

Headline: Constrained consultation on climate change

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To the detriment of our people, stakeholder consultation on climate change has been constrained, particularly in two areas.

These are the Philippines' commitment to a 70-percent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030; and the absence of agriculture recommendations to address climate change.

The UN website on climate change (www.unfccc.int) records our extremely high conditional commitment level to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) by 2030.

The United States and the European Union (EU) significantly contribute to GHG that cause undesirable climate change. And yet their commitment of reducing GHG by 26-40 percent is significantly below our 70 percent conditional commitment.

The website identifies two types of commitment: one with no conditions, while the other with conditions such as receiving financial and other aid from external sources and countries.

The Philippines did not give an unconditional commitment percentage, but gave a 70-percent conditional commitment.

This is significantly above the conditional commitments of Thailand (25 percent), Vietnam (25 percent), and Indonesia (41 percent). The 70 percent was not subjected to private sector consultation. Instead, it was unilaterally announced, which caught the private sector by surprise.

Last Sept. 24, a private sector consultation was conducted identifying 20 percent as a conditional commitment target. After more discussion, a 40 percent target was given. The 70 percent target was never identified.

This is why Alyansa Agrikultura, along with several other organizations, signed last Nov. 5 a Manila Declaration on Climate Change that stipulated the following: "Subject to meaningful consultation with all stakeholders, we commit to support the Philippine government's efforts to define our country's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) that are aligned to national priorities, circumstances and capabilities."

Because this meaningful consultation has not been conducted, one option is that the Philippines submit a conditional commitment target with a range of 40 percent-70 percent.

The 40 percent was at least discussed with the stakeholders, and is close to Indonesia's 41 percent conditional commitment.

And once again, the agriculture sector has been given little attention.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has pointed out that agriculture contributes 29 percent of GHG, and yet CCC has not submitted any agriculture climate mitigation recommendation.

Instead, recommendations are given for the energy, transport, industry, and waste sectors. Had the agriculture sector been consulted, it would have given valuable options to address climate change.

There are three sources of greenhouse gases: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O). Rice production accounts for 30 percent of global methane emissions. If we have intermittent instead of continuing irrigation so that the year-round flooded rice does not produce high levels of methane, it would be a significant help.

To minimize nitrous oxide, the use of organic alternatives to chemical fertilizers and pesticides will also be a significant option. Other agriculture-related recommendations such as biodiversity through efficient land use should also be included as the agriculture sector's contribution to address climate change.

There is not much time left before our Philippine delegation goes to Paris from Nov. 30 to Dec. 11 for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Consistent with the Nov. 5 Manila Declaration, the Climate Change Commission must now immediately conduct meaningful consultations to arrive at a possible 40-70 percent conditional commitment target with the necessary detail provided by the private sector.

If this is not done, we may be forced to comply with an inordinately high 70 percent target.

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