, in 2020, United Nations emergency relief coordinator Mark
19 Lowcock already warned of the threat of famine due to the consequences of the
20 pandemic. “Possibly the most alarming thing... is the threat of the return of famines”,
21 he said. According to him, “the red lights are flashing and the alarm bells are ringing”,
22 and revealed that the number of acutely food-insecure people around the world could
23 grow to as much as 270 million – an 82 percent increase over the pre-pandemic
24 figure – which could bring about mass starvation;⁹

25 WHEREAS, David Beasley, Executive Director of the UN World Food
26 Programme (WFP), divulged that the socio-economic impact of the pandemic is
27 more devastating than the disease itself. According to him, “many people in low- and
28 middle-income countries, who a few months ago were poor but just about getting by,
29 now find their livelihoods have been destroyed”;¹⁰

⁷ Deutsche Welle. (01 December 2020). *UN warns of coronavirus surge in humanitarian needs*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from: <https://www.dw.com/en/un-warns-of-coronavirus-surge-in-humanitarian-needs/a-55780761>

⁸ *Supra* Note 1.

⁹ *Supra* Note 7.

¹⁰ UN News. (10 November 2020). *COVID-19 worsening food insecurity, driving displacement, warn UN agencies*. Retrieved 10 January 2021, from: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1077272>

1 WHEREAS, it is imperative for the Senate, along with other key agencies, to
2 discuss and assess the primary causes of this unabated increases in prices in basic
3 commodities including pork, vegetables and fish;

4 WHEREAS, the State and its agencies must identify the policy levers that can
5 rein in excessive volatility and maintain prices within a reasonable band;

6 WHEREAS, given the high degree of uncertainty around the virus and its
7 evolution, the exigent demands of the times require that the State study the number
8 of overlapping and reinforcing dynamics that have emerged that are affecting food
9 systems and food security and nutrition, such as but not limited to disruptions to
10 food supply chains, loss of income and livelihoods, a deepening of inequality,
11 disruptions to social protection programs, and altered food environments;

12 WHEREAS, it is also the duty of the Senate to review and enact policies and
13 measures that can temper down and manage the surging prices of these commodities
14 after its careful evaluation and assessment of the situation and factors affecting this
15 persisting problem;

16 WHEREAS, while the State must take action to control the spread of the
17 coronavirus, urgent action is also required to stop the growing hunger crisis and
18 build more resilient and sustainable food systems that work for all Filipinos. It must
19 also scale-up investments in food production, ensure producers earn a living income
20 by establishing minimum producer prices and other support mechanisms, and
21 ensure workers earn a living wage;

22 WHEREAS, there is need to show our countrymen that their government
23 deals with their problems on food security with the same zeal as the matter of
24 vaccination, quarantine, and travel restrictions with regard to COVID-19;

25 WHEREAS, even as we grapple to improve our ailing economy, equal, if not
26 greater, attention must be given to ensure that none of our countrymen go hungry in
27 the meantime;

28 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to direct the
29 appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the
30 alarming increases in the prices of basic commodities such as pork, fish and
31 vegetables, with the end in view of implementing urgent measures that will control

- 1 and manage the cost of these basic commodities that pose a threat to the right to food
- 2 of Filipinos and affect the fragile condition of many Filipino households.

Adopted,


LEILA M. DE LIMA