

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9854



Introduced by REP. EMILIO BERNARDINO L. YULO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

According to data from the Food and Fertilizer Technology Center for the Asian and Pacific Region in 2015, the Philippines is an agricultural country with a land area of 30 million hectares, 47% of which is agricultural land cultivated by over 5 million farmers. Agriculture has been a vital aspect of the Philippine economy and continues to be a crucial sector, employing a large portion of the population and contributing to the country's overall economic growth. Agriculture must be transformed into a dynamic, high-growth industry if the country is to accelerate recovery, reduce poverty, and achieve inclusive growth. Soil testing is critical to improving agricultural productivity, sustainability, and the overall well-being of farmers and the country.

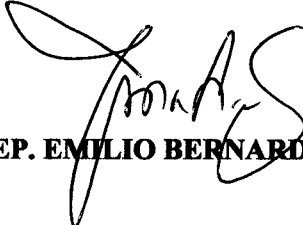
This bill seeks to establish a Soil Testing Laboratory Facility in each agricultural district in the Philippines which shall primarily study the impact of soil productivity, conduct soil research projects, collaborate with relevant government agencies to provide technical assistance in soil erosion prevention, fertility preservation, and other related areas, ultimately assisting both individual farmers and the nation's agricultural system.

As the country faces the challenge of ensuring food security for the rising population, increasing agricultural productivity through proper soil testing and nutrient management can boost the country's food production capacity and reduce reliance on imports. Soil degradation and nutrient depletion are also major environmental concerns in several parts of the Philippines. Soil testing allows authorities and farmers to monitor and treat these issues, improving soil health and preventing further degradation. Farmers who operate on small plots of land can gain access to soil testing facilities to make informed decisions about their crops, resulting to better yields and improved livelihoods.

The Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), established under the Department of Agriculture (DA), serves as the sole national soil resource agency in the country. Its range of services includes soil resource assessment and mapping, agricultural and water resource management, analytical services, and soil and water resource research and development. As the Local Government Code grants local governments the authority to provide agricultural extension services to individual farmers, BSWM expands its service offering to include farmer groups as well, allowing them to access technical assistance on issues related to soil and water-related agriculture production constraints.

The establishment of soil testing laboratory facilities in the agricultural districts of the country is essential for the improvement of crop productivity through helping local farmers in determining the nutrient content and pH levels of their soil and allowing them to apply the right amount and type of fertilizer and other inputs. The said facility can immediately prevent erosion and soil degradation by determining the soil physical properties. It also enables farmers, policymakers, and researchers to make informed decisions that benefit the country's agricultural sector and its people.

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


REP. EMILIO BERNARDINO L. YULO

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**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SOIL TESTING LABORATORY FACILITY IN EACH
AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR**

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the “Soil Facility Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is hereby declared the policy of the State to accelerate agricultural development by optimizing the use of resources such as soils with the goal of attaining food security for domestic use and expanding agricultural production for export.

SEC. 3. *Soil Testing Laboratory Facility.* There shall be established a Soil Testing Laboratory Facility in each agricultural district in the Philippines which shall primarily study the impact of soil productivity, conduct soil research projects, collaborate with relevant government agencies to provide technical assistance in soil erosion prevention, fertility preservation, and other related areas, ultimately assisting individual farmers and the country's agricultural system.

Existing facilities that would meet the minimum standards or could be upgraded to effectively serve as Soil Testing Laboratory facilities could be designated as such in compliance with the LGU where the facility in each agricultural district is situated.

SEC. 4. *Functions.* Each Soil Testing Laboratory Facility shall have the following functions, including but not limited to:

- a. To provide services in chemical analysis and soil testing to farmers and the general public and provide a basis for fertilizer usage recommendations;
- b. To provide an index of soil nutrient availability and determine whether fertilizer will be profitable;
- c. To evaluate the soil fertility condition and a district-level foundation for soil;
- d. To establish guidelines, procedures and techniques for the analysis of soil, fertilizers and other essential agricultural production components; and
- e. To identify problem soil areas for research and development and thereafter formulate strategies, programs, standards, techniques, and procedures for the facility's effective operation in accordance with the policies of the DA.

SEC. 5. *Operation and Management.* The facility shall be under the direct supervision of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in collaboration with the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), which shall ensure effective soil resources utilization by undertaking projects and research on soil conservation, soil testing, and other related activities. They are also hereby authorized to issue rules and regulations for their proper use and maintenance.

SEC. 5. *Reporting and Recording.* The Soil Testing Laboratory Facility shall record all findings and recommendations, and shall report to the DA in accordance with its current reporting system.

SEC. 6. *Personnel.* The Department of Agriculture, in coordination with the local government units (LGUs) concerned, shall create positions and determine the qualification of the laboratory personnel needed to operate the facility.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* The Secretary of Agriculture shall include in the Department's program the establishment and operationalization of a Soil Testing Laboratory Facility in each respective agricultural districts, the funding of which shall be included in the budget of the DA under the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SEC. 8. *Implementation.* The DA, in coordination with the respective LGUs of the districts, and other concerned agencies, shall formulate, identify, and promulgate the implementing rules and regulations necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions, which are not affected thereby, shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* Any law, decree, ordinance or administrative circular not consistent with any provision of this Act is hereby amended, repealed, or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity Clause.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,