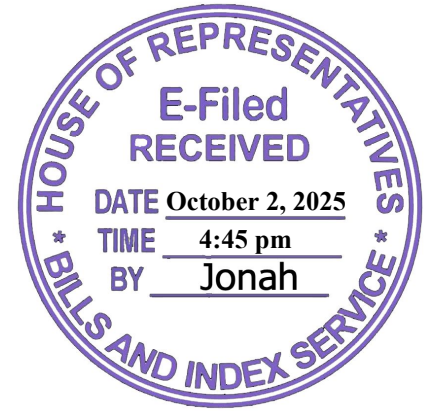




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. **5106**

Introduced by
REPRESENTATIVE DAVID “JAY-JAY” C. SUAREZ

AN ACT
CREATING A CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE TO
REVIEW, ASSESS, AND RECOMMEND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS FOR THE
MODERNIZATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF PHILIPPINE
AGRICULTURE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The agriculture and fisheries sector remain a vital yet persistently underperforming pillar of the Philippine economy. Despite our natural resource base and a large rural labor force, the sector’s contribution to national growth continues to lag due to structural weaknesses in governance, policy fragmentation, and underinvestment. In 2024, agriculture contracted by 2.2%, pulling down the country’s overall economic growth to just 5.2%, well below target.

In early 2025, the government declared a national “food security emergency” in response to soaring rice prices—an alarming development in a country historically dependent on rice for daily sustenance. While importation and tariff cuts were deployed as immediate measures, they underscore deeper issues: over-reliance on imports, a weakened regulatory framework, and a farm system that continues to underperform despite budgetary support.

This situation is not new. Reputable economists and agricultural experts have long pointed to institutional dysfunction at the root of the sector’s woes. The late Dr. Eliseo R. Ponce, a former president of Visayas State University and a former Executive Director of the Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Agricultural Research, conducted a comprehensive review of the agriculture bureaucracy. He identified critical issues such as over-centralization, fragmented mandates, politicized and commodity-skewed budgeting, and the lack of accountability and capacity support for local government units.

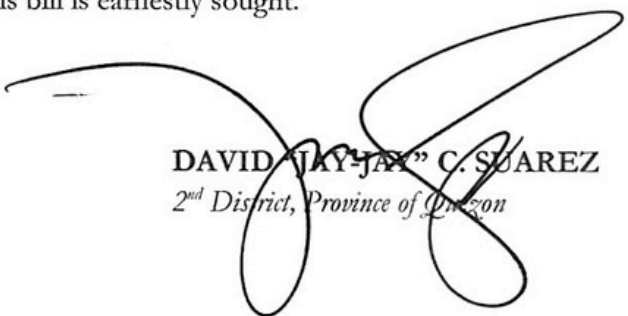
Echoing Dr. Ponce’s findings, economist and former NEDA Director-General Dr. Cielito F. Habito has called for the establishment of a high-level, multi-sectoral commission—similar to

the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II)—to take a “long, hard look” at fixing the agriculture bureaucracy. Dr. Habito argues that agriculture is “too important to be left to the DA alone,” and that genuine reform requires the input of experts, local leaders, and farmers themselves.

This bill answers that call. It seeks to establish a Congressional Commission on Agriculture (AgriCom), composed of Members of Congress, supported by a dedicated Technical Secretariat and an Advisory Council of recognized experts and stakeholders. The Commission shall undertake a comprehensive assessment of the sector, identify systemic weaknesses, and recommend targeted, time-bound, and actionable reforms. Its scope will include governance restructuring, budget rationalization, regulatory reform, LGU capacity building, research and extension, and resilience in the face of climate change.

Modeled after EDCOM II under Republic Act No. 11899, this measure is intended to harness the full powers of Congress to drive transformative, multi-year change in the agriculture sector.

In light of the continuing crisis in agriculture and the urgent need to secure food for every Filipino family, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



DAVID "JAY-JAY" C. SUAREZ
2nd District, Province of Davao



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

Section 1. Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Congressional Commission on Agriculture (AgriCom) Act.”

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote rural development and food security through a modern, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable agriculture and fisheries sector. Recognizing that institutional weaknesses and governance inefficiencies have long hindered agricultural growth, the State shall pursue a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to reforming the agriculture bureaucracy.

Section 3. Creation of the Commission. – There is hereby created a Congressional Commission on Agriculture, hereinafter referred to as the "Commission," to undertake a national review and recommend reforms to strengthen Philippine agriculture and fisheries.

Section 4. Objectives. – AgriCom shall be created to:

- (a) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the current state of Philippine agriculture and fisheries;
- (b) Identify institutional, regulatory, structural, and policy barriers to productivity and inclusivity;

- (c) Recommend a blueprint of targeted, measurable, and time-bound reforms, including reorganization of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and its agencies;
- (d) Promote effective devolution of agricultural functions and build capacity among LGUs;
- (e) Advance digital transformation, innovation, and climate resilience in agriculture;
- (f) Ensure meaningful stakeholder participation from public and private sectors, civil society, academe, and farming and fishing communities.

Section 5. *Composition.* – The Commission shall be composed of:

- (a) Five Members from the House of Representatives, including the Chairs of the Committees on Agriculture and Food, and on Rural Development;
- (b) Five Members from the Senate, including the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform.

The Commission shall be co-chaired by one Member from each chamber, designated by the Speaker of the House and the Senate President. The remaining Members shall reflect proportional representation of the Majority and Minority.

The Secretaries of the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) shall serve as Ex-Officio, non-voting members of the Commission to provide technical inputs and ensure close coordination with the Executive Branch.

Section 6. *Duration.* – The Commission shall exist for a period of three years from its organization, unless extended by joint resolution of Congress.

Section 7. *Powers and Functions.* – The Commission shall:

- (a) Review the mandates, functions, and performance of the DA and its attached agencies;
- (b) Examine the roles and capabilities of LGUs in agricultural development and the implementation of devolved services;
- (c) Evaluate the effectiveness of national programs in addressing productivity, competitiveness, food security, and farmers' incomes;
- (d) Recommend reforms in governance, regulation, planning, budgeting, research and development, extension, and value chain integration;
- (e) Hold hearings, consultations, field visits, and expert forums, and receive testimonies and data from agencies and stakeholders;

- (f) Summon and require by subpoena any official or document necessary to its work;
- (g) Engage with national and local agencies, the private sector, civil society, academic institutions, and international partners.
- (h) Establish and adopt, within the first ninety (90) days of its organization and in consultation with the Philippine Statistics Authority, a Performance Metrics Framework which shall be the basis for the quantitative and qualitative assessment of all programs and agencies under review.

Section 8. *Scope of National Assessment.* – The Commission’s assessment shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) Review of relevant laws and executive issuances affecting agriculture and fisheries, including the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act, Rice Tariffication Law, and devolved service delivery;
- (b) Performance of DA and its attached agencies against key outcome indicators;
- (c) Alignment of DA budgeting with policy priorities and sectoral needs;
- (d) Role of LGUs in delivering agricultural support services and identifying coordination gaps;
- (e) Comparative assessment of Philippine agriculture with regional and global benchmarks;
- (f) Identification of best practices from both domestic and international settings that may be scaled or adopted.
- (g) A systematic review of the implementation of Republic Act No. 8435 or the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act, to identify key accomplishments, implementation gaps, and structural barriers that hindered the fulfillment of its objectives.

Section 9. *Standing Committees.* – The Commission may organize standing committees from among its members, to study specific priority areas. Each standing committee shall be co-chaired by a member of the Commission and may be vice-chaired by a relevant expert from the advisory council, as determined by the Commission co-chairs.

Section 10. *Technical Secretariat and Advisory Council* –

- (a) A Technical Secretariat shall be constituted to provide research, coordination, and administrative support. It shall be headed by an Executive Director with proven expertise in agriculture, governance, and development management.
- (b) An Advisory Council shall be created to support the Commission with technical and sectoral advice. It shall be composed of experts from the academe, business,

local government, national agencies, and civil society. Members shall be selected by the Commission co-chairs in consultation with stakeholders.

Section 11. *Research Arm.* – The Commission may designate one or more institutions to serve as its research arm for data collection, policy analysis, and technical studies. These may include, but are not limited to, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF), and relevant state universities and colleges.

Section 12. *Reports and Outputs.* –

- (a) The Commission shall submit periodic reports to both Houses of Congress summarizing its findings and interim recommendations.
- (b) Within its term, the Commission shall submit a final report containing its complete assessment, proposed policy and institutional reforms, recommended legislation, and a reform roadmap with clear timelines and accountability mechanisms.
- (c) All published Committee and final reports of the commission shall include a dedicated section summarizing the inputs, proposals, objections received from farming and fishing communities and civil society organizations during public consultations, and shall provide a response as to how these were considered in the final recommendations.

Section 13. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial operation of the Commission shall be specifically appropriated in the next General Appropriation Act following the effectivity of this Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 14. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Section 15. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, other issuances, rules, and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

Section 16. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,