

23 MAY 11 P1:06

SENATE

P.S.R. No. 608

RECEIVED BY: 

INTRODUCED BY SENATOR RISA HONTIVEROS

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY OF PUBLIC OFFICERS AND INVESTIGATIONS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE ISSUANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 32 ON THE USE OF BIOFERTILIZERS

WHEREAS, on 27 April 2023, the Department of Agriculture issued Memorandum Order No. 32, series of 2023, or the "Implementing Guidelines on the Distribution and Use of Biofertilizers", which sets the guidelines on the distribution and use of biofertilizers for CY 2023 to improve rice production;

WHEREAS, Memorandum Order No. 32 claims to "aim to improve the productivity of farmers in rice production in spite of the high prices of fertilizers by distributing biofertilizers which will complement the use of inorganic fertilizers and support the balance fertilization program";

WHEREAS, Memorandum Order No. 32 provides that the use of two bags of inorganic fertilizer urea per hectare costs ₱4,000, while its "selected biofertilizer can substitute for at least two bags of urea without sacrificing the yield";

WHEREAS, Memorandum Order No. 32 also provides that "[t]heoretically, a savings of more than ₱2,000 per hectare can be realized if the cost of biofertilizer is less than ₱2,000 per hectare" and "[i]f the biofertilizer chosen by the DA-RFOs is less expensive, the fertilizer savings is increased";

WHEREAS, according to independent sources, agricultural group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG), and as reported in media, there is no basis for the issuance of Memorandum Order No. 32 since contrary to the claim of Memorandum Order No. 32 of ₱4,000 per hectare, the current cost of urea is only ₱1,100 per bag; and at two bags per hectare, the cost of urea is only ₱2,200 per hectare;

WHEREAS, Memorandum Order No. 32 provides that "the funds for [the] [p]roject shall be sourced out from the fertilizer support program of the National Rice Program";

WHEREAS, there is a need to investigate the basis for the issuance of Memorandum Order No. 32 on whether the price of fertilizer and cost of urea per bag are indeed high to warrant the insistence of the Department of Agriculture to use biofertilizer;

WHEREAS, there is a need to conduct a study on whether the use of biofertilizer instead of fertilizer will improve the productivity of farmers in rice production and whether its use is indeed more cost-efficient for farmers;

WHEREAS, at a time of high prices and looming El Niño, it is imperative to review the policies of the Department of Agriculture on rice production;

WHEREAS, there is a need to investigate this matter to prevent another Fertilizer Fund Scam that happened almost 20 years ago in 2004, where around P728 million in fertilizer funds of the Department of Agriculture earmarked for the purchase and distribution of fertilizers to farmer beneficiaries were allegedly diverted and used primarily for the re-election efforts of a former President;

WHEREAS, if there are identified individuals involved in this, then the Senate should hold accountable these individuals for possible violation of any law;

NOW BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, TO DIRECT THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY OF PUBLIC OFFICERS AND INVESTIGATIONS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE ISSUANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 32, ON THE USE OF BIOFERTILIZERS.

Adopted,

Risa Hontiveros *jet*
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