



## **National Movement for Food Sovereignty**

*A member of Asia Pacific Network for Food Sovereignty (APNFS)*

A COALITION OF NATIONAL FARMER FEDERATION, NGOs & CONSUMER GROUPS:

*PKMP, PKMM, KABAPA, PKSK, PANGISDA, AMMMA-K, MAKABAYAN, AKTIB, IRDF*

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### **WORLD FOOD DAY 2018: PEASANT AND URBAN POOR SECTORS CALL FOR SUPPORT FOR RICE FARMERS TO HELP ACHIEVE #ZeroHunger**

**Diliman, Quezon City, October 17, 2018** – Eighty members of peasant and urban poor sectors held a protest today, 9:00 am to 11:00 am, in front of the Department of Agriculture (DA) as commemoration of this year's World Food Day. The Integrated Rural Development Foundation (IRDF) and the National Movement for Food Sovereignty (NMFS), with the support from the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ), called for the DA to action on the limited supply of cheap rice available in the market which burdens the masses, especially the poor. The groups, who exclaimed “Zero Hunger, Now Na!” cited the importance of the availability and accessibility of cheap staple to eradicate hunger. Their movement is to appeal to the DA Secretary Manny Piñol to discuss with them in a dialogue the issue on rice.

Referring to the latest SWS survey, there is an estimate of 3.1 million Filipino families experiencing involuntary hunger, hence, the group stated that the limited availability of cheap rice in the market is not helping this hunger situation. The NMFS urged the National Food Authority (NFA), which is now under the DA, to support local rice farmers in order to augment the supply of cheap rice and not just rely on imports. Ka Erning Ofracio of Alternatibong Kilusan Tungo sa Iisang Bayan (AKTIB) expressed his dismay over the inadequate supply of cheap rice accessible in the market that has been a burden to the poor. With the high prices of commercial rice in the market, many Filipinos, particularly the poor, prefer to buy NFA rice. However, the limited amount of NFA rice allowed to be bought per individual makes the situation more difficult for them since this resulted to long queues in NFA outlets.

Ka Jhun Pascua of Pambansang Katipunan ng Makabayang Magbubukid (PKMM) and Ka Maning Rosario of Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Samahan sa Kanayunan (PKSK) urged the NFA to intensify their palay procurement from our local rice farmers especially during this time. They said that now that rice harvest season is around the corner, it means there will be more rice available, and they hope that the government can buy farmer's harvest to support not only the farmers, but also the poor. They also stressed that the NFA should increase the buying price of palay to 22-23 pesos. Ka Maning reported that presently, in Nueva Ecija, buying prices of palay already decreased to 13-14 pesos per kilo. With the high costs of production combined with the increasing price of fuel, there was barely any profit made by the rice farmers. In fact, most farmers are in huge debt due to the expensive production costs.

Ka Ed Mora, chairman of Pambansang Kaisahan ng Magbubukid sa Pilipinas (PKMP) and cluster head of the NMFS, lamented the decision of the government to put Rice Tariffication Bill as an urgent measure. He argued that relying the supply of our staple on importation will be detrimental to our food security. Despite the arrival of imports, the prices of rice remain high. The Palace has clarified before that there is no actual shortage of rice and that supply of rice is being held by the private sector. But the government's answer to counter the growing inflation is still to import rice. He also added that opening the rice trade will have the possibility of increasing world prices of rice again, when high demand for rice comes from the Philippines, just like what happened back in 2008.

Chief of Staff and Head Executive Assistant of the DA, Ferdinand F. Piñol, meet the group protesting outside of the agency and announced that the DA is open to face the farmers and hear their position in a dialogue. The group is looking forward to hold a dialogue with Secretary Piñol, which will possibly take place in the following week.

The group challenged the Senate to delay rice tariffication until thorough study and measures have been implemented to reduce uncompetitiveness of local rice farmers and a comprehensive domestic support for the rice sector has been put in place and expanded. They also urged the government to employ wide policy flexibility including price control, import control and safeguards for rice to address price and supply volatility, price manipulation, and cartel operations. Lastly, they suggested that the DA strengthen public-public partnership between NFA, local government units and farmers' associations, cooperatives, rice millers and entrepreneurs to ensure that government procures directly from palay producers, build sufficient buffer stock through a network of producers and rice millers, and quickly distribute stocks through a network of consumers associations, cooperatives and small retailers. According to them, through these actions, it is possible to eradicate hunger and to improve the welfare of the poor and our local farmers.

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