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Task force vests DAR with power to give quarantine passes to farmers

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The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) will soon grant farmers quarantine pass that will allow them to bring their produce to areas affected by the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ).

On April 4, 2020, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF-EID) granted the DAR the authority to issue quarantine pass to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs).

To recall, President Duterte declared a State of Public Health Emergency and placed the entire Luzon island under ECQ on March 16. The strict implementation of the monthlong ECQ prevents farmers and fishermen from bringing their produce to vegetable and fish landings, hence, limiting the food supply, especially in the National Capital Region (NCR).

The request for authorization was initiated by DAR Secretary John Castriciones to ensure the delivery of food and other agricultural products to markets, especially those located in critical areas where people cannot buy food because of the ECQ.

The DAR is now crafting a memorandum circular to guide DAR and ARBs in properly implementing the endeavor, Castriciones said in a news statement.

The authorization is expected to speed up the process of selling and distribution of agricultural commodities to critical areas nationwide, Castriciones said.

At the same time, the authorization would also accredit suppliers and truckers of agricultural products to be given incentives such as truck-ban exemptions, ease of

passage in checkpoints and immediate assistance from local government units (LGUs) during deliveries.

The issuance of quarantine passes, or food passes, is being implemented under the Foodlane Project where DAR and other government agencies converge to institutionalize efficient and seamless distribution of agricultural and fishery products from the production sites to market centers.

“This move kills two birds with one stone because this [objective] will help contribute to food sufficiency and also help our farmers survive Covid-19 by earning income by assisting them in selling their agri-products,” Castriciones said.

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