



Committee Daily Bulletin

18th Congress
Third Regular Session

A publication of the Committee Affairs Department

Vol. III No. 20
July 1, 2021

| COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES | | | | |
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| COMMITTEE | MEASURES | | SUBJECT MATTER | ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION |
| | NO. | PRINCIPAL AUTHOR | | |
| Agriculture | HR 1783 | Rep. Cabatbat | Strongly urging President Rodrigo Roa Duterte to immediately terminate or withdraw EO 135, series of 2021, that temporarily lowered the rates of import duty on rice | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga (1st District, Quezon), will deliberate further on House Resolution 1783 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Enverga gave a brief background on Executive Order No. 135 (EO 135), which was issued last May 15 by President Rodrigo Duterte. He said that EO 135 temporarily reduced the Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariff rates on imported rice to 35% for a period of one year. Prior to this, the tariff rate for rice imports within the minimum access volume (MAV) or in-quota was 40%, while those outside the MAV or out-quota was 50%. Hence, in today's meeting, he said the Committee would like to be informed of the circumstances that led to the decision to reduce the tariff rates on imported rice even if only temporarily.</p> <p>Rep. Argel Joseph Cabatbat (Party-List, MAGSASAKA), author of HR 1783, said that the resolution seeks clarification on the reason for the issuance of EO 135 and calls for the withdrawal or termination of the same. He noted that while the EO was issued supposedly to offset the expected shortfall in the local supply of rice this year, the Department of Agriculture (DA) has declared that the country has ample supply of rice. If this is the case, he said there is therefore no need for EO 135 to continue to be in effect.</p> <p>DA Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian explained the objectives of EO 135, as follows: diversify the source of rice imports; assure affordable rice to the consumers; and help ease inflationary pressure. He maintained that the EO does not remove tariff protection to the local rice producers but merely aligns tariff levels on rice imports with those of ASEAN and non-ASEAN countries.</p> <p>Sebastian stressed the need to diversify the country's sources of rice imports to ensure the country's food security especially during the pandemic. He explained that 90% of the Philippine rice imports comes from Vietnam, hence any change in the latter's policy concerning rice trade will significantly affect the Philippines. This was clearly demonstrated during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic last year when Vietnam decided to temporarily halt its rice exports. Fortunately, the Philippines earned Vietnam's commitment to still export rice to the country despite the export ban.</p> |

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| <p>Continuation... Agriculture</p> | | | | <p>In the ASEAN region, the major rice producers are Vietnam, Thailand, and Myanmar. Outside the region but still in Asia, the top producer and exporter is India. According to Sebastian, because of the rising trend in the price of imported rice from Vietnam and Thailand, it is more prudent to import rice from India, which offers a lower price. However, with higher tariff rates imposed on non-ASEAN countries, like India, the cost of importation becomes higher. Through EO 135, importation of rice from India at a 35% tariff rate becomes more economically attractive, providing the importers a viable option from where to source rice, Sebastian further said.</p> <p>Under the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), imports from ASEAN members enjoy 35% tariff rate on agricultural products, while non-ASEAN countries are imposed a tariff rate of 40 and 50 percent for in-quota and out-quota, respectively. ATIGA aims to achieve free flow of goods in the region resulting in less trade barriers and deeper economic linkages among Member States, lower business costs, increased trade, and a larger market and economies of scale for businesses. (Source: ASEAN website)</p> <p>The Committee requested DA to submit a report on the volume of rice imports from India before and after the issuance of EO 135.</p> <p>Tariff Commission (TC) Commissioner Ernesto Albano informed the Committee of the consultations made and actions taken prior to the approval of EO 135. He narrated that the process started with the letter of DA Secretary William Dar to the National Economic and Development Authority's (NEDA) Committee on Tariff and Related Matters (CTRM) requesting the temporary reduction of tariff rates on imported rice from India.</p> <p>However, Albano said the DA revised its request during the initial meeting of the CTRM, to cover other countries under the principle of MFN. Under the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement, to which the Philippines is a signatory, the principle of MFN means that countries cannot normally discriminate between their trading partners. Thus, when a country grants a favor, such as a lower customs duty rate, to another country, it has to do the same for all other WTO members.</p> <p>Albano continued that as part of the procedure in modifying tariff rates, the TC, an attached agency of NEDA, conducted a public hearing on February 4 which was participated in by senators and representatives from government agencies and the agricultural sector. He said, the TC has submitted its report on the public hearing to the CTRM. He, however, could not discuss in public the details of the report as</p> |
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| <p>Continuation... Agriculture</p> | | | | <p>these are confidential in nature. Nevertheless, the TC will submit the report to the Committee Chair.</p> <p>Rep. Enverga noted that the Committee on Agriculture was not invited in the February 4 public hearing. He enjoined the TC to include the Committee in all public hearings relevant to agriculture, to which Albano agreed.</p> <p>Expressing support for the HR 1783 were Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) president and former DA secretary and lawmaker Leonardo Montemayor, FFF National Manager Raul Montemayor, <i>Alyansa Agrikultura</i> chairman and former DA and Department of Trade and Industry undersecretary Ernesto Ordoñez, and University of the Philippines Professor Emeritus Rene Ofreneo.</p> <p>They averred that lowering the tariffs on imported rice will adversely affect the local rice farmers. Moreover, it does not assure the country's food security, instead it will make the country more import-reliant when it comes to rice.</p> <p>On the other hand, resource persons from NEDA, DTI, and Department of Finance (DOF) manifested their support for EO 135. They echoed the explanation of DA Undersecretary Sebastian on the need to temporarily reduce the MFN tariff rates on imported rice.</p> <p>DTI Undersecretary Ruth Castelo said that when the prices of commercial rice decrease, then the country can revert back to the old tariff rates.</p> <p>NEDA's Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Staff Assistant Director Lenard Martin Guevarra explained that the volume of the Philippines' rice imports from non-ASEAN countries is just around one percent from January to May 2021. Hence, the effect to local farmers as well as the estimated foregone revenues due to the lowering of the tariff rates are very minimal.</p> <p>Rep. Cabatbat questioned the issuance of EO 135 despite the low food inflation as recently pronounced by DA.</p> <p>DOF Undersecretary Elsa Agustin replied that EO 135 is a proactive measure of the government in addressing the looming rice price increases. She added that based on the estimates of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the savings that households will earn as a result of the EO will definitely outweigh the foregone revenues due to tariff reduction.</p> <p>Rep. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija) opined that the EO will not guarantee a lower price of rice in the domestic market but will only benefit rice importers. She asked the DA to intensify its campaign against rice cartels which</p> |
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| Continuation... Agriculture | | | | <p>manipulate the supply and prices of rice to their advantage.</p> <p>DA Undersecretary for Operations Ariel Cayanan said that the Department, in coordination with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and DTI, has filed cases against individuals believed to be involved in rice cartels.</p> <p>DTI Undersecretary Castelo also said that there is an inter-agency task force that runs after rice cartels and hoarders.</p> <p>The Committee requested all the resource persons to submit their position paper on HR 1783.</p> |
| Basic Education and Culture | HB 2693 | Rep. Gasataya | Integrating local history in the teaching of Philippine History/Social Science into the curriculum of public and private elementary and high school education | <p>The Committee, chaired by Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo, will deliberate further on the four bills.</p> <p>Rep. Manuel Cabochan III (Party-List, MAGDALO), co-author of House Bill 5123, said that the bill seeks to include in the senior high school curriculum the teaching of Philippine history during the World War II (WWII) period. He explained that WWII was a period in Philippine history which showcased the valor of the Filipino people in all the islands of the archipelago. Thus, he said this needs to be recalled, reviewed, and studied to inculcate in the hearts and minds of the youth the paramount values of patriotism and nationalism.</p> <p>Department of Education's Bureau of Curriculum Development (DepEd-BCD) Director Samuel Soliven assured the Committee that the teaching of Philippine history is already part of the K to 12 curriculum. BCD Supervisor Rosalie Masilang added that the histories of the different regions of the country are being taught in high schools.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Deogracias Victor "DV" Savellano (1st District, Ilocos Sur), author of HB 4841, suggested that aside from teaching local history on a regional level, the history of a province should also be taught in the high schools located in that province. He also informed the body that when he was Governor of Ilocos Sur from 2001 to 2010, his office was able to collate all relevant information on the history of Ilocos Sur and eventually turned it into a book. He said the DepEd Secretary was furnished a copy of the book in 2016, for possible integration into the high school curriculum of his province. However, he said, the DepEd has not acted on the request up to this time. He then asked the DepEd to submit to the Committee its teaching instruction on local history in the high schools of Ilocos Sur.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Evelina Escudero (1st District, Sorsogon) criticized the slow action of DepEd on the request of Deputy Speaker Savellano that</p> |
| | HB 4841 | Deputy Speaker Savellano | Including a subject in local history in the curricula of all public and private high schools | |
| | HB 5123 | Rep. Belmonte | Mandating the instruction of readings in Philippine History II: World War II in the Philippines in senior high school | |
| | HB 8621 | Rep. Castro (F.L.) | Mandating the inclusion of Philippine history as a subject in the high school curriculum | |

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| <p>Continuation... Basic Education and Culture</p> | | | | <p>was made years ago. She said the DepEd seems to be operating in a highly bureaucratic system which delays the creation and implementation of programs that will improve the quality of education.</p> <p>Rep. Romulo suggested that the proposed law should provide for the creation of a commission to be composed of the National Library of the Philippines and National Archives of the Philippines, among others, which will be tasked to consolidate and verify all historical data in the country.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Savellano said that he is amenable to the suggestion of the Committee Chair.</p> <p>The DepEd agreed to submit the requested documents as well as a list of reference materials for local history that is incorporated in the Balik Kasaysayan Program (BKP). The BKP is a catch-up program of DepEd that aims to deepen the awareness on local (national and international if possible) history, culture, and arts that contribute meaningfully to the strengthening of Filipino learners' patriotism and nationalism. <i>(Source: DepEd website)</i></p> |
| | <p>HBs 9006 & 9058</p> | <p>Deputy Speaker Oaminal and Rep. Garin</p> | <p>Further enhancing the basic education system by providing for the inclusion of a subject on savings and investments in the secondary education curriculum</p> | <p>The Committee will schedule another meeting for House Bills 9006 and 9058 to allow the DepEd to submit its official position paper on the two bills.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Henry Oaminal (2nd District, Misamis Occidental) and Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA), respective authors of HBs 9006 and 9058, underscored the need to provide a separate subject on savings and investment in the secondary education curriculum. They said integrating it with other existing subjects, such as Araling Panlipunan, will not suffice and will most likely compromise the quality of learning on savings and investments.</p> <p>Baguio City Rep. Mark Go supports the bills, saying that they will improve the financial literacy of the Filipino people that will likewise contribute to the economic growth of the country.</p> <p>DepEd-BCD Supervising Education Program Specialist Aileen Supnad requested for more time to submit DepEd's official position paper on the two bills.</p> |
| <p>Basic Education and Culture jt. w/ Youth and Sports Development</p> | <p>HB 9386</p> | <p>Rep. Go (M.)</p> | <p>Creating a high school for the sports in the City of Baguio to be known as the Baguio City Sports High School, and appropriating funds therefor</p> | <p>The joint Committee, co-chaired by Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo, Chair of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture, and Rep. Faustino Michael Carlos Dy III (5th District, Isabela), Chair of the Committee on Youth and Sports Development, approved House Bill 9386 subject to style and amendment, and the corresponding Committee Report.</p> |

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| <p><i>Continuation...</i> Basic Education and Culture jt. w/ Youth and Sports Development</p> | | | | <p>Baguio City Rep. Mark Go, author of the bill, said that his bill seeks to create the Baguio City Sports High School, which will be a specialized public high school that will provide the optimal environment for training so that students will be able to excel in sports and be competent to pursue athletic careers in the future. He added that the proposed school shall provide a sports-focused curriculum complemented with the necessary general academic curriculum to ensure that students will be well-rounded and equipped with the proper foundation.</p> <p>Rep. Dy said that the Committee on Youth and Sports Development is supportive of the bill. He said that setting up a sports high school in Baguio City will be very ideal given the benefits of a high altitude environment to the health and body of athletes during the period of training, based on numerous international studies.</p> <p>Also supportive of the bill were the Department of Education (DepEd) and Philippine Sports Commission (PSC).</p> <p>Rep. Romulo and DepEd asked which school in Baguio City will be utilized for the proposed sports high school, noting that it is not mentioned in the bill.</p> <p>Rep. Go said that he is open to tapping Baguio City National High School for the academic classes of student-athletes, and the Teachers' Camp also in Baguio for their sports training.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Romulo if Rep. Go will be willing to integrate the proposed Baguio City Sports High School into the National Academy of Sports (NAS) System, Rep. Go answered in the affirmative.</p> <p>Created through RA 11470, the NAS System is an attached institution of DepEd that is mandated, in close coordination with the PSC, to implement a national sports program geared towards providing excellent training to produce world-class athletes and sports professionals. The NAS system shall offer full scholarship in secondary education, integrated with a special curriculum on sports, to exceptionally talented students from all sectors. The law was signed on June 9, 2020.</p> |
| <p>Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)</p> | <p>HR 1802</p> | <p>Rep. De Venecia</p> | <p>Inquiry into the state of Filipino gastronomy and culinary heritage</p> | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Christopher de Venecia (4th District, Pangasinan), will continue its inquiry relative to House Resolution 1802 in its next meeting.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. De Venecia underscored the need to further promote the growth of Filipino gastronomy and culinary heritage given its potential to provide livelihood to the Filipino people. He also mentioned that gastronomy is one of the seven creative fields covered by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).</p> |

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| <p>Continuation... Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)</p> | | | | <p>The UCCN was created in 2004 to promote and strengthen cooperation among cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development. The 246 cities from different countries, which currently make up this network, work together towards a common objective of placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level. (Source: UNESCO website)</p> <p>According to Rep. De Venecia, there are only two cities in the country that are part of the UCCN: Baguio City, in the field of crafts and folk art; and Cebu City, in the field of design. He enjoined the concerned government agencies and the private sector to increase their collaboration so that another city in the country may be included in the UCCN, which may fall under the field of gastronomy. The other creative fields covered by the UCCN are music, media arts, film, and literature.</p> <p>Department of Tourism (DOT) Assistant Secretary Verna Esmeralda Buensuceso informed the body that the United Nations World Tourism Organization has recognized gastronomy tourism as an emerging phenomenon given that more than 30% of tourist spending is spent on food. She said the DOT has various programs promoting gastronomy and culinary tourism in the country, with some programs now being shown online because of the pandemic. This includes virtual tours of food tourism destinations and the DOT KAIN NA! Food and Travel Festival, which showcases Filipino food products, instructional cooking videos by renowned Filipino chefs, and other culinary related activities. She also reported that the DOT is embarking on a food mapping project to support the drive towards food tourism.</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Undersecretary Ernesto Abella emphasized the importance of food mapping and having a consolidated strategy in promoting Filipino cuisine abroad.</p> <p>DFA Assistant Secretary Eduardo Martin Meñez suggested that exporters develop high quality halal foods in order to penetrate and be competitive in the global halal market, which is one of the fastest growing markets in the world today.</p> <p>Center for International Trade Expositions (CITEM) and Missions Executive Director Paulina Suaco-Juan said that CITEM is now utilizing online platforms for its export promotion activities such as digital trade fairs and food exhibitions, showcasing Filipino food products particularly those produced by micro, small and medium enterprises.</p> <p>Renowned Chef and restaurant chain owner Margarita Forés shared that Filipino cuisine was</p> |
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| <p>Continuation... Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)</p> | | | | <p>highlighted on a global scale in 2015 during the Madrid Fusion, an international gastronomy congress. She also recommended that Filipino restaurants be encouraged to vie for the “Asia’s 50 Best Restaurants List.” She sought government support in bringing the voters (300-plus industry experts across Asia) over to the country to sample the food being offered by various Filipino restaurants.</p> <p>Jericson Co, co-owner of the Curator Coffee and Cocktails, which made it to the Asia’s 50 Best Bars List for the fifth year in a row this year, said that he and his partners are willing to share their experiences with other bar owners so that they could make it to the list as well. He emphasized the value of providing quality trainings to the workers to further develop their capacity in the food and beverage industry, as well as providing them other benefits to foster and maintain the creative spirit in the workplace.</p> <p>Commission on Higher Education’s Technical Committee for Hospitality Management and Tourism chairperson Benhur Ong reported some of the challenges confronting the Filipino gastronomy education, which include the lack of schools offering specializations in Filipino gastronomy and the lack of a central database that consolidates all information on Filipino cuisine and gastronomy. Further, he pointed out the lack of textbooks and research materials on gastronomy and culinary arts in the Philippine context.</p> <p>Department of Education’s Bureau of Curriculum Development Director Samuel Soliven explained that the National Book Development Board, which is tasked to develop the textbook industry, is now mainly focused on producing self-learning modules in response to the pandemic.</p> <p>Nicolo Aberasturi, founder of Down To Earth PH, presented the concept of Down To Earth farming to the body. Down To Earth is a family farm located in Dahilayan, Bukidnon which grows biodynamic vegetables, and raises local grass-fed cattle, heritage free-range pork, lamb, and native poultry. All of the farm’s produce are grown sustainably and organically (pesticide-free). He said the farm also provides trainings to small farmers to make their farms profitable through organic farming and to tailor fit their crops to what is appropriate for their farmland.</p> <p>Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA) recommended that one farm school should be established in every province to be able to develop products that are endemic to the locality. She said this will provide a wide array of sources of raw materials for the food industry and also help the local farmers.</p> <p>On the part of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Planning</p> |
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| <p>Continuation... Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)</p> | | | | <p>Office Acting Assistant Executive Director Charlyn Justimbaste presented the technical-vocational education and training (TVET) courses related to gastronomy and culinary arts. She also reported that based on 2020 data, 77.11% of TVET graduates are employed in the agriculture sector, 73.4% are in the processed food and beverages sector, and 67.42% are in the tourism sector.</p> <p>The owners of food and beverage establishments admitted that they do not require TESDA certificates from the workers that they hire. David Ong, co-owner of The Curator Coffee and Cocktails, believes that if they require TESDA certification, many applicants may not qualify despite their inherent talent or skills.</p> <p>Figaro Coffee Company founder Pacita Juan stated that TESDA serves certain markets such as fast food chains and overseas employers with demand for skilled labor. Juan is also the Southeast Asia Councilor of the Slow Food Movement, a global movement involving millions of people in over 160 countries, working to ensure everyone has access to “good, clean and fair food.” (Source: Slow Food website)</p> <p>TESDA assured the body that it is willing to work with industry partners to improve its course offerings to suit the labor requirements of the employers.</p> <p>The Department of Labor and Employment gave a brief presentation on the labor regulations in the agriculture and food industries. It likewise gave its assurance that a closer collaboration with the food industry will be made in order to determine and provide the needed technical assistance, trainings, and other interventions that will boost the productivity of this industry.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Center for Culinary Arts, Manila (CCA) Chancellor for Education Ma. Veritas Luna shared the CCA’s experience in the development of human resources in the culinary sector. She said the goal is to produce excellent culinary professionals who are internationally competitive. She also recommended that a single roadmap for the promotion of Philippine gastronomy and culinary heritage should be developed.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Kristine Singson-Meehan (2nd District, Ilocos Sur) inquired on the Filipino culinary or gastronomy programs that would need more funding from Congress. The head of the National Committee on Northern Cultural Communities of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Edwin Antonio, replied that additional budget may be allocated for the promotion of indigenous food to provide better livelihood opportunities to the indigenous people.</p> |
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| Continuation... Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee) | | | | <p>Rep. Ma. Lourdes Arroyo (5th District, Negros Occidental), Chair of the Special Committee on Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), asked about the assistance being offered by government agencies to PWDs with regard to the promotional activities on Filipino cuisine and cultural heritage. The NCCA and CITEM said that they provide sign language interpreters and include subtitles in their online or digital events.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their respective reports that were presented during the meeting as well as other documents requested by the Members.</p> |
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| TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES | | | | |
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| COMMITTEE | MEASURES | | SUBJECT MATTER | ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION |
| | NO. | PRINCIPAL AUTHOR | | |
| Poverty Alleviation (Technical Working Group) | Substitute Bill to HBs 1813, 2675 & 3601 | Deputy Speaker Pacquiao, Reps. Tallado, and Garin (S.) | Creating an agricultural pension fund for enhanced social protection to poor agricultural farmers | <p>The technical working group (TWG), presided by Committee Secretary Ma. Lourdes Sagmit-Mendoza, terminated its discussion on the Substitute Bill to House Bills 1813, 2675 and 3601.</p> <p>The final version of the substitute bill will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>The Committee Secretary gave a summary of the amendments to the bill that were agreed upon during the TWG's previous meeting. After which, she opened for discussion the unresolved issues pertinent to some provisions of the proposed law. Chief of which is the creation of a pension fund for poor agricultural workers that is separate and distinct from the existing Social Security System (SSS) pension fund.</p> <p>Under the proposed law, an Agricultural Pension Fund shall be established to provide enhanced social protection to poor agricultural workers. The government and the covered agricultural worker will contribute to the fund based on the schedule prepared and prescribed by the SSS. However, for those extremely poor agricultural workers, the government will fully subsidize their contributions.</p> <p>SSS Senior Vice President and Chief Actuary Edgar Cruz opined that a new and separate pension program for agricultural workers is no longer necessary. He added that the existing pension system of SSS already covers farmers and fisherfolk under the category of "self-employed."</p> <p>Cruz explained that a special pension program is only applied to certain groups if they exhibit significantly different risk profile such as the military and uniformed personnel whose lives are at risk because of the nature of their job.</p> |

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| <p>Continuation... Poverty Alleviation (Technical Working Group)</p> | | | | <p>This insurance policy, Cruz said, cannot be applied to the agricultural workers because they do not exhibit such risk profile.</p> <p>When asked if the SSS will be amenable to push through with the Agricultural Pension Fund without assigning any additional task to the SSS, Cruz answered in the affirmative. Cruz added that the SSS can be an administrator of the fund in the sense that SSS will collect the contributions and disburse the benefits under its existing pension system.</p> <p>Among the agreements made during the meeting were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The term “extremely poor” will be defined in the substitute bill consistent with the definition of the Department of Social Welfare and Development which is the “poor experiencing subsistence poverty.” • The pension benefit can be availed of by poor agricultural workers who have already given 120 monthly contributions or 10 years to the proposed Agricultural Pension Fund. • Poor farmers and fisherfolk who are over 55 years old at the time of the effectivity of the proposed law, who would like to benefit from the agricultural pension program, shall contribute only up to the time they reach 60 years old and the rest of the contribution shall be subsidized by the government to complete the minimum contribution of 120 months. • A public official or employee who, by act or omission, shall insert or allow the insertion of false data or information to allow persons other than the qualified agricultural workers to benefit from the program will be penalized with temporary disqualification to hold public office. Likewise, administrative sanction shall be imposed to erring government officials or employees without prejudice to prosecution in the proper courts, in accordance with the 2017 Revised Rules of Administrative Cases in the Civil Service and RA 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018. |
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