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REJECT RP-CHINA ANTI-FARMER DEALS! DEFEND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY!

We, representatives of farmers, fishers and indigenous peoples' organizations, development NGOs, academe, women's movements and church people united under the coalition Task Force Food Sovereignty (TFFS) call for the total scrapping of the agriculture and fisheries agreements entered into by and between RP and China last January 15-16, that favor and promote investments of Chinese corporations at the expense of the rights of the landless peasants and poor farmers and fishers in the Philippines.



The most questionable of these deals include the proposed establishment of huge agribusiness farms and processing plants using up more than one (1) million hectares of land for the production of hybrid rice, corn and sorghum and biofuel crops. These agriculture deals, signed together with the more than \$1 billion loan agreement intended to finance the controversial North railway projects and other infrastructure program of the Philippine government, are aimed at developing export-oriented production base with little link to the domestic economy, but with grave implications on agrarian reform, food security, rural livelihoods and environment.

We put to task the Departments of Agriculture, Agrarian Reform and the Environment and Natural Resources for agreeing to the following onerous deals:

1. Lease of 1 million hectares of land to the Fuhua Company, a large Chinese conglomerate based in Jilin province to set up a grains production and processing base in the Philippines.
2. Lease or other agribusiness ventures in at least 40,000 hectares of lands for the establishment of biofuel crop plantation.
3. Lease or other agribusiness ventures in at least 200,000 hectares of land for the Beidahuang Seed group for production of rice, corn and for organic farming and agro-tourism purposes
4. The facilitation of commercial contract agreements by and between domestic and Chinese corporations that will unduly exploit the country's agricultural lands, forests and marine and fishery resources.

These deals will hasten the consolidation of large landholdings, thereby worsening landlessness and further fueling land conflicts in the countryside. While the DAR still struggles to distribute more than 1.3 million hectares of the remaining target for land distribution and faces more than 700,000 hectares of backlogs in its land acquisition and distribution program, and while massive land use conversions, CLOA cancellations and landlord resistance continue to plague government's agrarian reform program, giving out more than 1 million hectares of lands to foreign corporations confirms government's lack of intent to pursue agrarian reform and address the age-old problem of peasant poverty and

landlessness in the country. Instead of securing tenure and land ownership of farmers, government may even facilitate the cancellation of EPs and CLOAs, under these deals, in order to meet the target production area. Worse, the deals would even allow government to give full information to the Chinese corporations on the legal status of peasants' land claims. Moreover, the deals will open the floodgates for foreign take-over of our land and natural resources clearly trampling upon the people's right to food sovereignty.

Food security will certainly be undermined as huge tracts of lands which can otherwise be planted to food crops for the domestic needs will have to be devoted to hybrid rice and corn and biofuel crops for export. Higher hunger and malnutrition incidence continue to stalk poor communities in the Philippines. Our rice self-sufficiency is on the decline. In 2003, our rice self-sufficiency is at a mere 90% and in 2005 it plummeted to 84%, creating the conditions for increased rice importation to the detriment of our domestic rice farming. Yet government's programs are geared towards promoting further the expansion of more export-oriented agribusiness as in the case of the Fuhua and Beidahuang agro-processing investments.

Government's misplaced priority on bioethanol production will similarly undermine food security since it requires the production of monoculture crops such as soya, cassava, sugarcane, corn, and palm oil on large tracts of lands requiring the cultivation of hundreds of thousands of hectares of lands. For example, one of the recently signed commercial agreements on bio-ethanol production between the Palawan Bioenergy Development Corporation and the China CAMCE Engineering Company entails the planting of sugarcane in 10,000 hectares in Palawan, a small island province.

Traditional farming and fishing livelihoods will be decimated as the more "efficient", large-scale corporate farms take-over agriculture, specifically rice and corn production in the Philippines. What will prevent those who have the capital to buy out farmlands from small farmers and engage in lease agreements or production ventures with the Chinese corporations? The envisioned multimillion-dollar Chinese investments may indeed bring in the money, machinery, equipment and employment, but these are miniscule compared to the enormous losses arising from the displacement of hundreds of thousands of poor, uneducated and unskilled farmers, marginal tillers and indigenous peoples who risk losing the main source of their livelihood – their land.

These deals will likewise have far-reaching impact on the environment. While these projects intend to promote alternative energy use, they may actually exact a heavier toll on the environment as biofuel crop production will use up more intensively scarce freshwater resources, lead to deforestation, and destroy biodiversity.

In the final analysis, export-oriented agribusiness ventures like the Fuhua and Beidahuang agro-production and processing plants have merely exacerbated poverty and social inequities in the Philippines, enriching the big business and landowning families, while depriving millions of Filipinos their right to a decent and humane life. For the last two decades, this export-oriented model of agriculture production, which these deals will likely entrench, has in fact failed to deliver sustained economic growth, in fact, it is shown to have stunted rural development, destroyed local jobs, and institutionalized exploitative working conditions as in the case of the banana and pineapple plantations in Mindanao.

We thus call on government to rescind all these anti-farmer and anti-poor farm agreements. We demand that government gives full disclosure of all agreements affecting farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, women and all other stakeholders and consult them widely before entering into any investment, trade and other cooperation agreements.

TASK FORCE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

February 8, 2007

PAMBANSANG KAISAHAN NG MGA MAGBUBUKID SA PILIPINAS (PKMP), ANIBAN NG MGA MANGGAGAWA SA AGRIKULTURA (AMA), KASAMA, PKSK, PAKISAMA, SANLAKAS, LIGA MANGGAGAWA, AKTIB, INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (IRDF), SEARICE, MODE, PHILNET-RDI, WOMENHEALTH, NASSA, ATCRD, RCPD, WAGI-Miriam College.

***For inquiries: Arze Glipo, Lead Convenor, TFFS, 925-0987 ,426-5518
Aya Jallorina, Media and Communications Officer, IRDF, 9250987***

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