

STATEMENT ON WORLD FOODless DAY

By: INNABUYOG-GABRIELA

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October 16 the official World Food Day held by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO)- an opportune time to send a strong message of food sovereignty and highlight consumers' strategies to address the food crisis. In reality, the country is experiencing otherwise. Poverty and hunger defines 80% of the Filipino people. Hence, we call on to commemorate this day as WORLD FOODLESS DAY.

Food security in Cordillera remains to be treated with much precaution. The ability of the Cordillera people to secure food for their families are continuously threatened by numerous social and economic problems, which in close review, are preventable. But the State's lack of political will to answer to its people make up the institutionalized problems in food security. First of all, the double threat of unemployment, minimal wage against the continuous rise in the price of basic commodities unable the people to purchase food. The 12% E-VAT and the uncontrollable oil price hikes that affect other products depreciates the value of a poor man's peso. As a country, the Philippines is import dependent, export oriented. This paved way to liberalization of our markets where cheaper imported products defeat our locally grown produce.

Our agricultural sector, the main source of our food, is not in good condition to provide for its people. It remains backwards and unequipped for sustainable production. The State's unwise budget appropriations leaving the agri sector unprioritized results to inefficient or lack of irrigation, monetary and seed capital and infrastructures, development aggression in the forms of mining, dams, land conversion and even militarization in the countryside hampers the successful harvest. And every year, the millions of tons of crops are destroyed by calamities and disasters.

Our country receives at least 20 typhoons annually. This is inevitable. Typhoons Pedring and Quiel hit the country in just a single week this October, causing P12 billion agricultural and infrastructure damages. In Cordillera, 2, 740 families were affected. A total of P191.7 million in farm and livestock were reported to have been lost. Mt. Province succumbed to P61 million loss in rice and corn, while Ifugao lost P60 million in agricultural damage and P51.7M in infrastructure. Landslides, rock slides in major trade routes in Cordillera resulted to P7.5M damage in irrigation systems, P12.5M destruction in bridges and P27M loss in river flood control. The collapse of the Burnay Bridge which connects Lagawe, Ifugao to Nueva Ecija limits the transport of supplies and relief goods.

The recent calamity raised the question of preparedness to rescue our food supplies in these dire events. In most parts of the affected areas, private sectors and NGOs played a big role in terms of disaster response and relief missions. Nine days of the onslaught of the typhoons and President Noynoy Aquino was not on sight. The inadequacy of the State to provide immediate and efficient relief and rehabilitation system jeopardize the life of the typhoon victims. We already know that we receive these typhoons every year. Destructions can be prevented or lessened with proper preparations. But it seems as though the government is not ready to respond in such situations.

We have to question the readiness of the government to respond in such situations. We, the INNABUYOG-GABRIELA, call on the people to assert for their right to proper government management in terms of calamities and disasters. According to Republic Act 10121, disaster reduction, prevention and preparedness should be prioritized. This allows the offices to use 70% of the Calamity Fund to create pre-emptive measures and 30% funds for actual calamities. It supports the creation of localized disaster risk reduction and management offices and officers. We must push for the implementation of such programs. We must also call our agricultural offices to respond to local farmers for their immediate recovery. At the same time, we must give importance to the condemnation of anti-people government programs such as E-VAT, unemployment and development aggression that denies Filipino consumers adequate, nutritious and accessible food supplies.

The fall of the agriculture sector is devastation to Filipinos. The loss of resources means no food for the Filipinos. At the same time, lack of resources denies the producers (farmers, fishermen, etc) their sources of income which, in turn, they use to buy their necessities, too, such as food.

STAND UP FOR ADEQUATE FUNDS FOR FOOD PRODUCTION!

WOMEN UNITE AND MOBILIZE AGAINST FOOD INSECURITY!