

A STRATEGY FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION, FOOD SECURITY, COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY:

OPEN FORUM

Dr. R. Gloria, former DOST Secretary: I would like to congratulate very sincerely and very heartily the NAST for putting up this document the PA 2020. This document is a very good, strong guidebook for the next secretary of agriculture and of the Philippine Government but a word of caution. I have stayed in Indonesia for 11 years, helping Indonesian agriculture. They developed a strategic grand design for agricultural development for Indonesia, of what agriculture would be in Indonesia in the next 20 years. They obtained money from the World Bank, from ADB and they got the best experts from the CGIAR and other various scientific institutions in the world. What happened. When the plan was submitted to Indonesia's Minister of Agriculture, the Minister said —thank you very much; it is good on paper, but it is very difficult to implement. With the PA 2020, let us all work to have this but we need to be sure that our plans to achieve PA 2020 are doable.

However, in 2020 I will be 80 years old. It will be good if we hand landmarks after 5 years, 10 years and then 15 in 2020 which we can look forward to. Again, my thanks to NAST. I also would like the group to study very well the case of rice and corn. I know that if you want to be poor, plant rice and corn; but if you want to have a better life, you plant commercial crops. As a Mindanaon, I hope that Mindanao will be involved in the planning process as we go along because Mindanao is the food basket of the Philippines.

Academician F. Campos: I will be very brief. I am going to comment on the speakers and here are the key words that I would like to bring out. The word "business-size". This was talked about by Secretray Yap, "business-size" the farmer. What does that mean? I'll tell you the farmers very often would say, "we are the ones who produce food, but it is the middlemen who become rich." So it is the middlemen whom we "business-size." For example, a basin of fish is sold initially at PhP 25 by the fisherman and is sold at PhP 50 by a middleman in the same place.

Regarding the CARP program, what happened to the CARP program after the Masagana 99. After that program fizzled out, many of the farmers given land titles sold the properties and the title because the farmers say they do not have the money to buy fertilizer and so on. Regarding eating brown rice, although it is high in nutrition, poor people prefer to eat well-milled rice. They say that they do not have money to buy food so if they have well milled or white rice, they just add fish sauce and a little oil and the rice will already be good to eat!

I would like to comment on Dr. Clarete's reaction. He says that we have to look at models that already work and let us improve on those models. I agree with him, let us adopt technologies like the Japanese and Koreans who dismantled and studied American cars, and introduced innovations into the same cars! Last but not least, I would like to congratulate politician panel speaker Congressman Bayani for the projects he has established in Nueva Vizcaya where they have good roads and large areas planted to vegetables, and most of corn and rice are coming from there. One last thing, I would not like to dampen your enthusiasm for this project but I have heard all of these some 50 years ago. Thank you.

Dr. R. Labadan from the private sector: By 2020 I will be 85 as most of the people here in NAST. Let us all be practical. Can we fast track the PA 2020? What do we need to research on? The next question is, as Dr. Gloria said, if you want to be poor, plant rice and corn. I am writing a book about coconut and it's a revelation that coconut is not the tree of life, the title of my book is "The Philippine's Money Tree". Everything in the coconut can be used to make money. So before doing more research, let us commercialize the research results that we already have. Thank you.

Academician RF Abarquez, Jr. We have been talking about distributing lands, what is the statistics, what is the track record of land that has been distributed. Was the original purpose for the distribution achieved?

Academician EQ Javier: The total land under the Dept of Agrarian Reform which are the private agricultural lands was 4.2 M ha target and out of that 4.2 M, 800,000 ha are left. Most of the private lands that have been reformed are the smaller land holdings. The remaining 800,000 ha are the bigger sugar and coconut lands. So the irony is, we broke up the lands which are already small, but now we have the remaining 800,000 ha and unfortunately, there are some voices that we should stop agrarian reform now. We end up in a situation that you have land reformed the small ones and left the big ones.

But this does not answer the question. The question is— was the intention to divide the land achieved? That is the issue.

Academician RD Guererro III: There is a study that shows that the beneficiaries of land reform are better off than before. And for most of them, the immediate benefit was the education of their children. However in the matter of productivity, this is a big question mark, because in the absence of supporting measures the land transfer by itself would not necessarily lead to higher productivity. But I think you have more peace and order in the countryside. So if you compute how much army resources we would have needed to keep the countryside peaceful, then perhaps that should be part of the equation. But clearly, the beneficiaries of land reform will have to be provided assistance. They are now being organized into agrarian reform communities and out of the 1600 or so agrarian reform communities have been established and 800 of them have been supported mainly by lateral grants. So land reform must be accompanied by inputs to help the land holders make their new assets more productive.

