

Attention:
Roel L.

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasang Pambansa, Quezon City

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. _____ 3272

INTRODUCED BY REP. JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The country is now in the throes of a rice crisis. Unless addressed decisively and clearly, the rice crisis threatens to unleash adverse political and economic consequences for our country and for the Filipino people. The times call for us to seize the bull by the horns and deal with the problem with a comprehensive and long-term solution.

All these represent an integrated approach to solving the rice crisis. With the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991, all extension personnel of the Department of Agriculture (DA) were devolved to provincial and municipal government units. Thus, the function of providing technical services to farmers is the responsibility of local government units.

For some reason, however, the expertise of LGU personnel in most regions of the country has deteriorated to alarming levels. In some LGUs, the agriculture extension office does not even have even the minimum complement or expertise, much less an effective fund allocation for agriculture. LGUs have also expressed discontent over devolution because while the extension function has been devolved, the appropriate agriculture funds still emanate from the DA.

This impasse has been the status quo in terms of agricultural extension for some decades now and it is hurting the overall performance of our agricultural sector. The question of how farmers can access new and innovative technologies is a critical issue in the Philippines.

The challenge confronting the government is how the government can provide technical services to our farmers on a national scale to effect positive growth to the impending food security crisis. This bill proposes the creation of a national cooperative extension service to address the problem of effective delivery of extension services to our farmers. This bill also seeks to introduce other reform measures in the area of agricultural extension such as seed quality testing, soil analysis, remote testing and GIS facilities and support for bio-based fertilizers that shall supplement the extension services provided under this bill.

While the rice crisis is a complicated international and local problem, the provision of technical and research inputs to our farmers through the proposed cooperative extension services is a step in the proper direction. This, in consonance with other allied reforms, will hopefully reverse the rice crisis and set our country on the path of food security and rural development. For the foregoing reasons, the passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENT UNIT COOPERATIVE
EXTENSIONRESEARCH SERVICE, PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Title. - This Act shall be known as the "**Agricultural Cooperative Research Extension Act of 2010.**"

Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to accelerate the growth and development of the rural areas, improve agricultural modernization as a key strategy to increase agricultural productivity, and address national food security and rural poverty. Towards this end, the State shall undertake the establishment of an agricultural cooperative extension service to provide technical services to farmers and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector.

Sec. 3. The Cooperative Extension Research Service. - There shall be created a Cooperative Extension Research Service composed of the Department of Agriculture (DA), designated State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and the Local Government Units (LGUs).

Sec. 4. Components and Functions of the Cooperative Extension Research Service. - The LGUs, in line with the devolution of extension personnel under Republic Act No. 7160, or the Local Government Code of 1991, shall provide extension services to farmers.

The DA is tasked with planning and monitoring, knowledge management and training of extension personnel of the various LGUs.

The SUC of a designated province shall be responsible for providing technical assistance to the LGU and DA of that province. The SUC shall also be responsible for providing technical as well as operational assistance in the overall planning, implementation and monitoring of the agricultural program of the province.

Sec. 5. Purpose of the Cooperative Extension Research Service. – The purposes of the Cooperative Extension Research Service are as follows:

- (a) Ensure the cooperation between the DA, the LGUs and the SUCs at the local level to ensure the direct provision of research and extension services to the farmers;
- (b) Establish and implement a nationwide extension system to service farmers at the local level;
- (c) Link the extension service to sources of new information and technologies from the SUCs;
- (d) Conduct downstream and on-farm research to address location-specific constraints to increase productivity and profitability that are fine-tuned to the practices of local farmers/stakeholders.

Sec. 6. Structure of the Cooperative Extension Service. – National level extension programs shall be orchestrated by the DA in close collaboration with the UPLB. At the regional level, the Regional Field Unit (RFU) together with the DA Regional Integrated Agricultural Research Center (RIARC) and the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) shall orchestrate the program in cooperation with the designated provincial SUC and local governments.

Provincial level SUCs and their municipal level counterparts can host the Rice, Corn and Livestock Action Center (RCLAC) where farmers can obtain initial solutions to their technological problems. The RCLAC shall host the seed laboratories, pest clinics, soil quality laboratories, veterinary clinics, grain quality testing laboratories, agricultural machinery services and other such agricultural support services. These shall be housed in municipal centers to be as near to the farmers as possible.

There shall be agricultural extension services at the barangay level to be of direct and accessible service to the farmers.

Sec. 7. Funds. – Funds from for the research-extension service shall be from different sources: the DA, Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the LGUs. There shall be a new regular fund in the amount of Ten Million Pesos (P10,000,000.00) shall be made available to SUCs to be used as incentives to their experts to conduct extension in their area of assignment or to recruit additional manpower to increase the coverage of their extension work, This may also be used to leverage as counterpart with LGU and DA funds to come up with a unified agricultural development plan for the province.

Additional funds shall also be provided SUCs for the construction of laboratories, clinics, facilities and for the training of technical personnel.

Sec. 8. Agricultural Radio Programs. - There shall be established an "On-the-Air" Agriculture School Radio Program as an important support to on-farm extension services. This program shall be hooked to national radio networks to ensure a national coverage.

Sec. 9. Remote Sensing and GIS Facilities. - There shall be a Remote Sensing and GIS Laboratory established at UP Los Baños (UPLB) to service and assist the SUC-DA-LGU in its agricultural planning and monitoring programs in the province.

Sec.10. Support for Bio-based Fertilizers. - The State shall provide support for the UPLB to strengthen its capacity to produce bio-based fertilizers specially the BIO-N and BIOCON technologies by upscaling its production facilities and providing a laboratory to handle quality assurance of bio-fertilizers.

Sec. 11. Soil analysis. - Soil analysis services shall be provided to farmers through soil analysis laboratories in the regions. and through the provision of soil analysis kits developed by the UPLB for use by the local governments in soil quality assessment. SUCs can train the LGUs in the use of soil test kits and in the interpretation of the results.

Sec. 12. National Seed System and Seed Quality Assurance Program. - Certified or good selected seeds shall be produced at the UPLB and other SUCs in order to assure farmers of steady and adequate supply of these seeds.

Sec. 13. National Grain Quality Assurance Program. - The SUC-LGU-DA shall also establish a laboratory for grain grading and certification. The SUC-LGU-DA shall also provide for good drying facilities to ensure the quality of grains of farmers.

Sec. 14. National Crop Pest Disease Surveillance and Monitoring System. - A nationwide crop pest and disease surveillance and monitoring system shall be established to assist farmers in pest management decisions. The system shall also inform researchers of new strains of pests and diseases that may be brought about by climate change.

The National Crop Protection Center of the UPLB can take leadership in this program in collaboration with the Regional Crop Protection Centers and the provincial SUCs.

Sec. 15. National livestock Pest Disease Surveillance and Quarantine Program. - A national quarantine system shall be established to prevent the spread of disease among livestock. The College of Veterinary Medicine of UPLB shall take the leadership in this program in coordination with the relevant SUCs and the private sector.

Sec. 16. Repealing Clause. - All laws or parts thereof, decrees, orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 17. Separability Clause. - If any of the provisions of this Act is declared invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 18. Effectivity, - This Act shall take effect immediately following its publication in a newspaper of general circulation or the Official Gazette, whichever comes first.

Approved,