

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7697



Introduced by Representative LEILA M. DE LIMA

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PLANT-BASED HEALTH ADVOCACY PROGRAM
TO BE KNOWN AS “GULAY PARA SA KALUSUGAN AT KALIKASAN
PROGRAM” AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The increasing prevalence of diet-related health issues, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and obesity, associated with premature mortality, underscores the importance of promoting nutrient-rich and plant-based foods.¹ Evidence suggests that a plant-based diet or increased plant consumption leads to numerous health benefits, including reduced body mass index and risk for degenerative diseases, such as hypertension and some types of cancers.²

Moreover, the environmental impact of meat production and the operation of livestock industries contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, increased water consumption, biodiversity loss, and deforestation, necessitating a shift towards more sustainable eating habits.³ Shifting food systems towards plant-based, vegetable-rich diets reduces the demand for animal-based foods. Less meat consumption may result in a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to current dietary patterns in most industrialized countries like the Philippines.

¹ González, N., Marquès, M., Nadal, M., & Domingo, J. L. (2020). Meat consumption: Which are the current global risks? A review of recent (2010-2020) evidences. *Food research international* (Ottawa, Ont.), 137, 109341. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodres.2020.109341>.

² Pistollato, F., & Battino, M. (2014). Role of plant-based diets in the prevention and regression of metabolic syndrome and neurodegenerative diseases. *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, 40(1), pp. 62-81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2014.07.012>.

³ González, N., et.al. Meat consumption: What are the current global risks?

This bill seeks to establish a national vegetable-based health advocacy program to be known as the "*Gulay Para sa Kalusugan at Kalikasan Program*," a national initiative designed to promote healthier eating habits centered on vegetables and plant-based foods, while advancing environmental sustainability and supporting local agriculture across the Philippines. The program addresses critical challenges facing the nation and aligns with broader commitments to public welfare and sustainable development. The proposed bill aims to encourage the consumption of vegetables and other plant-based alternatives over meat by implementing educational campaigns to raise awareness of its benefits, supporting local agricultural production, providing tax incentives for the sale of plant-based meals, and integrating plant-based, nutrition-focused programs into schools and communities.

This bill also recognizes the transformative potential of plant-based diets in promoting individual well-being and advancing national climate goals. Through coordinated efforts led by the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and Department of Agriculture (DA), in coordination with and local government units (LGUs), the "*Gulay Para sa Kalusugan at Kalikasan Program*" shall implement a nationwide advocacy campaign to raise awareness on the environmental and health benefits of plant-based food systems. It shall also provide support for local farmers to increase the production and distribution of affordable produce, including access to crop insurance, low-interest credit, storage facilities, and subsidized farm equipment.

This bill reinforces the State's dedication to building a healthier, more resilient Philippines, ensuring that sustainable practices and community well-being are prioritized for current and future generations. The measure intends to shift Filipino dietary habits toward a more plant-based, vegetable-rich diet to address three key pillars: public health, environmental sustainability, and local agricultural support. By embracing a plant-forward culture, Filipinos can contribute to long-term ecological balance, economic stability of farmers, and improved public health outcomes.

In view of the foregoing, early approval 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:

1 SECTION. 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Gulay Para sa*
2 *Kalusugan at Kalikasan Act.*”

3
4 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State recognizes the complex and
5 intertwining connections of plant-based food production and consumption, including
6 vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes, roots and tubers, sea plants, plant-based milks,
7 and plant-derived alternatives to animal-based products in improving public health,
8 enhancing environmental sustainability, offering a proven and cost-effective pathway
9 for households to reduce food expenditures, and fostering a more harmonious
10 relationship with nature and animals, grounded in principles of sustainability,
11 compassion, and responsible stewardship.

12
13 A diet rich in plant-based foods -- including nutritious plant-based alternatives
14 to traditional meat and egg products (such as plant-based *tocino*, corned beef, *tapa*,
15 sausages, burgers, and plant-derived egg alternatives, like those made from chickpea
16 flour or scrambled tofu) -- offers substantial health benefits, including the absence of
17 significant reduction of dietary cholesterol and lower saturated fat content, while
18 remaining culturally familiar and inclusive of Filipino food traditions. These foods serve
19 as an effective and accessible transition between meat-heavy diets and healthier,
20 more sustainable plant-forward eating patterns that support individual well-being, food
21 security, and ecological balance.

1 Towards this end, the State shall establish a comprehensive national plant-
2 based advocacy program that will not only promote a healthier nation but also pave
3 the way for a more sustainable and eco-friendly Philippines and provide a mechanism
4 to support local farmers.

5
6 SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms shall
7 mean:

8 (a) *Plant-Based Food* refers to food derived primarily from plant sources,
9 including but not limited to vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, roots and tubers,
10 nuts, seeds, sea plants, plant-based milks, and plant-derived alternatives to animal-
11 based products.

12
13 (b) *Plant-Based Meal Option* refers to a meal in which the primary components
14 and protein sources are plant-derived, subject to nutrition standards to be set by the
15 DOH in the Implementing Rules and Regulation.

16
17 (c) *Plant-Based Alternatives* refer to processed or formulated products intended
18 to substitute animal-based foods, subject to nutrition and labeling standards.

19
20 SEC 4. *Gulay Para sa Kalusugan at Kalikasan Program.* – The “*Gulay Para sa*
21 *Kalusugan at Kalikasan Program*,” hereinafter referred to as the Program, is hereby
22 established to promote healthier and more sustainable eating habits by prioritizing the
23 consumption of native vegetables and other plant-based alternatives. This initiative
24 seeks to address pressing public health issues, enhance environmental sustainability,
25 and support local agriculture.

26
27 SEC. 5. *Program Implementation.* – The Department of Health (DOH),
28 Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Social Welfare and Development
29 (DSWD), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and
30 Department of Agriculture (DA) shall be the lead agencies in the implementation of the
31 Program, in coordination with the local government units (LGUs). The Program shall
32 have the following components:

33
34 (a) *Public Health Campaign.* – The DOH shall, in coordination with the LGUs,
35 implement a national nutrition and public health campaign to promote the health
36 benefits of a plant-based diet, including the decreased risks of lifestyle diseases like
37 heart attacks, diabetes, and obesity. This integrated approach to health and nutrition
38 education shall focus on encouraging Filipinos to shift to meals that highlight
39 vegetables and other plant-based alternatives as the main ingredients in their daily
40 meals. Additionally, the DOH shall, in coordination with the Food and Nutrition
41 Research Institute (FNRI), initiate plant-based nutrition studies for healthcare
42 professionals to consider diet as a modality in the prevention and treatment of disease.
43 Orientation training on the objectives and mechanics of the Program shall be held
44 among personnel of the DOH and LGUs.

1
2 (b) *Environment Protection and Sustainability Advocacy Program Supporting*
3 *Plant-Based Food System.* – The DENR shall, in coordination with the LGUs,
4 implement an environmental protection and sustainability advocacy campaign to raise
5 awareness on the environmental benefits of a just plant-based food system,
6 particularly with concern to the issues surrounding greenhouse gas emissions, water
7 consumption, biodiversity loss, and deforestation. The campaign shall underscore the
8 significant role of food production and consumption in driving climate change and
9 promote the adoption of plant-based diets as a practical and sustainable alternative to
10 help mitigate the climate emergency.

11
12 (c) *Support for Local Farmers.* – The DA shall procure the produce necessary
13 for the program directly from local farmers to ensure the continued demand for locally
14 grown produce. The DA shall extend comprehensive support to local farmers to
15 enhance the production and distribution of affordable produce. This shall include
16 assistance in key stages of the agricultural value chain such as production, harvesting,
17 and distribution. The DA shall likewise ensure the provision of adequate storage
18 facilities and facilitate access to crop insurance, transition help for livestock farmers,
19 low-interest credit programs, and subsidized farm equipment to strengthen farm
20 resilience and productivity. Furthermore, the DA shall prioritize agroecological
21 practices and establish comprehensive retraining, financial incentive, and social
22 protection programs, co-designed with farmers, food workers, and local communities,
23 to support small-scale producers in shifting toward plant-based agriculture,
24 agroforestry, or other sustainable livelihoods.

25
26 (d) *Support for Locally Produced Plant-Based Food.* – The DA shall prioritize
27 procurement of locally produced and processed plant-based food, including but not
28 limited to tofu, plant-based protein products, and plant-based milks, from local micro,
29 small, and medium enterprises (SMEs). The DA shall extend comprehensive support
30 to local farmers to undertake value-adding processes to raw agriculture. This shall
31 include support for post-harvest handling, processing, and cold-storage infrastructure.

32
33 (e) *Plant-Based Meal Integration in Public Institutions.* – The DOH shall, in
34 coordination with the DepEd, implement the integration of plant-based food in
35 government institutions, public schools, and public hospitals. Plant-based options
36 consisting primarily of vegetables and other plant-based alternatives as the main
37 ingredient of the dish must be included in the meals that are offered and served in their
38 canteens, cafeterias, and other food stores.

39
40 (f) *“HALAMONDAY” in Public Institutions.* – The DOH shall implement the
41 Halaman Monday, or HALAMONDAY, movement in government institutions, public
42 schools, and public hospitals. Under this movement, only plant-based meals may be
43 sold in canteens and cafeterias of these institutions every Monday of the week.
44

1 SEC. 6. *Community Participation.* – The LGUs shall assist in the efficient and
2 effective implementation of the Program. The DepEd shall endeavor to mobilize
3 community organizations to continue nutrition education outside of the school. The
4 DOH shall encourage the active participation of the private sector, including the
5 parents, youth, farmers groups, fisherfolk groups, indigenous peoples, private
6 corporations, civil society organizations, and other groups. Likewise, the DepEd shall,
7 through the DA, coordinate with the accredited farmers' cooperatives and civil society
8 organizations for their active involvement in the implementation of the Program.

9
10 SEC. 7. *Tax Incentives.* – Any establishment that distributes or sells plant-
11 based meals shall have zero-rated value-added tax (VAT) on its plant-based meal
12 sales. Moreover, donations made to government agencies, including LGUs, for the
13 implementation of the Program are exempt from donor's tax.

14
15 SEC. 8. *Monitoring and Annual Report.* – The DOH shall, in coordination with
16 the DA, DepEd and LGUs, regularly monitor, review, and assess the impact and
17 effectivity of the Program. For this purpose, the agencies shall prepare and submit an
18 annual report on the status of the implementation and budget utilization of the Program
19 to the Office of the President and both Houses of Congress.

20
21 SEC. 9. *Appropriations.* – The funds necessary for the effective implementation
22 of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) under the
23 respective budgets of the implementing agencies.

24
25 SEC. 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from
26 the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education
27 (DepEd), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of
28 Agriculture (DA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the
29 local government units (LGUs) shall, in consultation with other relevant government
30 agencies like the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue
31 (BIR) on the provision on Tax Incentives, jointly promulgate the necessary rules and
32 regulations for the effective implementation of this Act. The implementing rules and
33 regulations shall include specific, measurable, and time-bound minimum targets and
34 standards, including procurement targets and compliance rates of public institutions,
35 for compliance to assess the implementation of the Act.

36
37 SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid
38 or unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force
39 and effect.

40
41 SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees,
42 presidential proclamations, letters of instruction, rules and regulations, or parts thereof
43 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended
44 accordingly.

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SEC. 13. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,