



SENATE
P.S. Res 879

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Introduced by Senator Poe

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RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD TO INVESTIGATE THE IMPORTATION OF RICE INFESTED WITH 'BUKBOK' OR WEEVILS RESULTING IN INFERIOR QUALITY OF RICE AND DELAYED DELIVERY OF AFFORDABLE RICE TO THE PROVINCES, WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF RECOMMENDING MEASURES TO ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY OF QUALITY RICE, PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUNISHING INDIVIDUALS FOR RECKLESS DISREGARD FOR THE LIVES AND SAFETY OF FILIPINOS

1 WHEREAS, the Philippine government practices the principle of separation of
2 powers and practices a system of checks and balances among the three branches of
3 government;

4 WHEREAS, Article XI, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states that
5 "[p]ublic office is a public trust," and "[p]ublic officers and employees must, at all
6 times, be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity,
7 loyalty, and efficiency; act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives";

8 WHEREAS, Article II, Section 27 also provides that "[t]he State shall maintain
9 honesty and integrity in the public service and take positive and effective measures
10 against graft and corruption";

11 WHEREAS, Article II, Section 28: "Subject to reasonable conditions prescribed
12 by law, the State adopts and implements a policy of full public disclosure of all its
13 transactions involving public interest";

14 WHEREAS, Article III, Section 7 states that "[t]he right of the people to
15 information on matters of public concern shall be recognized" and "[a]ccess to
16 official records, and to documents and papers pertaining to official acts,
17 transactions, or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for

1 policy development, shall be afforded the citizen, subject to such limitations as may
2 be provided by law”;

3 WHEREAS, being an agricultural country, the fundamental law, under Article
4 XII, Section 1 declares that “[t]he State shall promote industrialization and full
5 employment based on sound agricultural development and agrarian reform, through
6 industries that make full and efficient use of human and natural resources, and
7 which are competitive in both domestic and foreign markets”;

8 WHEREAS, the National Food Authority (NFA), an attached agency of the
9 Department of Agriculture, is tasked with ensuring food security and stability of
10 supplies and prices of rice, the country’s staple, and at any time, it is mandated to
11 ensure a 15-day buffer stock and 30 days of stock during lean months;

12 WHEREAS, during a Senate inquiry last February on issues that the country
13 has depleted stocks of state-subsidized rice, senators learned that the NFA was lax
14 in ensuring the availability of NFA rice since early last year despite the country
15 having achieved record harvests of 19.4 million metric tons of palay (unmilled rice)
16 in 2017;

17 WHEREAS, it was also learned that buffer stock was only good for 1.7 days as
18 of the latter part of February¹;

19 WHEREAS, the inter-agency NFA Council recommended the importation of
20 250,000 metric tons of rice from Thailand and Vietnam;

21 WHEREAS, 133,000 sacks of imported rice arrived at the Subic Bay Freeport
22 from Thailand last August 2, while some of the 200,000 sacks of rice that arrived in
23 Tabaco City, Albay were infested with rice weevils²;

24 WHEREAS, the grains agency has blamed the delays in the unloading of rice
25 inside the ships due to bad weather for the weevil infestation, with the NFA saying
26 that the heat inside the ship had been conducive to the hatching of the pest³;

27 WHEREAS, authorities have started to fumigate the pest-infested rice, while
28 Agriculture Sec. Emmanuel Piñol dismissed concerns that weevil-infested rice is not

¹ Tan, L. 2018, Feb. 27. ‘Senator blasts NFA chief for creating rice shortage panic’. CNN Philippines website. <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2018/02/27/NFA-rice-shortage-Senate-hearing.html>

² Quintos, K., Omelan, T. 2018, Aug. 22. ‘Inangkat na bigas na umabot sa Subic, Albay, nakitaan ng bukbok’. ABS-CBN News online. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/22/18/inangkat-na-bigas-na-umabot-sa-subic-albay-nakitaan-ng-bukbok>

³ ABS-CBN News. 2018, Aug. 23. ‘NFA blames unloading delays for weevil infestation of rice’. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/23/18/nfa-blames-unloading-delays-for-weevil-infestation-of-rice>

1 safe for consumption and even went on to say that he was willing to eat bukbok-
2 infested rice⁴;

3 WHEREAS, despite assurances that weevil-infested rice is safe to eat after
4 fumigation, still, the chemicals used in fumigating the rice bags pose a danger to the
5 lives of Filipinos, an estimated 10 million of whom rely on the affordable staple every
6 day;

7 WHEREAS, the pest infestation of NFA rice, which results in low quality of rice
8 as weevils cause the grains to be powdery, could be blamed to the gross negligence
9 and incompetence of officials running the grains agency;

10 WHEREAS, the infestation also deepens public misgivings about the way the
11 NFA carries out its mandate of ensuring that supply and price of affordable rice are
12 stable, amid reports that the northernmost province of Batanes has run out of NFA
13 rice, rice prices in Zamboanga and Tawi-Tawi have reached P70 and P100 a kilo,
14 respectively prompting officials to declare a state of calamity, supply of affordable
15 rice in some areas remains low to almost nil despite the arrival of imported rice, the
16 NFA has diverted P5.1 billion intended to ensure stability of price and supply of rice
17 and corn last year to pay off its debt, and the Agriculture department now considers
18 distributing smuggled rice to temper prices;

19 WHEREAS, good or quality rice for Filipinos means all is well and sharing the
20 blessings across a table with family and friends;

21 WHEREAS, to take away the importance of a good, quality rice is to diminish
22 the most fundamental of all Filipino values;

23 WHEREAS, as taxpayers, the public deserves to know the surrounding
24 circumstances and to deny all relevant information is contrary to the tenets of
25 democracy and transparency;

26 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, that the Senate Committee on Agriculture
27 and Food be directed to investigate the importation of rice infested with "bukbok" or
28 weevils resulting in inferior quality of rice and delayed delivery of affordable rice to
29 the provinces, with the objectives of recommending measures to ensure the

⁴ Rivas, R. 2018, Aug. 28. 'Serve me bukbok rice, I will eat it'. Rappler.
<https://www.rappler.com/business/210584-emmanuel-pinol-will-eat-weevil-bukbok-rice>

1 availability, accessibility and affordability of quality rice, protecting public health and
2 punishing individuals for reckless disregard for the lives and safety of Filipinos.

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4 Adopted,


GRACE POE