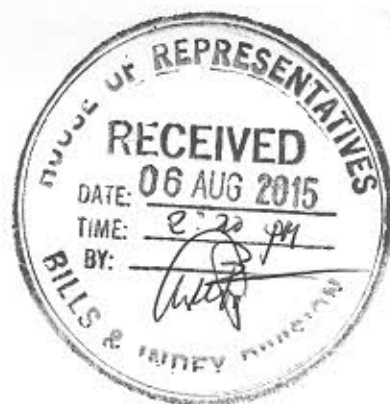


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5990



**INTRODUCED BY ANAKPAWIS PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE
FERNANDO L. HICAP**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

A world without IRRI is a world free from monopoly of rice crop varieties and from diseases and deaths brought by IRRI's agro-chemicals. Such was the concise yet very powerful message of a thousand farmers, agriculturist and scientists coming from the Philippines, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Bangladesh and Pakistan, in a protest action in April 2010 in Los Banos, Laguna, which then coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of IRRI or the International Rice Research Institute.

IRRI was established in 1959 by virtue of a Memorandum of Understanding between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and both the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. The institute was envisioned to be the world's prime mover in rice science and technology purportedly to reduce food-insecurity-related poverty in the Philippines as well as in the rest of the rice-producing countries in the underdeveloped regions.

Fifty-five years hence, however, according to the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), the biggest peasant organization in the Philippines, IRRI cannot at all claim that it has actually done anything that could positively be considered as a contribution to the food security of the Philippines or of other poor and agricultural countries. IRRI's researches to supposedly improve rice and even corn production have not led to any significant development in the country's agricultural productivity. The state of Philippine agriculture in fact has consistently worsened to the point that this otherwise "gracious" and "lucky" host country of IRRI is now also, and very oddly, the world's biggest net importer of rice.

What IRRI has outstandingly accomplished, rather, is the institutionalization of a rice production system that is highly dependent on ecologically unfriendly pesticide products promoted by its transnational corporation (TNC) partners. IRRI's science and technology mandate has long been geared almost solely toward the constant development and dissemination of hybrid, genetically engineered crops to complement and perpetuate the use of the said harmful chemicals promoted by predatory TNCs such as Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer, Dow AgroSciences and BASF among others. For over five decades now, IRRI has indeed been an instrument of monopoly capital's

onslaught upon the agriculture of the Philippines and of other Third World nations.

The introduction of IRRI's high yielding varieties of rice and corn grains during the now infamous Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s led to an unprecedented use of and dependence to pesticides and herbicides that soon disturbed and seriously harmed the previously prevailing natural ecosystem in the rice fields. Scientific tests have in fact proven how genetically modified crop varieties produce particular types of toxins and allergens that not only prompt allergic reactions but could also cause damage to vital human organs.

On top of what IRRI has already contributed to the continued sorry state of Philippine agriculture, the institute, furthermore, according to *Brotherhood of IRRI Support Services Group (BISSIG)*, a labor organization in IRRI, has been abusing its international status through its seemingly endless list of violations of its workers' rights to organize, to collectively bargain and negotiate, and to hold strikes.

In 1979, President Marcos issued Presidential Decree No. 1620 declared IRRI as an international organization, with all the privileges and immunities that came with the granting of such status. IRRI thus has been able to justify its anti-labor practices. IRRI has intermittently carried out mass lay-offs in 1989, 1993 and 1996. It has implemented questionable retrenchment programs that has warranted the unfair dismissal of regular employees. The institute has also engaged in union busting which included the harassment of union leaders and members.

These workers have failed in their various attempts to seek redress from the courts given IRRI's immunity from suit which it enjoys under Presidential Decree No. 1620. The same immunity has also been invoked to bar the workers from claiming compensation for having been afflicted with illnesses due to exposure to toxic chemicals and to inhuman working conditions.

Presidential Decree No. 1620, however, is not an international pact that cannot be repealed. IRRI does not in fact approximate a party such as a representative of any sovereign state entitled to privileges and immunities as are contained in the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*. Neither can IRRI invoke to be an entity comparable to a specialized agency of the United Nations.

Moreover, the international agreement signed by former President Fidel V. Ramos and representatives of ten (10) countries in May 19, 1995, which acknowledged IRRI as an international organization has yet to be ratified by the Philippine Senate. The said agreement furthermore does not compel any party to the agreement to grant IRRI any privileges and immunities or any form of financial support.

This legislative measure seeks to repeal PD 1620 precisely to strip IRRI of these said unjustifiable privileges and immunities which have been used to grossly violate the fundamental rights and freedom of IRRI workers with impunity. More compellingly, this bill, filed previously during the first regular session of the Fourteenth Congress by then Anakpawis Representative Rafael Mariano, is being refiled today to decisively challenge the collusion of IRRI and greedy agrochemical transnational corporations, in the hope of arresting

Philippine agriculture's ruinous dependence on chemical inputs which has caused farmers to suffer illnesses and has destroyed the country's traditional rice varieties. This bill, thus, is not only in defense of the welfare of Filipino workers and peasants but also a commitment to Philippine sovereignty and patrimony.

In view of the foregoing, the speedy passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


FERNANDO L. HICAP

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FERNANDO L. HICAP**

**AN ACT REPEALING PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1620 OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS "GRANTING TO THE INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH
INSTITUTE (IRRI) THE STATUS, PREROGATIVES, PRIVILEGES AND
IMMUNITIES OF AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION"**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in
Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. Presidential Decree No. 1620 otherwise known as "Granting to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) the Status, Prerogatives, Privileges and Immunities of an International Organization" is hereby repealed.

SECTION 2. All laws, jurisprudence, executive orders, executive issuances or letter of instructions, or any part thereof, inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.