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Sheila Crisostomo - The Philippine Star June 13, 2023 | 12:00am

In House Resolution 1062, Libanan, who represents the 4Ps party-list, is urging the committees on agriculture and food, and trade and industry to conduct the probe “in aid of legislation.” STAR / File MANILA, Philippines — House of Representatives Minority Leader Marcelino Libanan has filed a resolution calling for an inquiry into the “continuing low prices” of copra in the market.

In House Resolution 1062, Libanan, who represents the 4Ps party-list, is urging the committees on agriculture and food, and trade and industry to conduct the probe “in aid of legislation.”

He noted that 69 out of 82 provinces in the country are coconut producers, where 3.6 million hectares of land are planted with 347 million coconut trees by copra farmers.

“Copra farmers in the country, numbering around 2.5 million, play a crucial role in the agricultural sector, contributing significantly to the economy and the livelihoods of many rural communities,” he said, citing data from the National Coconut Farmers Registry System.

The resolution stated that copra is a major agricultural commodity and an essential ingredient for various products, including coconut oil, soap, cosmetics and animal feed, which results in some P91.4-billion average export earnings from 2014 to 2018.

The farmgate price of copra, however, dropped to around P20 per kilogram as of the first week of March this year, lower than the P40 average trading price in the same period last year.

“The persistent and ridiculously low price of copra in recent months has adversely affected copra farmers, leading to financial distress, decreased income and a decline in their standard of living,” Libanan said.

He emphasized that copra farmers face numerous challenges, such as “fluctuating global market prices, increasing production costs, lack of access to credit and limited market opportunities, which exacerbate the impact of low copra prices.”

“The plight of copra farmers is a matter of grave concern, as they continue to suffer economic hardships and financial instability due to the unreasonably low prices offered for their produce,” the lawmaker said.

He added that the House needs to conduct the probe to identify the root causes of the persistently low copra prices and recommend appropriate legislative measures to address the plight of copra farmers.

COPRA

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