

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. _____

539



Introduced by **Hon. Rodolfo G. Biazon**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Data from the Department of Agriculture indicate that 7.1 million hectares or 23% of the country's total land area have slopes of between 3% to 30% described as gently sloping, undulating or rolling. Cultivation and use of these areas for agriculture using traditional farming methods can lead to extensive soil erosion, and depletion of soil fertility.

It is reported that soil erosion is an environmental problem in the Philippines that affects between 63% to 76.5% of the country's total land area, with 13 of the 73 provinces having more than half of their area moderately to severely eroded. Total annual soil loss in the Philippines could be as high as 80.6 million tons per year. Without a doubt, this has contributed significantly to the alarming frequency of flashfloods in the lowlands.

This bill seeks to establish the Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT), involving diversified crop production and soil and water conservation measures as the more appropriate program for the Philippine hillsides and mountainsides. The adoption of this technology would result in substantial benefits to marginalized upland families who would derive a higher income from their crops. More importantly, it will help to restore and conserve soil fertility and stem the damage to the environment.

This bill proposes a 20% real property tax exemption to farmers applying the SALT farming method for the first five years of the implementation of this program, in addition to extension and other services provided by the Department of Agriculture. This measure will be powerful tools in advancing the government's major goals of poverty alleviation, environmental protection and sustainable development.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rodolfo G. Biazon".

RODOLFO G. BIAZON
Representative
Lone District, Muntinlupa City

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE SLOPING AGRICULTURAL LAND TECHNOLOGY
FARMING PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFORE AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT) Act of 2013.”

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policies.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote sustainable and comprehensive rural development and to provide support to the agricultural sector through appropriate technology transfer and research activities, and the provision of adequate financing, production, marketing, extension and other support services.

To this end, the establishment of programs and farming techniques shall be undertaken to ensure greater production, thereby increasing income and promoting equitable income distribution in the rural areas and enable the rural poor, particularly the hillside farmers, to contribute in the pursuit of national self-sufficiency in food production. These programs and techniques shall also be designed to achieve the sustainable management, development and conservation of the country’s land resources.

Sec. 3. *Definition.* – For purposes of this Act, Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT) shall refer to a system of farming sloping areas including hills and mountainsides whereby alleys of commercial or food crops like corn, beans, and other crops are grown in between rows of perennial trees and shrubs like coffee, banana, citrus, Kakawate, and Ipil-ipil planted along the contours. The rows of trees or shrubs serve to slow down the runoff and intercept eroded soils, thus minimizing soil erosion.

Sec. 4. *Coverage.* – The Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT) Farming Program shall cover all public and private lands including ancestral lands devoted to agriculture with a slope of at least five degrees (5) or higher, regardless of the agricultural products raised or that can be raised thereon.

Sec. 5. *Lead Agency.* – The Department of Agriculture shall, jointly with the Department of Agrarian Reform and in Coordination the local government units concerned and other non-government organizations, plan and program the implementation of the SALT farming method through a period of three (3) years from the effectivity of this Act.

Sec. 6. *Support Services.* – The Department of Agriculture shall provide information, general support and coordinative services in the implementation of the program particularly in the provision of the following:

- a) irrigation facilities, especially dry season facilities;
- b) infrastructure development and public works projects that fall under the program, including but not limited to the preparation of physical development plans;
- c) availment of existing government subsidies for irrigation facilities;
- d) price support for agricultural produce;
- e) long-term, low-interest credit, loans and grants, especially to landowners, farmers and farmers organizations;
- f) all crops suitable for the implementation of the program; and

g) development of cooperative management skills through intensive training.

Sec. 7. *Incentive.* – All farmers applying the SALT farming method shall be granted a twenty percent (20%) real property tax exemption for the first five (5) years following the implementation of the Act.

Sec. 8. *CLOA Requirement.* – The application of the SALT method to their landholdings shall be a pre-requisite before farmers are awarded the Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) by the Department of Agrarian Reform.

Sec. 9. *Implementing Rules.* – The Secretary of Agriculture, through the Bureau of Soils and Water Management, shall formulate the rules and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

Sec. 10. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the implementation of this act shall be charged to the appropriations for the Department of Agriculture. Thereafter, such amount necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 12. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any section or provision of this act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, such parts not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 13. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in at least (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,