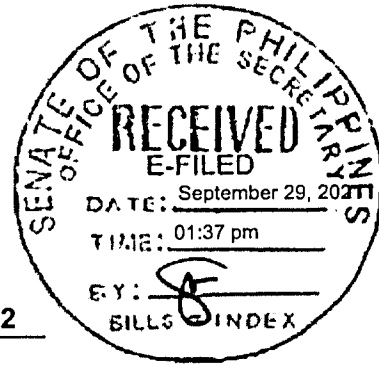


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)



SENATE

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 922

Introduced by Senator FRANCIS N. PANGILINAN

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND AGRARIAN REFORM TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE PROLIFERATION OF SMUGGLED CHINESE VEGETABLES IN THE MARKET

WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 10845 or the "Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016" declares it the policy of the State to promote the productivity of the agricultural sector and to protect farmers from unscrupulous traders and importers;

WHEREAS, the same law imposes higher sanctions for large-scale smuggling of agricultural products and declares the same as economic sabotage. Large-scale smuggling is committed through importing or bringing the agricultural products listed in Section 3 of said Act without the required import permit from regulatory agencies, or by misclassification, undervaluation, or misdeclaration upon filing or import entry and revenue declaration with the Bureau of Customs, among others;

WHEREAS, during a virtual briefing on 28 September 2021, Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary William Dar advised the public that smuggled Chinese vegetables, such as carrots and cabbage, have entered the market via Subic Port;

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) did not issue import permits for said produce and the shipments have been misdeclared as "other items." According to Secretary Dar, the BPI only issues import permits for frozen mixed vegetables and processed vegetables "intended for embassies and hotels";

WHEREAS, since no import permit or sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances have been issued for said produce, the DA advised the public that these vegetables must be avoided in view of the uncertainty of their pesticide and formalin content;¹

WHEREAS, smuggled agricultural produce may contain invasive pests and host various diseases. The exposure of other food products to these goods poses a serious threat to the health of our people, the productivity of the agriculture sector, and our country's food security. As an example, smuggled pork from China was the culprit behind the recent outbreak of African Swine Fever in the country;

¹ Business World. *Pesticide advisory issued against smuggled vegetables*. Published on 28 September 2021. Available at <https://www.bworldonline.com/pesticide-advisory-issued-against-smuggled-vegetables/>. Accessed on 29 September 2021.

WHEREAS, Benguet farmers have alerted the DA as early as August 2021 about the imported produce being sold at the Divisoria public market in Manila. In response, the DA noted that the BPI had not issued any import permits for vegetables;

WHEREAS, according to Augusta Balanoy of Highland Vegetable Multipurpose Cooperative, a larger volume of foreign carrots was spotted in key markets in the country. Their counterparts in Cebu have alerted them that four container vans filled with carrots from China have been distributed in their markets on a weekly basis;

WHEREAS, Balanoy's group conducted their own investigation on the matter and found that small warehouses near Divisoria in Manila have been releasing imported vegetables to Metro Manila markets whenever there is a rise in the prices of Benguet vegetables. They have secured boxes of the imported carrots with markings indicating that these came from China;

WHEREAS, farmers groups such as the Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura and the Federation of Free Farmers have lobbied for the construction of first border inspection facilities at major ports in the country. According to Secretary Dar, while the project has been approved and already funded, construction of the facilities is being hampered by bureaucratic and technical issues;²

WHEREAS, the entry of cheap, smuggled carrots resulted in drastic drops in orders from local farmers causing further distress in the sector amidst the pandemic struggle.³ Filipino farmers suffered devastating losses since the government started imposing restrictive measures and lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The farm and business operations of smallholder farmers who lack the means to transport their products have been disrupted;

WHEREAS, it is the duty of the State to protect the agriculture sector, our local farmers, and the public from the manipulative schemes of economic saboteurs that endanger the production and supply of agricultural products, stability of prices, and the country's food security;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved by the Senate of the Philippines to direct the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food, and Agrarian Reform to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the proliferation of smuggled Chinese vegetables in the market.

Adopted,


FRANCIS N. RANGILINAN

² Inquirer.net. *DA: Don't buy smuggled vegetables*. Published on 29 September 2021. Available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1494392/da-dont-buy-smuggled-vegetables>. Accessed on 29 September 2021.

³ Inquirer.net. *Smuggled carrots flooding markets alarm Benguet farmers*. Published on 27 September 2021. Available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1493252/smuggled-carrots-flooding-markets-alarm-benguet-farmers>. Accessed on 29 September 2021.