

No Need to Suspend Bio-Fuels Program to Boost Rice Production - MabuhayRadio

Written by Senator Pimentel's Press Office

Thursday, 03 April 2008 02:19 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 April 2008 02:37

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Q. Pimentel, Jr. (PDP-Laban) today said he sees no need to suspend the government's bio-fuels program so that more agricultural lands can be devoted to the planting of rice and other crops.

Mr. Pimentel said the government should not backtrack from developing alternative, renewable sources of energy that are abundant in the country to further reduce our dependence on imported oil which is becoming less and less affordable to Filipinos as its price has exceeded \$100 per barrel in the world market.

"With the price of crude oil shooting up to \$106 per barrel, there may come a time when we could no longer afford this imported commodity. We should not stop working to attain self-sufficiency in energy," said Pimentel, principal author of the Bio-Fuels Act of 2007 (Republic Act No. 9367).

He was reacting to the proposal of certain quarters, including some legislators, to set aside or postpone the implementation of the Bio-Fuels Law due to apprehensions that it may endanger the country's food security, especially in the wake of the current rice crisis.

Mr. Pimentel said the government should not backtrack from developing alternative and renewable sources of energy.

Senator Pimentel said he fears that the production of bio-fuels – also called "green" or plant-based fuels – may be affecting food production may be true in the United States and Europe where corn, wheat and sorghum crops are the main ingredients for making ethanol as a substitute fuel for motor vehicles.

However, he said the situation in the Philippines is entirely different because sugarcane or bagasse is being used here as main ingredient for ethanol.

No Need to Suspend Bio-Fuels Program to Boost Rice Production - MabuhayRadio

Written by Senator Pimentel's Press Office

Thursday, 03 April 2008 02:19 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 April 2008 02:37

Mr. Pimentel pointed out that this will not affect sugar supply in the domestic market because the bulk of the country's sugar production is being exported.

Furthermore, Senator Pimentel said the Department of Agriculture has already identified sizeable areas of agricultural lands that can be developed as additional rice plantations.

Senator Pimentel said that bio-fuels will provide not only alternative energy sources but will also lessen air pollution.

He explained that ethanol production will enable sugar planters to make profitable use of their excess sugarcane after meeting domestic requirements and export quotas. He said the bagasse, after the sugar extraction of sugar, usually end up as farm wastes.

Mr. Pimentel said the production of coco-diesel has led to increased demand for coconut oil, giving a much-needed shot-in-the-arm to the ailing coconut industry. At present, coconut oil is widely used for cooking oil but the bulk of this product is exported to other countries.

The government is also promoting jatropha as a bio-fuel source and has ordered the use of huge tracts of idle public and private lands for jatropha plantations. Senator Pimentel said these lands are mostly located in upland and hilly areas and unsuitable for rice planting.

Senator Pimentel cited a report from the Department of Agriculture that 15 foreign and local companies have embarked on bio-fuel ventures with P34 billion worth of proposed investments covering 725,300 hectares of land to be planted to sugarcane, jatropha or tuba-tuba, palm oil and coconut.

The Alternative Fuels Corp. of the Philippine National Oil Company and the Philippine Forest Corp. under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources are overseeing the government's massive jatropha plantation program.

A total of 137,537 hectares of what used to be idle lands spread in various military reservations have been devoted for jatropha nurseries and plantations. Another 50,000 hectares of lands in

No Need to Suspend Bio-Fuels Program to Boost Rice Production - MabuhayRadio

Written by Senator Pimentel's Press Office

Thursday, 03 April 2008 02:19 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 April 2008 02:37

government penal colonies including Iwahig, Palawan will be converted into jatropha plantations.

Senator Pimentel said that bio-fuels will provide not only alternative energy sources but will also lessen air pollution. Ethanol, for instance is considered a clean fuel because it is unlike gasoline or diesel which emits a lot of carbon dioxide. # # #

[Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)