

ARTA steps in to help agencies improve food production sector service following complaints versus BAI and BPI

23 October 2020 – The Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) has now stepped in to improve the processing of applications in the food production sector, particularly in the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

Over the course of the month, ARTA has met with BAI and BPI in separate meetings to discuss the ways in which the agencies can streamline their processes. This, after mounting complaints was received by ARTA against the two bureaus regarding the quality of their services. ARTA first met with the stakeholders of the respective agencies to gather inputs on their experience.

For BAI, there was a consensus on its burdensome processing during the time of pandemic caused by lack of an effective online system and a failure to adopt to the new normal. Moreover, new processes and requirements have been implemented without proper consultation and dissemination to the stakeholders.

Throughout the several meetings with BAI and its stakeholders, ARTA was able to discuss what BAI needs to do to comply with the provisions of R.A. 11032.

For BPI, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), the Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. (PHILEXPORT), and Philippine Food Processors and Exporters Organization Inc. (PHILFOODEX) copy furnished ARTA a letter regarding the drafting of circulars that will require the registration of food business operators. This, they said, could be a source of overregulation.

In line with this, the stakeholders requested for the suspension of consultation process for a thorough analysis of the regulations regarding food safety. They also asked for BPI to undergo a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) and a stocktaking of all their food safety regulations before conducting public consultations. This will ensure that agencies are acting coherently and not unnecessarily burdening the food and agriculture industries.

Further, ARTA was able to gather some of the concerns raised namely the incoherent policies of BPI divisions, the overlapping and redundant policies from several regulating bodies, and the lack of manpower and infrastructure of the implementing agency.

“ARTA is ready to help any agency that is willing to reform their ways to deliver better government service. We commend both BAI and BPI for their readiness to take responsibility for the matters that their stakeholders are raising. The law is here and ARTA has the programs that can improve their services. That’s why I implore our stakeholders, speak up. And to our agencies, step up. We need to be able to work hand in hand to weather this pandemic successfully,” ARTA Director General Jeremiah Belgica said.

ARTA has already issued recommendations on how the bureaus can streamline their processes. Currently, both BAI and BPI are in coordination with ARTA to resolve their problems. Department of Agriculture Secretary William Dar also expressed his commitment to partner with ARTA in improving the services of the national government agency.

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