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Rice Tariffication Law: Education and Views of Farmers in the Southern Philippines

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ABSTRACTS

The study was conducted to determine the views of farmers in the implementation of the rice tariffication policy. This qualitative study was conducted with 15 participants from the three barangays of the municipality of Norala South Cotabato, the Philippines using purposive sampling. On the awareness of farmers on rice tariffication law (RTL), it was found out that most of the farmers are aware of the implementation of RTL particularly through their access to social media such as radio and televisions, Facebook, and other online sources. On the views of farmers on RTL, it was found out that the majority of the farmers believe that their economic situations are being affected such as inflation, loss of profit, and failure of the harvest. On the issues encountered in the implementation of RTL, the following are found out: (1) continuous inflation rate in commodities and other basic needs, (2) high pricing fertilizer and pesticides, and (3) decrease in the yields of crop production.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Rice is a basic commodity and the most important food crop of the people in the world. It is the most common farming activity of countries, particularly in Asia. Most of the world's population is dependent on rice (Permatasari et al., 2016). Rice is the most cultivated cereal crop and the most important food plant especially in the Philippines, where it provides a considerable portion of the protein intake for millions of people (Umadevi et al., 2012). The Philippines has approximately 4.2 million ha of rice lands and produces about 11.2 million Metric Tons of milled rice, sufficient only for 90% of the population (Rebualos et al., 2021). There are at least five major provinces that produce rice as their major farming crop. Rice production in the Philippines has been rapidly growing from the 1970s until the early 1980s when 3 of the countries achieved self-sufficiency, having a surplus enabling the country to export a small amount.

More than price benefits, the law has expanded the availability of different rice types and varieties in the local market, providing consumers a wider range of choices, depending on their budget and quality preference.

Many farmers in the Philippines claimed that the implementation of the rice tariffication law (RTL) brings an impact to the farmers (Casinillo, 2020). Farmers lost around 68 billion pesos due to the effects of the policy which saw the influx of more imported rice and the losses of rice producers exceeded the gains of consumers by as much as 34 billion in the first year of implementation of the law.

Thus, this study aimed to determine the views of farmers on the RTL, particularly in the Municipality of Norala, South Cotabato, the Rice Bowl, and Granary of the Southern Philippines.

2. METHODS

This study used a qualitative - thematic method of research design to describe the situation of the farmers and asked what were their views on the implementation of the RTL. Qualitative Research is intended to deeply explore, understand and interpret social phenomena within their natural setting. By using a qualitative research methodology, researchers collected richer information and get a more detailed picture of issues, cases, or events (Arora and Stoner 2009). The participants of this study were the fifteen (15) farmers of the three (3) chosen Barangays of the Norala South Cotabato that owns or tenants of at least one (1) hectare of farmland, engage in farming for at least five (5) years and affected with the implementation of RTL. These farmers are farming in Brgy. Poblacion, Brgy. Lapuz and Brgy. Esperanza Norala South Cotabato, the rice bowl of the south.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following are the results of the research:

- (i) Responses on awareness on RTL. It shows that all participants were aware of the RTL where they got their information from the TVs, Radio, Seminars but, they aren't knowledgeable enough about the so-called policy. The farmers were dismayed by the implementation of the policy and blamed the government on it.
- (ii) Views of farmers on RTL. It was found out that with the implementation of the policy, the intermediaries such as the traders, wholesalers, retailers, and importers—have benefitted from the law and not the farmers themselves. Moreover, rice farmers suffered drastic losses, which far surpassed any gains to consumers. The farmers have

negative thoughts on the RTL since their economic conditions are affected by inflation and other problems. Maybe because they are not properly oriented to the policy.

- (iii) Top common issues in the implementation of RTL. The study found out that the continuous inflation rate is one of the major issues they experience. Since their incomes are just enough to pay for their loans, they feel the increase of prices in the commodities where they are short of funds to secure for their own. This reality justifies that inflation in our commodities is true. For the farmers who used to live with their children, their income is not enough to sustain their living. The high pricing of fertilizers and pesticides is another issue. They used to buy these materials to sustain and protect their production. As necessity, they are forced to secure some to skip the failure of their harvest and the losses. In buying these items, they notice the hike of its prices. The last major issue is, they experience a decrease in their yields. Because they could not sustain their rice fields with enough fertilizers and pesticides, the farmers encounter a decrease in production. When the production is low, and the price of rice is also minimal, the farmers will experience losses.

Thus, among others, the advent of the policy is not time for the farmers of Norala, South Cotabato, Philippines. They justify the negative effects rather than the positive they might give.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: (i) The farmers although they are aware of the policy, however not properly oriented of the law; (ii) The farmers' negative views on the policy are evident through their economic instability experiences; (iii) With the issues they encountered, the farmers are started losing their hope to rise again from the crises; (iv) The capitalists contribute to the farmers' dilemma where they used to collect their investments even with little incomes yield from their farming; (v) The farmers turn back the blame to the government without proper consultations regarding the implementation of the policy.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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