Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 1110

Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and FERDINAND R. GAITE,
GABRIELA Women’s Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS,
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCIS L. CASTRO,
and KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD TO INQUIRE
INTO THE APPROVAL OF GMO GOLDEN RICE AND THE DEMONSTRABLY
SERIOUS LAPSES IN ITS APPROVAL BY THE BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES AND TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF
ENACTING REMEDIAL LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS THESE LAPSES

WHEREAS, it has come to the attention of the Filipino public that the Bureau of Plant
Industry has approved the application of the Philippine Rice Research Institute and the
International Rice Research Institute for the direct use as food, feed and for processing of
Golden Rice or GR2E last 10 December 2019;

WHEREAS, this application got started in 2017 and is the first of its type of GMO that has
been applied for under the revised guidelines on GMO approvals, the DOST-DA-DENR-
DOH-DILG Joint Department Circular No. 1, Series of 2016. Golden Rice will affect rice, our
staple food, and it is the first GMO to be used for staple food;

WHEREAS, the application was approved without taking into consideration the existing rule of
precaution laid out by Executive Order 514 merely relying upon the approvals of other
government authorities, not the Philippines, as basis for concluding that the safety of Golden
Rice or GR2E is as good as the findings in US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand;

WHEREAS, the way the BPI has acted with interested stakeholders from farmers and
consumers groups falls short of the constitutional requirement of full public participation in
matters relating to public interest. Demonstrably, the BPI merely paid lip service to the essence
of public participation by letting the assessment of the application proceed while purportedly
listening to the concerns raised by these groups in dialogues organized by the National Anti-
Poverty Commission and through the auspices of Anakpawis Party-list Representative back in
2017;

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Plant Industry has not been fully transparent in the way they have
provided paltry amounts of information to interested stakeholders in Munoz, Nueva Ecija and
San Mateo, Isabela in July 2018. BPI largely referred stakeholders to public consultations which
were organized without giving the interested stakeholders equal standing on the amount of information about the status of applications;

WHEREAS, the application did not provide any transparency by denying the opportunity for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel from meeting with the interested stakeholders;

WHEREAS, even as this Resolution is being filed, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, the Hon. William Dar, has not even bothered to respond to the appeals made by interested stakeholders when the application was approved last 10 December 2019;

WHEREAS, even the next steps after the issuance of the biosafety permit is not clear as this has not been provided by the Bureau of Plant Industry;

WHEREAS, this harrowing episode in governmental openness and transparency only shows that the JDC No. 1, Series of 2016, is not fully responsive to the Supreme Court ruling dated December 2015 which declared the previous administrative regulation DA Administrative Order No. 8, null and void, for basically not following the basic constitutional principles of EO 514 on the precautionary principle, public participation and transparency, all of which have been blithely ignored or only paid lip service to by the entire scientific establishment, including the bureaucrats in the Department of Agriculture.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability inquire into the approval of GMO Golden Rice and the demonstrably serious lapses in its approval by the Bureau of Plant Industry and for other purposes and to consider the possibility of enacting remedial legislation to address these lapses.

1. To determine the safety of GMO Golden Rice for human consumption and whether the standard toxicological and safety data has been generated and assessed based on actual Philippine conditions and assess reliably.

2. To determine the necessity and efficacy of Golden Rice to address Vitamin A deficiency when there are existing and available natural sources of Vitamin A and current government programs in addressing malnutrition.

3. To determine whether the current regulatory framework, the JDC No. 1, S. 2016 is the appropriate and sufficient yardstick to use on questions regarding the safety and efficacy of GMO Golden Rice

4. To determine the impacts of the cultivation of GMO Golden Rice its subsequent tests on GMO Golden Rice on farmers’ and indigenous peoples’ socio-economic, political and cultural rights and on the rice industry which is currently impacted by the rice trade liberalization policy of the Government

5. To determine the propriety and ethics of using vulnerable populations as test subjects in feeding tests;
6. To identify and confirm the demonstrable procedural lapses in the approval of Golden Rice or GR2E, particularly:

A) On the precautionary principle - which was set aside when safety considerations raised by interested stakeholders were covered up by the assessment results coming from different countries dissimilar in geography, cultural context and food preference as the Philippines and went on in open field-testing Golden Rice in areas where rice is widely planted;

B) On the applicability of substantial equivalence – whether there was scientific basis in its application in assessing the safety of GMO Golden Rice

C) On public participation - the run-around given to interested stakeholders and giving them last-minute information on where the consultations are to happen, that the public was only given one-sided information, that the LGU was not able to get a balanced perspective of the issues at hand before making its decision

D) On transparency - the government was not forthcoming in the details of the public consultation relating to the field tests; it was not also clear how comments are to be submitted; it was also not clear what criteria was used by the STRP in assessing GMO Golden Rice

E) Premature regulatory approval of an unfinished product – this brings to the fore the concern that there is actually no product that is ready for roll-out and widespread marketing to the public and yet the BPI approved both its field testing and direct use for food, feed and processing

7. To take the lessons from this legislative inquiry in the deliberations on the legislative measures on the establishment of a National Biosafety Authority of the Philippines driving home the need to have an independent agency that is staffed by experts and individuals who do not have apparent and implied conflicts of interest with the authorities when there is at present a plethora of approved and pending GM products and events approved even before and after the effectivity of JDC No. 1, Series of 2016

8. To ask the DA and BPI to reconsider its issuance of the permit for food, feed and processing of GMO Golden Rice
Adopted,

REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. ARLENE D. BROSAS
GABRIELA Women’s Party

REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
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REP. FERNANDO R. GAITE
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