

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6947



Introduced by **HON. TSUYOSHI ANTHONY “HORI” G. HORIBATA,**
HON. MIGUEL LUIS R. VILLAFUERTE, HON. VINCENZO RENATO LUIGI R.
VILLAFUERTE, AND HON. TERRY L. RIDON

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Each year, a significant portion of the country’s agricultural land is irreversibly converted from actual or potential agricultural use to non-agricultural purposes, a trend driven largely by urban expansion, infrastructure development, and inconsistent land-use governance frameworks.^{[1][2]} According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), from 2012 to 2022, a total of 620,399 hectares of irrigated agricultural lands were converted to other uses, which averages to approximately 62,040 hectares per year – highlighting both the scale and persistence of this trend.^[3] This situation is further aggravated by overlapping and, at times, conflicting government programs and policies on land use and development, which weaken institutional safeguards intended to protect prime agricultural areas.^[4]

The continued reduction of the country’s agricultural land base poses a serious threat to national food security and the agricultural sector’s capacity to produce sufficient food and fiber for domestic consumption.^{[1][2]} Beyond its impact on food production, the extensive conversion of agricultural land undermines the economic foundation of rural communities, where agriculture remains a primary source of livelihood and local economic activity.^{[2][5]} Despite these risks, there is currently no comprehensive statutory mechanism requiring the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Department of Agriculture to regularly report to Congress data and trends on the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.^[4]

This measure seeks to strengthen transparency, accountability, and policy coherence by instituting a regular reporting and review mechanism on agricultural land conversion and by ensuring that national government policies affecting agricultural land are aligned with local development plans.^{[1][4]} The overarching objective is not only to preserve agricultural land for long-term food security, but also to reduce opportunities for graft and corruption arising from fragmented laws, inconsistent policies, and uncoordinated administrative actions among government agencies.^{[2][5]}

[1] International Rice Research and Development Foundation. (2023). *Philippines is a rice deficit country: The challenges, policy innovations, and strategic interventions*.
<https://irdf.org.ph/press-statement-philippine-food-security-at-a-crossroads-urgent-action-demanded-to-secure-our-rice-future/>

[2] BusinessMirror. (2025, June 25). *The silent crisis: Land conversion and its threat to our food security*.
<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/06/25/the-silent-crisis-land-conversion-and-its-threat-to-our-food-security/>

[3] BusinessMirror. (2023, December 11). *PHL converts 600K hectares of irrigated lands*.
<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/12/11/phl-converts-600k-hectares-of-irrigated-lands/>

[4] Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). (2025). *Still no land use law: Implications for agricultural land protection*.
<https://www.pids.gov.ph/details/news/in-the-news/still-no-land-use-law>

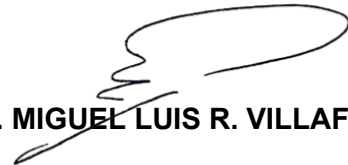
[5] Philippine News Agency. (2025). *Bill vs. agricultural land conversion filed at House*.
<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1262599>

A similar measure was filed during the Nineteenth Congress under House Bill No. 272, which was subsequently substituted by House Bill No. 5287, underscoring the continuing and urgent need for legislative action to safeguard the country's agricultural land resources.

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



HON. TSUYOSHI ANTHONY "HORI" G. HORIBATA



HON. MIGUEL LUIS R. VILLAFUERTE



HON. VINCENZO RENATO LUIGI R. VILLAFUERTE



HON. TERRY L. RIDON

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AND HON. TERRY L. RIDON

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR STRONGER MEASURES TO PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL LAND AND
REGULATE ITS CONVERSION TO NON-AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Title. – This Act shall be known as the *"Agricultural Land Preservation Act."*

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to minimize unnecessary and irreversible conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, and ensure that national government policies and programs administered and implemented for the protection of agricultural land are compatible with the development plans of the local government units (LGUs).

SEC. 3. Conversion of Agricultural Land for Non-Agricultural Uses. – The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) shall, in coordination with the national government agencies (NGAs) and LGUs, develop criteria for identifying the effects of government programs on the conversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes and undertake the following measures:

- (a) Identify the adverse effects of government policies and programs on the preservation of agricultural land;
- (b) Consider alternative actions, as appropriate, to lessen such adverse effects; and
- (c) Ensure that the policies and programs of the National Government for the preservation of agricultural lands are practicable and compatible with the development plans of the LGUs.

For purposes of this Act, *agricultural land* refers to land devoted to the cultivation of the soil, planting of crops, growing of fruit trees, raising of livestock, poultry or fish, and other farm activities and practices performed by a farmer in conjunction with farming operations of persons, whether natural or juridical.

SEC. 4. Availability of Restorative Information. – The DAR and the DA shall provide other NGAs, LGUs, organizations, and individuals all the necessary and available information that are pertinent to the restoration, maintenance and improvement of the quantity and quality of agricultural land.

SEC. 5. Review of Existing Policies and Procedures. – The DAR and the DA shall, in coordination with the NGAs and LGUs, conduct a regular review of existing laws and policies, administrative rules and regulations to determine whether the existing provisions are in accordance with the provisions of this Act, and, whenever necessary, develop proposals and take appropriate action to bring government policies, programs and administrative activities into conformity to the purpose of this Act.

SEC. 6. Technical Assistance. – The Secretary of Agrarian Reform and the Secretary of Agriculture and other department secretaries shall, whenever appropriate, provide technical assistance to LGUs which intend to develop policies or programs that regulate the conversion of prime agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

SEC. 7. Agricultural Land Resource Information. – The Secretary of Agrarian Reform and the Secretary of Agriculture shall, in cooperation with other departments and agencies of the government, design and implement educational programs and materials emphasizing the importance of prime agricultural land to the country's well-being and distribute educational material through mass media, schools, organizations, and other government agencies.

SEC. 8. Reportorial Requirements. – The Secretary of Agrarian Reform and the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit a report to the Congress of the Philippines on or before January 31 of every year, through the Committee on Agrarian Reform of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform of the Senate of the Philippines, on the implementation of this Act.

The annual report shall include an update and information on the effects, if any, of government programs and administrative activities relevant to the preservation of agricultural land: results of the reviews on existing policies and procedures required under Section 5 of this Act and action taken to ensure its observance; and statistical data on agricultural land conversion to non-agricultural uses.

SEC. 9. Limitations. – This Act does not authorize the government in any way to regulate the use of private agricultural land, or in any way affect the property rights of owners of such land. None of the provisions or other requirements of this Act shall apply to the acquisition or use of agricultural land for national defense purposes.

SEC. 10. Separability Clause. – If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

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

Approved,