

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Eighteenth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 170



Introduced by Rep. Bernadette Herrera-Dy

A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE HOUSE COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON THE EXISTENCE AND CIRCULATION OF LOCAL VINEGAR BRANDS MADE FROM SYNTHETIC ACETIC ACID AND FOR CONCERNED AGENCIES TO PURSUE RESULTS OF ITS INTER-AGENCY MEETING TOWARDS THE SAFETY OF FILIPINO CONSUMERS

WHEREAS, on May 8, 2019, a local newspaper reported that researchers from the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (DOST-PNRI) used isotope-based analytical techniques to more than 360 "brands" of vinegar in the Philippines to determine if the products are natural or synthetic.

WHEREAS, PNRI later clarified that they tested 360 "samples" (not brands) all over the country. From the 17 brands they tested, they found that only 3 passed under nuclear testing. Of the products, 8 out of 10 are synthetic or "fake" and not made from acetic acid derived from plants. While the 3 brands that passed the test still use acetic acid, these are naturally derived and do not use synthetic chemicals.

WHEREAS, PNRI clarified that its study is limited to determining whether the acetic acid is fermented or synthetic, and did not include whether the synthetic acetic acid "has residues that may be carcinogenic." However, it has previously stated that the "fake vinegar" brands contain elements that can cause "various degenerative diseases."

WHEREAS, PNRI also stated that synthetic acetic acid comes from fossil fuels, petrochemicals, or a by-product in the production of diesel, oil, and other substances. Further, the agency said that the chemical should not be used for food.

WHEREAS, according to reports, synthetic acetic acid is produced chemically by the reaction of methanol with carbon monoxide which is used as a solvent for paints and resins. This may be dangerous to human health. Thus, brands using this chemical pose risks to consumers.

WHEREAS, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) emphasized that although synthetic acetic acid in vinegar brands are "not necessarily harmful," these do not undergo "natural process of alcoholic or acetous fermentation of natural raw materials" which is the FDA's standard. It also warned that products using synthetic chemicals shall have their registration with the FDA revoked for misdeclaration.

WHEREAS, Administrative Order 134 S. 1970 of the Department of Health or the Regulation Prescribing the Standard of Identity and Quality of Vinegar states that "vinegar containing any artificial matter, such as synthetic acetic acid, or cloudifying agent shall be deemed to be adulterated and its sale is thereby prohibited."

WHEREAS, Section 15, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution declares that the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

WHEREAS, Section 9, Article XVI of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that the State shall protect consumers from trade malpractices and from substandard or hazardous products.

WHEREAS, Section 3 of RA 10611 or the Food Safety Act of 2013 mandates to strengthen the food safety regulatory system in the country and protect the public from food-borne and water-borne illnesses and unsanitary, unwholesome, misbranded or adulterated foods.

WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture (DA) initiated an inter-agency meeting with the Department of Health's (DOH) Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Department of Science

1 and Technology (DOST) and its research agency Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI),
2 the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and DOST PNRI scientist Raymond Sugang to
3 set standards on vinegar, to verify products that use synthetic chemicals, to release advisories
4 against these products, and to monitor products being sold in the market.

5 **WHEREAS**, the DA directed the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) to set the
6 standards for vinegar and such products must be classified as sour condiments produced
7 through a natural fermentation process.

8 **WHEREAS**, despite the aforementioned policies, findings, and warnings from various
9 stakeholders, the PNRI stated that it does not have the mandate to release brand names of
10 vinegar that use synthetic acetic acid. However, PNRI said that they already submitted their
11 findings on the 17 vinegar brands to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

12 **WHEREAS**, FDA has not yet released the brand names of fake vinegar products as it claimed
13 that it is still waiting for PNRI's complete report of findings before doing so.

14 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the House of Representatives, urging the
15 appropriate House Committee to conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation on the existence
16 and circulation of local vinegar brands made from synthetic acetic acid and for concerned
17 government agencies to pursue results of its inter-agency meeting towards the safety of Filipino
18 consumers. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure the health and wellness of its citizens. It
19 has been mandated by law that vinegar containing any artificial matter shall be prohibited.
20 Filipino consumers must also be protected from food-borne and water-borne illnesses and
21 unsanitary, unwholesome, misbranded or adulterated foods. Despite claims that synthetic acetic
22 acid has not yet been proven to be detrimental, the threat of this possibility is already a cause
23 for alarm. At the same time, the lack of transparency in dealing with this issue serves to be a
24 problem. The public should not only be advised to be careful in choosing brands. Instead,
25 credible and accurate information must be provided. The government must also strengthen its
26 measures to protect the public from harmful products and food offered in the market. Thus, the
27 concerned agencies are urged to release the names of the brands using synthetic acetic acid
28 and to expedite efforts to resolve this issue. The House of Representatives shall monitor
29 developments of this concern and continuously direct all its efforts towards the safety of the
30 Filipino people.
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33 *Adopted,*

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BERNADETTE HERRERA-DY