

# **The Peasants' Struggle for Genuine Land Reform**

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Greetings from the Philippines! I am pleased to be part of this gathering and I would like to thank Via Campesina for giving me this opportunity.

I would like to briefly share with you what is the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) or Peasant Movement of the Philippines

- KMP is a democratic and militant movement of landless peasants, small farmers, farm workers, subsistence fisherfolk, rural youth and peasant women. It has effective leadership of more than 1 million rural people with 65 provincial chapters and 15 regional chapters nationwide.
- KMP advocates and struggle for a genuine agrarian reform and national industrialization as the foundation for over-all economic development; a sovereign nation free from foreign domination and control, and defends the people's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;
- KMP also struggles for immediate economic relief for the peasants, launches programs and projects for livelihood and production, health, sanitation, disaster relief, and technology-development.

## **Who owns the lands in the Philippines?**

- 60% of the agricultural lands or 8.6M hectares are owned by 13 % of the landowners
- The biggest landlords, only 9,500 people, own more than 20 % of all agricultural lands or approximately 2.8.M hectares.
- The country's economy is still dependent in agriculture
- Yet, farmers remain landless because lands are controlled by the landlords, agrochemical TNCs and MNCs.

## **Landlessness the root of Philippine's Agricultural Problem**

- 7 out of 10 farmers are landless.
- Of every 100 farmers, 21 are agricultural workers, 28 are unpaid family workers, 26 are under some form of tenancy relation and only 25 own land.
- Average size of farmland is from 0.5 to 2 hectares
- More than 75% of Philippine labor force is employed in the agricultural sector

## **Forms of exploitation of peasants**

- **High Cost of Land Rents** - Land rent use up as much as 10 sacks per hectare per harvest.
- **High cost of production** - Thousand of pesos are spent on farm implements and inputs per cropping season
- **Usury** - Interest rate of 15 to 35 % per cropping season (on a four-month period).
- **Forced Labor/Slavery** - Members of farmer's families serve the landlords' household for free.
- **Unjust/unequal distribution of harvest** - Maximum harvest of 40-100 cavans of palay. However, harvest is distributed by "tersya" or 1/3 for the farmers; 75-25 in favor of the land owner. Cost of production shouldered by the farmers.

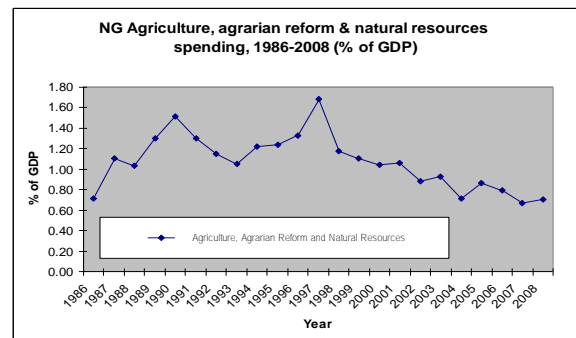
- **Inhumane and deplorable conditions of work and intolerably low wages for farm and agricultural workers.**
  - between P151 to P212 nationwide yet farm worker's wages were found to go as low as P20 (Negros), P50 (Samar), and P69 (Cagayan Valley).
- **Criminalization of agrarian cases** – Filing of trumped up cases and harassment suits against farmers
  - Recent example is the case of Randal Echanis, KMP deputy secretary general for external affairs who was currently in jail since January 28, 2008 for false charges filed against him
- **Eviction/disrespect of security of tenure** - Displacement of farmers resulting from cancellation of CLOAs and EPs, land use conversion, and land grabbing
- **Extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances** (60% of the victims are peasants)

**There is no Genuine Agrarian Reform Law in the country.** The 20 year old Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) is retrogressive and merely enabled the farmer to sink deeper into misery. CARP has many **BUILT IN** loopholes that were deliberately crafted for use by landowners to evade transfer of ownership over the land. It was intended to suit the interest of the landowners, who ironically, comprised 61% of the members of the 8th Congress of the Philippines that passed RA 6657.

Aside from the bogus CARP, the government neglected the Philippine agriculture.

Further, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and globalization worsens the agricultural situation.

The WTO (together with agrochemical TNCs) promotes and pushes for genetically modified organisms (GMOs), pesticides and hybrid rice that ultimately controlled the world's agriculture.



## Problems Encountered in Defending and Upholding Farmers' Rights to Land and Livelihood:

### 1) Criminalization of Agrarian Cases

The filing of trumped up criminal cases and other harassment suits against farmers as a means to break down their will and surrender their rights in favor of the landlord is one of the main problems being faced by the peasants. While a case is clearly agrarian in nature, numerous criminal cases have been filed and continue to be filed against farmers involved in agrarian disputes.

### 2) Human rights abuses against peasants

- Harassment on peasants, 38 of the 182 cases recorded or about 21% , by the military and police at their farms, usually they are accused of being members of the New People's Army (NPA) or supporters. Harassment is with threat that accounts to 20% or 37 cases.
- About 19% or 34 are cases of summary execution, extra-judicial killings including Gracel Galacio, the 9 year-old girl from Compostela Valley killed by the military on March 31, 2007 and framed up as a member of NPA, and Celso Pojas, Chair of Farmers' Association in Davao City (FADC) and Spokesperson of KMP – Southern Mindanao Region (KMP – SMR) killed on May 5, 2008

- These cases are from 2001 to 2009. This year early, it already reached 38 cases or about 21% of the total. This year, summary execution is already at 4, while harassment, intimidation and threat is already 21 or 12% of the total.

"This simply means that there is no holiday for the Arroyo government to abuse the peasants and violate our rights."

### **3) Lack of Special Agrarian Courts, judges and qualified personnel to handle agrarian cases or dispute in rural areas**

The location of the offices of government agencies mandated to handle agrarian disputes and the trial courts are situated mostly in urban centers far-away from the farmers' villages. Lacking in resources to face the cases, farmers either lose the case or give in to the pressures of the landowners.

### **Success stories**

Despite the harassments and human rights violations against the peasants who feed the nation, we are happy to share with you some of the success stories we had. These success stories are results of painstaking education, mobilizing and organizing of peasants.

- **Hacienda Luisita farmers till 2,000 hectares outside CARP**

Struggling farm workers in the sprawling 6,000 hectare Hacienda Luisita owned by former President Corazon Aquino are now cultivating 2,000 hectares of the hotly disputed sugar estate outside the 20-year old CARP. The key to this success story is the determination of the Hacienda Luisita farm workers to challenge and fight the Stock Distribution Option (SDO) scheme legitimized by the bogus CARP in the parliament of streets, in the regular courts and in the court of public opinion.

- **10,000 farmers and fisherfolks at Hacienda Looc are still locked in a battle against Fil-Estate, the Manila South Coast Development Corporation and SM of Henry Sy over 8,650 hectares of prime agricultural lands**

Private developers intend to develop this into a major eco-tourism hub in Hacienda Looc, Nasugbu in Batangas. These farmers and fisherfolk are members of KMP and Pamalakaya (National Federation of Small Fisherfolks of the Philippines), despite continuing harassment, they remained in their land

- **800 farmers inside the Central Mindanao University (CMU) are still tilling their 400 hectare land**

Our farmer members from Buffalo, Tamaraw and Limus in Bukidnon, Mindanao are ceaselessly fighting for their rights to land. They are CLOA-holders but were also victimized by CARP that exempted CMU lands from distribution though it is idle and farmers have been there for decades. Their crops are always destroyed by CMU security guards affecting their lives and livelihood but because of their militant actions and unity of farmers they remained in their land

### **HB 3059 Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB): The Peasants' Legislative Agenda**

The GARB is authored by the late Anakpawis Partylist Representative Crispin Beltran. **The bill seeks to break up land monopoly and distribute for free the agricultural lands within five years to Filipino farmers, agricultural workers, fisherfolk, and indigenous peoples** and eliminate all forms of oppression and exploitation in the countryside and thereby pave the ground for the advent of genuine social justice.

It is based from the experience of the farmers and a product of the national peasant summit in November 2007 conducted by the farmers' groups - Kilusang magbubukid ng Pilipinas, Amihan (National Federation of Peasant Women) and Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (Union of Agricultural Workers).

**“Under GARB, all agricultural lands will be covered and distributed to landless, land lacking and willing to-till farmers across-the-nation for free with strong support services and guarantees that the lands would not revert back to landlords”**

**STRUGGLE FOR GENUINE AGRARIAN REFORM!  
SUPPORT HB 3059 GARB!  
RESIST IMPERIALIST GLOBALIZATION!  
JUNK WTO AND FTAs!  
LONG LIVE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY!**