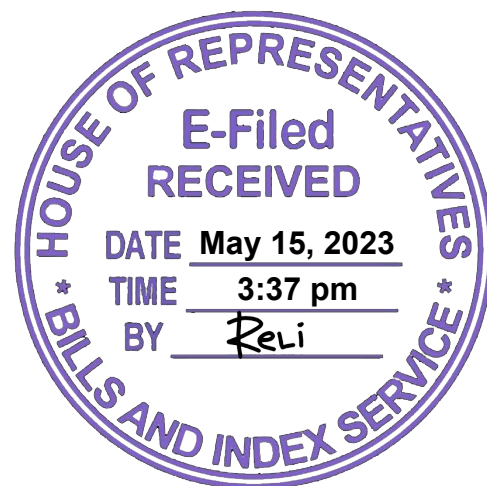


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8116



Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND “LRAY” F. VILLAFUERTE, JR. AND**
HON. BRIAN RAYMUND S. YAMSUAN

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Benjamin (“Ben”) W. Mead is a 42 year-old Australian and a permanent resident of the Philippines since 2015. Ben is married to a Filipina, an adoptive father to a Filipina daughter, has exhibited and continually exhibits qualities that support his granting of naturalization as a Filipino citizen.

Since residing in the Philippines, Ben managed a range of impactful initiatives in his Agriculture-focused enterprises. This includes substantial charitable initiatives via The Mead Foundation Inc, an SEC-registered non-profit, to benefit the Filipino people and the country’s environment.

In the agricultural industry, Ben’s interests lie in his shareholding and chairmanship of BioPrime Agri-Industries Inc and his shareholding in and leadership as CEO of Iba Botanicals Inc.

Under Ben’s leadership, BioPrime Agri Industries introduced a compelling nano bio-fertilizer technology to the Philippines that promises immense impact at scale for Filipino farmers. Since 2018, through a disciplined engagement with Department of Agriculture (“DA”) and PhilRice, the product proved to permit Filipino rice and corn farmers to substantially reduce chemical fertilizer whilst increasing yields and earnings significantly. It was through these efforts that the Department of Agriculture gained sufficient confidence to adopt “balanced fertilization” as the main strategy to address the country’s reliance on imported chemical fertilizer. With the support of DA, thousands of Filipino farmers benefited from this advancement in fertilization technology. Today, BioPrime Agri Industries Inc provides employment for more than 150 Filipinos. During the global pandemic, Ben moved some Php 6 billion of nano bio-fertilizer inventory in the Philippines to support the needs of the farmers with almost 1,000,000 hectares of farmland improving the fertilizer crisis. Later in 2023, Ben committed to move the manufacturing of this product from the United States to the Philippines in support to our domestic food security and the needs of Filipino farmers. As part of this initiative, Ben has committed the company to reinvest 2.5% of profits in non-profit initiatives such as the building of schools nationwide for the children of Filipino farmers. This should provide enhanced education opportunities and knowledge of improved farming practices.

In addition, Ben is the founder and CEO of Iba Botanicals Inc, a pioneer in the production of high-volume and high-value botanical extracts (pure essential oils) from the Philippines. Iba Botanicals has invested more than Php 150,000,000 in its initiative, which provides full-time employment for 120 Filipinos, and 350 daily farm workers, vast majority of which are displaced indigenous Aeta community members. Iba Botanicals is a BOI-accredited export enterprise that supplies large multinational flavor and fragrance companies in Europe as well as in USA. Ben's pioneering work has put the Philippines on the map as a global player in the production of these high-value extracts showcasing the Philippines from where the products originated. Iba Botanicals products are supplied to global fine fragrance brands (e.g. Chanel, Dior, Victoria's Secret), consumer goods brands (e.g. Bath & Body Works) and wellness companies (e.g. Young Living, doTERRA). From its present 100-hectare plantation in Zambales as of end 2022, Iba Botanicals is facilitating the planting of a further 500 additional hectares in 2023, and an additional 500 hectares in 2024. The expansion areas are projected to create at minimum an additional 600 jobs for agricultural and plant workers in an economically depressed location, populated by marginalized communities.

Iba Botanicals was recently the first to have obtained the necessary permits and licenses to propagate Agarwood plantations, a critically endangered tree species that is also the world's highest value forest product, by virtue of Ben's pioneering approach to further Philippine botanicals on the global stage. Iba is now undertaking the establishment of plantations at scale, as well as support of third-party planters who wish to participate in this new high-value agri-industry. In doing so, it is anticipated that there will be relief from poaching the wild agarwood trees, as legal and sustainable source becomes available.

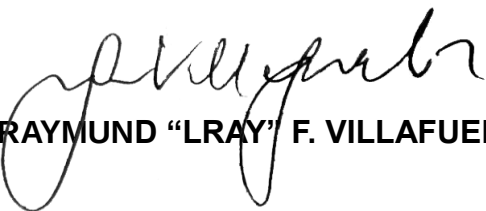
More than his outstanding performance in the Agricultural Sector, Ben is also prioritizing philanthropic activities as the Founder and CEO of The Mead Foundation ("TMF"). TMF is a non-profit initiative of the Mead family and since 2015 has built three active divisions; medical, marine conservation, and community.

- TMF's medical division implements free cleft lip and palate surgeries for underprivileged Filipinos. Since inception, more than 3,500 free surgeries were performed by both an annual medical mission attended by international surgeons as well as a regular program sponsoring cases in government hospitals in Metro Manila. By 2025, TMF intends to construct a full-time cleft clinic in Las Pinas that will provide a dedicated facility for free surgeries on an ongoing basis.
- TMF's marine conservation division takes an integrated approach to Marine Protected Area administration, coral reef restoration, livelihood creation and other aligned site-specific efforts such as sea turtle conservation. With projects in six locations in the Philippines, an additional two project sites will be added in 2023. The projects are undertaken in with the support of local and international partners -- such as University of the Philippines, Southern Cross University (Australia) -- with funding of the Mead Family.
- Finally, the Community arm of TMF has a range of programs in support of general development for communities in need, such as clean water systems for Aeta communities, significant disaster relief operations following Typhoon

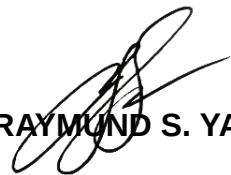
Odette, feeding programs, school infrastructure and materials sponsorship, and other related activities.

Ben's allegiance in this country is indubitable. His values, goals and wide knowledge as well as his competency in the field of agriculture shall truly advance the entire nation. Thus, let Congress give to him the privilege of becoming a Filipino citizen.

With, the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is most humbly and earnestly sought.



LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.



BRIAN RAYMUND S. YAMSUAN

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Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND “LRAY” F. VILLAFUERTE, JR. AND
HON. BRIAN RAYMUND S. YAMSUAN**

AN ACT
GRANTING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO BENJAMIN W. MEAD

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

SECTION 1. Benjamin W. Mead is hereby granted Philippine citizenship with all the rights, privileges, and prerogatives, as well as the duties and obligations appurtenant thereto, under the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of the Philippines.

SEC. 2. Benjamin W. Mead shall take the Oath of Allegiance to the Republic of the Philippines before an officer duly authorized to administer the same. The Oath of Allegiance shall be registered with the Bureau of Immigration.

SEC. 3. Upon registration of the Oath of Allegiance, the Bureau of Immigration shall issue a Certificate of Naturalization to Benjamin W. Mead who shall thereupon enter into the full enjoyment of Philippine citizenship.

SEC. 4. This Act shall take effect immediately upon its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,