

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 2924



Introduced by **Rep. FERDINAND ALEXANDER A. MARCOS**
1st District, Ilocos Norte

EXPLANATORY NOTE

With 36,000 kilometers of shoreline – the fifth longest in the world – the Philippines has the potential of becoming a salt-exporting country. And yet the reality at present is that we are actually importing as much as 93% of our salt requirement, and our domestic salt industry has been in steady decline over the years to the point of being deemed a dying industry.

It has not been always like this. There was a time when we are almost 100% self-sufficient in salt. We used to have a number of production areas with a thriving salt industry. We even have an entire province in the country bearing a name whose etymology literally means “place of salt” or “place of salt-making” (ref. Pangasinan).

The sad plight of our salt industry has been attributed to a number of factors. Import liberalization has led to the flooding of cheap salt import. Years of rapid urbanization have resulted in former salt farms being converted to more lucrative industries such as fishponds, residential, commercial or industrial areas. Most small-scale salt producers have also failed to adapt to changes brought by climate change, and this is unfortunate considering that their industry is very dependent on weather conditions. The government has also failed to prioritize the development of our local industries and there were no focused interventions to stimulate some of the flagging industries.

Perhaps, however, one of the major causes responsible for the steady decline of the country’s salt industry is the passage of Republic Act No. 8172, otherwise known as the Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide (ASIN). Mandating that all food-grade salt in the Philippines be iodized but applied to the entire salt industry, our local salt farmers were marginalized in the massive shift to iodization. The capital requirement for the machinery and technology necessary for iodization proved to be too heavy especially for subsistence, small and medium scale salt farmers and producers so much so that those in the industry dropped one by one and shifted to other sources of livelihood.

It is urgent and vital therefore to revive and modernize the Philippine salt industry. We need a comprehensive salt industry development program that will mobilize resources that will reduce import dependence and achieve food sufficiency.

Our salt farmers and salt producers must be given access to needed technology, capital and support services so that they could attain increased income for their families, scale-up local production that can lower importations and also ensure food safety and product quality.

Among ASEAN member states, Indonesia and Vietnam have included salt self-sufficiency as part of their priorities for food, agricultural and industrial development. As far as Thailand is concerned, we are actually importing a small portion of our salt requirement from that country.

In view of the precarious state of our country's salt industry, perhaps the better approach is that we encourage, not require, the iodization of our salt production. It is believed that there is room or space for the making of different varieties of salt depending on various industry requirements. By moving forward this way, we expect not only to revive our domestic salt production but also serve as a stimulus to the various ancillary or dependent economic activities to our salt industry.

On the basis of the foregoing considerations, the early approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



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AN ACT
REVITALIZING THE SALT INDUSTRY, CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDING INCENTIVES TO SALT FARMERS,
PRODUCERS AND EXPORTERS, AND PROVIDING 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 “Philippine Salt Industry Development Act”.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to promote industrialization and full employment based on sound agricultural development through industries that make full and efficient use of human and natural resources, and which are competitive in both domestic and foreign markets. For this purpose, the State shall provide support through appropriate technology and research, and adequate financial, production, marketing, and other support services to revitalize the salt industry, attain increased income for salt farmers and salt producers, achieve salt self-sufficiency, and become a net exporter of salt.

SEC. 3. Definition of Terms. – As used in this Act:

- a) **Artisanal salt** refers to unrefined sea salt, derived directly from a living sea or ocean, harvested and cooked through a natural evaporation process. It retains natural traces of minerals depending on the source and the manner of production, such as solar evaporation, cooked or smoked.
- b) **Food-grade salt** refers to salt for human and animal consumption;
- c) **Iodized salt** refers to any type of salt artificially spray-coated with iodine;

- d) **Industrial salt** refers to salt used in the treatment, processing, and/or manufacture of non-food commercial products;
- e) **Philippine sea salt** refers to salt produced from the evaporation of seawater, brine, or concentrated brine in any salt farm within the Philippines.
- f) **Salt farm** refers to areas of land, shorelines, or coastal areas, including its buildings, machineries, and equipment used for salt production. Salt farms may be classified according to sizes as follows:
 - (i) **Small-scale salt farm** – salt farm of not more than three (3) hectares;
 - (ii) **Medium-scale salt farm** – salt farm of more than three (3) hectares but not more than fifty (50) hectares; and
 - (iii) **Large-scale salt farm** – salt farm owned or leased by individuals that is more than fifty (50) but not more than five hundred (500) hectares, or salt farm owned or leased by an association, cooperative or corporation that is more than fifty (50) but not more than one thousand (1,000) hectares; and
- g) **Salt producer** refers to an individual, corporation, cooperative, or association involved in the production of sea salt.

SEC. 4. Philippine Salt Industry Roadmap. – For the attainment of the objectives of this Act, there shall be formulated and established a Philippine Salt Industry Development Roadmap (“Roadmap”), which shall include, but not be limited to, programs, projects, interventions and incentives for the development and management, research, processing, utilization, modernization, business development, and commercialization of Philippine salt. The Roadmap shall include the following objectives, among others:

- a) Increase salt production in order to attain salt self-sufficiency, and become a net exporter of salt;
- b) Encourage salt farming and expand the number of salt-producing areas;
- c) Ensure the sustainable production, management and harvesting, and soil and water conservation practices in salt-farming areas;
- d) Promote public and private investments in the salt industry development programs;
- e) Ensure the sustainability and viability of the salt industry through the establishment of cooperatives among salt farmers and producers in order to optimize local production and improve access to government interventions, assistance, and incentives;
- f) Advance market access for Philippine salt products locally and internationally;

- g) Extend technical and financial assistance for the development, processing, commercialization, and marketing of Philippine salt products;
- h) Develop and distinguish category of salt areas into artisanal salt production areas, as gourmet salt producing areas, iodized salt producing areas, salt ecotourism sites, and similar sites or areas, and provide appropriate incentives;
- i) Introduce new salt development technology based on robust research and development (R & D) activities;
- j) Provide continuous training and capacity building in the salt industry;
- k) Provide technical and financial assistance in the local design and fabrication of high-capacity processing equipment and machineries for the salt industry;
- l) Adopt a program for the active formation of cooperatives of salt farmers pursuant to Section 21 of this Act; and
- m) Support R & D activities for salt revitalization.

SEC. 5. Creation of the Philippine Salt Industry Development Council. –

To ensure the unified and integrated implementation of the Roadmap and accelerate the modernization and industrialization of the Philippine Salt Industry, a Philippine Salt Industry Development Council (PSIDC) is hereby created with the following composition:

- a) Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) as **Chairperson**;
- b) Secretary of the Trade and Industry (DTI) as **Co-Chairperson**;
- c) Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), as **Vice-Chairperson**;

Members:

- d) Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- e) Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH);
- f) Secretary of the Department of Tourism;
- g) Chairperson of the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA);
- h) Secretary of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev);
- i) Director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR);
- j) Chief Executive Officer of the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP);

- k) One representative each from the League of Provinces of the Philippines, League of Cities of the Philippines, and League of Municipalities of the Philippines;
- l) One (1) representative from the private sector engaged in salt-production business;
- m) One (1) representative from the salt farmers or workers;
- n) One (1) representative from the salt farmer cooperatives; and
- o) One (1) representative from the private sector engaged in a business belonging to the local salt industry, other than farming and production.

SEC. 6. Functions of the PSIDC. – The PSIDC shall have the following powers and functions:

- a) Formulate the Philippine Salt Industry Development Roadmap containing the short-term, medium-term and long term-development plan;
- b) Identify specific and priority programs and projects in support of, and in line with the Roadmap;
- c) Provide development funds, technical assistance and equipment to salt farmers and the industry. The support shall be commensurate to the size of the salt farm;
- d) Undertake the construction, through the DA-BFAR, of new small scale artisanal salt farms;
- e) Identify sources of financing and facilitate credit windows with government banks and the Agricultural Credit Policy Council to expand salt industry development;
- f) Increase production of local salt by increasing land area devoted to salt and improving farm productivity;
- g) Institutionalize capacity building for salt farmers through the Agricultural Training Institute;
- h) Strengthen market linkage and promotion of Philippine salt;
- i) Conduct continuing R & D on innovation and modernization of the salt industry;
- j) Establish an Agri-Insurance Program for salt producers;
- k) Establish parameters and guidelines when domestically-produced salt may be subjected to mandatory salt iodization under the provisions of Republic Act (RA) No. 8172, otherwise known as "An Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide (ASIN). Such parameters shall include the level of iodine deficiency among Filipinos and the degree of recovery of the domestic salt industry;

- l) Establish parameters and guidelines when imported salt may be exempted from mandatory salt iodization under the provisions of RA No. 8172. Such parameters shall include the level of iodine deficiency among Filipinos and the degree of recovery of the domestic salt industry;
- m) Recommend to the Department of Budget and Management the required yearly appropriations for the plan and implementation of salt development programs;
- n) Submit annual reports, not later than June 30 of each year, to the Office of the President and to each House of Congress, on the status of the implementation of the Roadmap and the salt industry development in the country; and
- o) Promulgate such rules and regulations, and exercise such other powers and functions, as may be necessary to carry out the objectives of this Act.

SEC 7. Program Management Office and Secretariat. – The DA-BFAR shall lead in the industry strengthening, expansion and promotion of the salt industry. Toward this end, a Program Management Office (PMO) is hereby created under the Office of the Director of the BFAR to oversee the overall implementation of the salt industry development roadmap as well as the conduct of regular monitoring of its execution by the implementing agencies and/or partners.

The Secretariat is also hereby created under the PMO and shall perform functions such as coordinating and managing the regular meetings of the PSIDC, preparing and/or consolidating reports for the PMO, monitoring the implementation of policy decisions that the PSIDC has adopted, and liaising with all the member departments and relevant agencies of the government, as needed.

SEC. 8. Salt as Basic Agricultural Product. – Salt, whether unprocessed or processed, is hereby classified as a basic agricultural product with all its necessary legal and regulatory implications.

The DA shall also ensure that salt is a priority commodity to be produced locally in areas or regions identified in this Act, as well as in the development plan for the salt industry. The required resources shall be allocated by the DA for this purpose.

SEC. 9. Jurisdiction over Salt Farms and Fishponds with Salt Farms. – The administrative jurisdiction and management of salt farms and fishponds with salt farms shall be lodged with the DA-BFAR. All applications for salt farm leases, including those submitted to the DENR, shall henceforth be processed by the DA-BFAR. However, all existing salt farm lease agreements issued by DENR shall remain valid until their expiration. Thereafter, application for renewal shall be lodged with the DA-BFAR.

SEC. 10. *Priority Areas for Salt Production.* – Provinces with Type 1 climate, which include Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Pangasinan, Zambales, Bataan, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan, Antique, and Marinduque, are hereby declared priority areas for salt production. As such, these provinces shall be prioritized in the national development of salt farms. The DENR shall identify and map sites within these priority areas suitable for salt production, and the DA-BFAR shall then issue the corresponding tenurial instrument to qualified applicants for the development of salt farms in these areas.

SEC 11. *Utilization of Public Lands Previously Intended for Fishpond Development and Those With Existing Fishpond Lease Agreements (FLAs).* – All areas previously released to DA-BFAR for fishpond development that were not issued with fishpond lease agreements (FLAs), or those areas previously covered by FLAs but were subsequently cancelled or terminated or previously reverted, are hereby automatically identified as areas suitable for salt production that may be issued with tenurial instruments by DA-BFAR.

Existing FLAs shall also include salt farming or production as among the valid activities that may be undertaken by the leaseholder under the condition that the required annual commercial fish and/or salt production under the existing FLA rules and regulations is complied with. FLA holders who intend to venture into salt farming shall be given the same support, training, and financing given to salt farmers and producers, as provided under this Act.

SEC. 12. *Identification of Additional Public Lands Suitable for Salt Production.* – Consistent with the Roadmap adopted by the PSIDC, the DENR shall identify additional areas suitable for salt production. Once identified and mapped-out, the DA-BFAR shall issue the appropriate tenurial instruments to qualified applicants.

SEC. 13. *Municipal Waters.* - As far as practicable, portions of municipal waters adjacent to areas identified as suitable for salt farm development may be included in the tenurial instrument, and as such, these municipal waters may also be utilized as salt farms: *Provided*, That no critical habitat or spawning ground of fish may be affected by the salt farm development in such municipal waters: and *Provided further*, That the LGU concerned has been consulted.

SEC. 14. *Qualifications of Tenurial Awardees.* – Consistent with the provisions of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall come up with the qualifications of awardees of salt-farm tenurial instruments taking into account relevant laws on the matter.

SEC. 15. *Registration, Construction, and Lease of Salt Farms.* – The DA-BFAR shall facilitate the prompt registration of salt farms as well as assist in the design, construction, and development of small-scale artisanal salt farms, either on its own or through partnership with the private sector. The DOST, on the other hand, shall provide the necessary technology in the construction of large-scale salt farms employing modern technologies to increase production efficiency and environmentally-sound practices.

The DENR shall promptly act on the processing and issuance of permits and clearances, such as Environmental Compliance Certificates, prior to the development of salt farms to ensure that such projects will not cause a significant negative impact on the environment.

Individuals may lease up to five hundred (500) hectares of salt farms. Corporations, associations, and cooperatives may lease up to one thousand (1,000) hectares. A lease applicant may apply for a lease for more than one area and hold several lease agreements, but in no case shall the total area covered by such multiple lease agreements exceed the limits prescribed under this provision. Leases shall have a tenure of twenty-five (25) years, renewable for another twenty-five (25) years. Upon expiration of the second lease, the existing lease may apply for a new lease over the same area. Lease rates for salt farm and fishponds shall be determined by the DA-BFAR, and shall be aligned with the prevailing FLA rates.

SEC. 16. *Periods for Approval of Salt Farm Lease Agreements and Issuance of Tenorial Instruments; Termination.* – The BFAR Provincial Officer shall process new salt farm lease applications within sixty (60) calendar days, and shall forward such application to the BFAR Regional Director, who shall have thirty (30) calendar days to approve or return the application. When approved, the tenorial instrument shall be issued to the applicant within the thirty (30)-day period.

For the renewal of the lease agreement, the BFAR Provincial Officer shall process salt farm lease application within sixty (60) calendar days, and shall forward such application to the BFAR Regional Director, who shall have fifteen (15) calendar days to approve or return the application. Upon such approval, the BFAR Regional Director shall issue the tenorial instrument to the applicant within the fifteen (15)-day period.

For the transfer of leases, the BFAR Provincial Officer shall process such application for transfer within sixty (60) calendar days, and shall forward such application to the BFAR Regional Director, who shall have thirty (30) calendar days to approve or return the application. Upon such approval, the BFAR Regional Director shall issue the tenorial instrument to the transferee within the thirty (30)-day period.

Unfavorable decisions by the BFAR Regional Director may be appealed by the applicant to the BFAR National Director within thirty (30) calendar days from receipt of such decision. Such appeal shall be resolved within sixty (60) calendar days from receipt by the National Director. A copy of the decision shall be

immediately sent to the appellant and to the BFAR Regional Director concerned. In case of favorable decision on the appeal, the concerned BFAR Regional Director shall issue the tenurial instrument within seven (7) calendar days from receipt of said favorable decision.

The DA Secretary shall issue the appropriate rules and guidelines for the termination of salt farm lease agreements, and consequently the revocation of the tenurial instruments issued pursuant to this Act.

SEC. 17. *Promotion of Artisanal Salt and Non-Traditional Salt Farming Methodologies and Techniques.* - The PSIDC shall promote and support artisanal salt farming, as well as available non-traditional alternative methods and techniques of salt farming that allow year-round production of salt even under erratic weather patterns. The introduction of new technology shall be preceded by R & D activities spearheaded by the Department of Agriculture – National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (DA-NFRDI) in close coordination with the DOST.

SEC. 18. *Funding and Technical Support for the Development of Salt Farms and Equipment.* – The DA-BFAR shall provide funding and technical support in the development and operation of salt farms. It shall also provide equipment and other necessary support to salt farmers.

SEC 19. *Construction of Salt Farm Roads, to be known as Daan Asinan.*
– Consistent with the development plans on the revitalization of salt industry, the DA shall, in coordination with the LGUs and salt farmers within the area, identify priority locations of roads linking the salt farms to the market, to be known as *Daan Asinan*. The DA shall take into account the investment for salt farm to be undertaken in the area, the number of salt farmers and their families who shall benefit therefrom and the amount of salt produced or potentially produced in the salt farms. Thereafter, the DA shall undertake the construction, improvement, and maintenance of the *Daan Asinan*.

SEC. 20. *Training Programs.* – The DA shall, together with other government offices such as but not limited to the DOST, DTI , Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), provide complementary training programs to develop and upgrade the skills and competencies of salt farmers and producers, ensure product traceability and compliance to food safety, technology acquisition including product labelling and packaging, conduct continuous training on market positioning for Philippine artisanal or specialty and industrial salts and such other skills necessary in the maintenance and development of the local salt industry.

SEC. 21. Salt Farmers Cooperatives. – The CDA shall assist in the formation of cooperatives of local salt farmers and producers in order that they can economically engage in the production and distribution of Philippine salt. The CDA shall also assist in the organizational strengthening, capacity-building, and financial literacy training of salt farming and producing cooperatives and their members so that they can leverage their resources, ensure sustainable operations, and increase the number of successful cooperative-managed salt farms in the country.

SEC. 22. Labeling of Salt Made in the Philippines. - All salt produced or manufactured in the Philippines for export shall be labeled as “Made in the Philippines” in a prominent and conspicuous manner on the product, its packaging, and accompanying documentation, and shall comply with the requirements of RA 7394, otherwise known as the “Consumer Act of the Philippines.”

For domestically produced salt intended for the local market, salt manufacturers, producers or farmers are encouraged to provide a label “Made in the Philippines.”

The DTI shall assist domestic salt manufacturers, producers or farmers on this labeling requirement.

SEC. 23. Registration with DA-BFAR. – Salt farmers, producers and importers of salt shall register with the BFAR.

The BFAR shall continue to implement measures ensuring compliance of salt farmers with food safety laws and guidelines intended for human and animal consumption: Provided, That salt which are not intended for food consumption, shall not be subjected to food safety laws and guidelines. For this purpose, the BFAR shall engage the expertise of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development and the Food and Nutrition Research Institute.

SEC. 24. Importation of Salt. – No person shall import salt without securing the appropriate authorization from the following agencies:

- a) DOH-FDA and DA-BFAR – for food-grade salt; and
- b) DA-BFAR – for industrial salt.

The DOH-FDA and DA-BFAR shall align and streamline their processes.

SEC. 25. Tarrification. - Tariff collections shall be automatically deposited in a special account with the Bureau of the Treasury which shall be used for the development of the salt industry, through the Salt Industry Development and Competitiveness Enhancement Fund.

Salt imports include imported products under the following Harmonized System headings or ASEAN Harmonized Tariff Nomenclature Codes, the Descriptions:

2501 – Salt (including table salt and denatured salt) and pure sodium chloride, whether or not in aqueous solution containing added anti-caking or free flowing agents; sea water.

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|-------|------------|---|--|
| (i) | 2501.00.10 | - | Table salt |
| (ii) | 2501.00.20 | - | Unprocessed rock salt |
| (iii) | 2501.00.50 | - | Sea Water |
| (iv) | 2501.00.51 | - | Salt, denatured, industrial |
| (v) | 2501.00.91 | - | With sodium chloride content more than 60% |
| | | | but less than 97%, calculated on a dry basis, |
| | | | fortified with iodine |
| (vi) | 2501.00.93 | - | Other, with sodium chloride content 97% or more but less than 99.9%, calculated on a dry basis |
| (vii) | 2501.00.99 | - | Others |

Tariff collection shall be automatically credited to a special account in the general fund of the national treasury, which shall be in place within ninety (90) days upon effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 26. Creation of the Salt Industry Development and Competitiveness Enhancement Fund. – There is hereby created a Salt Development and Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, herein referred to as the “SIDCEF:”

Provided, That allocation and utilization of the SIDCEF shall be subject to the following guidelines:

- a) The Secretary of the DA shall be accountable and responsible for the management and utilization of the said fund in coordination with the other government agencies concerned;
- b) The amount allocated shall be released directly to the implementing agencies as provided for in this Act based on the objectives of the Salt Industry Development Roadmap: *Provided further,* That the unutilized portion of the SIDCEF shall not revert to the general fund but shall continue to be used for the purpose for which it was set aside. The fund releases shall not be subject to any ceiling by the DBM; and

- c) Any program undertaken in accordance with this Act shall only be deemed complementary and supplementary to, and shall not be replacement of any existing programs for the fisherfolk already implemented by the DA-BFAR and other agencies concerned.

SEC. 27. Review of the Salt Tariff Rates. – Consistent with the policies of this Act, the Tariff Commission shall review the most favored nation or MFN in-quota and out-quota tariff rates on salt imports originating from non-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), World Trade Organization (WTO) member states. Within sixty (60) days following the effectivity of this Act, the Tariff Commission shall recommend to the National Economic and Development Authority Board the possible MFN in-quota and out-quota rate adjustments for salt imports that will ensure the competitiveness of the local industry.

SEC. 28. Powers of the President. – The President, consistent with the national interest of safeguarding Filipino salt producers, is hereby empowered to act with delegated authority to revise or adjust existing rates of customs duties on salt imports under the WTO Agreement on agriculture under ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement or ATIGA, including any necessary change in classification: *Provided*, That the adjustment is time-bound and the power herein delegated to the President shall only be exercised when Congress is not in session: *Provided, further*, That any order issued by the President adjusting the applied tariff rates shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication.

The power herein delegated to the President may be withdrawn or terminated by Congress through a joint resolution in accordance with the provisions under Section 1609 of RA 10863 or the “Customs Modernization and Tariff Act or the CMTA.”

SEC. 29. Trade and Export Assistance. – The DTI and DA shall assist and support local salt farmers in the trade and exportation of domestically-produced salt. It shall enhance the capabilities and global competitiveness of potential and existing producers and exporters of salt through export financing; business matching; provision of trade and market information; organization of trade fairs and business missions; conduct of seminars, workshops, conferences and symposium on export-related subjects, including export documentation and procedures; product design and development; market consultancy; and product consultancy.

SEC. 30. Prioritization of Domestically-Produced Salt. – The government shall prioritize the use of domestically-produced salt in its programs, including the fertilization of coconut farms by the Philippine Coconut Authority.

SEC. 31. Incentives. – The following incentives shall be provided to investors in salt farm development and salt processing facilities:

- a) The Board of Investments shall classify salt farms as preferred areas of investment under its Investment Priorities Plan subject to pertinent rules and regulations;
- b) The salt farmers and processors shall be given priority to access credit assistance and guarantee schemes being granted by government finance institutions; and
- c) Salt farm development and their equipment shall be covered by the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation.

SEC. 32. Research. – The DA-NFRDI shall conduct research, either on its own or in collaboration with state universities and colleges and other stakeholder research institutions, to enhance the technological development, provide applicable policy direction, and develop innovative project-based interventions that may be adopted and implemented to achieve the objectives of this Act.

The DOST Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development Council (PCIEERD), as lead together with other relevant DOST offices and agencies shall develop and implement a comprehensive program for the acquisition, design, and manufacture of salt iodization equipment, and transfer of the salt iodization technology to salt producers/manufacturers.

SEC. 33. Human Resources Development. – All stakeholders in the salt industry shall contribute to the development of a sustainable human resource for the industry. Towards this end, the DOLE, in collaboration with the duly recognized salt associations and salt cooperatives, the Commission on Higher Education, the TESDA, the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), the CDA and the private sector, shall formulate and implement a Human Resources Development (HRD) Master Plan for the salt industry which shall include, among others, the following:

- a) Capacity building, skills trainings, and institutional strengthening of the salt farm workers, salt farmers, salt farming and producing cooperatives, and their organizations to actively contribute in productivity and competitiveness;
- b) Scholarship program for the underprivileged but deserving college and post graduate students who are taking up courses in relevant fields of discipline in state universities and colleges which have programs in agriculture, agricultural engineering and mechanics, and chemical engineering/salt technology; and for vocational courses and skills development for farmers and farm technicians, and skilled workers in salt farms; and
- c) Conduct of capability training or attendance to local or international trainings and seminars by salt farmers and workers.

SEC. 34. *Mandatory Salt Iodization; Exemptions and Incentives.* – Imported food grade salt shall continue to comply with the mandatory iodization as provided under the provisions of RA 8172. Domestically-produced salt including industrial salt shall be exempt from said mandatory iodization. However, as provided under Section 6 (k) and (l) of this Act, PSIDC may exercise its power to require the mandatory iodization of domestically-produced salt and may exempt the mandatory iodization of imported food grade salt.

The DTI, DOH, and DOST-PCIEERD shall develop, enhance, implement and sustain programs that will encourage and incentivize local salt producers to iodize the salt that they produce and manufacture for human and animal consumption.

SEC. 35. *Role of LGUs.* – The LGUs with areas suitable for salt production shall, as far as practicable, establish their respective Salt Industry Development Task Force. The LGUs shall regularly conduct a survey of existing salt farms and salt enterprises in their respective localities. Each local Salt Industry Development Task Force shall conduct a survey of existing salt processing enterprises that are operating in the locality. In cooperation with the DA-NFRDI, DENR, DTI and the appropriate DOST-Regional Office, and in consultation with the DA and BFAR, they shall identify and map appropriate areas for local salt production.

The LGUs shall also enact local ordinances to support the development of Philippine sea salt, artisanal, gourmet, and specialty salt produced in their respective municipalities or cities, implement appropriate measures to ensure the ease-of-doing business and ensure that salt farmers or producers and local gourmet outlet owners are free from harassment on alleged non-compliance with iodization requirements. Law enforcement units, including members of the Philippine National Police, shall ensure that domestic salt farmers and producers are not unduly burdened.

SEC. 36. *Agencies' Regular Programs.* – The mandates, functions and activities of the various departments and agencies identified in this Act shall be considered regular programs and shall be included in their annual budgets.

SEC. 37. *Reporting.* – The various departments and agencies specified in this Act shall provide regular updates to the PSIDC on the progress of their programs and activities toward the realization of the objectives of this Act.

SEC. 38. *Congressional Oversight.* – The Congressional Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization (COCAFAM) shall ensure the full implementation of this Act.

SEC. 39. Appropriations. – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the departments and agencies concerned. Thereafter, such amount as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 40. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The PSIDC created under Section 5 of this Act shall be convened within sixty (60) days from the approval of this Act. Thereafter, it shall issue the implementing rules and regulations to efficiently carry out the provisions of this Act within one hundred twenty (120) days from approval of this Act.

SEC. 41. Separability Clause. – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 42. Repealing Clause. – The pertinent provisions of RA 8172, RA 8550, otherwise known as the "Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998," as amended, are hereby modified or amended accordingly. Further, all laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 43. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,