
Policies on Agrarian Reform

Agrarian reform is essentially the rectification of the whole system of the agriculture, an important aspect of the Philippine economy because nearly half of the population is employed in the agricultural sector, and most citizens live in rural areas. Agrarian reform is centered on the relationship between production and distribution of land among farmers; in a broader sense it includes related changes in agricultural institutions, including credit, taxation, rents, and cooperatives. Through genuine and comprehensive agrarian reform, the Philippines would be able to gain more from agricultural potential and uplift the Filipinos in the agricultural sector, who have been, for the longest time, suffering in poverty and discontent.

Department of Agrarian Reform

The Department of Agrarian Reform is the lead government agency that holds and implements comprehensive and genuine agrarian reform which actualizes equitable land distribution, ownership, agricultural productivity, and tenurial security for, of and with the tillers of the land towards the improvement of their quality of life.

- For us to understand more the development of agrarian reform we need to turn our attention to our country history, especially on past colonization.

Pre Spanish period

“This land is Ours God gave this land to us”

Before the Spaniards came to the Philippines, Filipinos lived in villages or barangays ruled by *chiefs* or *datus*. The *datus* comprised the nobility. Then came the *maharlikas* (freemen), followed by the *aliping mamamahay* (serfs) and *aliping saguiguilid* (slaves).

However, despite the existence of different classes in the social structure, practically everyone had access to the fruits of the soil. Money was unknown, and rice served as the medium of exchange.

Landownership in the Philippines under Spain

“United we stand, divided we fall”

System of pueblo agriculture – where rural communities, often dispersed and scattered in nature, were organized into a pueblo and given land to cultivate.

Families were not allowed to own their land – the King of Spain owned the land, and Filipinos were assigned to these lands to cultivate them, and they paid their colonial tributes to the Spanish authorities in the form of agricultural products.

- Law of Indies, the Spanish crown awarded tracts of land to :
 - a. Religious order
 - b. Repartamientos for Spanish military as reward to their service
 - c. Spanish encomenderos
- Those mandated to manage the encomienda or the lands given to them, where Filipinos worked and paid their tributes to the encomendero.

Encomienda system – was an unfair and abusive system. Filipinos in the encomienda were also required to render services to their encomenderos that were unrelated to farming

“Compras y vandalas” – became the norm for the Filipino farmers working the land – they were made to sell their products at very low price or surrender their products to the encomenderos, who resold it as a profit.

Hacienda system – developed in the beginning of the nineteenth century as Spanish government implemented policies

- Developed as a new form of ownership

- In **1860s**, Spain enacted a law ordering landholders to register their landholdings and only those who benefited from this.

- The primary reason why revolts in the Philippines were often agrarian in nature is that because of “abusive system” of Spaniards
- Filipinos fought the Philippine Revolution in a confluence of motivations, but the greatest desire for freedom would be the necessity of owning land.
- Upon the end of Philippine revolution, the revolutionary government would declare all large landed estates, especially the confiscated friar lands as government property.

Landownership in the Philippines under the Americans

“Long live America”

- 🌟 The Americans are aware that the main cause of social unrest in the Philippines was landlessness, and they attempted to put an end to the deplorable conditions of the tenant farmers by passing several land policies to increase the small landholders and distribute ownership to a bigger number of Filipino tenants and farmers:
 - **Philippine Bill of 1902** – Set the ceilings on the hectarage of private individuals and corporations may acquire: 16 has. for private individuals and 1,024 has. for corporations.
 - American were also given rights to own their agricultural lands in the country.
 - **Land Registration Act of 1902 (Act No. 496)** – Provided for a comprehensive registration of land titles under the Torrens system.
 - **Public Land Act of 1903** – introduced the homestead system in the Philippines.
 - Allowing a tenant to enter into a agricultural business acquiring a farm of at least 16 hectares.

✚ Landownership did not improve during the American period ;

- There was no limit to the size of landholdings people could possess.
- Not all friars lands acquired by the Americans were given to landless peasant farmers.
- This land reform program was implemented without support mechanisms(if a landless peasant farmer received land ,he only received land ,nothing more.
- This system led to widespread peasant uprisings, such as the Colorum and Sakdal Uprisings in Luzon revolts.

SAKDAL UPRISING – was a peasant rebellion in Central Luzon that lasted for two days, May 2-3, 1935. It was easily crushed by government forces then, but this historical vent tells of the social inequality brought about by issues in land ownership and tenancy in the country.

Sakdal – “To accuse”, which is the tittle of the newspaper helmed by **Benigno Ramos**

✚ This led to the establishment of the Partido Sakdalista in 1933.

- **Tenancy Act of 1933 (Act No. 4054 and 4113)** – regulated relationships between landowners and tenants of rice (50-50 sharing) and sugar cane lands.

Commonwealth Period

“Government for the Filipinos”

President Manuel L. Quezon espoused the "Social Justice" program to arrest the increasing social unrest in Central Luzon.

Significant legislation enacted during Commonwealth Period:

- 1935 Constitution – "The promotion of social justice to ensure the well-being and economic security of all people should be the concern of the State"
 - Commonwealth Act No. 178 (An Amendment to Rice Tenancy Act No. 4045), Nov. 13, 1936 – Provided for certain controls in the landlord-tenant relationships
 - National Rice and Corn Corporation (NARIC), 1936 – Established the price of rice and corn thereby help the poor tenants as well as consumers.
 - Commonwealth Act. No. 461, 1937 – Specified reasons for the dismissal of tenants and only with the approval of the Tenancy Division of the Department of Justice.
 - Rural Program Administration, created March 2, 1939 – Provided the purchase and lease of haciendas and their sale and lease to the tenants.
- Commonwealth Act No. 441 enacted on June 3, 1939 – Created the National Land Settlement Administration with a capital stock of P20,000,000.

Post-War Interventions toward Agrarian Reform

President Manuel A. Roxas (1946-1948) enacted the following laws:

- Republic Act No. 34 -- Established the 70-30 sharing arrangements and regulating share-tenancy contracts.
- Republic Act No. 55 -- Provided for a more effective safeguard against arbitrary ejection of tenants.

Elpidio R. Quirino (1948-1953) enacted the following law:

Executive Order No. 355 issued on October 23, 1950 -- Replaced the National Land Settlement Administration with Land Settlement Development Corporation (LASEDECO) which takes over the responsibilities of the Agricultural Machinery Equipment Corporation and the Rice and Corn Production Administration.

Ramon Magsaysay (1953-1957) enacted the following laws:

- Republic Act No. 1160 of 1954 -- Abolished the LASEDECO and established the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA) to resettle dissidents and landless farmers. It was particularly aimed at rebel returnees providing home lots and farmlands in Palawan and Mindanao.
- Republic Act No. 1199 (Agricultural Tenancy Act of 1954) -- governed the relationship between landowners and tenant farmers by organizing share-tenancy and leasehold system. The law provided the security of tenure of tenants. It also created the Court of Agrarian Relations.
- Republic Act No. 1400 (Land Reform Act of 1955) -- Created the Land Tenure Administration (LTA) which was responsible for the acquisition and distribution of large tenanted rice and corn lands over 200 hectares for individuals and 600 hectares for corporations.
- Republic Act No. 821 (Creation of Agricultural Credit Cooperative Financing Administration) -- Provided small farmers and share tenants loans with low interest rates of six to eight percent.

President Carlos P. Garcia (1957-1961)

Continued the program of President Ramon Magsaysay. No new legislation passed.

President Diosdado P. Macapagal (1961-1965) enacted the following law:

Republic Act No. 3844 of August 8, 1963 (Agricultural Land Reform Code) -- Abolished share tenancy, institutionalized leasehold, set retention limit at 75 hectares, invested rights of preemption and redemption for tenant farmers, provided for an administrative machinery for implementation, institutionalized a judicial system of agrarian cases, incorporated extension, marketing and supervised credit system of services of farmer beneficiaries.

The RA was hailed as one that would emancipate Filipino farmers from the bondage of tenancy.

This study resource was shared via CourseHero.com