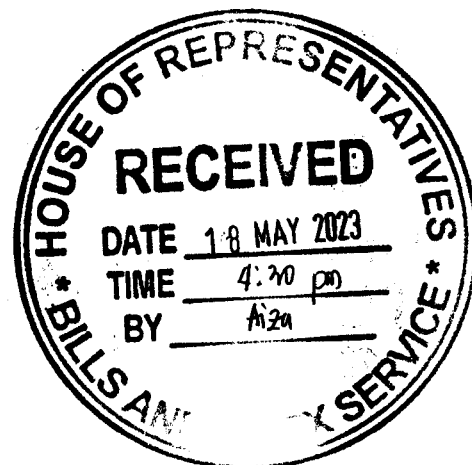


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **8197**



Introduced by

SPEAKER FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ
HON. YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ
and
HON. JUDE A. ACIDRE

AN ACT
DECLARING THE PHILIPPINE MAHARLIKA HIGHWAY AS THE NATIONAL
FOOD HIGHWAY, PROVIDING AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM FOR THE
PROCESSING, STORAGE, TRANSPORT, DISTRIBUTION, AND
MONITORING OF FOOD PRODUCTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Agriculture is a vital sector of the Philippine economy, employing millions of Filipinos and contributing significantly to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). However, the sector faces various constraints, including the lack of efficient transportation and logistics systems for the timely and cost-effective delivery of agricultural products to the markets.

By designating the Philippine Maharlika Highway as the National Food Highway, the government can prioritize the use of this major road network for the transportation and distribution of agricultural products, particularly perishable goods. This will help reduce post-harvest losses, ensure food safety and quality, and promote fair pricing for both farmers and consumers.

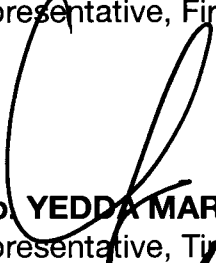
Moreover, the National Food Highway can serve as a platform for the development of agri-tourism and other agricultural-related businesses along the route. This can generate more jobs and income opportunities for local communities and promote the use of modern technologies and infrastructure in the agriculture sector.

Therefore, the declaration of the Philippine Maharlika Highway as the National Food Highway is a crucial step towards improving the efficiency and competitiveness of the agriculture sector in the country. It will help address the challenges faced by our farmers and improve the overall welfare of the Filipino people.

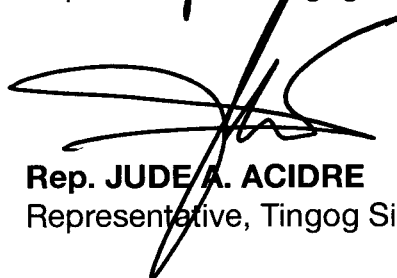
In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



Rep. FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ
Representative, First District of Leyte



Rep. YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ
Representative, Tingog Sinirangan



Rep. JUDE A. ACIDRE
Representative, Tingog Sinirangan

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THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the “National Food Highway Act of 2023.”

Section 2. *Declaration of the Philippine Maharlika Highway as the National Food Highway.* - The Philippine Maharlika Highway, which stretches from Laoag City in Ilocos Norte to Zamboanga City in Mindanao, is hereby declared as the National Food Highway.

Section 3. *Definition of the National Food Highway.* - The National Food Highway refers to an integrated system for the processing, storage, transport, distribution, and monitoring of food products along the Philippine Maharlika Highway.

Section 4. *Scope and Coverage of the National Food Highway.* - The National Food Highway shall cover the following:

- (a) Food processing and storage facilities located along the Philippine Maharlika Highway;
- (b) Transport and distribution systems for food products along the Philippine Maharlika Highway; and
- (c) A food monitoring system to ensure the safety and quality of food products transported and distributed along the Philippine Maharlika Highway.

Section 5. *Roles and Responsibilities of Government Agencies and Stakeholders.* - The following government agencies and stakeholders shall have the following roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the National Food Highway:

- (a) Department of Agriculture (DA) shall be responsible for the establishment and management of food processing and storage facilities along the Philippine Maharlika Highway, in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the private sector. The DA shall also provide technical assistance to local farmers and food producers to ensure the quality and safety of food products.
- (b) Department of Transportation (DOTr) shall be responsible for the development and implementation of a transport and distribution system for food products along the Philippine Maharlika Highway, in partnership with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the private sector. The DOTr shall also ensure the safety and security of food products during transport and distribution.
- (c) Department of Health (DOH) shall be responsible for the implementation of a food monitoring system to ensure the safety and quality of food products transported and distributed along the Philippine Maharlika

Highway. The DOH shall also provide training and technical assistance to food safety inspectors and other relevant personnel to ensure compliance with food safety standards.

- (d) Local Government Units (LGUs) shall provide support and assistance to the implementation of the National Food Highway within their respective jurisdictions, including but not limited to the provision of necessary permits, licenses, and regulatory compliance certificates.

Section 6. *Creation of a Food Processing and Storage System.* - The DA, in partnership with the DTI and the private sector, shall establish and manage food processing and storage facilities along the Philippine Maharlika Highway. These facilities shall comply with food safety standards and shall cater to the needs of local farmers and food producers for the processing, storage, and distribution of their products.

Section 7. *Development of a Transport and Distribution System.* - The DOTr, in partnership with the DPWH and the private sector, shall develop and implement a transport and distribution system for food products along the Philippine Maharlika Highway. This system shall ensure the safe and efficient transport and distribution of food products and shall comply with relevant laws and regulations.

Section 8. *Implementation of a Food Monitoring System.* - The DOH shall implement a food monitoring system to ensure the safety and quality of food products transported and distributed along the Philippine Maharlika Highway. This system shall include the following:

- (a) Inspection and monitoring of food processing and storage facilities for compliance with food safety standards;
- (b) Regular testing and analysis of food products for contaminants and other harmful substances;

- (c) Monitoring of transport and distribution systems to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations; and
- (d) Provision of training and technical assistance to food safety inspectors and other relevant personnel.

Section 9. *Creation of the National Food Highway Management Board.* - There is hereby created a National Food Highway Management Board, which shall be responsible for the implementation of this Act.

Section 10. *Composition of the National Food Highway Management Board.* - The National Food Highway Management Board shall be composed of the following:

- (a) Secretary of Agriculture or his/her representative as the Chairperson;
- (b) Secretary of Transportation or his/her representative as the Co-Chairperson;
- (c) Secretary of Public Works and Highways or his/her representative as a member;
- (d) Secretary of Trade and Industry or his/her representative as a member;
- (e) Secretary of Health or his/her representative as a member;
- (f) Three (3) representatives from the private sector, one each from the farmers' groups, transport industry, and health industry, as members; and
- (g) One (1) representative from the academe or research institutions, as a member.

Section 11. *Powers and Functions of the National Food Highway Management Board.* - The National Food Highway Management Board shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Develop and implement plans, programs, and projects for the efficient and timely delivery of fresh produce, livestock, and other agricultural products from the farms to the markets and consumers;
- (b) Establish and maintain a database of agricultural products, producers, markets, and other relevant information along the National Food Highway;
- (c) Coordinate with relevant government agencies and private sector stakeholders for the development and improvement of infrastructure and logistics systems along the National Food Highway, including the construction of cold storage facilities, processing centers, and logistics hubs;
- (d) Promote the use of modern technologies and best practices in agriculture and logistics systems to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the agriculture sector;
- (e) Develop and implement measures to ensure the safety and quality of agricultural products transported along the National Food Highway;
- (f) Monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Act and recommend policy and legislative reforms to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the National Food Highway; and
- (g) Perform such other functions as may be necessary to achieve the objectives of this Act.

Section 12. *Expansion of the National Food Highway.* – Expansion of the National Food Highway. – The National Food Highway may be expanded to include the Western Philippine Nautical Highway. Thereafter, the existing National Food highway and the Philippine Nautical Highway shall be integrated to comprise the Philippine Food Loop.

This expansion shall take effect upon the completion of the necessary facilities and infrastructure along the Western Philippine Nautical Highway.

Section 13. *Implementation of a Food Monitoring System.* - The DOH shall implement a food monitoring system to ensure the safety and quality of food products transported and distributed along the Philippine Maharlika Highway. This system shall include, but not limited to, the following:

- (a) Inspection and monitoring of food processing and storage facilities for compliance with food safety standards;
- (b) Regular testing and analysis of food products for contaminants and other harmful substances;
- (c) Monitoring of transport and distribution systems to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations; and
- (d) Provision of training and technical assistance to food safety inspectors and other relevant personnel.

Section 14. *Appropriations.* - The necessary funds for the implementation of this Act shall be sourced from the annual General Appropriations Act and other available funds.

Section 15. *Separability Clause.* If any provision or part of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Section 16. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, executive orders, and administrative orders, or parts thereof, inconsistent with any provision of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

Section 17. *Effectivity Clause.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the online version of the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,