

**Statement of**  
**SECRETARY NASSER C. PANGANDAMAN**  
**Department of Agrarian Reform, Republic of the Philippines**  
**During the Opening Program of the International Food Festival**  
**Milan, Italy, 17 October 2008**

Your Excellency, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, Your Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, Honorable Mayor Letizia Moratti, Extraordinary Commissioner Expo Milan 2015, Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

I am deeply honored of this privilege to be part of this propitious celebration of the International Food Festival and to share with you the successes and challenges of our food security program in the Philippines.

Indeed, the question of "Who will Feed the Planet?" is one that has to be urgently addressed. May I therefore take this opportunity, in behalf of my government, to reiterate our commitment to the outcome of the June 2008 FAO High-Level Conference on World Food Security, where world leaders embraced food security as a permanent policy.

I am proud to report that the Philippines has made, and is continuing to make, significant inroads into ensuring food safety and security for our people consistent with the UN Millenium Development Goals.

Our agriculture sector registered a growth rate of 5.1% in 2007, higher than our population growth rate of 2.04%. Self-rated poverty is down to its 20-year low in 2007.

To protect these gains, our government implemented early this year an intensified food production program aimed at strengthening the country's ability to provide food for the citizens through a series of efficient and budget-friendly food production modules. This program dubbed F.I.E.L.D.S. (Fertilizer, Irrigation and Infrastructure, Extension and Education, Loans, Dryers and other post-harvest production facilities, and Seeds and other genetic materials) consisting of six assistance packages, form the centerpiece of our government's food security efforts.

To ensure that our food security initiatives are in place, we have created a National Task Force to ensure the efficient use of public funds and resources to said program, and the effective implementation of the Ginintuang Masaganang Ani (GMA), our flagship programs for rice and corn.

We have also created a favorable policy environment for our food security initiatives. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has suspended for the next two years the conversion of all rice lands into non-agricultural uses to protect prime agricultural lands suitable for rice production.

We continue to monitor the strict implementation of our laws providing for the Network of Protected Areas for Agricultural and Agro-Industrial Development.

We are pushing for the extension of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) to complete the distribution of agricultural lands to qualified farmers who are still awaiting the promise of tenurial security.

We support the inclusion of the right to food in our government's National Action Plan on Human Rights. This will strengthen and further solidify government action in addressing hunger.

Our food security initiatives are however not without challenges. While we have the strongest economy in 30 years, the current economic slowdown that threatens big economies is causing real difficulties for countries around the world, not only the Philippines. Our government is working hard to address this drawback by managing inflationary pressures and providing safety nets to those hit hardest by these global developments.

We continue to implement programs to protect the poorest of the poor. We provide assistance to poor families from our value-added tax revenues through the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). Our Accelerated Hunger-Mitigation Program (AHMP) continue to provide our poor with access to low-priced but good quality prime commodities, such as rice, vegetables, and meat, and low-cost medicines.

The agencies of our government work together towards a concerted effort to ensure food safety and security. Our agriculture and fishery schools throughout the country will soon produce rice and corn and other agricultural crops, livestock and aquatic products in commercial quantities.

The Department of Agrarian Reform in the Philippines of which I am the Secretary, likewise plays a crucial role in the food security program of our country. It is the lead agency implementing the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program or CARP, which is not only a social reform program aimed at the equitable distribution of land resources, but necessarily provides support services to the farmer beneficiaries to enable them to make productive use of the land.

As of June this year, we have distributed a total of **SEVEN MILLION TWO HUNDRED FIFTEEN THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED FIVE (7,215,105)**

**HECTARES** under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program. In terms of people, this translates to a total of **FOUR MILLION FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEEN THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE (4,416,183) farmers** who were afforded security over the land they cultivate, and therefore increased control over one of the most important factors of production --- land, the biggest land transfer accomplishment in the history of agrarian reform worldwide.

Verily, agrarian reform requires significant budget resources for its successful implementation. Unfortunately, and as is true with most bureaucracies, the need for development intervention sadly exceeds the available financial resource of the government. What we did in the Department of Agrarian Reform is to adapt a focused-strategy where farming communities were clustered and grouped into what we call Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs) which now serve as growth points in the countryside and where partnership and convergence between and among agrarian reform stakeholders occur and is optimized.

To date, we have already launched a total of 1,976 ARCs involving 1,189,356 farmer-beneficiaries. About 4.1 million small farmers and fisherfolks were granted loans for their agricultural and agri-business endeavors, in the total amount of P222-B. We have also provided, under our credit programs, a total of P9.34-B to some 934,939 farmer beneficiaries and their organizations.

In addition to credit facilities, we have also endeavored, under the CARP, to provide infrastructure support such as farm-to-market-roads, irrigation and post-harvest facilities to our farmer-beneficiaries, as well as the necessary organizational and human resources training they need to effectively manage their lands.

We have also endeavored in the Department of Agrarian Reform to bring information technology to our farmers. Our government has in the last three years, implemented the program "Knowledge Networking Towards Enterprising Agricultural Communities or K-Agrinet." This is an e-government funded program aimed at developing and modernizing the country's agricultural sector in the light of the growing demand for more advance and proactive approach to assist farmers, fisherfolks and agricultural communities.

These we have not done alone, but have done so over the years, with the help and support of our foreign development partners such as the IFAD, WB, FAO, JICA, JBIC, ADB and UNDP whose confidence in our government is crucial not only to the success of agrarian reform, but to our food security and development agenda as well.

The Government of the Philippines is confident that these food security and social reform initiatives, backed by our solid financial infrastructure and effective and efficient revenue-generating measures will enable us to successfully meet our food sufficiency target by 2010.

May I therefore express again, in behalf of my government, our commitment to the achievement of food security and safety not only for the Filipino people but necessarily for the entire global community.

I am confident that our productive discourse in this gathering will permit us to go back to our home countries and organizations with a clearer solution to "Who will Feed the Planet?" and definitely, a concerted agenda towards food security with social equity.

Thank you very much and Good Day to all!