

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4231

Introduced by Representatives Walden F. Bello (AKBAYAN), Mark Llandro L. Mendoza (4th District, Batangas), Irvin M. Alcala (2nd District, Quezon), Tomas B. Apacible (1st District, Batangas), Salvador H. Escudero III (1st District, Sorsogon), Cresente C. Paez (COOP NATCCO), Cesar V. Sarmento (Lone District, Catanduanes), Bernardo M. Vergara (Lone District, Baguio City), Ronald M. Cosalan (Lone District, Benguet), Teddy Brawner Baguilat, Jr. (Lone District, Ifugao), Pryde Henry A. Teves (3rd District, Negros Oriental) and Kaka J. Bag-ao (AKBAYAN)

EXPLANATORY NOTE

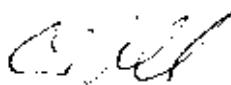
Irrigation is a vital input to agricultural production. It is essential to maximizing land productivity and improving farmers' incomes. Data from the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics indicate that palay yield per hectare in irrigated lands is at 4.21 metric tons per hectare. This is 43 % higher than the yield per hectare in non-irrigated which is at 2.93 metric tons per hectare. Similarly the average net income of a rice farmer planting in irrigated lands is at PHP 14,063 per hectare, per season. On the other hand, a rice farmer tilling non-irrigated lands only earns an average net income of Php 8,447 per hectare, per season.

Unfortunately, despite the proven significance of appropriate irrigation systems increasing farm output and farmers' income, government has yet to decisively act towards ensuring that every agricultural producer has ready access to irrigation facilities and services. At present, only 45.89 per cent of total agricultural lands have irrigation facilities.

In 1991, Congress passed Republic Act 6978 providing for the accelerated program for the construction of irrigation projects. However, government has yet to implement the said law. This bill seeks to amend and build on RA 6978 by ensuring that there is a definite mechanism, process, as well as resources to ensure the establishment of irrigation facilities in all agricultural lands under a Ten Year Full Irrigation Masterplan. The bill also emphasizes the role of farmers' groups and organization in developing and monitoring the said master plan.

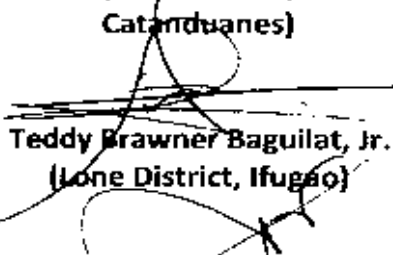
The urgency of improving the country's irrigation facilities is at no time more urgent than today. Extreme weather conditions, such as prolonged droughts, are expected to be more prevalent because of climate change. Improving the country's irrigation systems, facilities and services is an important strategy in building farmers' resilience to climate change, while helping them improve productivity and incomes.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


Walden F. Bello
(AKBAYAN)


Tomas W. Apacible
(1st District, Batangas)


Cesar V. Sarmiento
(Lone District,
Catanduanes)


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AN ACT
TO PROMOTE RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY PROVIDING FOR AN
ACCELERATED PROGRAM WITHIN A SIX-YEAR PERIOD FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF IRRIGATION PROJECTS

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

SECTION 1. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to help maximize the potential of the country's limited land resource, help farmers cope with extreme weather changes brought about by climate change and improve farmers' productivity and incomes by ensuring that all of the country's agricultural lands are covered and serviced by appropriate and fully operational irrigation systems and facilities.

SECTION 2. *Mandate.* - The National Irrigation Administration shall undertake a six-year program for the construction of irrigation projects in the remaining 1.5 million hectares of unirrigated but irrigable lands, whether in the lowlands or in the uplands, including other related project components nationwide. The program shall give priority to areas with social and economic problems, taking into consideration population, area served, project cost and other economic and environmental factors as may be deemed necessary in undertaking the program within the context of the national development plans. The National Irrigation Administration, in consultation with the provincial and municipal development councils, shall determine the areas which shall be given priority.

SECTION 3.- *Regular updating of inventory of irrigation facilities and creation of a National Irrigation Database* - The National Irrigation Authority shall regularly update its inventory of all irrigation systems and facilities and maintain a publicly accessible National Irrigation Database. The database shall include municipal, provincial, regional and national information on the following:

- Status of irrigation systems, including the area covered as well as the type of existing irrigation facilities;
- Irrigation balances;

- Listing of irrigation facilities for rehabilitation.

The inventory shall include an accomplishment report on the implementation of the accelerated ten-year irrigation program mandated under Republic Act No. 6978 otherwise known as the "AN ACT TO PROMOTE RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY PROVIDING FOR AN ACCELERATED PROGRAM WITHIN A TEN-YEAR PERIOD FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF IRRIGATION PROJECTS."

SECTION 4. *Third party validation.* – The results of the inventory shall be validated by at least two local farmers' organizations operating within each province.

SECTION 5. *Establishment of a Full Irrigation Task Force.* – A special task force, from hereon referred to as the Task Force, shall be created to formulate a Six-Year Full Irrigation Master Plan, based on the results of the inventory of irrigation facilities as well as results of the assessment of the status of implementation of the accelerated ten year irrigation plan provided in Republic Act No. 6978.

The Task Force shall be headed by the National Irrigation Agency, and shall be composed of the following:

1. Secretary of the Department of Agriculture
2. Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management
3. Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform
4. Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources
5. Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology
6. Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government
7. A representative of the Irrigators' Association
8. A representative each from three (3) national farmers' organization

The Secretaries of the above-mentioned agencies may appoint their duly authorized representative to sit in the Task Force.

The President of the Philippines, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, shall appoint the representatives of the national farmers' organizations in the Task Force. The Department of Agriculture shall consult farmer organization members of the National Agricultural Fisheries Council in identifying representatives of the national farmers' organizations that should sit in the Task Force.

SECTION 6. *Functions and mandate of the Task Force.* – The Task Force shall undertake the following functions:

1. Review and recommend policies on the maintenance and rehabilitation of irrigation facilities as well as the financial and transfer arrangements of irrigation facilities to the Irrigators' Association and other qualified farmers' organizations. The review process shall include local and national consultations with farmers groups and other affected stakeholders.
2. Create a Ten Year Full Irrigation Masterplan, hereon referred to as the Irrigation Master Plan, which shall establish government's annual irrigation target and the corresponding budget requirement, consistent with the provision of RA 6978, with the end in view of irrigating all agricultural lands and building farmers' resilience to droughts and rising atmospheric temperatures as a result of climate change, within a period of ten years upon the passage and implementation of this Act.

The Master Plan, which will be implemented by NIA, shall include targets for rehabilitation of existing irrigation facilities and the installation of new irrigation systems per region, including in upland areas. It shall also identify the types of irrigation facilities appropriate for each province, in consultation with farmers' organizations in the locality.

3. Exercise of oversight function over the implementation of the Ten Year Full Irrigation Masterplan.

SECTION 7. Appropriations. - Such sums as may be necessary for the implementation of this Act, including the conduct of the inventory of the and the operations of the Task Force, shall be taken from any available appropriations of the National Irrigation Administration under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, the succeeding appropriations for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act until the program shall have been completed.

SECTION 8. Separability Clause. - If, for any reason, any section or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions hereof shall not be affected thereby and shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,