

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7533



Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.**

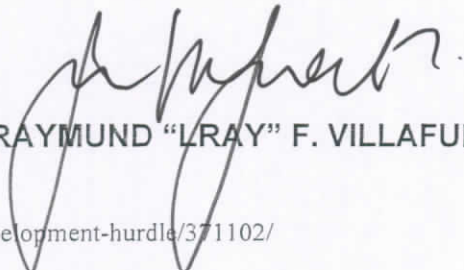
EXPLANATORY NOTE

At the start of the millennia, the Philippines envisioned to become the premier agri-tourism destination in Asia, fusing together the tourism and agriculture industry to produce a niche product to rival that of Japan and Thailand. The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Tourism has since worked with institutions to push for this potential, alongside the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, whose top advocacy has been the promotion of farm tourism. These agencies have since identified and developed agri-tourism sites in the country such as Sonya's Secret Garden in Cavite, the Del Monte Plantation in Bukidnon, and Bohol Bee Farm in Bohol, to name a few.

In 2016, then-President Benigno Aquino signed Republic Act No. 10816, also known as the "Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016". This legislation helped gain recognition on this niche tourism product to serve as a catalyst for the development of agriculture and fishery communities. However, despite the push from legislation, agri-tourism still lack the priority it demands—farm tourism was excluded from the 2017 Investment Priorities Plan¹.

This bill intends to strengthen the current efforts to develop this form of sustainable tourism through the creation of a Bureau of Agri-Tourism. It aims to provide a comprehensive legislative framework for the promotion of agri-tourism in the country and implement an Agri-Tourism Research and Development Program. This will ensure that the long-term sustainability of this sector is prioritized.

The approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.

¹ <http://www.manilatimes.net/ph-agritourism-faces-development-hurdle/371102/>

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AN ACT

PROMOTING AGRI-TOURISM BY IDENTIFYING AREAS THAT ARE VIABLE
FOR DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This shall be known as the "Agri-Tourism Development Act of 2018."

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policies.* – The State recognizes that the agriculture and fisheries sector are vital to the economy.

The State also recognizes that tourism is a primary source of income for our people particularly those in remote and underdeveloped areas of our country.

It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote, propagate, develop further and implement the agri-tourism centers in the Philippines that will cumulatively help farmers by creating other sources of income apart from their harvests. Towards this end, a comprehensive program for the creation of agri-tourism sites is hereby established.

The State recognizes and supports the central role of the farmers, indigenous people and other stakeholders at the grassroots in this program.

SECTION 3. *Definitions.* – As used in this Act, the following terms shall refer to:

- a. “Agri-tourism” shall refer to the practice of inviting visitors to any stage of the agricultural process for purposes of encouraging the sale of agricultural products or to earn income through their visit;
- b. “Secretary” shall refer to the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

SECTION 4. *Creation of the Position of Undersecretary for Agri-Tourism.* –

There is hereby created in the Department of Agriculture the position of Undersecretary for Agri-Tourism, solely for the purpose of attending to the needs of the agri-tourism industry, to be appointed by the President. Such Undersecretary shall have the following functions:

- a. set policies and formulate standards for the effective, efficient and economical operations of the agri-tourism industry in accordance with the programs of the government;
- b. exercise overall supervision over all functions and activities of all offices and instrumentalities and other offices related to agri-tourism including its officers;
- c. establish, with the assistance of the director, such regional, provincial and other agri-tourism officers as may be necessary and appropriate and organize the internal structure of Bureau of Agri-Tourism in such manner as is necessary for the efficient and effective attainment of its objectives and purposes; and
- d. perform such other functions as may be necessary or proper to attain the objectives of this Act.

SECTION 5. *Creation of the Bureau of Agri-Tourism.* – The Bureau of Agri-Tourism (BAT) is hereby created with the following functions:

- a. prepare and implement a Comprehensive National Agri-Tourism Industry Development Plan;
- b. recommend to Congress and to the President the areas that are prime for agri-tourism but require infrastructure projects such as farm-to-market roads;

- c. provide for the registration and the issuance of identification cards to agri-tourism farmers;
- d. monitor and review agri-tourism agreements between Filipino citizens and foreigners who seek to invest in the agri-tourism sector;
- e. formulate and implement a Comprehensive Agri-Tourism Research and Development Program, such as, but not limited to, organic farming, sea farming, sea ranching, tropical/ornamental fish and seaweed culture, plantation tours, livestock and farm fieldtrips, aimed at increasing resource productivity, improving resource use efficiency, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the country's agri-tourism program;
- f. establish and maintain a Comprehensive Agri-Tourism Information System;
- g. provide extensive development support services in all aspects of agri-tourism creation and marketing;
- h. provide advisory services and technical assistance on the improvement of the industry;
- i. advise and coordinate with LGUs on the maintenance of proper sanitation and hygienic practices in agri-tourism sites;
- j. coordinate with LGUs and other concerned agencies for the establishment of productivity enhancing and market development programs in agri-tourism communities;
- k. enforce all laws, formulate and enforce all rules and regulations governing the conservation and management of agri-tourism sites;
- l. assist the LGUs in developing their technical capability in the development, management, regulation, conservation, and protection of agri-tourism sites;
- m. perform such other related functions which shall promote the development, conservation, management, protection and utilization of agri-tourism sites.

SECTION 6. *Composition of BAT.* – As a line bureau, the BAT shall be headed by a Director and assisted by two (2) Assistant Directors who shall supervise the administrative and technical services of the bureau respectively. It shall establish regional, provincial and municipal offices as may be appropriate and necessary to carry out effectively and efficiently the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 7. *Educational Campaign at all Levels.* – The Department, the Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Education and the Philippine Information Agency shall launch and pursue a nationwide educational campaign to:

- a. help realize the policies and implement the provisions of this Act;
- b. promote agri-tourism and inform the public of new agri-tourist destinations;
and
- c. promote the principle of sustainable development.

SECTION 8. *Infrastructure Support.* – The Department, in cooperation with concerned agencies, shall:

- a. prepare and implement a nationwide plan for the development of agri-tourism fishing ports and markets;
- b. prioritize the construction of farm-to-market roads linking the agri-tourism sites to markets, bus terminals, train stations, airports, coastal landing points and arterial roads/highways;
- c. establish and maintain quality laboratories in identified areas and prescribe the highest standards for the operation and maintenance of such agri-tourism sites;
- d. arrange and make representations with appropriate funding institutions to finance such facilities for the use of the agri-tourism cooperatives/associations; and
- e. develop and strengthen marketing facilities and promote cooperative marketing systems.

SECTION 9. *Strict Compliance with Environmental Laws.* – The utilization and development of all areas under this Act shall be regulated by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pursuant to all laws and statues on the utilization and protection of natural resources and the environment, and must strictly comply with the land use plan approved by the local government unit concerned and the requirements imposed by existing DENR rules, regulations, and other issuances, taking into consideration the sustainable use and development of the area.

SECTION 10. *Incentives for Municipal and Small-Scale Agri-Tourism Businesses.* – Municipal and small-scale agri-tourism farmers shall be granted incentives which shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Capability-building program for targeted parties shall be developed by the Department to promote greater bankability and credit worthiness of municipal and small-scale agri-tourism farmers. Such program shall include organizing activities, technology transfer, and skills training related to agri-tourism, as well as credit management; and
- b. An information campaign shall be conducted to promote the capability-building and credit programs. The campaign shall ensure greater information dissemination and accessibility to targeted agri-tourism farmers.

SECTION 11. *Funding.* – The amount of two hundred fifty million pesos (Php 250,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated for the initial year of this Act. Every year thereafter, Congress shall allocate an amount not less than thirty million pesos (Php 30,000,000.00) to be included in the budget of the Department for the implementation and continued expansion of this program.

SECTION 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Secretary shall adopt rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act within ninety (90) days from the date of effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 13. *Separability Clause.* – Should any provision herein be declared unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity of the other provisions of this Act.

SECTION 14. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other issuances or parts inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 15. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect in fifteen (15) days after publication in the Official Gazette or in one (1) newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,