



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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 9499

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

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT-MANAGED FARM-TO-
TABLE FOOD HUBS IN ALL 5TH AND 6TH CLASS MUNICIPALITIES TO
CONNECT FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK WITH INSTITUTIONAL
BUYERS, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Food security, rural poverty reduction, and agricultural modernization remain among the most pressing development priorities of the Philippines. While the country is endowed with rich agricultural and fishery resources, many small farmers and fisherfolk continue to face structural challenges such as limited market access, weak bargaining power, high post-harvest losses, and dependence on layers of intermediaries that significantly reduce farmgate incomes.

The “Farm-to-Table Food Hubs Act” seeks to address these long-standing inefficiencies by establishing an integrated, localized, and institutionalized system of agricultural aggregation, processing, distribution, and market linkage through the creation of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs (FTFHs) in 5th and 6th class municipalities. These hubs are envisioned as strategic facilities that directly connect local producers with institutional buyers such as government feeding programs, schools, hospitals,

and private sector markets, thereby shortening the supply chain and improving both producer income and consumer access to affordable food.

The bill adopts a whole-of-government and multi-sectoral approach by designating the Department of Agriculture as the lead implementing agency, in coordination with key government institutions such as the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Cooperative Development Authority, among others. It likewise recognizes the critical role of Local Government Units, cooperatives, associations, civil society organizations, and private sector partners in ensuring the effective implementation and sustainability of the program.

The bill further strengthens market access for local producers by encouraging institutional procurement through accredited food hubs, consistent with existing procurement laws and regulations. It also supports the development of value-adding activities, logistics systems, and post-harvest infrastructure to reduce losses and improve competitiveness in agricultural and fishery sectors.

By modernizing agricultural market systems and institutionalizing farm-to-market integration at the local level, the State affirms its commitment to food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable rural development.

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



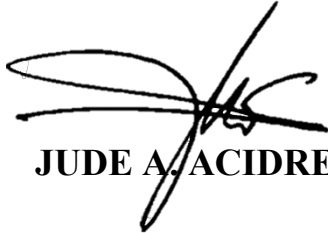
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*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines
in Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. Short Title - This Act shall be known as the “*Farm-to-Table Food Hubs Act.*”

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote food security, inclusive economic growth, rural development, and

sustainable agricultural modernization by strengthening direct market access for local farmers and fisherfolk.

The State recognizes the vital role of farmers, fisherfolk, agrarian reform beneficiaries, rural workers, and local agricultural enterprises in ensuring a stable and sufficient food supply, reducing poverty in rural communities, and supporting national economic resilience. Toward this end, the State shall develop efficient, accessible, and community-based food aggregation and distribution systems that enable local producers to directly supply institutional buyers and consumers.

The State shall likewise promote equitable and transparent agricultural supply chains, reduce excessive intermediary costs, minimize post-harvest losses, improve farmgate prices, and encourage value-adding activities that increase the income and competitiveness of local producers.

Consistent with the principles of local autonomy and participatory governance, the State shall empower Local Government Units (LGUs), in partnership with cooperatives, associations, civil society organizations, and the private sector, to establish and manage Farm-to-Table Food Hubs that strengthen local economies and enhance community food systems.

The State further recognizes the importance of sustainable food systems and shall support innovations in food logistics, storage, processing, marketing, and institutional procurement to improve the efficiency, resilience, and long-term viability of local agricultural and fishery industries.

SEC. 3. Objectives. - This Act seeks to:

- (a) Establish and strengthen LGU-managed or LGU-designated Farm-to-Table Food Hubs in 5th and 6th class municipalities as centralized aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and marketing centers for locally produced agricultural and fishery products;
- (b) Improve direct market access and income opportunities for farmers, fisherfolk, agrarian reform beneficiaries, cooperatives, and other local producers by facilitating sustainable linkages with institutional buyers, local markets, and consumers;
- (c) Promote local food security and supply chain resilience by strengthening community-based food distribution systems and encouraging localized sourcing of agricultural and fishery products;
- (d) Reduce post-harvest losses, excessive intermediary costs, and supply inefficiencies through improved logistics, storage, handling, and market coordination;
- (e) Encourage institutional procurement and long-term market arrangements between local producers and public or private buyers, consistent with existing procurement laws and regulations;
- (f) Support value-adding activities, product quality improvement, food safety compliance, and agricultural competitiveness through technical assistance, training, and infrastructure support; and

(g) Strengthen rural development and local economic growth by promoting inclusive participation of cooperatives, associations, civil society organizations, and private sector partners in the operation and sustainability of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs.

SEC. 4. Definition of Terms. - For purposes of this Act, the following terms are hereby defined:

(a) *Farm-to-Table Food Hub (FTFH)* refers to an LGU-established or LGU-designated aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and marketing center that facilitates the direct linkage of local farmers and fisherfolk with institutional buyers and consumers;

(b) *Local Producers* refer to individual farmers, fisherfolk, agrarian reform beneficiaries, rural workers, and duly registered cooperatives, associations, or community-based organizations engaged in the production of agricultural and fishery products within the municipality or adjacent localities;

(c) *Institutional Buyers* refer to public and private entities purchasing agricultural and fishery products in bulk or on a regular basis, including schools, hospitals, hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, public markets, government feeding programs, and similar establishments;

(d) *Food Safety Standards* refer to the applicable sanitation, handling, storage, transport, and quality control requirements prescribed by the Department of

Agriculture (DA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other relevant government agencies;

(e) *Farmgate Price* refers to the price received by farmers or fisherfolk for their products at the point of production, prior to transportation, trading, or retail distribution;

(f) *5th and 6th Class Municipalities* refer to municipalities classified as such pursuant to existing laws, rules, and regulations issued by the Department of Finance (DOF) or other competent government authorities;

(g) *Cooperative or Association* refers to any duly registered farmers' or fisherfolk cooperative, association, organization, or federation recognized by the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), or other relevant government agencies; and

(h) *Institutional Procurement* refers to the sourcing or purchasing of agricultural and fishery products by government agencies, government-owned or controlled corporations, private institutions, and other entities for feeding programs, commercial operations, or organizational use.

SEC. 5. Lead Implementing Agency and Inter-Agency Coordination. - The Department of Agriculture (DA) shall serve as the lead implementing agency of this Act and shall oversee the planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Farm-to-Table Food Hubs program nationwide. In carrying out its

functions under this Act, the DA shall coordinate with the following agencies and entities:

1. The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), for coordination with Local Government Units (LGUs) and local development planning;
2. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), for market linkage development, enterprise support, and institutional buyer engagement;
3. The Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and other government agencies implementing feeding, nutrition, and institutional procurement programs;
4. The Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), for cooperative organization strengthening and capacity-building support;
5. State universities and colleges (SUCs), technical-vocational institutions, and other relevant entities for training, research, and technical assistance; and
6. Farmers' and fisherfolk cooperatives, associations, civil society organizations, and private sector stakeholders for program implementation and sustainability.

The DA may establish an inter-agency technical working group or coordinating council to ensure harmonized implementation of this Act and to facilitate policy coordination, capacity-building, and market integration initiatives.

The DA shall develop and maintain a national monitoring and information system for Farm-to-Table Food Hubs, including data on production volume, market

transactions, participating producers, institutional procurement, and other relevant indicators necessary for program assessment and policy development.

SEC. 6. Establishment of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs. -

(a) Subject to feasibility assessments and the availability of funds, every 5th and 6th class municipality shall, individually or jointly with adjacent municipalities, establish, designate, or operationalize at least one Farm-to-Table Food Hub (FTFH) to serve as an aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and marketing center for locally produced agricultural and fishery products.

(b) Existing public markets, trading posts, agricultural terminals, warehouses, cold storage facilities, or other suitable government-owned facilities may be upgraded, designated, or integrated as Farm-to-Table Food Hubs for purposes of this Act.

(c) Each FTFH shall:

1. Serve as a centralized collection and consolidation point for agricultural and fishery products sourced from local producers;
2. Facilitate post-harvest handling and related activities, including cleaning, sorting, grading, packaging, labeling, storage, and basic processing to maintain product quality and reduce losses;
3. Facilitate direct marketing, negotiated supply agreements, institutional procurement arrangements, and other market linkage activities between local producers and institutional buyers;
4. Support food safety compliance, pricing transparency, and efficient logistics and distribution systems.

(d) The Department of Agriculture (DA), in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and other relevant agencies, shall prescribe minimum standards and operational guidelines for the establishment, accreditation, management, and operation of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs to ensure food safety, logistical efficiency, accessibility, and long-term sustainability.

SEC. 7. Role of Local Government Units. - The Local Government Units (LGUs) shall:

1. Identify, provide, or facilitate access to land, facilities, utilities, and other infrastructure necessary for the establishment and operation of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs;
2. Maintain an updated registry of local farmers, fisherfolk, cooperatives, associations, agrarian reform beneficiaries, and other eligible producers within their jurisdiction;
3. Facilitate coordination between local producers and institutional buyers to ensure stable and timely supply arrangements;
4. Provide administrative, technical, and logistical support necessary for the effective operation and sustainability of the food hubs.

Preference shall be given to duly registered farmers' and fisherfolk cooperatives, associations, and community-based organizations in the management, operation, and administration of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs, subject to applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

The LGUs may enter into partnerships, joint ventures, or other cooperative arrangements with cooperatives, associations, accredited non-government organizations, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and private enterprises for the development, operation, financing, and sustainability of the food hubs.

The LGUs shall encourage the participation of local producers, cooperatives, and community stakeholders in planning and decision-making processes related to the operation and management of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs.

SEC. 8. Institutional Procurement and Market Linkages. -

(a) Government agencies, government-owned or controlled corporations (GOCCs), state universities and colleges (SUCs), public hospitals, schools, feeding programs, and other government institutions procuring agricultural and fishery products shall, whenever practicable and consistent with existing procurement laws, rules, and regulations, prioritize the sourcing of locally produced agricultural and fishery products through accredited Farm-to-Table Food Hubs established under this Act.

(b) Local Government Units (LGUs) are encouraged to adopt local procurement policies and market linkage programs that support farmers, fisherfolk, cooperatives, and associations participating in Farm-to-Table Food Hubs, subject to existing laws and regulations.

(c) The Department of Agriculture (DA), in coordination with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the Government Procurement Policy Board

(GPPB), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and other relevant agencies, shall formulate guidelines to facilitate institutional procurement arrangements, community-based sourcing mechanisms, negotiated procurement modalities where authorized by law, and simplified accreditation procedures for eligible local producers and cooperatives.

(d) The DA and DTI shall assist Farm-to-Table Food Hubs, cooperatives, and participating producers in developing long-term supply agreements, market contracts, pricing transparency mechanisms, and buyer-seller matching programs with public and private institutional buyers.

(e) Nothing in this Act shall be construed to exempt any procuring entity from compliance with applicable procurement, auditing, food safety, and competition laws and regulations.

SEC. 9. Accreditation, Food Safety, and Quality Standards. -

(a) All Farm-to-Table Food Hubs established or designated under this Act shall comply with applicable food safety, sanitation, quality assurance, post-harvest handling, storage, transport, and traceability standards prescribed by the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Department of Health (DOH), and other relevant government agencies.

(b) The DA, in coordination with the FDA, DTI, DILG, and other concerned agencies, shall establish an accreditation system for Farm-to-Table Food Hubs,

participating cooperatives, associations, and producers to ensure compliance with operational, food safety, and product quality standards.

(c) Accreditation standards shall include, but shall not be limited to:

1. Proper sanitation and hygiene practices;
2. Appropriate storage, cold chain, and transport systems where necessary;
3. Product grading, packaging, labeling, and traceability measures;
4. Compliance with applicable environmental and waste management regulations;
5. Record-keeping and inventory management systems; and
6. Other standards necessary to ensure product quality, consumer protection, and efficient market operations.

(d) The DA shall provide technical assistance, training, and capacity-building programs to assist Local Government Units (LGUs), cooperatives, associations, and participating producers in complying with accreditation and food safety requirements.

(e) No Farm-to-Table Food Hub shall engage in institutional procurement arrangements under this Act unless duly accredited in accordance with the standards and procedures established by the DA.

(f) The DA may periodically inspect and evaluate Farm-to-Table Food Hubs and may suspend or revoke accreditation for substantial noncompliance with the standards prescribed under this Act and its implementing rules and regulations.

SEC. 10. Digital Market Systems and Information Platform. -

(a) The Department of Agriculture (DA), in coordination with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Local Government Units (LGUs), and other relevant agencies, shall develop, establish, or support digital market systems and information platforms for Farm-to-Table Food Hubs established under this Act.

(b) The digital market systems may include, but shall not be limited to:

1. Product listing and inventory management systems;
2. Market matching platforms connecting producers, cooperatives, food hubs, institutional buyers, and consumers;
3. Price monitoring and market information services;
4. Supply forecasting and demand coordination mechanisms;
5. Digital ordering, scheduling, and logistics coordination systems;
6. Traceability and quality assurance monitoring systems; and
7. Electronic record-keeping and data management systems for operational and reporting purposes.

(c) The DA and DICT shall promote accessible, user-friendly, and low-cost digital technologies appropriate for rural communities and small-scale producers, including mobile-based platforms and offline-compatible systems where practicable.

(d) LGUs and Farm-to-Table Food Hubs shall encourage the registration and participation of local producers, cooperatives, and institutional buyers in the digital market systems established under this Act.

(e) The DA, in coordination with concerned agencies, shall provide capacity-building programs, technical assistance, and digital literacy training to participating LGUs, cooperatives, associations, and local producers to support the effective use of digital market systems.

(f) All data collection and processing activities conducted pursuant to this Act shall comply with applicable data privacy, cybersecurity, and information management laws, rules, and regulations.

SEC. 11. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting. -

(a) The Department of Agriculture (DA) shall establish and implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for all Farm-to-Table Food Hubs established under this Act.

(b) The M&E system shall track and assess, among others, the following indicators:

1. Volume and value of agricultural and fishery products consolidated, processed, and distributed through Farm-to-Table Food Hubs;
2. Income levels and farmgate price improvements of participating farmers, fisherfolk, and cooperatives;
3. Reduction in post-harvest losses attributable to food hub operations;

4. Number and type of institutional buyers engaged and volume of procurement facilitated through the hubs;
5. Operational efficiency and financial sustainability of Food Hubs;
6. Participation rates of local producers, cooperatives, and associations; and
7. Compliance with food safety, accreditation, and quality standards.

(c) All LGUs operating Farm-to-Table Food Hubs shall submit regular reports to the DA in accordance with guidelines to be issued in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), including data on operations, procurement activities, financial performance, and program outcomes.

(d) The DA shall prepare and submit an annual consolidated report to the President of the Philippines, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Congress of the Philippines, detailing the implementation status, accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations for the improvement of the program.

(e) The DA shall maintain a centralized database of all Farm-to-Table Food Hubs, participating producers, accredited cooperatives, and institutional buyers, which shall be updated regularly and used as a basis for policy formulation and program improvement.

(f) The Commission on Audit (COA) shall have access to all records, reports, and databases relevant to the implementation of this Act for audit and evaluation purposes in accordance with existing laws and regulations.

SEC. 12. Appropriations and Funding Sources. -

(a) The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Department of Agriculture (DA), subject to availability of funds and the usual budgeting processes under existing laws.

(b) Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation, expansion, and maintenance of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) under the budget of the Department of Agriculture and other concerned implementing agencies.

(c) In addition to the annual appropriations provided under paragraphs (a) and (b), the implementation of this Act may be supported through the following funding sources, subject to applicable laws, rules, and regulations:

1. Counterpart funding from Local Government Units (LGUs) for the establishment, upgrading, operation, or maintenance of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs;
2. Grants, subsidies, or assistance from national government programs, including agricultural modernization, rural development, and food security programs;
3. Official Development Assistance (ODA) from foreign governments, international organizations, and development partners;
4. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), joint ventures, and other lawful private sector participation arrangements for infrastructure, logistics, storage, and related facilities;

5. Loans, grants, or technical assistance from government financial institutions, subject to applicable laws and credit policies; and
6. Donations, endowments, and other lawful contributions from private entities and civil society organizations, subject to government accounting and auditing rules.

(d) The Department of Agriculture, in coordination with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and concerned agencies, shall ensure the efficient allocation and utilization of funds for the establishment, operation, and sustainability of Farm-to-Table Food Hubs, giving priority to 5th and 6th class municipalities and other underserved areas.

(e) All funds herein appropriated or otherwise made available shall be used exclusively for the purposes of this Act and shall be subject to existing budgeting, accounting, auditing, and procurement laws, rules, and regulations.

SEC. 13. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within one hundred twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DA, in consultation with the DILG, DTI, farmer and fisherfolk organizations, and LGU leagues, shall formulate the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 14. Separability Clause. - If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 15. Repealing Clause. - All laws, executive orders, issuances, decrees, rules and regulations inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are deemed amended, modified or repealed accordingly.

SEC. 16. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,