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BUDGET BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Briefing on the proposed FY 2018 budget, plans and programs of the following government agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Agriculture (DA) and its attached agencies and corporations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies under the purview of the Cabinet Secretary, namely, the National Food Authority (NFA), Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), and National Irrigation Administration (NIA) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Karlo Alexei Nograles (1st District, Davao City), listened to the presentation on the proposed FY 2018 budget, plans and programs and major accomplishments of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and its attached agencies and corporations, and agencies under the purview of the Cabinet Secretary.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Magnolia Antonino (4th District, Nueva Ecija) sat as the presiding officer during the deliberation on the proposed budget of the DA.</p> <p>Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said that under the FY 2018 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the DA and its attached agencies and corporations will get a total of P60.63 billion, which is 18.4% higher than their current year's appropriation of P51.23 billion.</p> <p>Piñol discussed the DA's key reforms and accomplishments in 2017 and prior years, and the thrusts and priorities for FY 2018 that are geared towards improving service delivery and agricultural growth.</p> <p>Looking forward, Piñol said that the DA will continue to pursue plans and programs that will increase the yield and productivity of farmers and fisherfolks; complete farm-to-market road projects; and modernize the agriculture sector.</p> <p>On the query of several House Members with regard to the DA's Farm-to-Market Road Development Program (FMRDP), Piñol said that its approved budget under the 2018 NEP is only P6 billion. This, according to Piñol, will only allow the agency to construct 600 kilometers of farm-to-market roads at an average cost of P10 million per kilometer, which is not enough to address the backlog of 13,000 kilometers.</p> <p>Several House Members pushed for an increase in the budget of the DA, saying that the DA's 2018 budget of P60 billion is not enough to fund the agency's priority programs considering that it is only one-third of their original budget proposal of P220 billion.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Mark Aeron Sambar (Party-List, PBA) sat as the presiding officer during the deliberation on the proposed 2018 budget of the agencies under the purview of the Cabinet Secretary.</p> <p>NIA Administrator Ricardo Visaya, NFA Administrator Jason Aquino, PCA Administrator Romulo dela Rosa, and FPA Executive Director Wilfredo Roldan presented their respective proposed 2018 budget, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NIA – P38.38 billion NFA – P7 billion PCA – P1.49 billion FPA – P133.63 million

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>		<p>They also discussed their respective major accomplishments for the first semester of 2017, and thrusts and priorities for 2018.</p> <p>On the query of several House Members on the continuous importation of rice despite claims that the Philippines is self-sufficient in rice, Aquino explained that rice importation is based on the country's commitment to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Aquino said that the NFA is mandated to ensure the country's food security by maintaining a buffer stock equivalent to 15 days consumption at any given time and 30 days consumption by July 1st of each year which is sourced from local farmers and rice importation.</p> <p>GABRIELA Party-List Rep. Arlene Brosas inquired on the status of herbicides – paraquat and glyphosate – that are banned in other countries due to their harmful effects not only to the environment but also to humans.</p> <p>Roldan confirmed that these herbicides, which are used to control weeds, are hazardous, but farmers who use them are well-trained on the proper way of handling these chemicals. According to Roldan, there are no cases reported in the Philippines in relation to the harmful effect of these chemicals to humans and to the environment.</p> <p>Asked if the agency is promoting the use of organic fertilizers and pesticides. Roldan said that the PCA's mandate is limited to inorganic fertilizers and pesticides and that the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Products Standards (BAFPS) is in charge of promoting the use of organic fertilizers and pesticides.</p> <p>On the status of the Coco Levy Fund, Dela Rosa said they are trying to reconcile the version of both Houses of Congress with that of the Executive branch to come up with a final version.</p> <p>The DA, NFA, FPA, PCA and NIA responded to the queries raised by the Members of the Committee and agreed to submit their plans and programs in the Member's respective districts.</p>
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