

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1113



Introduced by Honorable Representatives
ARLENE D. BROSAS (Gabriela Women's Party),
FRANCE L. CASTRO (ACT Teachers Partylist),
and **RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL (Kabataan Partylist)**

AN ACT
REPEALING PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1620 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "GRANTING TO
THE INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (IRRI) THE STATUS,
PREROGATIVES, PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF AN INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATION"

EXPLANATORY NOTE

A world without the International Rice Research Institute is a world free from the monopoly of rice crop varieties and other diseases and deaths brought by IRRI's agrochemicals. IRRI's existence in the Philippines has been over half a century, but it failed to contribute to the country's food security. This concrete situation pushed the Filipino peasantry, agriculturists and scientists, food security advocates, and people's organizations to press the government for agricultural programs and policies based on genuine rural development, free from foreign monopoly control and sincere in achieving food security for the people.

IRRI was established in 1959 by a Memorandum of Understanding between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. The institute was envisioned to be the world's prime mover in rice science and technology, purportedly to reduce food-insecurity-related poverty in the Philippines as well as the rest of the rice-producing countries in the underdeveloped regions.

Sixty-three years since IRRI's founding, almost a billion people remain undernourished or lacking calories, while two billion are malnourished or lacking essential nutrients, according to the United Nations Food and the Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Its empty and dangerous propaganda of the Green Revolution, in effect, raised calorie consumption in developing countries while permitting the destruction of diversity in farmers' fields. IRRI's research, which they claim to improve rice and corn production, has not led to any significant development in the country's agricultural productivity.

If IRRI accomplished anything, it was the institutionalization of a rice production system that heavily relied on agrochemicals, like insecticide, and was supported by its transnational corporate (TNC) partners.

IRRI's science and technology mandate has long been geared almost solely toward the constant development and dissemination of hybrid, genetically engineered crops to complement and perpetuate the use of the said harmful chemicals promoted by predatory TNCs such as Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer, Dow AgroSciences, and BASF among others. For over five decades now, IRRI has been an instrument of monopoly capital's onslaught upon the agriculture of the Philippines and other Third World nations.

The introduction of IRRI's high-yielding varieties of rice and corn grains during the now infamous Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s led to an unprecedented use of and dependence on agrochemicals that eventually harmed the natural ecosystem in the rice fields. Scientific tests have proven how genetically modified (GMO) crop varieties produce particular types of toxins and allergens that not only prompt allergic reactions but could also cause damage to vital human organs.

In 1979, President Marcos issued Presidential Decree No. 1620, which declared IRRI as an international organization, with all the privileges and immunities that came with granting such status. Thus, IRRI has been able to justify its anti-labor practices. It intermittently carried out mass lay-offs in 1989, 1993, and 1996. It has implemented a questionable retrenchment program that has warranted the unfair dismissal of regular employees. The institute has also harassed union leaders and members as part of its union-busting activities.

These workers have failed in their various attempts to seek redress from the courts, given IRRI's immunity from suit, which it enjoys under Presidential Decree No. 1620. The same immunity has also been invoked to bar the workers from claiming compensation for having been afflicted with illnesses due to exposure to toxic chemicals and inhumane working conditions.

However, Presidential Decree No. 1620 is not a binding treaty that cannot be revoked. IRRI does not, in fact, approximate a party such as a representative of any sovereign state entitled to privileges and immunities as are contained in the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*. Neither can IRRI invoke to be an entity comparable to a specialized agency of the United Nations.

Moreover, the international agreement signed by former President Fidel V. Ramos and representatives of ten (10) countries on May 19, 1995, which acknowledged IRRI as an international organization, has yet to be ratified by the Philippine Senate. The said agreement furthermore does not compel any party to the agreement to grant IRRI any privileges and immunities or any form of financial support.

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the main pushers of Golden Rice and Green Revolution technologies, culprits behind the erosion of farmers' knowledge and genetic diversity, and ushers of corporations in pursuit of full control of seeds and agriculture, celebrated its 63rd anniversary on April 4, 2022.

High-technology yet simplistic solutions peddled by IRRI such as gene mapping, gene modification and editing (i.e. CRISPR Cas 9), promotion of hybrid rice, use of Big Data, and robotics relegated our farmers into being passive recipients, effectively erasing indigenous practices of sustainable agriculture. IRRI continuously exploits genetic resources with biotechnological approaches or breeding genetic resources into a narrow diversity of 'modern' rice that requires heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides that poisons the environment and the people.

Approximately 25% of IRRI's operational funding comes from philanthrocapitalists like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and private companies like Bayer and Syngenta, 25% from Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) funds, 7% from international institutions such as the World Bank, Africa, and Asian Development Bank, and FAO, and 33% from national governments (US, China, India, Switzerland, Germany). In reality, the institute's supposedly public nature is a source of cheap technical manpower for TNCs and lends credibility to TNC science. In the end, it spawned seed industries, turning seeds into a commercial enterprise.

This bill was filed during the first regular session of the 14th Congress by Anakpawis Representative Rafael Mariano, during the third regular session of the 16th Congress by former Representative Fernando Hicap, and during the first regular session of the 17th Congress by Anakpawis Representative Ariel Casilao.

This legislative measure has been refiled today to fulfill the rights of Filipinos, and to challenge the collusion of IRRI and agrochemical TNCs. This aims to repeal PD 1620 in order to strip IRRI of the aforementioned unjustified privileges and immunities that have been used to blatantly violate the fundamental rights and freedom of IRRI workers with impunity, as well as, protecting IRRI from potential legal liabilities related to agrochemical agriculture and its effects on the environment and public health. This also seeks to end the nation's agricultural dependence on agrochemicals that are contributory to the deterioration of people's health and which have significantly destroyed the traditional methods of food production. Thus, it is not only in defense of the welfare of Filipino workers and peasants but also a commitment to Philippine sovereignty and patrimony.

In view of the foregoing, the speedy passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



ARLENE D. BROSAS
Gabriela Women's Party



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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Presidential Decree No. 1620 otherwise known as "Granting to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) the Status, Prerogatives, Privileges and Immunities of an International Organization" is hereby repealed.

SECTION 2. All laws, jurisprudence, executive orders, executive issuances or letter of instructions, or any part thereof, inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,