

## **Perspective of the Peasant Struggle Against APECO**

The all-out campaign  
against APECO, led by  
PAMANA – Aurora in the  
province, by AMGL in the  
region and Resist APECO!  
Defend Aurora! Movement

in the NCR has set off and resolutely affirmed the repeal of RA  
10083.

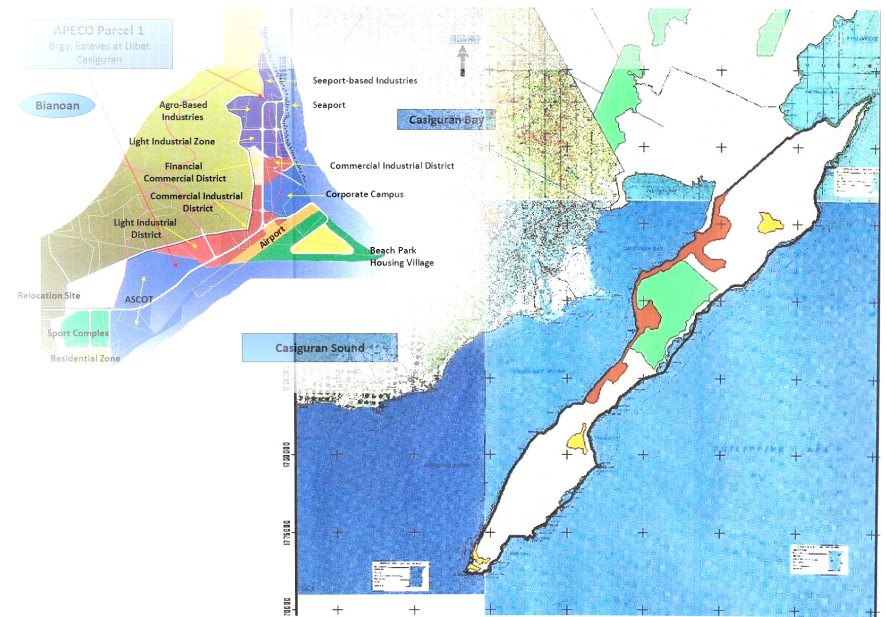
In the province, PAMANA – Aurora is organizing the Alyansa ng  
Mamamayan Tutol sa APECO (People's Alliance Against APECO)  
primarily composed of local farmers, fisherfolks and indigenous  
peoples affected by the program. In the region, AMGL is mobilizing  
farmers from different provinces to support the Aurora farmers'  
issues.

In the NCR, Resist APECO! Defend Aurora! Movement has already  
lobbied to lawmakers, sent position papers against the P332.5-  
million budget allocation in the House of Representatives. It was  
accompanied by a protest action outside congress where local  
farmers were able to express their opposition against APECO. In  
addition, more organizations and individuals are joining the Resist  
APECO! Defend Aurora! Movement to express support to the  
Aurora farmers.

**REPEAL RA 10083 APECO!**  
**SUPPORT THE AURORA FARMERS' STRUGGLE**  
**FOR THEIR RIGHTS TO LAND AND LIVELIHOOD!**  
**STRUGGLE FOR GENUINE LAND REFORM!**

Let us support the call to repeal RA 10083, oppose the implementation  
of APECO and support the Aurora farmers' struggle for their rights to  
land and livelihood. Please join the Resist APECO! Defend Aurora!  
Movement or support our campaign. You may send a message at  
[amgl.info@gmail.com](mailto:amgl.info@gmail.com) or [resistapeco@gmail.com](mailto:resistapeco@gmail.com).

## **Aurora Peasants' Struggle Against Aurora Pacific Economic Zone and Freeport Act of 2010 (APECO)**



**Prepared by**  
**Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon**  
**(AMGL, Peasant Alliance in Central Luzon) and**  
**Panlalawigang Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Aurora**  
**(PAMANA - Aurora)**

## **What is APECO?**

APECO is Aurora Pacific Economic Zone and Freeport Act of 2010 or Republic Act 10083. It is a program

that aims to transform Casiguran town as well as the whole Aurora to as an investment haven, site of commercial and industrial districts and eco-tourism zones.

Before APECO, the Angaras, namely Sen. Edgardo Angara and his son, Rep. Juan Edgardo “Sonny” Angara filed the Aurora Special Economic Zone Act of 2007 or ASEZA in Congress, House Bill 5309 at the House of Representatives and Senate Bill 2603 at the Senate. ASEZA was passed on February 20, 2007 during the Arroyo administration. The program targeted 493-hectares of prime agricultural land at Brgy. Esteves and Dibet in Casiguran town as the site of the project. However, Casiguran and Aurora people opposed the program and claimed that they were never consulted about the enactment of ASEZA. The program immediately affected about 400 households who are majorly farmers and fisherfolk who are about to be displaced from their farms and homes.

On April 20, 2009, Rep. Angara filed the House Bill 3470 and on August 25, 2009 and September 8, 2009, Sen. Angara filed the Senate Bill 3408 and 3430, respectively. This is the Aurora Pacific Economic Zone and Freeport Act of 2010 or APECO.

APECO’s main difference with ASEZA is that it expanded the land being targeted for land use conversion. The ASEZA land of 493-hectares of the 2 barangays was declared as Parcel 1 and another 12,427-hectares covering 3 barangays, Brgy. Cozo, Culat and San Ildefonso were declared as Parcel 2. In total, APECO involves 12,920-hectares of land to be the project area. Still, Casiguran people were not consulted in the enactment of APECO and those affected are undoubtedly opposing the program.

APECO is divided into parcels and phase of implementation such as the following:

- **Parcel 1**
  - **Phase 1**

## **Programs and Activities**

The movement’s accepted program and activities would be in line with the provincial, regional and national plan of opposing the APECO project. This may include:

### **1. Public Information Drive**

- educational discussions, discussion groups, forums
- publication of statements, primers, brochures
- statements released to the media
- signature drive or petition to repeal APECO, online petition
- website, mailing list

### **2. Mass Actions**

- participation of mass actions led by Aurora sectors
- initiate actions in NCR to further propagate the demand to repeal APECO
- coordinate exposure programs for sectors to Casiguran and Aurora province
- coordinate fact-finding and solidarity mission to Casiguran and Aurora province

### **3. Alliance Work**

- lobbying to lawmakers, local government units, government agencies
- lobbying and dialogue to institutions such as the church, academe, non-government organizations and more
- initiate actions in NCR to further propagate the demand to repeal APECO
- gathering of international support for the Aurora people and demand to repeal APECO

### **4. Financial and Material Support**

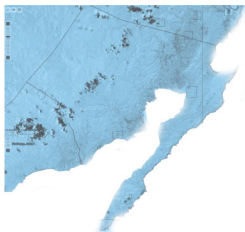
- fund-raising drive
- solicitation
- relief and rehabilitation drive
- support for the production of materials necessary for the public information drive

### **5. Legal and Legislative Support**

- coordination with lawyers groups to render legal services to the people of Aurora, especially those facing cases filed by APECO
- congressional inquiry to further register the demand of the Aurora people to repeal APECO

## Resist APECO! Defend Aurora! Movement

**RESIST  
APECO!  
DEFEND  
AURORA!  
MOVEMENT**



The Resist APECO! Defend Aurora! Movement is a national, multi-sectoral movement or campaign to support the demand of Aurora people to repeal APECO or RA 10083. It is primarily composed of

people's organizations of basic sectors such as the peasants, fisherfolk and indigenous people, supported by sectors and individuals from the church, government employees, academe, lawyers, artists and more. It is also composed of organizations and individuals from Casiguran town, provincial, regional and national level.

The movement is expected to include more sectors and individuals who would affirm the basis of unity:

- **to repeal APECO;**
- **uphold the rights to land and livelihood of Aurora people; promote of genuine land reform in the province.**

This movement will be represented by a body of convenors and among them spokespersons will be appointed to articulate the standpoint of Aurora people against APECO. The convenors initially include representatives from the peasants (provincial, regional and national), fisherfolk (nat'l), indigenous people (nat'l), church (local and nat'l), institution (regional), multi-sectoral group (regional) and government employees (nat'l). More representatives are being invited to compose the body. The movement will include a secretariat composed of PAMANA, Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL, Peasant Alliance in Central Luzon), Pamalakaya-Pilipinas (fisherfolk) and Gov't Employees for Genuine Land Reform (GE4GLR).

- Entrance plaza (on-going construction by New Kanlaon Construction worth P436.5 million), administration building (to be completed next year), corporate center, business processing outsourcing building, five-star hotel, road network, water, sewerage facilities

### ▪ **Phase 2**

- Service support building, BPO building, infirmary, transportation terminal
- Staff and workers housing, clubhouse, covered courts
- Establishments
  - Agro-based industries, wood-based, wine and beverages, pharmaceuticals, food supplements
  - Seaport based industries, warehouse, container terminal, fuel, oil depot, canning/seafood processing, cold storage, meat/fish processing, bricks factory, wheat and grain mills
  - Light industrial zone, boat building and repair, wood furniture, crafts machine shops, home-made industries, biscuit factory, noodle manufacturing, office supplies
  - Financial commercial district, bank, insurance, investment companies, condominium/offices, multi-national firms, leasing corporation, commercial industrial district, IT park, electronic hub, health, beauty and wellness club, tourist souvenir shops
  - Light commercial zone, retail store, mini-board house, room, bed for rent

### ▪ **Parcel 2**

#### ▪ **Phase 2 – Eco-tourism (12,427-hectares)**

- 10 MW windmill, resort, surfing, snorkeling and more
- mariculture park covering 300-has. at Brgy. Cozo that may expand to 3,000-has. in Casiguran

### ▪ **APECO also offers local and foreign investors the following:**

- Income Tax Holiday
- Net Operating Loss Carry Over
- Imposition of a Tax Rate of 5% on Gross Income Earned
- Accelerated Depreciation
- Capital Equipment Incentives
- The importation of source documents by information technology-registered enterprises shall be eligible for tax and duty free importation
- Raw Materials Incentives
- Incentives on Breeding Stocks and Genetic Materials
- Provision of Investor's Visa (on the condition that necessary qualifications and requirements)



- Exemption from Wharfage Dues
- Deferred Imposition of Minimum Corporate Income Taxes
- Tax Treatment of Merchandise in the Aurora Ecozone
- For those investors who would abide by the Renewable Energy Act of 2009
  - Income Tax Holiday
  - Duty-free Importation of Renewable Energy Machinery, Equipment and Materials
  - Special Realty Tax Rates on Equipment and Machinery
  - Net Operating Loss Carry-over
  - Corporate Tax Rate
  - Accelerated Depreciation
  - Zero Percent Value-added Tax Rate
  - Cash Incentive of Renewable Energy Developers for Missionary Electrification
  - Tax Exemption of Carbon Credits
  - Tax Credit on Domestic Capital Equipment and Services

▪ **APECO's Board of Directors is composed of the following:**

- Chairman – appointed by the president
- President and CEO – vice chair – presently Gov. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo (sister of Sen. Angara)
- Board of Directors
- Governor
- Congressional representative – Rep. Juan Edgardo Angara
- President and CEO
- Mayor of Dinalungan, Casiguran and Dilasag towns (1 yr term each)
- 1 representative of domestic investors (formerly Industries Dev't Corp. by the Ong, known illegal loggers of Aurora, presently Robert K. Mathay appointed by president Aquino on February 13, 2011)
- 1 representative of foreign investors (Asera US-based windmill manufacturer owned by Engr. Larry Asera)
- 1 representative of the workers
- 2 prominent Filipino residents hailing from the province (one is Bienvenido Laguesma appointed by pres. Aquino on February. 13, 2011)

Thus, the APECO program is aiming to overhaul the social and economic way of life of Casiguran and Aurora people without democratically involving them in the decision-making process. The on-going projects at the 5 barangays affects and threatens about thousand families of farmers, fisherfolk and indigenous people. The

**Images from NFFSM APECO (June 22-25, 2011)**



(Top) Bountiful harvest from the sea. (Left) Rice granary of northern Aurora.



(Top) Airstrip that encroached farmers' land. (Right) Farmer victim of APECO land grabbing, behind her is the construction of admin building.

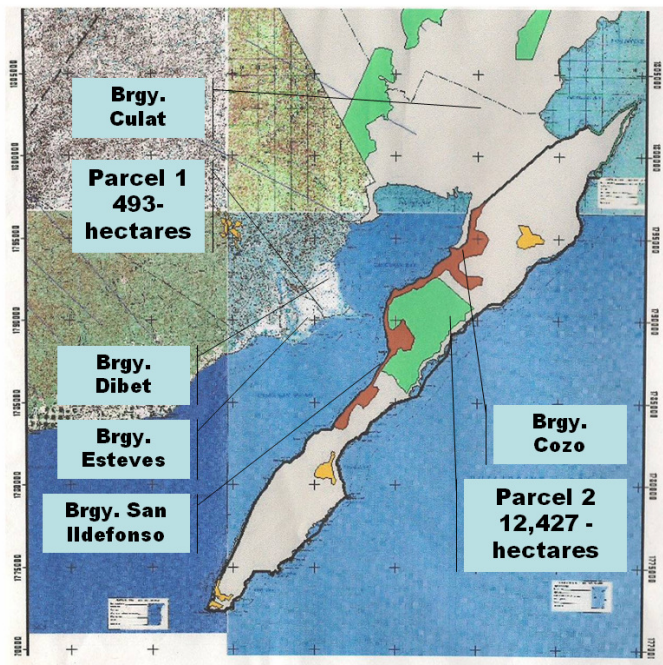


Quarrying operations that supply APECO projects, causing destruction to environment and livelihood of farmers.

The NFFSM APECO determined that the people of Casiguran and Aurora demand the repeal of APECO or Republic 10083 and protection of their rights to land and livelihood. Thus, upon acquiring the grievances and plea of the people of Casiguran, the delegates of National Fact Finding and Solidarity Mission support their call:

- that the Republic Act 10083 or Aurora Pacific Economic Zone and Freeport Act of 2010 be repealed;
- the on-going projects that infringe the people's right to land and livelihood be immediately stopped;
- ejectment cases against farmers be dismissed and demolition operations be barred;
- that the rights of farmers, fisher folk, indigenous people and other sectors to land and livelihood be recognized, protected and promoted.

### **APECO coverage in Casiguran and Northern Aurora**



conversion of productive rice lands in Brgy. Esteves and Dibet, dubbed as the rice granary of northern Aurora would also result the loss of food supply for at least 22,403-population of Casiguran.

Farmers and indigenous people who cultivated the lands for at least 50 years are now facing displacement from their land. The project would also wipe-out fishing communities who supply the fish requirement for the province.

Aside from detrimental effects to the rights and livelihood of the people, the project would also cause the further environmental destruction as it requires quarrying and logging the hills of Aurora. At present, a quarry site at Brgy. Bianoan is a potential cause of flash floods.

In general, the APECO project would not benefit the Aurora people but only the Angaras, their lackeys and the foreign investors. The Angaras dominate the APECO administration and their "dummies" are on a land grabbing onslaught all-over the province. APECO is a legalized and massive land grabbing in Aurora that threatens the people's rights on land. At present, the people are now resisting displacement and demolition of their houses. They have decided by organizing the Alyansa ng Mamamayan Tutol sa APECO (AMTSA, People's Alliance Against APECO) and they are supported by the Panlalawigang Alyansa ng Magbubukid ng Aurora (PAMANA, Provincial Peasant Alliance of Aurora). In Manila, they are supported by the Resist APECO! Defend Aurora! Movement composed by different sectors.

### **National Fact-finding and Solidarity Mission on APECO Report (June 22-25, 2011)**

Upon reaching the Aurora province on June 22, 2011, delegates have caught sight of the rich and abundant agricultural and fisheries wealth of the province. The lands were cultivated with coconut, rice, fruit and vegetable crops and the bays are parked with small fishing boats. At the early stage, delegates have established that the province is mainly agricultural, thus, its population composes of farmers, fisher folk and indigenous people as majority.

Based from the information gathered from 134 residents of 5 barangays namely, Brgy. Esteves, Dibet, Cozo, Culat and San Ildefonso, the NFFSM APECO group sums up their findings as follows:

The APECO project covers immense areas, 12,923 hectares, affecting the lives of people of Casiguran of at least 5,430 people (population of 5 villages) and eventually 4,336 families or a population 22,403 residents of the Casiguran town.

It is inconceivable that APECO infringed the rights of the people to land, who cultivated the lands for 50 years or more, having Original Certificate of Title (OCT), Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), Certificate of Stewardship Contract (CSC) under the Integrated Social Forestry (ISF), coverage of former president Quezon's Proclamation 467 for the indigenous people.

The concrete and ongoing effects of APECO are located in Parcel 1 covering Brgy. Esteves and Dibet. Farmers have been victims of land grabbing and displacement that gave way to the expansion of the airstrip, construction of the administration building, entrance plaza and more. There are also 450 farmer families (are) targeted to be displaced. Lands of farmers in Brgy. Dibet have also been converted to give way to the widening of the road network connecting the airstrip, and hills have been excavated to supply the requirements of construction. The actual construction related to the APECO project is affecting an estimated 2,312 residents of the 2 barangays.

The 2 barangays are considered the rice granary of Casiguran and northern Aurora, as 493 hectares of productive rice farms are cultivated by farmers. Threatening these rice lands poses a big threat to the food security of the town and the province. There are systematic demolitions and ejectment cases against the farmers. Under the threat of land use conversion, Casiguran and Aurora people may lose about 961 to 1,281 metric tons of rice supply. About 22,403 Casiguran residents or 4,336 families are potential victims of local food shortage and hunger.

The on-going construction of APECO component projects resulted in environmental destruction in Casiguran. There is a current quarrying operation in Brgy. Biancoan that also encroaches the land of resident farmers. It also endangers the water supply of Casiguran town, source of household water and irrigation to farms.

There are also military deployments in the area. In Brgy. Esteves, elements of the 48th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army transformed the barangay hall into their detachment. They regularly patrol the area causing alarm to the farmers. A certain platoon leader Lt. Julius Gawi admitted that they are conducting "Bayanihan" operations. The military also conducts regular patrols at barangay Cozo, Culat and San Ildefonso and regular household checks on farmers known to oppose APECO.

In addition, Fr. Jose Francisco "Joefran" Talaban, 43 years old and Parish Priest of Nuestra Señora de la Salvacion in Brgy. Biancoan, Casiguran had survived in an assassination attempt last June 26, 2010 by anti-communist group sponsored by the 48th Infantry Battalion Philippine Army (IBPA) called "Aniban ng mga Ayaw sa Komunista (ANAK-Bianoan) or "Alliance Against Communists of Biancoan. Fr. Talaban has been targeted because of his active participation in exposing and fighting for Casiguran people against APECO.

There are broad protests of Casiguran residents against APECO. People from different barangays claim there were no public consultations or hearings conducted on APECO. The residents were not informed of what APECO is, its component projects and its effect on their lives. They also learned that APECO did not go through committee hearings at the House of Representatives and was only enacted through being "lapsed into law."

The Casiguran and Aurora people claim the APECO project is wholesale land grabbing, displacement and land use conversion. Its objective is only to serve the Angara's, foreign and local investors at the cost of trampling upon their rights to land and livelihood. They also claim that it would result in environmental destruction, poverty and hunger to the people of Casiguran and Aurora.