

Boracay still open to land reform

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About 15.5 hectares of the 400 hectares of agricultural land in Boracay in Aklan can be immediately subjected to land reform, a Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) official has said.



Undersecretary David Erro said that after deducting the 220.4487 hectares that were subjected to exemption or conversion, 408.5113 hectares can be covered by land reform. DAR Secretary John Castriociones believes that once President Duterte gives the order to place Boracay under land reform after its closure for rehabilitation, the department could immediately distribute 15.5 hectares to farmers, particularly the native Aetas who were displaced by the developments in the island.

“There is a valid ground for us to implement the coverage of agricultural lands under agrarian reform,” Castriociones said.

Erro said there are 408.5113 hectares that could be subjected to land reform. However, it “appears that structures were illegally built” on the land “since there is no request for exemption or conversion from DAR,” he said.

But the President can order the land be redistributed even if there are structures on it, he added.

Proclamation 1064, signed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2006, divided Boracay into agricultural lands and forestlands, Erro said.

A big chunk or about 628 hectares has been classified as agricultural land and 377 hectares into forestland.

Erro said Duterte is correct in saying that Boracay Island can be placed under agrarian reform. But it should be the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) that will turn over the lands to DAR for distribution.

“Until DENR transfers the land to us, we will have no jurisdiction over these agricultural lands,” Erro said.