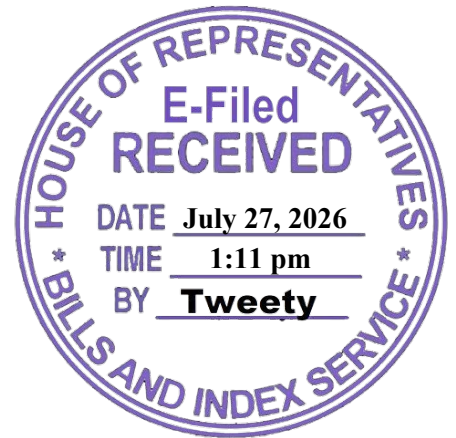




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10250



Introduced by Representative Ma. Cristina Talavera Lopez

AN ACT MANDATING THE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS ROOT CROPS INTO THE NATIONAL FEEDING PROGRAM FOR UNDERNOURISHED CHILDREN IN PUBLIC DAY CARE, KINDERGARTEN AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11037, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE “MASUSTANSYANG PAGKAIN PARA SA BATANG PILIPINO ACT,” PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Malnutrition among Filipino children has long been one of the most persistent challenges to the Philippine public health system. Through Republic Act No. 11037, or the “*Masustansyang Pagkain Para sa Batang Pilipino Act*,” the government established the National Feeding Program, which addresses this concern by providing fortified meals to undernourished children in public day care centers and elementary schools. However, one category of nutrient-dense food has remained conspicuously absent from its implementing menus: **indigenous root crops**.

The Philippines is home to a rich diversity of indigenous root crops such as *kamote*, *gabi*, *ube*, and *kamoteng kahoy*, which have long served as traditional sources of carbohydrates, dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals. These crops are climate-resilient, adaptable to a wide range of growing conditions, and cultivated by thousands of smallholder farmers across the country. Despite their nutritional and economic value, indigenous root crops remain underutilized in government feeding programs, representing a missed opportunity to strengthen the nutritional content of the program's menus while supporting local agriculture.

This measure seeks to amend Republic Act No. 11037 by mandating the inclusion of indigenous root crops and root crop-based products in the cycle menus of the National Feeding Program, subject to regional availability and cultural appropriateness. The bill further promotes the cultivation of indigenous root crops through the *Gulayan sa Paaralan Program* and encourages the prioritization of accredited root crop farmers' cooperatives and enterprises in the procurement of feeding program requirements.

By linking child nutrition initiatives with local agricultural development, this proposed measure advances the objectives of food security, sustainable agriculture, rural economic development, and improved nutrition outcomes for Filipino children. This bill introduces a specific, evidence-based, culturally grounded mandate that the law's current text does not contain—one that draws on a food source already familiar to, and grown by, Filipino communities nationwide.

The passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



MA. CRISTINA TALAVERA LOPEZ
Representative, ALONA Party List



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

SECTION 1. A new paragraph (f) is hereby inserted in Section 3 of Republic Act No. 11037 to read as follows:

Section 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms shall be understood to mean as follows, to wit:

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(f) INDIGENOUS ROOT CROPS REFER TO TUBEROUS STAPLE CROPS LONG CULTIVATED IN THE PHILIPPINES, INCLUDING *KAMOTE, GABI, UBE, KAMOTENG KAHoy*, AND OTHER NATIVE VARIETIES IDENTIFIED AS SUCH BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (DA) OR THE PHILIPPINE ROOT CROPS RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER.

SECTION 2. Sections 4(a), 4(b), and 4(f) of Republic Act No. 11037 is hereby amended to read as follows:

“Section 4. *National Feeding Program.* – The National Feeding Program, hereinafter referred to as the Program, is hereby established to address undernutrition among Filipino children.

The Program shall have the following components and coverage:

“(a) Supplemental Feeding Program for Day Care Children. – The DSWD, in coordination with the LGUs concerned, shall implement a supplemental feeding program for under nourished children with ages three (3) to five years. The program shall be administered in a day care centers or in any other facility which can be used for such purpose: Provided, That the Program shall include the provision of at least one (1) fortified meal for a period of not less than one hundred twenty (120) days in a year: Provided, further, That in the preparation of fortified meals, the DSWD shall work in collaboration with recognized parents’ organizations; **PROVIDED FINALLY, THAT THE CYCLE MENU PREPARED FOR THIS PURPOSE SHALL INCLUDE INDIGENOUS ROOT CROPS OR ROOT CROP-BASED PRODUCTS AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK, SUBJECT TO REGIONAL AVAILABILITY AND CULTURAL APPROPRIATENESS, AS DETERMINED BY THE DSWD IN COORDINATION WITH THE DA AND THE FOOD AND NUTRITION RESEARCH INSTITUTE (FNRI);**

(b) School-Based Feeding Program. – The DepED shall implement a school-based feeding program for undernourished public school children from kindergarten to grade six (6): *Provided*, That the Program shall include the provision of at least one (1) fortified meal to all undernourished public elementary school children for a period of not less than one hundred twenty (120) days in a year; **PROVIDED FURTHER, THAT THE CYCLE MENU PREPARED FOR THIS PURPOSE SHALL INCLUDE INDIGENOUS ROOT CROPS OR ROOT CROP-BASED PRODUCTS AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK, SUBJECT TO REGIONAL AVAILABILITY AND CULTURAL APPROPRIATENESS, AS DETERMINED BY THE DEPED IN COORDINATION WITH THE DA AND THE FNRI.”**

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(f) *Gulalayan sa Paaralan.* – The NGAs shall encourage their respective component units to devote a portion of their land

or space for the cultivation of vegetables and other nutrient-rich plants as identified by the NNC; **PROVIDED, THAT NOT LESS THAN ONE-FOURTH (1/4) OF THE AREA CULTIVATED UNDER THIS COMPONENT SHALL BE DEVOTED, WHERE PRACTICABLE, TO INDIGENOUS ROOT CROPS, TO SUPPORT BOTH THE CYCLE MENU REQUIREMENT UNDER SECTION 4(A) AND (B) OF THIS ACT AND THE NUTRITION EDUCATION OBJECTIVES OF SECTION 4(H) HEREOF;** Provided, **FURTHER**, That component units lacking in, land shall adopt modern gardening technologies with the assistance of the DA, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the city or municipal agricultural officers. Parents shall also be encourage to maintain a similar program in their own backyards

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SECTION 3. Section 12 of Republic Act No. 11037 is hereby amended to read as follows:

“Section 12. Procurement of Goods and Services. – The Department of Budget and Management, Government Procurement Policy Board, and the Commission on Audit, in consultation with the NGAs, are hereby mandated to specifically establish and promulgate a community-based mode of procurement, liquidation and audit that will ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the Program; **PROVIDED, THAT IN PROCURING INDIGENOUS ROOT CROPS OR ROOT CROP-BASED PRODUCTS FOR THE NATIONAL FEEDING PROGRAM, THE DEPED AND THE DSWD SHALL GIVE PRIORITY TO ACCREDITED ROOT CROP FARMERS’ COOPERATIVES AND ENTERPRISES;** Provided, **FURTHER**, That this provision shall apply solely to the implementation of the Program by the NGAs and LGUs concerned.

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SECTION 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The NGAs in consultation with the NCC, the FNRI, the DOH, the DA, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and concerned LGUs, and such other relevant government agencies, nongovernment organizations, and development partners shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations pertinent to the provisions of this Act within ninety (90) days after the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 5. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any section or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions which are not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 6. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, or issuances, or any part thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 7. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,