



ONE VOICE

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EDITORIAL

RICE TARIFFICATION LAW: BOON OR BANE?

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The rationale of Republic Act No. 11203 (Rice Tariffication Law) is promising as it reads: "It is the policy of the State to ensure the food security and to make the country's agricultural sector viable, efficient and globally competitive. The State adopts the use of tariffs in lieu of non-tariff restrictions to protect local producers of agricultural products" (RA 11203, Section 1).

Speaking of rice as the staple food of Filipinos, the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) aims to secure at any given period of the year an available and sufficient supply of rice, accessible at affordable prices for all rice consumers of the country. It is also envisioned that the Law would effectively contribute to the modernization and global competitiveness of the Philippine rice industry.

However, the implementation of RTL since March 2019 has resulted to negative effects. In the first place, far from ensuring the so-called "food security" for the rice consuming public, indicators point to the opposite direction. In so far as the availability of rice supply in the market is concerned, there is no question of it. But, availability is one thing and accessibility another given that this is dependent on the affordability of the price of rice per kilogram. In other words, in spite of greater supply of rice available in the market, the price of rice

has not considerably gone down as projected. The current price of a good kind of rice per kilogram has stood above the Php40.00 mark. Seemingly the government economic managers have miscalculated two determinants, which are beyond the control of RTL. One, the price of rice in the global market is volatile. It is not much cheaper due to the small size of the global rice market itself. Two, in the face of the current deregulation policy, rice traders are free to manipulate at will the price of rice in the local market. One could not also dismiss the presence and operation of rice cartels in the country that can play with the supply and price levels of rice in the market to rake in big profits for themselves.

Ironically, while the price of imported rice remains very high, the farm gate price of locally produced *palay* stands at a dismally low price, as low as between Php7.00 to Php10.00 per kilogram. Never before, has the price of *palay* plummeted down so low relative to its production cost. With imported rice flooding the market, rice traders would go for imported stocks instead of buying the local rice produce. Consequently, there is an extremely low demand for the local rice produce. In this regard, even the NFA (National Food Authority) is no longer in a position to alleviate the painful plight of our local rice growers. Under the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), the NFA is limited only to maintaining buffer stock for emergencies and disaster relief. For a thirty-day buffer stock (to be procured locally), a budget of approximately Php31 billion is required. Unfortunately, the government can only provide NFA a procurement budget of Php7 billion. The rice farmers then are left with no other option but to sell their *palay* or rice to unscrupulous middlemen who practically dictate upon farmers the ridiculously low prices for their produce.

In effect, our farmers' margin of profit is very little. They produce rice at a very high cost and sell their harvest at a very low price. After paying back the cost of production, a meager income is left to them to spend for food and other basic necessities. And for many farmers who do not

own the land they till, they have to pay land rent and contend with usurious interest rates for debts they have incurred. It is tragic that those who work so hard to produce rice would find little food on their tables. In such a situation, who among our local rice farmers would continue planting rice? Who would be motivated to work in the rice farms, when the prospect of a decent income is nil?

According to RTL (Section 13), a *Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund* (Rice Fund) shall be created from generated tariffs on rice importation. The Rice Fund is pegged annually to the tune of Php10 billion for the next six years following the approval of the Act. It shall be allocated and disbursed, as follows: 50% for Rice Farm Machineries and Equipment; 30% for Rice Seed Development, Propagation and Promotion; 10% for Expanded Rice Credit Assistance; and 10% for Rice Extension Services. The delivery of these allocations shall be coursed through pertinent government agencies, banks and local government units. *(Continued on page 11.....)*

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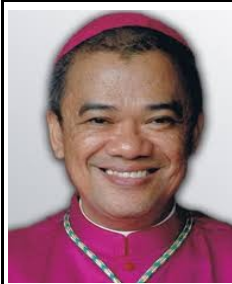
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CHRIST AND THE WORKERS

Most Rev. Gerardo A. Aminaza, D.D.
Chairperson-CWS National

Message of Most Rev. Gerardo Alminaza, D.D. Bishop, Diocese of San Carlos City to the Forum of Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform, Kapayapaan & Pilgrim for Peace last September 12, 2019 in St. Martin de Pores Hall in Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City with theme: Ring Out Peace! Our Urgent Call

Greetings of Peace from all of us here in Negros Island.

These past months, my priests in the Diocese of San Carlos have buried most of the 59 bodies of the victims of extra judicial killings in five (5) cities and two (2) towns in Negros Island. In Guihulngan City alone, 24 people have been summarily killed since 2017. A certain group circulated a list of those to be killed. A medical doctor in the city health office found her name in the list. Fear for her life prevented her to provide health services to thirty-three (33) barangays in that city.

"I am Doctor Mary Rose Sancelan. I worked as City Health officer of Guihulngan. I am the only doctor serving here. My workload is heavy doing both consultations and administrative work. I am accused that I am the CPP-NPA leader JB Regalado. I felt helpless and paranoid when I go out to work. Of course, we are afraid to die. I am no longer free to go to the countryside. I am no longer free to do basic services like school-based immunization."

A climate of violence, fear and impunity grieves our island. Some of my priests and lay people have cried for grief over these senseless deaths that left children orphaned, parents burying their children, wives or husbands widowed. But we

also heard some voices approving of these killings and blaming the victims. Others have remained deaf and mute due to fear and apathy.

Negros Island has a long history of violence brought about by centuries old issues of land rights, poverty and injustice. Recently however, the termination of the peace talks and the release of Memorandum Order no. 32 and Executive Order 70 have dramatically escalated EJKs in our beloved Island of Negros. This culture of violence has undermined the sanctity of human life

Pope Francis tells us that the right to life is the first among human rights. The killings in Negros must stop. We must invigorate conversations in our church communities to console ourselves and the bereaved families of EJK victims to draw strength from our solidarity and to have a common goal in addressing economic and political realities. Second, we should promote integral peace, push for social justice and socio-political economic reforms that will address the historical roots of the conflict in the Negros Island and the whole country.

Since we started to ring the church bells in Negros Island, the killings have lessened but have not stopped. Fear has drowned most of our people's voices but our people in whose faces we see God's image have given us strength and hope.

Thus, we continue our loud cry for peace. We continue to fervently pray for the killings to stop. And for God's love, justice and peace to reign in our land.

Thank you for being in solidarity with us here in Negros Island. Thank you for praying with us and for us. Thank you for always remembering us. We are all in this together. The killings must stop. And what has happened in Negros should not happen anywhere else.

Let's continue to work together for peace..... integral peace, lasting peace.

Featured Article

Formation of Defend Negros #StopTheAttacks Network Timely In Face of Continuing Human Rights Violations in the Island



Launching of Defend Negros #StopTheAttacks Network at Commission of Human Rights (CHR), Quezon City.

The formation of the Defend Negros #StopTheAttacks Network on June 22, 2019 is timely in the face of the continuing human rights violations. According to the Northern Negros Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (NNAHRA) and various fact sheets these violations were committed by state forces (2nd Negros Occidental Provincial Mobile Company and 62nd Infantry Battalion, PA, Silay City PNP elements, elements of 79th IB PA, SCAA paramilitary elements under the Philippine Army, PNP-SAF, and Joint Investigating Task Group, RPA, 6th SAF-SAB, RMF, 33rd CMO Company), suspected armed goons of the land owner and security guards of different landlords in Negros Islands.

Included in the network are representatives from the Catholic and Protestant Churches, students, artists, and members of other sectors including the *Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura* (UMA) and the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW). Both UMA and NFSW are part

of the Church People - Workers Solidarity (CWS).

Right after it was formed, 10 individuals including a United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) pastor were arrested from June 25-26 and tagged as members and leaders of the CPP-NPA in Himamaylan City in Negros Occidental.

Then on June 27, Lito Ito, a *habal-habal* driver was shot dead outside a store in Bgy. Buenavista, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental by two armed men aboard a motorcycle.

Almost 10 days after, on July 7, men riding in tandem on a motorcycle shot dead a 42 years old worker of the Philippine Independent Church near one of its churches in the town of Majuyod.

The most serious incidents though occurred in a span of just less than a week, from July 23 – 27, when 15 civilians were killed by suspected state

Featured Article

death squads in 6 cities and towns of Negros Oriental. This time, the victims included a former mayor, a city councilor, a principal and a teacher, a one year old child and another lawyer previously red tagged.

But besides the much publicized killings in Negros Oriental, there are continuing grave human rights violations in Northern Negros Occidental.

These include illegal arrests and searches; intimidation; harassments; forced evacuations; indiscriminate firing of weapons; illegal encampments; and fake surrenderees, as documented by Northern Negros Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (NNAHRA).

Besides these 56 out of the 95 barangays in Escalante City, San Carlos City, Don Salvador Benedicto, Calatrava, and Toboso in Far North Negros Occidental are experiencing Peace and Development Team (PDT) activities and Community Support Program (CSP) of the 79th IB and 33rd CMO Company of the Philippine Army.

And the latest of these was that done by the AFP: revising the commemoration of the Escalante massacre on September 20 by showcasing and displaying 2510 alleged rebel surrenderees on said date in a so-called peace summit.

Before the commemoration, 8 members of Teatro Obrero, NFSW, and KADAMAY who belong to a Mobile Prop Team (MPT) were arrested by police and military operatives in Escalante City on September 19. According to those arrested, said state agents planted guns and explosives among those who were arrested and labeled them as NPA rebels.

As of this writing (November 4, 2019), 57 activists including 15 minors were arrested by police and soldiers who forcibly entered the offices of *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Kilusang Mayo Uno, Anakpawis, Gabriela*, National Federation of Sugar Workers, and a private

residence in Bacolod City and Escalante City on October 31 and November 1, 2019. So that no bail can be availed of by those arrested, the AFP claimed that assorted firearms, fragmentation grenades, two grenade launchers, and assorted ammunition were supposedly found in the premises of the places raided.

Human rights violations in Negros Island escalated when President Duterte issued on November 22, 2018 Memorandum No. 32 (MO 32) "to suppress lawless violence and acts of terror in Negros Oriental, Bicol and Samar. He also issued EO 70 on December 4, 2018 which institutionalizes a 'whole-of-nation approach' versus insurgency.

Defend Negros #StopTheAttacks Network has been relentlessly campaigning against the intensifying human rights violations in the Island by inviting relatives of EJK victims to Manila to go on speaking tours and joining media events.

It also replicated the call of the four Roman Catholic Bishops of Negros to toll the bells in Churches and schools until the killings stop.

In coordination with *Sama-samang Artista para sa Kilusang Agraryo* (SAKA), it has organized various cultural events such as an art exhibit on the Negros 14 killings; various gigs in solidarity with Negros farmers; and many others.

The network has also been able to help organize events in Negros Occidental and in Siliman University in Dumaguete City even if it is based in Metro Manila.

The people of Negros continue to hold protest actions against the killings, militarization, and MO 32 and EO 70. They need all the help they can avail of through groups such as the Defend Negros #StopTheAttacks Network.

Featured Article

Another Bane to Agricultural Workers: The Proposal to Increase the Importation of Sugar



Despite the problems generated by the importation of rice, the Department of Finance in an economic bulletin issued in the 1st week of October of this year pushed for the removal of quantitative restrictions on sugar imports. Early this year, the government already hinted on the liberalization of the industry.

Liberalization is being pushed because of the premise that local sugar prices are higher than those in the world market, making local prices uncompetitive. Liberalization would remove the limit on the volume of imported sugar that could enter the domestic market, which economic managers said could dramatically bring down sugar prices.

Earlier, on September 21, 2018, President Duterte came out with Administrative Order (AO) No. 13 removing non-tariff barriers and streamlining administrative procedures on the importation of agricultural products. This AO includes sugar and was done to increase importation of said commodity supposedly to lower the costs of sugar in the retail market.

Sugar stakeholders, however, maintained that allowing the unregulated entry of cheaper refined sugar into the country by major exporting countries like Thailand and India would kill the Philippine sugar industry.

The sector employs about 700,000 workers across 20 sugar producing provinces, the most emblematic of which is Negros. Sugar farming and mill operations

generate Php90 billion annually from the sale of raw and refined sugar, molasses and ethanol.

This economic plan to liberalize the sugar industry has been met with dissent.

In a resolution filed by the Office of the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* of Bukidnon, stakeholders have appealed to President Duterte to junk the proposal of the Department of Finance to liberalize the importation of sugar. Bukidnon accounts for 75 percent of sugar production of Mindanao. More than 100,000 will be directly affected if the unregulated sugar importation will be allowed.

Senator Miguel Zubiri has called on the Department of Agriculture and the Sugar Regulatory Agencies to come out with a strong statement opposing the new policy that could "kill our farm workers and producers". Instead, Zubiri said, the government must support the local industry by providing it with enough assistance, adding that lower prices in other sugar-producing countries such as Thailand was made possible by heavy subsidies and other government interventions, which Filipino sugar farmers do not have access to.

In the previous congress, ten senators (Miguel Zubiri, Cynthia Villar, Sonny Angara, Nancy Binay, JV Ejercito, Sherwin Gatchalian, Richard Gordon, Loren Legarda, Koko Pimentel and Joel Villanueva) signed a resolution asking Malacañang to drop the plan.

More recently, at least 24 lawmakers signed House Resolution 412 to oppose the planned liberalization of sugar importation, saying such a move will be detrimental to farmers and the whole industry.

This month the National Federation of Sugar Workers is calling for a national summit of all sugar stakeholders especially the sugar workers and small planters to come up with a national position and set up a network to campaign against the liberalization of the sugar industry.#

(Note: Most parts of this article were taken from the articles on sugar liberalization in the Philippine Star October 6-14, 2019)

Statements

Solidarity Message of Church People and Workers Solidarity
National Sugar Stakeholders Summit
November 8, 2019
Social Hall, Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA),
Diliman, Quezon City

We, from the Church People and Workers Solidarity send our warmest greetings to *Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura*, the National Federation of Sugar Workers and other stakeholders of the sugar industry as you convene today for the National Sugar Stakeholders Summit.

Firstly, we are one with you in demanding justice for all victims of killings of farmers, farm workers and human rights defenders in the Negros Island and in other parts of the country. In addition, we call for an impartial probe of the recent mass arrest of 57 individuals in Negros and in other parts of the country for them to be accorded due process and their human rights to be respected.

Secondly, we are concerned that the proposed unlimited liberalization of the sugar industry will only worsen the already dire living condition of our farmers and farm workers and their families. Aside from suffering in the climate of violence, fear and impunity, farmers and farm workers have long been hurting from the impact of liberalization to the sugar industry. You have long languished from widespread poverty, high indebtedness, severe hunger and malnutrition.

Further liberalization will only destroy the local sugar industry, leading to loss of livelihood and jobs of local farmers and agricultural workers just like what happened to rice, garlic and onion farmers. Farmer incomes and wages of farm workers are expected to be reduced further as price of local sugar will drop at the lowest price to compete with sugar coming in from other countries.

In his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Pope Francis asked everyone to say, *“Thou shalt not to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills”*. Thus, we are in solidarity with you in calling to stop the liberalization of the sugar industry and the whole economy.

Thirdly, we are with you in prayer and action in the demand for humane working and living condition of farmers and farm workers; and for genuine land reform.

Finally, we pray that the National Sugar Stakeholders Summit shall have a fruitful discussion on the impact of liberalization to the farmers, farm workers, small planters and to the whole country; come up with resolutions that will unite the more than 700,000 farmers, farm workers, and small planters in the country; and act together to stop this global trend of killing the local sugar industry.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay kayong lahat.

Most Rev. Gerardo A. Alminaza, D.D.
Bishop- Diocese of San Carlos
Chairperson
Church People-Workers Solidarity

PASTORAL APPEAL ON THE RECENT BACOLOD ARRESTS
“End the culture of fear and silence; Uphold the human rights of free speech and redress of grievances!”
November 7, 2019

While more than 30 have been freed of the arrested 62 individuals who were either in the offices or are members of advocacy groups in Bacolod City; still, we express our alarm of these unfortunate incidents that aggravate the culture of fear and silence in our island of Negros.

There were reported irregularities in the said arrests. Only one judge from Quezon City has issued numerous search warrants for the advocacy groups’ offices in Luzon and the Visayas, which apparently prompted Chief Justice Diosdado Peralta to remind “court judges to exercise prudence in issuing warrants.”

It is also reported that the individuals and the media were asked to step outside during the search; thus, there were no witnesses during the search. After firearms were found in the areas being searched, all occupants of the offices were arrested. The advocacy groups claimed that the firearms were planted.

We, therefore, join the call for an impartial investigation of these arrests, for due process and the rule of law to be upheld.

These advocacy groups that lead protests against what they perceive as anti-people programs and policies, are incidentally “red-tagged” or are accused to be sympathetic to the New People’s Army.

We are alarmed of these arrests of members of “red-tagged” organizations since most of those summarily killed in the Negros island were also red-tagged. A few months ago, we, the four bishops of the Negros island have made a unified call to stop the killings in our island; to end the culture of fear; and to work for integral and sustainable peace.

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church has listed as a human right, “the right to assemble and form associations.” Church’s teachings further indicate that the State or the government’s reason for being is “the realization of the common good in the temporal order... It has also the duty to protect the rights of all its people, and particularly of its weaker members, the workers, women and children”. (*Mater et Magistra*, 20)

In this light, we reiterate our call to all concerned institutions and organizations that we should all work to address the root causes of the unease in our midst. A military solution is not the way to peace.

The culture of fear and silence must end. Only Jesus’ commandment of loving God and our neighbor, especially the weakest in our community, is the way to a just and lasting peace.

Most Rev. Gerardo A. Alminaza, D.D.
Bishop of San Carlos

In Photos: CWS Activities

Daughters of Charity community in solidarity with Pepmaco and Nutri-Asia workers



Heavy monsoon rain did not stop the sisters and volunteers of Daughters of Charity in sharing love, compassion and solidarity with striking workers in Laguna last August 3. The visit was organized by the Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS).

The first stop of the visit was at the Pepmaco workers' picketline where workers shared how their health and safety are being disregarded inside the workplace. They were exposed to hazardous chemicals without protection and many of them experienced skin burns from these chemicals. It was also reported that three pregnant women have experienced miscarriages due to long working hours and unsafe working conditions. Urinary tract infection is also a common illness of workers who need to work for long hours until their relievers come.

In the afternoon, the group also visited the picketline of the Nutri-Asia workers who have been camping out since June in front of the Cabuyao City hall to demand the immediate release of their colleagues who were illegally arrested and detained during the violent dispersal of their picket line on July 6, 2019. The workers staged their strike starting July 6, 2019 to demand from the management of Nutri-Asia

the implementation of the DOLE order to regularize contractual workers and terminate the two manpower agencies which are operating as illegal labor only contractors.

"Indeed, this is modern day slavery.", a heartfelt reflection from one of the volunteers. One of the sisters also shared her realization that the situation of workers is in worsening state and needs to be addressed. They call on fellow church people to continue their support to the workers. Sr. Liza Ruedas, DC, head of the Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) office of the Daughters of Charity shared on her social media account this experience and called out to her friends to boycott the products of Pepmaco and Nutri-Asia until workers demands are met.



The DC delegation were Sr. Nova Borjal, DC from Santa Isabel College of Manila, Sr. Mater Leal, DC, Sr. Adela Bautista, DC, Sr. Ma. Liza H. Ruedas, DC from Hospicio-Marillac Center, Sr. Bing Gunao, DC, Mr. Mark Anthony Salvador from Asilo de San Vicente de Paul and Ms. Lendy Mae Languido.

The DC community brought food packs and comfy towels to more than 170 workers. Meanwhile, Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS) is inviting fellow church people to visit the workers on strike in Pepmaco, Nutri-Asia and Monde Nissin in Laguna.

In Photos: CWS Activities

Solidarity visit in Negros



Last August 10-13, 2019, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) composed of 4 foreign delegates had a solidarity visit in Negros Island to have a deeper understanding on the peasant struggle killings and human rights violations happening in the province.

The group also visited the wife of Atty. Ben Ramos and relatives of Councilor Toto Patigas

who were killed by unidentified assailants and the political prisoners who are members of UCCP and IFI detained in Negros Occidental District Jail - Male Dormitory.

On the last day, all delegates went to Commissioner Chito Gascon of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) The visit was facilitated by CWS and hosted by the Diocese of San Carlos.

Solidarity visit to PEPMACO picketline

On August 17, 2019, CWS facilitated the solidarity visit to the PEPMACO striking workers by the Philippine Solidarity Task Force of the California Nevada Annual Conference and California Pacific Annual Conference Task Force on the Philippines of the United Methodist Church. 6 foreign delegates and 2 staff from the National Council of the Philippines joined the integration.



In Photos: CWS Activities

Forum in Malate Church



Last August 27, 2019, the Church People - Workers Solidarity in partnership with the Public Affairs Ministry (PAM) of Our Lady of Remedies Parish conducted a forum with the topic “National Sovereignty on West Philippine Sea”. Ms. Rosario Bella Guzman of Ibon Foundation was the speaker . It was attended by more than 170 participants from volunteers of Malate Parish organizations and communities. Ms. Najda de Vera from the secretariat of *Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura* (UMA) discussed the present situation about the killings in Negros Island while one mother from Negros gave a testimony on the killing of her son.



Sandiwa Art Exhibit



On September 11-13, 2019, the Sandiwa – a Network of Advocates for National Minority Rights conducted an Arts Exhibit with the theme: “*Samu’t Saring Habi ng Buhay, Katutubong Sining at Kultura para sa Kapayapaan*” at Colegio de San Juan de Letan in Intramuros, Manila. The partner organizations for this activity were the Dominican Justice, Peace and Care of Creation, Asuncion A. Perez Center, Incorporated of the United Methodist Church, Ecumenical Bishops Forum and Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS).

“Workers’ Prospects, Hopes and Chances in the Coming Midterm Election” Forum

On April 29, 2019, CWS in partnership with the College of the Holy Spirit Campus Ministry and Community Engagement conducted a forum on orkers situation with the theme “Workers’ Prospects, Hopes and Chances in the Coming Midterm Election”. After the forum, a presscon was held. The panelists were Fr. Rudy Abao, MSC, Fr. Noel Gatchailan, SVD, Sr. Lyn Leuterio, ICM and Ms. Eleanor de Guzman of Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU).



In Photos: CWS Activities

Appointment of new priest minister of the Diocese of Kalookan Labor Ministry



Fr. Roger Guinit and some labor coordinators of Diocese of Kalookan

On October 25, 2018. Most Rev. Pablo Virgilio David, D.D. appointed Rev. Fr. Roger Guinit as the new priest minister of the Diocese of Kalookan Labor Ministry. As the new priest minister, Fr. Roger Guinit will lead the ministry that is mandated to assist and extend programs and services to workers.

After his appointment, Fr. Roger called for a core group/secretariat meeting of the Labor Ministry coordinators and volunteers to plan the diocesan wide labor coordinators' meeting on November 12. The meeting was attended by Celso Pascua from St. Joseph the Workman Parish, Teresa from San Roque Cathedral and volunteers from the Church People-Workers Solidarity.

Two months later, Bishop David instructed all parishes of the diocese to form labor desks in their respective parishes. The Labor Ministry then conducted vicariate level consultation meetings in order to understand the situation of the workers in the following vicariates namely; Vicariate of San Roque, Vicariate of Our Lady of Grace, Vicariate of The Sacred Heart of Jesus, Vicariate of San Jose De Navotas and Vicariate of San Bartolome. To date, the labor ministry has conducted 5 vicariate-wide meetings wherein 19 parishes were represented. Two labor desks were also formed in 2 parishes.

According to Mr. Noel Anda of CWS, this effort of the Diocese of Kalookan is a meaningful step that will surely benefit workers especially those who are experiencing inhumane working conditions.

RICE TARRIFFICATION..... (From page 2)

But, even this Rice Fund will not be of immediate assistance to the present predicament of the local rice producers and workers. To begin with, the majority of farmers does not belong to eligible farmers' associations or registered rice cooperatives and can avail of the services from the Rice Fund. And which farmers' associations or cooperatives would take the trouble of borrowing money from banks, even with zero interest, when income from rice production is barely enough to pay for the production cost?

The RTL far from improving has worsened the lot of our rice farmers. The precarious situation may even lead to the further downturn of the local rice industry. More farmers would shift from growing rice to other agricultural crops, decreasing further the land areas planted to rice. Some landowners might soon convert or sell their

prime farm rice lands for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. When the breakdown of the local rice industry widens, countless jobs connected with the local rice industry will be lost.

In sum, as things stand in the present, the RTL has failed to deliver its twin objectives: the supply of rice at affordable prices to consumers and the increase of income for rice farmers and workers. This situation raises a lot of questions: From where now is the food security to come? Why aim to secure the stable supply of rice by way of rice imports? Why should we be import-dependent for the supply of our staple food? Has our government given up on our local capacity to produce rice sufficient for the consumption requirements of its citizens? Why not aim first to strengthen the local rice industry? Should we not first make our local rice industry globally competitive before anything else?

Boses ng Manggagawa

Katanungan: Ramdam mo ba ang pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas? Ano sa tingin mo ang dapat gawin ng pamahalaan upang magkaroon ng sapat at abot kayang suplay ng bigas?



"Hindi ko po naramdaman ang pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas kundi lalo pa itong tumaas. Siguro, dapat po nilang pagtuunan ng pansin ang mga pangangailangan ng ating mga magsasaka. Mas makabuti siguro kung dadagdagan pa ng ating pamahalaan ang pondo para sa kanilang programang agrikultura upang matugunan ang pangangailangan ng ating mga magsasaka." - **Michael Ballola, Factory Worker**



"Hindi ko ramdam ang pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas. Ang pwedeng gawin ng pamahalaan ay bigyan ng sapat ng tulong o pondo ang mga magsasaka. Malawakang magtanin ng palay sa halip na mag-import pa ng bigas total marami naman tayong mga lupa. Bigyan rin ng lupang masasaka ang mga magsasaka at alisin ang buwis na n agpapahirap sa mga magsasaka." - **Reymond Gacita, Factory Worker**

Thank you

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REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

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Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA)

National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW)

Solidarity with the Workers Network (SWN)

Visayas Human Development Agency

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NCPWR - Southern Tagalog

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