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SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
AT THE CEREMONIAL SIGNING OF THE ANTI-AGRICULTURAL
ECONOMIC SABOTAGE ACT

[Delivered at the Kalayaan Hall, Malacañan Palace in Manila| 26 September 2024]

Thank you very much, Executive Secretary Chief Luc Bersamin. *[Please be seated.]*

Senate President Senator Francisco “Chiz” Escudero and the honorable members of the Senate; House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez and the members of the House of Representatives; Agriculture Secretary Kiko Tiu Laurel Jr. and other Cabinet secretaries who are here with us this afternoon; our key development partners and stakeholders in the agriculture, fisheries, tobacco, and other industries; fellow workers in government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon to you all.

We pride ourselves on hard work, resilience, and the rich bounty from our lands and our seas. Yet, for too long, our agricultural workers have been exploited not necessarily just by foreign foes, but by shadowy figures operating in the very markets that we trust.

Well, enough is enough.

Today, we come together not merely to protect but to uplift the very hands that cultivate our fields and that fish our waters, as we embark on the pivotal journey of enacting the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

This would not have been possible without our legislators whose determination has fortified the backbone of our economy: our farmers, our fisherfolk, and every Filipino who reaps the fruits of their labor.

To those who seek to sow chaos in the fertile fields and waters that sustain us: The hand of justice will swiftly and decisively find you.

Economic sabotage in agriculture is not simply a tale of dubious deals and inflated profits; it manifests as well as hunger, desperation, as betrayal.

Let us then acknowledge the gravity of the situation: These crimes threaten not only our economy but our national security as well. It jeopardizes the livelihood of hardworking Filipino farmers and fisherfolk and it threatens the food sustainability of our communities.

In 2023 alone, we lost over three billion pesos to agricultural smuggling --- staggering amount.

And in less than nine months this year, we have seized over two hundred thirty million peso worth of smuggled agricultural products.

Every sack of smuggled rice, every under-the-table onion deal, every substandard meat sneaking past our quarantine checks—these are not just numbers; they represent lives, families, and futures that are being compromised.

So, let us not ignore the cartels—the organized crime syndicates that manipulate prices and control supplies.

They have names, they have networks, and they are operating right under our noses.

But today marks a turning point.

The passage of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act will set in motion transformative outcomes.

It is a proactive measure to prevent the entry of smuggled agricultural products, ensuring that the correct duties and taxes are paid while imposing higher penalties on violators.

This law shapes a stronger, more resilient agricultural sector that defends both our farmers and our consumers.

It also safeguards public health by preventing the consumption or industrial processing of agricultural products that lack the necessary sanitary and phytosanitary permits. It ensures that what ends up on the tables of every Filipino family are safe and of the highest quality.

Under this law, smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and cartel operations involving agricultural and fishery products will now be classified as economic sabotage—a non-bailable offense punishable by life imprisonment and fines up to five times the value of the goods involved. *[applause]*

And let me be clear: this law does not just target the masterminds; it holds all accomplices accountable—financiers, brokers, employees, even transporters.

We are establishing the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council, which I will chair, alongside the Secretaries of Agriculture, Finance, Transportation, Trade and Industry, and Interior and Local Government, and Justice, and other key officials.

We will enforce the law and ensure that swift and decisive action is taken against anyone who dares to sabotage our agricultural sector. *[applause]*

Together with that, we are also creating an Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group, dedicated to dismantling smuggling operations and apprehending offenders.

This law provides for the development of a special team of prosecutors nationwide to expedite cases related to agricultural sabotage.

No longer will these cases gather dust; they will be prioritized and they will be resolved urgently.

We will confront and dismantle the powerful forces that have long exploited our system for their own gain, ensuring that justice prevails, and the dignity of our agricultural sector is upheld.

No more backdoors, no more shortcuts, and certainly no more turning a blind eye in *Bagong Pilipinas*. [applause]

By eliminating smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and other cartel activities, we are not only shielding our local producers but also providing consumers with affordable agricultural and fishery products.

This law is not just another policy; it is your battle cry.

I urge each of you to be vigilant, to report wrongdoing, and to hold accountable those who seek to undermine our nation.

The food security of our country, the stability of prices, and the dignity of our farmers depend on us all.

This law is clearly a clarion call to restore trust in our institutions and reinvigorate faith in our justice system.

As we pave the path with integrity and dedication, let us envision a Philippines where our farmers flourish, our markets are filled with produce locally sourced, no parent has to worry about feeding their children because of spiraling food prices.

Let us stand resolute in this commitment, for together, we shall cultivate not only the land but the future of our beloved nation.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat!

Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat. [applause]

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