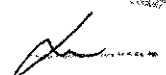


FOURTEENTH CONGRESS }
OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES }
First Regular Session }

8 MAR 27 '08

SENATE
P. S. Res. No. 333

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Sen. M. A. Madrigal

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, AGRICULTURE AND FOOD, AGRARIAN REFORM, AND TRADE AND COMMERCE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE COUNTRY'S RICE SUPPLY AND THE RESURGENT RICE AND FOOD CRISES WITH THE END IN VIEW OF URGENTLY ADOPTING A FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN THE SHORT- AND LONG-TERM

WHEREAS local rice prices have increased by 30 percent since last year;

WHEREAS according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the international food prices index rose 37 percent in 2007;

WHEREAS according to the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS), retail prices for Regular Milled Rice, Well Milled Rice, Premium Rice, Fancy Rice average around P25/kg, P27/kg, P30/kg, and P40/kg, respectively, as of 11 March 2008;

WHEREAS despite efforts by Malacañang to downplay the current rice crisis, the fact is, the government has requested Vietnam to continue supplying about 1.5 million metric tons of rice to secure the local rice supply for the year 2008;

WHEREAS the Department of Agriculture has started to request fast-food chains and restaurants to give half orders of rice to customers, if requested, as a measure to save on the rice supply;

WHEREAS the UN World Food Programme projected that the international increase in food and grains prices will most likely continue until year 2010;

WHEREAS despite the worldwide nature of the food crisis, it is of urgency to look into the government's food security and agricultural programs and policies – or lack of these – because of the recurrent problem of the shortfalls in rice production every year;

WHEREAS according to the National Food Authority (NFA), the country's rice harvest last year amounted to only 6.44 million metric tons, even though the annual requirement is 11.8 million metric tons;

WHEREAS according to US Department of Agriculture data in 2004, the Philippines ranked third among the world's top rice importers after Indonesia and Nigeria;

WHEREAS rampant land conversion of prime agriculture lands into industrial and residential use is seen as a major cause in dwindling rice and agriculture yields;

WHEREAS according to the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, palay plantations decreased from 4.13 million in 2004 to 4.07 million hectares in 2005, which amounts to 56,200 hectares of agricultural crop area lost between 2004 and 2005 due to unregulated land conversion;

WHEREAS lack of government support for agriculture in the face of rising costs of farm inputs has resulted in the high cost of production of rice, and the uncompetitiveness of Philippine rice farming;

WHEREAS according to a study conducted by the International Rice Research Institute, Filipinos spend, in 1999 prices, P44,387 per hectare a year for rice, while our neighboring countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and China spend only P31,798, P33,509, P34,169 and P36,560, respectively;

WHEREAS this situation of uncompetitive rice production costs and the lack of government priority policy in support of rice farmers has adversely fostered the country's dependence on increasing rice importation as well as the proliferation of rice smuggling;

WHEREAS the NFA estimated in 2001 that the government is losing around P1.8 billion to rice smuggling each year, while around 500,000 metric tons of rice are smuggled to the country every year;

WHEREAS although the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas has repeatedly called attention to the proliferation of "rice syndicates and rice smugglers," the government has demonstrated little political will in seriously going after the real masterminds behind such activities despite some showcase attempts at investigating some customs and port officers in 2002 and 2006;

WHEREAS as early as 2003, there were reports that then Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn "Joc-Joc" Bolante would frequently visit the LTA building of the Arroyos along with a certain Kishore Hemlani, who was accused of importing infested rice that the government procured in 2002 for nine billion pesos;

WHEREAS the present rice crisis has further enticed opportunist traders to sell NFA rice at prevalent higher market prices or engage in "rice diversion";

WHEREAS 120,000 sacks of NFA rice were caught in Northern Mindanao, recently, in an alleged attempt to divert said stocks;

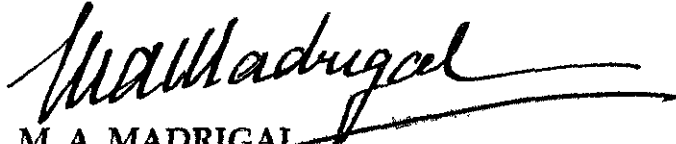
WHEREAS the State has a responsibility to ensure stability in the supply of the country's main staple as well as its affordability and accessibility and it falls upon Congress to ensure that this is carried out, especially on behalf of the poor who are

already weighed down by rising oil, power and water rates;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED to direct the Committees on Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Food, Agrarian Reform, and Trade and Commerce to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the current status of the country's rice supply and the resurgent rice and food crises with the end in view of adopting a food security and agriculture development policy;

BE IT RESOLVED FURTHER that the Congressional Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization undertake an assessment of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997, and propose an action plan to mitigate the effects of the food crisis.

Adopted,


M. A. MADRIGAL