

## (UPDATE 2) Sumilao farmers in Palace for meeting with Arroyo

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MANILA, Philippines -- Representatives of Higaonon farmers from Sumilao, Bukidnon are now in Malacañang for a meeting with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The 55 farmers marched for two months and some 1,700 kilometers from Bukidnon to Metro Manila, to dramatize their demand to be reinstated as owners on a 144-hectare property previously awarded them under agrarian reform but which is being developed into a hog farm by San Miguel Foods Inc.

The six representatives of the farmers -- Napoleon, Samuel and Eugene Merida, Linda Ligmon, Gary Galarilla and Hilda San-ahan -- were accompanied by Bishops Broderick Fabillo and Francisco Claver, Fr. Danny Huang and Fr. Anton Pascual of Caritas Manila, their lawyers Marlon Manuel and Arlene Bag-ao, and non-government organization worker Jane Capacio.

They were ushered into the main Palace building where Manuel said they would be served lunch and then meet with Arroyo behind closed doors.

The rest of the farmers have remained at the San Beda Church, where they had earlier heard mass and were joined unexpectedly by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye and Presidential Management Staff chief Cerge Remonde.

Remonde said they were there to fetch the farmers' representatives and the religious leaders who would accompany them to the dialogue.

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