

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. **5247**



Introduced by

BAYAN MUNA Representatives EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE, and FERDINAND R. GAITE,
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCE L. CASTRO,
GABRIELA Women's Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS, and
KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

AN ACT

REPEALING PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1620 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
"GRANTING TO THE INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE
(IRRI) THE STATUS, PREROGATIVES, PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF
AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION"

EXPLANATORY NOTE

A world without International Rice Research Institute is a world free from monopoly of rice crop varieties and from diseases and deaths brought by IRRI's agro-chemicals. IRRI's existence in the Philippines is more than half a century but failed to contribute in attaining food security in the country. This concrete situation pushed Filipino peasantry, agriculturists and scientists, food security advocates and people's organizations to press the government of agricultural programs and policies based on genuine rural development, free from foreign monopoly control and sincere in achieving food security for the people.

IRRI was established in 1959 by virtue of a Memorandum of Understanding between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and both the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. The institute was envisioned to be the world's prime mover in rice science and technology purportedly to reduce food-insecurity-related poverty in the Philippines as well as in the rest of the rice-producing countries in the underdeveloped regions.

Fifty-seven years hence, however, according to the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), a nationwide peasant organization, IRRI cannot at all claim of its positive contribution to the food security of the country or of other poor and agricultural countries. IRRI's researches, which they claim to improve rice and even corn production have not led to any significant development in the country's agricultural productivity. In fact, the state of Philippine agriculture has consistently worsened to the point that the very host country of IRRI, fell to becoming the world's biggest net importer of rice in 2008, and being the third last year, following China and Nigeria.

1 One of the highlighted cases of extreme starvation and production difficulties was experienced
2 by more than 6,000 farmers and Lumad people from Kidapawan and other parts of North
3 Cotabato in Mindanao, who protested demanding food on April 1, 2016. While this was
4 predominantly driven by the extreme drought, they also suffered abuses such as displacement
5 and militarization that hampered their agricultural cultivation and exacerbated their access to
6 food. Worsening was, the government neglect, amidst the many reports of hunger, the local
7 and national government failed to address the situation, through immediate food relief and
8 assistance. The farmers' action were replied with a bloody dispersal by the Philippine National
9 Police known as the Kidapawan Carnage that left two farmers dead, more than a hundred
10 injured and seventy eight detained, including elderly and pregnant women.

11
12 If IRRI actually accomplished anything, it was the institutionalization of a rice production
13 system that is highly dependent on agro-chemical products such as pesticide, promoted by its
14 transnational corporation (TNC) partners. IRRI's science and technology mandate has long
15 been geared almost solely toward the constant development and dissemination of hybrid,
16 genetically engineered crops to complement and perpetuate the use of the said harmful
17 chemicals promoted by predatory TNCs such as Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer, Dow
18 AgroSciences and BASF among others. For over five decades now, IRRI has indeed been an
19 instrument of monopoly capital's onslaught upon the agriculture of the Philippines and of
20 other Third World nations.

21
22 The introduction of IRRI's high yielding varieties of rice and corn grains during the now
23 infamous Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s led to an unprecedented use of and
24 dependence to agro-chemicals that eventually harmed the natural ecosystem in the rice fields.
25 Scientific tests have in fact proven how genetically modified (GMO) crop varieties produce
26 particular types of toxins and allergens that not only prompt allergic reactions but could also
27 cause damage to vital human organs.

28
29 On April 8, 2015, Bill Gates, the 2017 Forbes richest billionaire, donated USD 10.3 million
30 dollars to IRRI through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) intended for
31 various research on genetically modified Golden Rice, a genetically manipulated variety that
32 contains beta carotene. According to Masipag, a network of farmer's groups, scientist and
33 non-government organizations in the Philippines, the funding will be used for high
34 technology solutions like chemical farming and GMOs that would create further trouble
35 among poor peasant families and consumers.

36
37 Moreover, IRRI is enjoying its immunity to the point of blatant disregard of its workers who
38 were exposed to harmful and dangerous agro-chemical products and outright violations of
39 labor rights. According to *Brotherhood of IRRI Support Services Group (BISSIG)*, a labor
40 organization in IRRI, has been abusing its international status through its seemingly endless
41 list of violations of its workers' rights to organize, to collectively bargain and negotiate, and to
42 hold strikes.

43
44 In 1979, President Marcos issued Presidential Decree No. 1620 declared IRRI as an
45 international organization, with all the privileges and immunities that came with the granting
46 of such status. IRRI thus has been able to justify its anti-labor practices. IRRI has intermittently

1 carried out mass lay-offs in 1989, 1993 and 1996. It has implemented a questionable
2 retrenchment program that has warranted the unfair dismissal of regular employees. The
3 institute has also engaged in union busting which included the harassment of union leaders
4 and members.

5
6 These workers have failed in their various attempts to seek redress from the courts given
7 IRRI's immunity from suit which it enjoys under Presidential Decree No. 1620. The same
8 immunity has also been invoked to bar the workers from claiming compensation for having
9 been afflicted with illnesses due to exposure to toxic chemicals and to inhuman working
10 conditions.

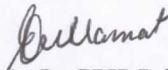
11
12 Presidential Decree No. 1620, however, is not an international pact that cannot be repealed.
13 IRRI does not in fact approximate a party such as a representative of any sovereign state
14 entitled to privileges and immunities as are contained in the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic*
15 *Relations*. Neither can IRRI invoke to be an entity comparable to a specialized agency of the
16 United Nations.


17
18 Moreover, the international agreement signed by former President Fidel V. Ramos and
19 representatives of ten (10) countries in May 19, 1995, which acknowledged IRRI as an
20 international organization has yet to be ratified by the Philippine Senate. The said agreement
21 furthermore does not compel any party to the agreement to grant IRRI any privileges and
22 immunities or any form of financial support.

23
24 This legislative measure seeks to repeal PD 1620 precisely to strip IRRI of these said
25 unjustifiable privileges and immunities which have been used to grossly violate the
26 fundamental rights and freedom of IRRI workers with impunity, as well as, shielding from
27 potential legal liabilities brought about agro-chemical agriculture, impact on the environment
28 and health. This bill was filed during the first regular session of the 14th Congress by then
29 Anakpawis Representative Rafael Mariano, during the third regular session of the 16th
30 Congress by former Representative Fernando Hicap, and during the first regular session of
31 the 17th Congress by Anakpawis Representative Ariel Casilao. It is refiled today to fulfill the
32 rights of Filipinos and decisively challenge the collusion of IRRI and agro-chemical TNCs,
33 in the hope of altering the country's agricultural dependence on agro-chem, which is
34 contributory to the deterioration of people's health, producers, as well as consumers, and
35 significantly, wiped out the traditional practices of food production in the country. Thus, is
36 not only in defense of the welfare of Filipino workers and peasants but also a commitment
37 to Philippine sovereignty and patrimony.

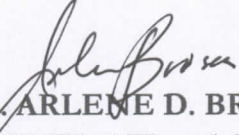
38
39 In view of the foregoing, the speedy passage of this bill is earnestly sought.
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

1 *Approved,*

2
3
4
5 
6 **Rep. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT**
7 *Bayan Muna Party-list*
8

9
10
11 
12 **Rep. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE**
13 *Bayan Muna Party-list*
14

15
16 
17 **Rep. FERDINAND R. GAITE**
18 *Bayan Muna Party-list*
19

20
21 
22 **Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS**
23 *GABRIELA Women's Party*
24

25
26 **Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO**
27 *ACT Teachers Party-list*
28

29
30
31 **Rep. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO**
32 *Kabataan Party-list*
33
34
35
36
37

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

5247

HOUSE BILL No. _____

Introduced by

BAYAN MUNA Representatives EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE, and FERDINAND R. GAITE,
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCE L. CASTRO,
GABRIELA Women's Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS, and
KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

AN ACT

**REPEALING PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1620 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
"GRANTING TO THE INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE
(IRRI) THE STATUS, PREROGATIVES, PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF
AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION"**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Presidential Decree No. 1620 otherwise known as "Granting to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) the Status, Prerogatives, Privileges and Immunities of an International Organization" is hereby repealed.

SECTION 2. All laws, jurisprudence, executive orders, executive issuances or letter of instructions, or any part thereof, inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,