

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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4237**



Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE IRRIGATION FOR FOOD SECURITY PROGRAM AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Food security is inseparable from water security. Irrigation is the single most critical input that determines whether farmers can produce stable yields, plant beyond a single cropping season, and withstand the growing risks of drought and climate variability. Where irrigation is reliable, farmers achieve higher productivity, consumers benefit from more stable food prices, and the nation strengthens its independence from external supply shocks.

At present, the Philippines has an estimated 3.1 million hectares of irrigable land. Yet only about 2.15 million hectares are actually served by irrigation systems. Nearly one million hectares remain rainfed and vulnerable to weather fluctuations. This structural gap constrains national rice and corn production, weakens rural incomes, and increases reliance on imports.

The situation is made more urgent by climate change. El Niño events, stronger typhoons, and unpredictable rainfall patterns directly undermine rainfed agriculture. Irrigation is not merely a production tool but a climate adaptation strategy — one that ensures the country can continue to feed itself under conditions of stress.

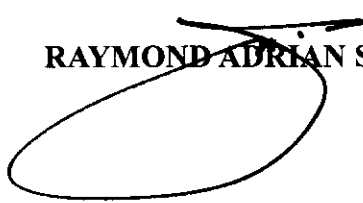
Past irrigation programs have often been fragmented, underfunded, or treated as short-term infrastructure projects rather than as a long-term investment in food security. The National Irrigation Administration (NIA), established by Republic Act No. 3601 and strengthened under Presidential Decree Nos. 552 and 1702, is the lead institution mandated to develop, operate, and maintain irrigation systems. But to maximize its role in today's context, it must be directed and supported by a clear legislative mandate that explicitly links irrigation to food security.

This bill therefore establishes an Irrigation for Food Security Program under the NIA, with the following core elements:

1. **National Development Targets** – Achieve irrigation service coverage for at least 3.1 million hectares of irrigable land within ten years, prioritizing rice- and corn-producing provinces and climate-vulnerable areas.
2. **Sustained Financing** – Provide for appropriations, concessional credit, official development assistance, and the issuance of irrigation bonds as authorized under the NIA Charter, with recognition of irrigation financing as compliance under Republic Act No. 11901, the Agriculture, Fisheries, and Rural Development Financing Enhancement Act of 2022.
3. **Integration into Food Security Planning** – Require irrigation expansion and rehabilitation to be aligned with the National Food Security Roadmap, ensuring coherence between water management, crop production, and nutrition objectives.
4. **Climate-Resilient Infrastructure** – Promote multipurpose irrigation systems that combine water supply with flood control, hydropower, and watershed rehabilitation.
5. **Farmer Participation** – Strengthen irrigators' associations and farmer groups in the planning, operation, and maintenance of irrigation systems to ensure sustainability.

By enacting this measure, Congress will not only invest in physical infrastructure but also in the resilience and dignity of the Filipino farmer and consumer. Irrigation is the difference between vulnerability and security, between dependence and self-reliance. With irrigation for food security, the Philippines can better withstand shocks, reduce import dependence, and guarantee that food remains available and affordable for every Filipino family.

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


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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the “Irrigation for Food Security Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is the policy of the State to ensure food security by expanding and modernizing irrigation systems nationwide, reducing dependence on rainfall, increasing crop yields, and improving resilience to climate variability.

SEC. 3. *Irrigation for Food Security Program.* There is hereby established an Irrigation for Food Security Program under the National Irrigation Administration (NIA). The Program shall:

- (a) Identify and prioritize irrigable areas critical to food security, including rice, corn, and other staple crop zones;
- (b) Construct, rehabilitate, and modernize irrigation facilities to achieve a target irrigated area of at least 3.1 million hectares within ten (10) years;
- (c) Integrate irrigation expansion into the National Food Security Roadmap;
- (d) Promote multipurpose irrigation projects that combine water supply with flood control, power generation, and watershed management;
- (e) Strengthen farmer participation through irrigators’ associations in operation and maintenance; and

(f) Ensure gender-responsive and climate-resilient irrigation development.

SEC. 4. *Financing.* The Program shall be funded through:

- (a) Annual appropriations in the General Appropriations Act;
- (b) Bond issuances by the National Irrigation Administration, consistent with its charter, subject to Department of Finance approval;
- (c) Loans and credit facilities from government financial institutions; and
- (d) Grants, concessional loans, and official development assistance consistent with national priorities.

SEC. 5. *Public–Private Partnerships.* The NIA, in coordination with the Public–Private Partnership Center, may enter into build-operate-transfer, joint venture, or other PPP arrangements for irrigation infrastructure, consistent with food security objectives.

SEC. 6. *Oversight.* An Inter-Agency Oversight Committee composed of the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Development Planning, the Department of Finance, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the National Irrigation Administration shall monitor the implementation of the Program.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the NIA. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the NIA, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Development Planning, and other relevant agencies, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations.

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

SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, executive orders, and issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,