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SENATE
P.S. Res 770

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Introduced by Senator Poe

RESOLUTION

URGING THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE WIDESPREAD INFESTATION OF 'COCOLISAP' IN THE CALABARZON THAT THREATENS THE PHILIPPINES' \$2-BILLION COCONUT INDUSTRY, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF RECOMMENDING LONG-LASTING MEASURES TO CONTAIN THE OUTBREAK OF SCALE INSECTS TO OTHER PROVINCES AND TO HELP THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR AS A WHOLE IN COMBATTING THE PROBLEM

Whereas, the coconut industry plays a key role in national development, which comprises 60 percent of the world's coconut exports and is among the top ten export produce of the country. The Philippine coconut industry is worth an estimated \$2 billion;

Whereas, about one third of the country's arable agricultural land or 3.26 million hectares is planted to 340 million coconuts in 68 out of 79 provinces, which provides a significant source of income for 3.5 million Filipino coconut farmers;

Whereas, about 13 varieties of coconuts are known in the Philippines, yielding over 15 billion nuts annually;

Whereas, a debilitating disease—detected as early as 2009 by the Regional Crop Protection Center of the Department of Agriculture in Barangay Ulango, Tanauan City, Batangas and first discovered in Indonesia—is destroying coconut farms in Region IV-A that covers the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon (CALABARZON) and Basilan province in Mindanao;

Whereas, about 2.1 million coconut trees were already affected by the coconut scale insect (scientific name: *aspidotus rigidus*), also known as *cocolisap* as of June 30, spreading quickly compared with only 1.2 million affected trees recorded in May¹ Batangas was said to be the hardest-hit province;

Whereas, the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) already declared an “outbreak” of *cocolisap* infestation, with the pest causing “much economic damage” and infecting “more than 60 percent of the total production²”;

Whereas, the country's coconut industry has already suffered a huge setback in the spread of *cocolisap*, with P200 million in mounting losses as of 2013 because of the

¹ “Infested coconut trees now at 2.1 million. BusinessWorld online. June 30, 2014.

<http://bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Economy&title=Infested-coconut-trees-now-at-2.1-million&id=90115>

² “PCA declares ‘cocolisap’ outbreak. Interaksyon. June 30, 2014. <http://www.interaksyon.com/article/90190/pca-declares-cocolisap-outbreak>

infestation³. Yield losses averaged 60 percent, ranging from 25 percent for “moderate” infestations up to 100 percent⁴;

Whereas, the coconut industry may stand to lose up to P33 billion in annual losses⁵ if the situation is left unmanaged;

Whereas, President Benigno Aquino III signed Executive Order No. 169 on June 5 to establish emergency measures to manage the spread of *cocolisap*. It puts the PCA to effectively control, manage and eradicate the pest;

Whereas, the government has allotted P400 million for the Scale Insect Emergency Action Program of the PCA⁶. Newly-appointed Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization Francis Pangilinan said among the emergency measures being considered include mechanical (leaf pruning) and chemical (use of organic pesticides and biological control agents)⁷;

Whereas, farmers feared that the use of chemicals to fight *cocolisap* may have wide-reaching implications on the health of consumers. In fact, the Philippines lost nata de coco product sales abroad when it was learned that the coconut products were laced with chemicals⁸;

Whereas, environmental advocate Greenpeace urged the Agriculture department to stop promoting the use of pesticides to combat *cocolisap*,⁹ citing the research of the Task Force on Systemic Pesticides of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature which confirmed the harmful impact of pesticides, particularly neonicotinoids and fipronil (neonics), that threaten the world’s biodiversity and ecosystems;

RESOLVED, that urgent measures to contain the spread of scale insects afflicting the coconut industry should be long-lasting and must not be harmful to the environment and the people;

RESOLVED, FURTHER, that the government provide assistance to affected farmers and income-earners in the coconut industry;

RESOLVED, FINALLY, that an information campaign in the local government units with *cocolisap* infestation and how to combat the problem be massively disseminated and in the long-run, a comprehensive omnibus approach must be undertaken to resolve the issue.

Adopted,


GRACE POE

³ “How ‘cocolisap’ infestation threatens Philippines.” ABS-CBN News online. June 9, 2014. <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/focus/06/09/14/how-cocolisap-infestation-threatens-philippines>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “Malacañang issues order to contain coconut pest outbreak. Rappler online. June 6, 2014. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/59857-executive-order-169-coconut-scale-outbreak>

⁶ “P400-M earmarked to fight cocolisap.” Manila Bulletin online. June 16, 2014. <http://www.mb.com.ph/p400-m-earmarked-to-fight-cocolisap/>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cure vs coco pest opposed. Philippine Daily Inquirer online. June 27, 2014. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/614744/cure-vs-coco-pest-opposed-tagged-harmful>

⁹ Greenpeace urges DA and PCA to stop promoting pesticide use against cocolisap. June 26, 2014.

<http://www.greenpeace.org/seasia/ph/press/releases/Greenpeace-urges-DA-and-PCA-to-stop-promoting-pesticide-use-against-cocolisap/>