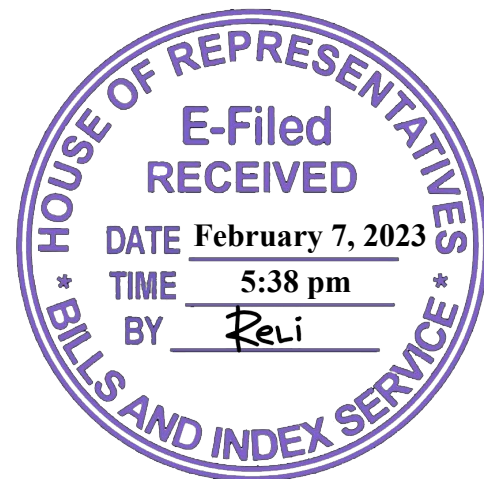


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7114



Introduced by **REP. JOSE FRANCISCO “KIKO” B. BENITEZ, Ph.D.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 21, Article II of the 1987 Constitution mandates the State to promote comprehensive rural development. Towards this end, the National Convergence Initiative for Sustainable Rural Development was established.

The NCI-SRD is a strategic framework that integrates planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of rural development programs of the Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Department of Interior and Local Government. It addresses the fragmented interventions for rural development and promotes integrated ecosystem management or sustainable integrated rural development which takes into consideration the conservation, restoration and protection of natural ecosystems and resources from ridge to reef. Its implementation mechanism involves inter-agency bodies at regional, provincial and municipal levels.

It ensures that development is guided by ecological principles, and development pressures do not disrupt natural cycles that sustain the rich biodiversity in the mountains and down its rolling slopes to the coast and the sea. Verily, NCI-SRD embeds social responsibility to conserve and protect our environment so that future generations can benefit from its abundance.

Established in 1999 through DA-DAR-DENR Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, s. 1999, the NCI-SRD was expanded to include the DILG in 2015, pursuant to DA-DAR-DENR-DILG Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, s. 2015. It started with nine pilot convergence areas in 2000 to demonstrate the feasibility of the convergence framework. This has grown into 15 convergence areas in 10 regions in 2019. Convergence areas are selected based on a set of criteria, including potential for fisheries and agro-forestry, target groups, status of intersecting ecosystem services, and performance of local government units.

This bill aims to institutionalize the NCI-SRD as an integral component of the poverty reduction policy of the Government. This bill had been thoroughly deliberated and approved on third reading in the 18th Congress, through the leadership of Rep. Elisa Olga Kho, then Chairperson of the House Committee on Rural Development.

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


JOSE FRANCISCO “KIKO” B. BENITEZ

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HOUSE BILL NO. 7114

Introduced by **REP. JOSE FRANCISCO “KIKO” B. BENITEZ, Ph.D.**

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE CONVERGENCE STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROVIDING THE IMPLEMENTING
MECHANISMS THEREFOR

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

CHAPTER I

General Provisions

SECTION 1. **Short Title.** — This Act shall be known as the “National Convergence Strategy for Sustainable Rural Development (NCS-SRD) Act.”

SEC. 2. **Declaration of Policy.** — It is the policy of the State to promote agricultural development as a means to ensure food security and alleviate poverty. Towards this end, the State shall develop and operationalize a common framework for equitable, inclusive, and sustainable rural development through the convergence of the resources of the principal departments of the National Government concerned with rural development, namely the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). This convergence shall be implemented through a national convergence strategy.

SEC. 3. **Guiding Principles.** — The implementation of the National Convergence Strategy for sustainable rural development (NCS-SRD) is guided by the following principles:

- a) The National Convergence Strategy is an institutionalized complementation strategy among the DA, DAR, DENR, and the DILG. The four (4) rural development departments shall work with other national line agencies and government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), primarily the National Electrification Administration (NEA), National Irrigation Administration (NIA), and National Food Authority (NFA), the academe, donor agencies, international and local non-government organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs), and other relevant stakeholders to mitigate institutional coordination problems;
- b) The complementation of resources and expertise of the DA, DAR, DENR, and the DILG, and local government units (LGUs) shall be the primordial consideration in the

implementation of the National Convergence Strategy: *Provided*, that such collaborative activities shall not alter or impair the respective mandates of the DA, DAR, DENR, and the DILG;

- c) The primacy of the LGUs as the integrating and converging force for sustainable rural development at the local level shall be emphasized. The NCS-SRD shall aim to strengthen the LGUs into becoming sustainable economies;
- d) The National Convergence Strategy must have a defined constituency. Intervention following the ridge-to-reef strategy shall focus on smallholder farmers, both agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs), and non-ARBs, small fisherfolk, upland dwellers, and Indigenous Peoples (IPs);
- e) The participatory approach shall be adopted in all phases of development: planning and budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, reporting and knowledge sharing;
- f) The National Convergence Strategy shall be incorporated in all programs, projects and activities of the national government departments and concerned LGUs to enhance the complementation of resources and expertise of the DA, DAR, DENR, DILG, and LGUs;
- g) The National Convergence Strategy shall include relevant measures for an enabling environment to encourage investment by the private sector, cooperatives and other NGOs.

SEC. 4. **Scope.** — This Act shall apply to all rural development areas primarily inhabited by targeted beneficiaries, namely, the smallholder farmers, both ARBs and non- ARBs, small fisherfolk, upland dwellers, and IPs.

SEC. 5. **Definition of Terms.** — As used in this Act:

- a) *Agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs)* refer to landless farmers and regular farm workers, irrespective of tenurial arrangement, who were awarded lands as evidenced by as Emancipation Patent (EP) or a Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) under Presidential Decree (PD) No. 27 or Republic Act (RA) No. 6657, as amended, otherwise known as the “Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988”, including the leaseholders to the landowners’ retained areas who represent the ARB group which were not awarded with lands but whose tenurial rights maybe evidenced by the registration of leasehold contracts;
- b) *Agribusiness* refers to agriculture and fishery-based activities that put farmers, processors, distributors, consumers, and other players within a system that produces, processes, transports, markets, and distributes agricultural and fishery products using appropriate technologies and applications;
- c) *Convergence* refers to the integration, complementation, harmonization and optimization of institutional, technical, financial, and human resources;
- d) *Ecosystem* refers to a physically defined environment made up of two inseparable components which are the i) biotope, or a particular physical environment with specific

characteristics such as the climate, temperature, humidity, and concentration of nutrients, and the ii) biocenosis which is a set of living organisms such as animals, plants or micro-organisms that are in constant interaction and are, therefore, in a situation of interdependence;

- e) *Forest ecosystem* refers to a dynamic complex of plant animal and micro-organism communities and their abiotic environment interacting as a functional unit, where trees are a key component and where humans, with their cultural, economic and environmental needs are an integral part of;
- f) *Indigenous peoples (IPs)* refers to a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others who have continuously lived as an organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied the same; possessed customs, tradition and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, now-indigenous religions and culture, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos;
- g) *Small holder farmers* refer to marginal and sub-marginal farm households that own or cultivate not more than three (3) hectares of land including ARBs and non-ARBs;
- h) *Small fisherfolk* refer to people directly or personally and physically engaged in culturing and processing fishery and aquatic resources;
- i) *Sustainable rural development (SRD)* refers to the development objective of meeting the needs of the present generation in the rural communities, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, consistent with the principles of social equity, efficiency and environmental integrity.

CHAPTER II

Physical Framework

SEC. 6. **Guiding Framework.** — The convergence strategy shall adopt the ridge-to- reef or sustainable integrated area development approaches as the intervention framework in the convergence areas.

The ridge-to-reef strategy refers to the development approach where coastal and estuarine ecosystems are managed so human settlements in upland and forest areas, in middle and lowland areas, or in coastal areas, may use the resources therein to support livelihood and derive income therefrom in a sustainable manner, minimizing therefore damage to wetlands and marine environments. On the other hand, integrated area development refers to a development approach that considers the ecological, economic, political, cultural and human challenges and opportunities in a specific area.

For purposes of this Act, convergence area refers to the physical area that is selected according to a set of criteria mandated under Section 7 of this Act, and shall be developed according to a Convergence Area Development Plan (CADP) proposed by the LGU, and approved by the NCS-SRD Executive Board created under Section 10 of this Act.

SEC. 7. *Criteria for Selection of Convergence Areas.* — There shall be a set of mandatory and prioritization criteria that shall guide the identification and selection of a convergence area.

- a) The mandatory criteria include the following:
 - 1) Adequacy of ecosystem zones. — The convergence area must cut across the various ecosystems or must be a combination of at least two (2) ecosystems;
 - 2) Good financial housekeeping record. — The LGU must show proof of good governance performance in internal housekeeping, particularly in sound fiscal management.
- b) The prioritization criteria include the following:
 - 1) Key production areas with connectivity for increased productivity and income. — The convergence areas must have been identified by the DA, DAR, DENR and the DILG for agro-forestry and fisheries development for major production or with potential for expansion, scaling up or connection to allied industries, services for backward and forward integration;
 - 2) Combination of sites across major poverty groups. — The convergence areas must cover a significant number of smallholder farmers, agricultural workers including actual and potential ARBs, fisherfolk, IPs, rural women, and upland dwellers;
 - 3) Presence of relevant stakeholders and civil society organizations (CSOs). — The convergence areas must have active CSOs that may be tapped to support the convergence initiative; these include private, business, academic, and research institutions that are willing to partner within the convergence area.

CHAPTER III

NCS-SRD Ecosystem Technical Working Groups and Components

SEC. 8. *Ecosystem Technical Working Groups of NCS-SRD.* – Three (3) technical working groups (TWGs) shall implement the NCS-SRD in an ecosystem. They shall be equally important and mutually re-enforcing, and shall ensure that the objectives of the NCS- SRD as a means of improving institutional efficiencies are achieved.

Infrastructure development shall form part of the improvement of the ecosystem and shall sufficiently consider the impact of such development on ecosystem services.

The TWG on Coastal and Marine Resources Management shall address the issues and concerns pertaining to the use and management of coral reefs, sea grasses and algal beds,

brackish wetland areas, mangroves and beach forests ecosystems. The TWG shall be composed of representatives of the concerned offices and units of the DA, DAR, DENR and DfLG. Other government agencies, NGOs, POs, the academe, private sector or business groups, and other associations may, upon determination of the NCS-SRD Executive Board, be invited to participate in the work of the TWG.

The TWG on Sustainable Lowland Agriculture shall address the issues and concerns on the use and management of agricultural ecosystems through the application of good agricultural practices or applied knowledge and practices geared at addressing environmental, economic and social sustainability dimensions of on-farm production and post-production processes, resulting in unique and exceptional non-food agricultural products, and safe and nutritious food products. The TWG shall be composed of representatives of the concerned offices or units of the DA, DAR, DENR, and DILG. Other government agencies, NGOs, POs, the academe, and private sector may upon the determination of the NCS-SRD Executive Board, be invited to participate in the meetings and activities of the TWG.

The TWG on Forestry and Upland Development shall address the issues and concerns on the use and sustainable management of the upland areas and forests ecosystems through conservation of biodiversity, protection of primary or old growth forests and secondary growth forests, and rehabilitation of degraded and denuded ecosystems. The TWG shall be composed of representatives of the concerned offices and units of the DA, DAR, DENR, and DILG. Other government agencies, NGOs, POs, the academe, private sector or business groups may, upon determination of the NCS-SRD Executive Board, be invited to participate in the meetings and activities of the TWG.

For purposes of this section, primary or old growth forests refer to untouched, pristine forests that exist in their original condition and relatively unaffected by human activity, while secondary growth forest refers to the largest and most dynamic natural forest ecosystem in the Philippines which is typically an area which has been disturbed, whether naturally or unnaturally, such as those recovering from the effects of selective logging, or areas that have been degraded by slash-and-bum agriculture or kaingin but have been reclaimed by forest growth and are characterized by a less developed canopy structure, smaller trees, and less diversity.

SEC. 9. *Components of the NCS-SRD.* — The components of the functions of the three (3) TWGs are as follows:

- a) *Policy and Advocacy.* This component shall address the issues and problems of conflicting, overlapping, and other unclear policies related to land administration, regulatory framework, operational strategies, and jurisdictional boundaries.
- b) *Agro-Enterprise and Agribusiness Development.* This component shall facilitate enterprise development and agribusiness within the convergence areas through the establishment of agro-enterprise clusters in all provinces. These clusters shall be the focus for agribusiness initiatives based on the potential of the areas, especially those designated as strategic zones in the strategic agricultural and fisheries development zones maps.

For purposes of this section, a strategic agricultural and fisheries development zone refers to an area within the Network of Protected Areas for Agricultural and Agro-

industrial Development identified for production, agro-processing, and marketing activities to help develop, and modernize, with the support of the government, the agriculture and fisheries sectors in an environmentally and socio-culturally sound manner.

- c) *Capacity Development.* This component shall ensure the organizational preparedness of the DA, DAR, DENR, and the DILG and the building up of the capacity of other stakeholders to implement the NCS-SRD through training and technology-transfer activities.
- d) *Knowledge Management.* This component shall ensure that the NCS-SRD programs, projects and activities are properly and efficiently monitored and documented to facilitate adoption, expansion and scaling up of innovations, when possible and necessary.

CHAPTER IV

Implementing Structure and Mechanism

Article One

National Policy Administration

SEC. 10. ***NCS-SRD Executive Board.*** — The NCS-SRD Executive Board, hereinafter referred to as the Board, is established to act as the policy making body of the NCP-SRD. The Board shall direct the implementation of the provisions of this Act, and shall have the following as ex-officio members:

- a) Secretary of Agriculture as Chairperson;
- b) Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources;
- c) Secretary of Agrarian Reform;
- d) Secretary of the Interior and Local Government; and
- e) Executive Director of the NCS-SRD National Secretariat.

The Department Secretaries may appoint their respective permanent alternate representatives whose rank shall not be lower than Undersecretary.

SEC. 11. ***Powers and Functions.*** — The Board shall exercise the following powers and functions:

- a) Provide the overall policy directions for the implementation of programs, projects and other related activities under the NCS-SRD;
- b) Approve programs, projects, and plans, and the implementing rules and regulations pertaining to the operation of the NCS-SRD;
- c) Appoint the national focal person (NFP) with a rank of Assistant Secretary and a deputy national focal person (DNFP) with a rank of Director IV to spearhead the NCS-SRD Technical Working Group (NCS-SRD TWG) and oversee and supervise NCS-SRD operations;

- d) Consult with other concerned national government agencies, stakeholders, and partner agencies on policies and major programs related to sustainable rural development;
- e) Approve memoranda of agreement with investors and funding agencies as recommended for approval by the NCS-SRD national focal person;
- f) Approve the implementation and coordination structure of the NCS-SRD, including the membership of the National Convergence Strategy Technical Working Group (NHS-SRD TWG), the three (3) NCS—SRD Ecosystem Technical Working Groups (NCS- SRD ETWG) and the four (4) NCS-SRD Component Working Groups (NCS-SRD CWG), through a Joint Special Order;
- g) Allocate the resources to carry out the plans, programs, projects, and other related activities of the NCS-SRD;
- h) Regularly advise the President of the Philippines on all matters concerning the implementation of convergence initiative strategies.

SEC. 12. ***Meetings of the Board.*** — The Board shall meet on a quarterly basis and may hold special meetings as deemed necessary. The Secretary of Agriculture shall act as the Lead Convenor and the Secretaries of Agrarian Reform, Environment and Natural Resources, and the Interior and Local Government shall act as Co-Convenors. The meetings may be held in rotation amongst the four (4) departments of the convenors. In the absence of the Lead Convenor or Co-Convenor of the host department, the principal members present may decide or choose among themselves who shall chair the meeting.

SEC. 13. ***National Focal Person and Deputy National Focal Person.*** — The Board shall appoint a National Focal Person (NFP), with a rank of Assistant Secretary, to spearhead the NCS-SRD Technical Working Group (NCS-SRD TWG) and supervise the NCS-SRD operations. The NFP shall act as the Chairperson of the NCS-SRD TWG and shall be assisted by a Deputy National Focal Person (DNFP), with a rank of Director IV, and by the NCS-SRD Executive Director. The NFP shall also convene the members of the NHS-SRD TWG to discuss the status of the NCS-SRD programs, projects and activities before the conduct of Board meetings. The NFP shall come from the DA as the lead department, the DNFP shall come from the DENR DAR, or DILG.

SEC. 14. ***Convergence Focal Persons.*** — The DA, DAR, DENR, and the DILG shall designate a Convergence Focal Person responsible for the coordination and management of the convergence program in their respective departments in the national and field levels.

SEC. 15. ***NCS-SRD TWG.*** — The NCS-SRD TWG shall serve as the advisory and recommendatory body to the Board on matters related to the implementation of the NCS-SRD.

SEC. 16. ***Composition of the NCS-SRD TWG.*** — The NHS-SRD TWG shall be composed of the following members:

- a) Chairperson, TWG on Coastal and Marine Resources Management
- b) Chairperson, TWG on Lowland Resources Management

- c) Chairperson, TWG on Forestry and Upland Development
- d) Convergence Focal Person, DA (Agro-Enterprise Development)
- e) Convergence Focal Person, DAR (Policy and Advocacy)
- f) (I) Convergence Focal Person, DENR (Knowledge Management)
- g) Convergence Focal Person, DILG (Capacity Development)
- h) Executive Director, NCS-SRD National Secretariat Office

SEC. 17. ***NCS-SRD National Secretariat Office.*** — A permanent NCP-SRD National Secretariat is created with a plantilla for its administrative and technical staff complement. Filling up of permanent personnel must be based on the current and existing NCS-SRD National Secretariat organizational structure. The NHS-SRD National Secretariat Office headed by an Executive Director who shall be appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. The Executive Director shall have a rank of Director IV and shall oversee and supervise NHS- SRD operations and the National Secretariat. The Executive Director shall come from DA and shall directly report to the Board.

The NCS-SRD National Secretariat shall be composed of personnel to be selected and seconded from the DA, DENR, DAR and the DILG in addition to the designated coordinators of each working group. The NCS-SRD Nations Secretariat shall work closely with the NCS-SRD national focal person and deputy national focal person, the Chairpersons of the different TWGs and the Convergence Focal Persons.

SEC. 18. ***Functions of the NCSMRD National Secretariat.*** — The NCS-SRD National Secretariat shall have the following functions:

- a) Assist in the conduct of Board and NCS-SRD TWG meetings and workshops, write shops, seminars, fora, and consultations;
- b) Provide administrative and technical support to the Board and NCS-SRD TWG;
- c) Document and disseminate the highlights of the proceedings of the Board and NCS-SRD TWG meetings and activities;
- d) Ensure that appropriate actions are taken on agreements reached during the Board and NCS-SRD TWG meetings and activities;
- e) Submit monitoring and progress reports to the Board and NCS-SRD TWG and other oversight bodies;
- f) Follow up on the activities to be conducted by the three (3) NCS-SRD ETWGs and four (4) NCS-SRD CWGs, and ensure that the timelines for the activities are strictly followed;
- g) Manage the database of the convergence areas in coordination with the CWG on knowledge management; and
- h) Perform other functions as the Board may direct.

There shall be a satellite secretariat office to be established in the rural development departments. Each satellite secretariat office shall be composed of staff from the offices of the

respective permanent Alternate Board Representatives.

Article Two

Sub-National Level Administration

SEC. 19. ***Regional Convergence Strategy - Technical Working Group (RCS-TWG)***. – Parallel to the NCS-SRD TWG, the RCS-TWG shall manage and supervise the programs, projects, and other related activities at the regional level.

SEC. 20. ***Duties and Responsibilities***. — The duties and responsibilities of the RCS-TWG are as follows:

- a) Work closely with the other government line agencies and offices and with the Regional Development Council (RDC) and concerned Provincial Development Council (PDC) to ensure that the enhanced convergence strategy interventions are aligned with the regional development agenda and initiatives;
- b) Facilitate complementation of efforts and resources for greater impact;
- c) Coordinate and work closely with the Provincial LGUs in the implementation of the NCS-SRD plans, programs, projects, and other related activities. The Regional Directors of rural development departments may enter into an agreement with the Provincial Governor or LGU leagues, as necessary;
- d) Meet monthly or when necessary, to discuss issues and problems related to the implementation of plans, programs and activities.

SEC. 21. ***Composition of the RCS-TWG***. — The RCS-TWG shall be composed of the following:

- a) Regional Directors of the DA, DENR, DAR, AND DILG, one of whom maybe elected as the chairperson;
- b) The three (3) other rural development department regional directors will act as co-chairpersons; and
- c) Regional Focal Persons of the rural development departments and the Head of the RCS-TWG Secretariat as Members.

The Chairperson of the RCS-TWG shall be a convergence champion and shall be voted upon by and among the Regional Directors of the DA, DAR, DENR, and DILG. Upon the organization of the TWG, a resolution attesting to the assumption of duties and functions shall be submitted to the NCS-SRD National Secretariat. If necessary, the membership of the RCS-TWG may be expanded to include representatives from the Provincial LGUs and other agencies.

The RCS-Secretariat is composed of representatives from the regional offices of DA, DAR, DENR and DILG. The RCS Secretariat is headed by the Regional Focal Person. The Regional Focal Person and the members of the RCS Secretariat shall be designated by the

Chairperson of the RCS-TWG.

SEC. 22. *Provincial Convergence Strategy Technical Working Group (PCS-TWG).* — The PCS-TWG is responsible for implementing the plans, programs, projects, and other related activities of the NHS-SRD at the provincial level in collaboration with RCS- TWG. The PCS-TWG shall identify and determine appropriate interventions, resources, and support services needed such as infrastructure, logistics, extension, inputs, lands, and institutional development for the implementation of the NCS plans and programs.

The Provincial Governor shall chair the PCS-TWG and the Provincial Directors of the DAR, DENR and DILG shall act as Co-Chairpersons. The members of the PCS-TWG are the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO), Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer (PARO), Provincial Agriculture Officer (PAO), Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator (PPDC), Provincial Government-Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PG-ENRO), Agricultural Program Coordinating Officer (APCO) of the DA and Provincial Interior and Local Government Officer (PILGO). The provincial LGU shall lead the interface mechanisms and the rural development departments shall provide the technical and operational support. Existing LGU mechanisms may be adopted to spearhead or manage the convergence initiatives at the LGU level.

SEC. 23. *Municipal Convergence Strategy Technical Group (MCS-TWG).* — The MCS-TWG is responsible for implementing the plans, programs, projects, and other related activities of the NCS-SRD at the respective municipalities in collaboration with the PCS-TWG. The MCS-TWG shall identify and determine appropriate interventions, resources, and support services needed such as infrastructure, logistics, extension, inputs, lands, and institutional development for the implementation of the NCS-SRD plans and programs.

The Chairperson of the MCS-TWG is headed by the Municipal Mayor and the Municipal Head of DAR, DENR and DILG are the Co-Chairpersons. The members of the MCS-TWG are the Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO), City or Municipal Environment and Natural Resource Officer (C/MENRO), Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer (MARO), Municipal Agriculture Officer (MAO), concerned Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (MPDC), Municipal Interior and Local Government Officer (MILGO) and a designated DA regional field office representative.

The municipal or city LGU shall lead the interface mechanisms and the DA, DAR, DENR and DILG shall provide the technical and operational support. Existing LGU mechanisms may be adopted to spearhead or manage the convergence initiatives at the LGU level.

Article Three

Monitoring and Evaluation

SEC. 24. *Mentoring and Evaluation.* — A monitoring and evaluation system based on the performance indicators set by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) shall be developed and strictly implemented and managed. A regular reporting system shall be installed in an open and transparent manner in accordance with the Management for Development Results (MDR) principles aimed to help keep track of the progress and end result of the project implementation of the convergence area. The monitoring and evaluation report must identify

and describe the gaps and issues experienced during the implementation of the NCS, the learnings on convergence as an approach to sustainable rural development, and the proposed policy recommendations.

CHAPTER VI

Final Provisions

SEC. 25. ***Convening of NCS-SGD National Secretariat Office.*** — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall convene the NCS- SRD National Secretariat Office. The current head of the NCS-SRD National Secretariat shall sit temporarily as Officer-in-Charge of the NCS-SRD National Secretariat Office until such time that a regular Executive Director is appointed.

SEC. 26. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretaries of the DA, DAR, DENR, and the DILG shall jointly issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 27. ***Structure and Staffing Pattern.*** — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the NCS Executive Board shall formulate and submit the NCS-SRD National Secretariat Office's proposed organizational structure and staffing pattern for final approval to the DBM.

The DA shall assist in the preparation of the Organizational Structure and Staffing Pattern to ensure that the NCS-SRD National Secretariat may effectively carry out its mandated functions under this Act.

SEC. 28. ***Appropriations.*** – The funds necessary to carry out the implementation of the NCS-SRD shall be taken from the available funds of the rural development departments under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the full operation of the NCS-SRD National Secretariat Office and the staggered implementation of NCP plans and programs shall be included in the respective annual budget of the rural development departments in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Other sources of funds such as grants, donations, and other forms of assistance from donor agencies and other public or private entities may be tapped and facilitated by the NCS-SRD Executive Board to support the program, subject to the regular auditing guidelines and procedures. Cost-sharing or counter parting schemes among national government and LGUs are also encouraged to support the implementation of the NCS-SRD.

SEC. 29. ***Non-Impairment Clause.*** — Nothing in this Act shall be construed to diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or available to marginalized or basic sectors under existing laws including Republic Act No. 6657, as amended, Republic Act No. 8371, otherwise known as “The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997,” and Republic Act No. 8550, as amended, otherwise known as the “Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998.”

SEC. 30. ***Separability Clause.*** — If any part or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions or parts not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 31. **Repealing Clause.** — All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are not consistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SEC. 32. **Activity.** — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.