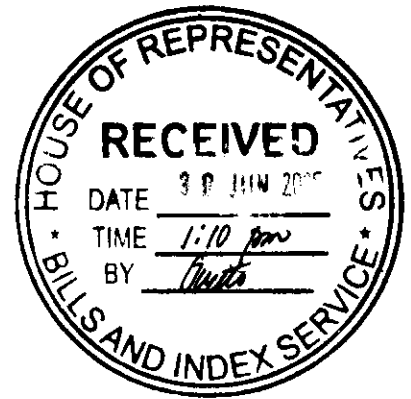


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS

House Bill No. **309**



Introduced by **REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

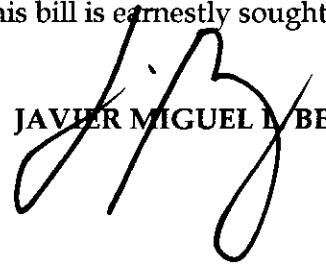
The 1987 Constitution mandates the State to promote rural development and ensure access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food for all¹. In fulfillment of this mandate, this bill seeks to declare the Province of Negros Occidental as the Slow Food Hub of the Philippines, in recognition of its established leadership in sustainable agriculture and food heritage preservation.

Negros Occidental cultivates over 16,000 hectares through organic farming practices supported by at least 17,000 organic adopters². Organic agriculture, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), enhances food security, protects biodiversity, and improves soil and water health, making it a cornerstone of climate-resilient food systems³.

The province likewise promotes the Slow Food movement, which emphasizes traditional food systems, locally sourced ingredients, and environmentally sustainable production. This aligns with UNESCO's recognition of food heritage as an intangible cultural asset essential to community and cultural identity, sustainability, and intergenerational continuity.⁴

By legislating this recognition, the State affirms its commitment to sustainable agriculture, cultural preservation, and food sovereignty. Declaring Negros Occidental as the Slow Food Hub of the Philippines provides a legal foundation for aligning national programs, investments, and policies with long-term goals on food security, environmental integrity, and inclusive rural development.

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


JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ

¹ 1987 Constitution, Art. II, Sec. 15; Art. XIII, Sec. 5.

² Provincial Government of Negros Occidental, Office of the Provincial Agriculturist. Annual Report on Organic Agriculture Development, 2023.

³ FAO (2007). Organic Agriculture and Food Security. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

⁴ UNESCO (2005). Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS

House Bill No. 309

Introduced by REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ

AN ACT CREATING THE PROVINCE OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL AS THE
"SLOW FOOD HUB OF THE PHILIPPINES"

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title* - This Act shall be known as the "Organic and Slow Food Act"

SECTION 2. *Slow Food Hub of the Philippines* - The Province of Negros Occidental prioritizes food security through the promotion of agricultural productivity. As a predominantly agricultural province, Negros Occidental encompasses 540,386 hectares of agricultural land, with at least 16,000 hectares dedicated to organic farming, supported by an estimated 17,000 organic adopters. The Province also champions sustainable, locally sourced, and culturally significant food, actively engaging local restaurant owners. Local cuisine integrates traditional flavors with contemporary trends, celebrating heritage while embracing innovation. These efforts ensure ingredients are sourced from local farmers and producers practicing sustainable farming methods that respect biodiversity.

SECTION 4. *Definition of Terms* - As used in this Act:

- (a) Food Security - the condition wherein individuals' dietary needs and preferences are met, ensuring access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food at all times;
- (b) Agricultural Productivity - the ratio of agricultural outputs to inputs, reflecting economic growth while maintaining sustainable food prices and balancing resource use;
- (c) Organic Farming - an agricultural practice that relies on natural processes and inputs, such as vermicast, manure, compost, plant materials, and animal by-products, to cultivate healthy crops and livestock without synthetic chemicals;

- (d) Organic Adopters - Farmers and producers who actively practice organic farming or are in the process of transitioning to organic farming methods;
- (e) Locally sourced ingredients - Agricultural or food products that are produced, harvested, or processed within a specific geographical region defined in this Act as the Province of Negros Occidental, to promote sustainability, support local economies, and minimize environmental impact;
- (f) Culturally significant food - food that embodies and preserves the cultural heritage of a specific place, serving as an identifiable hallmark of the region's identity and traditions;
- (g) Local Cuisine - culinary practices and dishes rooted in the traditions of a local community's culture, as defined in this Act within the context of the Province of Negros Occidental; *and*
- (h) Slow Food - a movement that counters fast-paced, industrialized food systems by prioritizing quality over speed. It emphasizes the preparation of fresh, locally sourced meals while reducing waste and the carbon footprint. The movement advocates for the celebration of local traditions and products, as defined in this Act within the Province of Negros Occidental.

SECTION 5. *Repealing Act* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, rule or regulation inconsistent or contrary to the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 6. *Effectivity* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,