



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 9120

Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez, and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
DECLARING THE PHILIPPINE MAHARLIKA HIGHWAY AS THE
NATIONAL FOOD HIGHWAY, PROVIDING AN INTEGRATED
SYSTEM FOR THE PROCESSING, STORAGE, TRANSPORT,
DISTRIBUTION, AND MONITORING OF FOOD PRODUCTS, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 21, Article II of the 1987 Constitution mandates that the State shall promote comprehensive rural development and agrarian reform. Furthermore, Section 9, Article XIV provides that the State shall promote the growth and generalized spread of technology and ensure that the benefits of science and technology are used to improve the productivity of the country.

The Philippine agricultural sector remains the backbone of the national economy, yet it is burdened by a fragmented and inefficient logistics network. As of 2025, post-harvest losses in the Philippines remain alarmingly high, reaching as much as 33% for mangoes and up to 45% for onions. This is primarily due to inadequate cold storage and the lack of specialized transport corridors. These inefficiencies do not only result in billions of pesos in lost revenue for our farmers but also drive up retail food prices, contributing to the 44% food insecurity rate reported among the population in 2023-2024.

By declaring the Philippine Maharlika Highway as the National Food Highway, this bill institutionalizes a strategic, integrated system for the

processing, storage, and rapid distribution of agricultural goods. This measure transitions our primary road network from a mere transit route into a "living" logistics ecosystem. It not only prioritizes the movement of perishable goods through the establishment of strategic cold-chain hubs in partnership with the private sector, which is already projected to reach 100,000 pallet positions by 2026, but also ensures that food quality is monitored from farm to table. This bill also creates the National Food Highway Management Board to oversee and implement this Act.

Furthermore, this bill introduces the "Philippine Food Loop" concept by integrating the Maharlika Highway with the Western Philippine Nautical Highway. This creates a resilient, multi-modal circuit that ensures the continuous flow of food even when specific regions are hit by typhoons. Designating this highway as a National Food Highway is a critical structural intervention to modernize Filipino agriculture, lower the cost of living, and achieve genuine national food sovereignty.

This measure was also filed during the 19th Congress.

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



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



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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 “*National Food Highway Act*”.

Section 2. *Declaration of the Philippine Maharlika Highway as the National Food Highway.* – The Philippine Maharlika Highway, which stretches from Laoag City in Ilocos Norte to Zamboanga City in Mindanao, is hereby declared as the National Food Highway.

Section 3. *Definition of the National Food Highway.* – The National Food Highway refers to an integrated system for the processing, storage, transport,

distribution, and monitoring of food products along the Philippine Maharlika Highway.

Section 4. *Scope and Coverage of the National Food Highway.* – The National Food Highway shall cover the following:

- a) Food processing and storage facilities located along the Philippine Maharlika Highway;
- b) Transport and distribution systems for food products along the Philippine Maharlika Highway; and,
- c) Food monitoring system to ensure the safety and quality of food products transported and distributed along the Philippine Maharlika Highway.

Section 5. *Roles and Responsibilities of Government Agencies and Stakeholders.* – The following government agencies and stakeholders shall have the following roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the National Food Highway:

- a) Department of Agriculture (DA) shall be responsible for the establishment and management of food processing and storage facilities along the National Food Highway, in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the private sector. The DA shall also provide technical assistance to local farmers and food producers to ensure the quality and safety of food products.
- b) Department of Transportation (DOTr) shall be responsible for the development and implementation of a transport and distribution system for food products along the National Food Highway, in partnership with

the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the private sector. The DOTr shall also ensure the safety and security of food products during transport and distribution.

- c) Department of Health (DOH) shall be responsible for the implementation of a food monitoring system to ensure the safety and quality of food products transported and distributed along the National Food Highway. The DOH shall also provide training and technical assistance to food safety inspectors and other relevant personnel to ensure compliance with food safety standards.
- d) Local Government Units (LGUs) shall provide support and assistance to the implementation of the National Food Highway within their respective jurisdictions, including, but not limited to, the provision of necessary permits, licenses, and regulatory compliance certificates.

Section 6. *Creation of a Food Processing and Storage System.* –The DA, in partnership with the DTI and the private sector, shall establish and manage food processing and storage facilities along the National Food Highway. These facilities shall comply with food safety standards and shall cater to the needs of local farmers and food producers for the processing, storage, and distribution of their products.

Section 7. *Development of a Transport and Distribution System.* – The DOTr, in partnership with the DPWH and the private sector, shall develop and implement a transport and distribution system for food products along the National Food Highway. This system shall ensure the safe and efficient transport and distribution of food products and shall comply with relevant laws and regulations.

Section 8. *Implementation of a Food Monitoring System.* – The DOH shall implement a food monitoring system to ensure the safety and quality of food products transported and distributed along the National Food Highway. This system shall include the following:

- a) Inspection and monitoring of food processing and storage facilities for compliance with food safety standards;
- b) Regular testing and analysis of food products for contaminants and other harmful substances;
- c) Monitoring of transport and distribution systems to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations; and,
- d) Provision of training and technical assistance to food safety inspectors and other relevant personnel.

Section 9. *Creation of the National Food Highway Management Board.*
– There is hereby created a National Food Highway Management Board, which shall be responsible for the implementation of this Act.

Section 10. *Composition of the National Food Highway Management Board.* – The National Food Highway Management Board shall be composed of the following:

- a) Secretary of Agriculture or his/her representative as the Chairperson;
- b) Secretary of Transportation or his/her representative as the Co-Chairperson;
- c) Secretary of Public Works and Highways or his/her representative as a member;
- d) Secretary of Trade and Industry or his/her representative as a member;

- e) Secretary of Health or his/her representative as a member;
- f) Three (3) representatives from the private sector, one each from the farmers' groups, transport industry, and health industry, as members; and,
- g) One (1) representative from the academe or research institutions, as a member.

Section 11. *Powers and Functions of the National Food Highway Management Board.* – The National Food Highway Management Board shall have the following powers and functions:

- a) Develop and implement plans, programs, and projects for the efficient and timely delivery of fresh produce, livestock, and other agricultural products from the farms to the markets and consumers;
- b) Establish and maintain a database of agricultural products, producers, markets, and other relevant information along the National Food Highway;
- c) Coordinate with relevant government agencies and private sector stakeholders for the development and improvement of infrastructure and logistics systems along the National Food Highway, including the construction of cold storage facilities, processing centers, and logistics hubs;
- d) Promote the use of modern technologies and best practices in agriculture and logistics systems to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the agriculture sector;
- e) Develop and implement measures to ensure the safety and quality of agricultural products transported along the National Food Highway;
- f) Monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Act and recommend

- policy and legislative reforms to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the National Food Highway; and,
- g) Perform such other functions as may be necessary to achieve the objectives of this Act.

Section 12. *Expansion of the National Food Highway into the Philippine Food Loop.* – The National Food Highway may be expanded to include the Western Philippine Nautical Highway. Thereafter, the existing National Food highway and the Western Philippine Nautical Highway shall be integrated to comprise the Philippine Food Loop.

This expansion shall take effect upon the completion of the necessary facilities and infrastructure along the Western Philippine Nautical Highway.

Section 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DA, in coordination with the DTI, DOTr, DPWH, DOH, concerned LGUs, and in collaboration with private stakeholders, shall promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to ensure the effective implementation of this Act.

Section 14. *Appropriations.* – The necessary funds for the implementation of this Act shall be sourced from the annual General Appropriations Act and other available funds.

Section 15. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision, or part hereof, is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

Section 16. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation contrary to, or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

Section 17. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,