

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 616



Introduced by Hon. Christopher V.P. de Venecia

**AN ACT PROMOTING INTEGRATED URBAN AGRICULTURE IN URBAN AREAS
NATIONWIDE TO ADDRESS FOOD SECURITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Agriculture is one of the fundamental aspects of the Philippine economy. According to 2018 Agriculture Indicators System publication of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) entitled *Population and Labor Force*, 25.4% of the country's workforce are employed in agriculture. While farming has always been associated with rural areas and done on vast farmlands, farming can also be done in metropolitan areas and cities. This practice is called Urban Agriculture which, as defined in this Act, refers to the development paradigm that encompasses principles, management technologies, and the policies relating to the practice and application of agricultural production of food and goods in urban areas.

Urban agriculture is already being practiced in many countries in the world, and, in fact, has been practiced since 3500 BC. At present, there has been a considerable interest in urban agriculture all over the world due to concerns on environment degradation, decreased food production, and increasing population. Additionally, urban agriculture contributes to the health of the city ecosystem, creates a more aesthetic appeal, and more importantly, reduces the carbon footprint by fixing carbon through photosynthesis. This proposed measure seeks to promote integrated urban agriculture development in all metropolitan areas nationwide ultimately to address food security concerns.

Studies show that in order to address the continuing rise of the need for food security, a sustainable alternative method of growing food in addition to the conventional rural agricultural practice needs to be in place. One of the solutions in addressing this issue is through urban agriculture which will not only improve the ecosystem of urban areas, but will also provide residents with a sufficient, safe, and nutritious food source. Furthermore, urban agriculture will also help reduce poverty by increasing household income through saving and income generation.

In addition to the health and environmental aspects urban agriculture brings, developing green spaces in urban communities fosters a healthy and positive sense of belongingness up to the

household level. Realizing the process of how foods from farm to table cultivates appreciation of the ordinary citizen, more specifically, the youth, on the plight of our farmers to bring fresh and high-quality products for the Filipino people which develops their interest and love for contemporary farming.

It is perceived that in fifty years, the world population will double in number. As a result, demand for food will also increase together with the need for more lands and better agricultural practices. A proactive and sustainable method of food production would be most beneficial to address these challenges, thus, constituting the need for an integrated urban agriculture system in the country.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christopher V.P. De Venecia', written in a cursive style.

REP. CHRISTOPHER V.P. DE VENECIA
Fourth District, Pangasinan

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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 ‘Integrated Urban Agriculture Act.’

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. The State shall promote and protect the fundamental right of every person to adequate food and freedom from hunger. Recognizing the challenges to food security and ecological balance in urban areas, the State shall optimize the use and productivity of urban land resources and spaces to support sufficient and sustainable food production. Towards this end, the State shall promote the development of modern, cost-effective, space-efficient, and environmentally-safe agriculture technologies in urban areas to contribute in achieving sustainable food production and food security, promoting agro-ecology, ensuring public and mental health and thus improving the quality of life of urban populations. In doing so, the state shall prioritize the conservation of the country’s genetic biodiversity, and endemic and heirloom flora and fauna as a strategy for climate change adaptation, mitigation and resiliency.

Accordingly, the State shall ensure the integration of principles, strategies and technologies on urban agriculture in urban planning, and instill a love of farming among urban dwellers most especially the youth.

SEC. 3. Definition of Terms. As used in this Act:

- a. *Agro-ecology* refers to a scientific discipline and set of practices that studies how different components of the agroecosystem interact, and seeks sustainable farming systems that optimize and stabilize yields. it applies ecological concepts and principles to manage interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment for food security and nutrition;

- b. **Community Gardens** refer to any piece of land cultivated by group of people using either individual or shared plots on public or private land with the consent of the owner, to produce edibles, such as herbs, vegetables, fruits or ornamentals, as a form of sustainable land use system for economic and societal development. community gardens may be found in neighborhoods and schools, or connected to institutions such as hospitals or located on the grounds or roofs of shared housing, such as, but not limited to, tenements and apartment complexes;

- c. **Food Forest Gardening** refers to multi-layered crop farming or a low maintenance and sustainable method of food production that is based on woodland ecosystems, incorporating fruit and nut trees, shrubs, herbs, vines, and perennial vegetables which yields are directly useful to humans. it also refers to a system of agro-forestry that creates diverse, productive, healthy, ecologically-sound and sustainable system of land use;

- d. **Food security** refers to a situation wherein all people have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food, at all times, to maintain a healthy and active life;

- e. **Food system** refers to a complex web of activities involving the production, processing, transport, and consumption of food. Issues concerning the food system include the governance and economics of food production, its sustainability, the degree to which we waste food, how food production affects the natural environment and the impact of food on individual and population health;

- f. **Good Agricultural Practices** refer to the practices that address environmental, economic, and social sustainability for on-farm processes, and which result in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products;

- g. **Idle lands** refer to non-agricultural lands in urban and urbanizable areas on which no improvements have been made by the owner, as certified by the city, municipal or provincial assessor. Idle government lands refer to lands owned by any government entity that have been idle and have not been used for the purpose for which they have been reserved for the past 10 years;

- h. **Indoor farming** refers to controlled environment agriculture which aims to optimize plant growth to house vertical farming techniques in greenhouses, warehouses, abandoned buildings, shipping containers, tunnels, skyscrapers and modern buildings using soilless farming techniques such as hydroponics, aquaponics, and aeroponics;

- i. ***Integrated urban agriculture*** refers to the development paradigm that encompasses principles, management technologies, and the policies relating to the practice and application of agricultural and fisheries production of food and goods in urban areas;
- j. ***Peri-urban areas*** refer to areas where urban and rural features and processes meet, interact and intertwine, usually located between city and countryside. Peri-urban areas are semi-dense clusters with a density of at least 300 inhabitants per square kilometer and a population of 5,000 or more but are neither contiguous with nor within two (2) kilometers of an urban area;
- k. ***Protected agriculture*** refers to the use of technologies that enclose crops to harvest higher yields, safer, cleaner and of better quality even out of season by modifying the natural environment and protect crop against the elements (high temperature, excessive rainfall, humidity, wind, birds, insects, etc.); also known as greenhouse agriculture;
- l. ***Social preparation*** refers to the series of activities designed to prepare the underprivileged and homeless families to cope with the changes brought about by government development projects;
- m. ***Soilless agriculture*** refers to the technologies proving that soil is not crucial to grow plants; a method when plants do not rely on the soil as a source of nutrients and water; common methods are hydroponics, aquaponics and aeroponics;
- n. ***Urban areas*** shall refer to any of the following, per PSA Resolution No. 01, Series of 2017-098:
- If a barangay has a population size of 5,000 or more;
 - If a barangay has at least one establishment with a minimum of 100 employees;
 - If a barangay has 5 or more establishments with a minimum of 0 employee, and 5 or more facilities within the two-kilometer radius from the barangay hall;
- o. ***Urban planning*** refers to multi-disciplinary art and science of analyzing, specifying, clarifying, harmonizing, managing and regulating the use and development of land and water resources, in relation to their environs, for the development of sustainable communities and ecosystems in urban and urbanizable areas;
- p. ***Urbanizable areas*** refer to sites and lands which, considering the present characteristics and prevailing conditions, display marked and great potential of becoming urban areas within the period of five (5) years; and

- q. **Vertical farming** refers to the methods or practices of increasing the number of plants grown in an area by growing crops in vertically stacked layers; generally done in greenhouses, warehouses, abandoned buildings, shipping containers, tunnels, skyscrapers and modern buildings using soilless farming techniques such as hydroponics, aquaponics or aeroponics.

SEC. 4. Coverage. This Act shall cover idle or abandoned government or private lands, buildings, shipping containers, subdivisions/villages, public housing, open spaces in all urban, peri-urban and urbanizable areas in the country; and all available land resources and buildings in schools, state or private universities and colleges, military camps suitable for growing crops and raising poultry, livestock and aquaculture: *Provided, That*, the utilization of idle lands for urban agriculture purposes shall not be used as grounds for the eviction of informal settler families occupying said lands; *Provided further That*, the raising of poultry and livestock shall be limited to urbanizable areas and all livestock raising shall be subject to health and safety standards and regulations issued by the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and other relevant government agencies.

SEC. 5. Urban Farming. Local government units (LGUs) shall identify and develop idle government and/or private lands and buildings, without prejudice to the rights of owners of private lands, buildings and open spaces, within their jurisdiction, for full or partial conversion solely to community gardens, food forest gardens, indoor farms and/or vertical farms to support food security and community nutrition; *Provided, That*, food forest gardens and urban farms adopting agro-ecological principles shall be the priority form of urban agriculture wherever applicable and feasible; *Provided further, That*, spaces allocated for urban agriculture and aquaculture shall not be prime lots. All LGUs, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Cooperative Development Authority, shall capacitate neighborhood associations and people's organizations, and facilitate the organization and registration of community-based cooperatives, to undertake community gardening and establish community farmers' markets.

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit or extinguish the rights of owners to their private lands and spaces without their consent or without their receipt of just compensation, in case of expropriation.

The Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) shall ensure that the design and development of subdivision, condominium and public housing projects have provisions for adequate spaces for community gardens, food forest gardens, greenhouse agriculture, roof gardens, indoor farms and/or vertical farms. Towards this end, the DHSUD, in coordination with the DA, shall capacitate homeowners' association to undertake community gardening and/or vertical farming.

The DA shall provide the necessary technical assistance and support services, including the provision of seeds and seedlings and gardening tools, access to loans from government financial institutions, and training-workshop to capacitate various stakeholders, and the design, establishment, promotion and regulation of indoor and vertical farming machineries and facilities to ensure the full productivity of community gardens, school gardens, food forest gardens,

greenhouse farms, roof gardens, and indoor and vertical farms. The DA shall ensure that the provision of technical assistance is consistent with Philippine Good Agricultural Practices (PHILGAP) or a set of standards and regulations ensuring food quality and safety, facilitation of market access, establishment of community farmers' markets and reduction in non-compliance with issuances regarding permitted pesticides and other contamination hazards, as provided under Republic Act No. 10611 or the Food Safety Act of 2013 and relevant laws.

The DA, in coordination with the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Energy, and the Department Of Public Works And Highways shall also undertake the establishment of rainwater harvesting facilities in compliance with Republic Act No. 6716, renewable energy systems and solid waste management systems, including waste-to-energy facilities, to provide sustainable supply of water, energy and compost to community gardens, food forest gardens and urban farms.

SEC. 6. Urban Agriculture and Aquaculture in Urban Planning. The DHSUD, in coordination with the DA, shall ensure the integration of concepts and principles of urban agriculture and its relationship to other processes in the food system in urban planning. Accordingly, the DHSUD and DA shall promote sustainable, smart and organic food production systems that harness the benefits of new technologies and methods in soil, nutrient, water and energy management, such as composting, rainwater harvesting and utilization of renewable energy. The DHSUD shall also ensure the rational use of land resources in urban planning to promote sustainable peri-urban interface, as well as for the spatial requirements of supply chain management and logistics to strengthen urban-rural foodshed linkages.

Towards these ends, the DHSUD shall promulgate guidelines for the harmonization of Comprehensive Land Use Plans and zoning ordinances of local government units with urban agriculture policies, frameworks, strategies and standards.

All LGUs are hereby mandated to incorporate urban agricultural development in their respective Annual Development Plans, Annual Investment Plans, Physical Framework Plans, and Development Master Plans including the hiring of agriculturists and agricultural and biosystems engineers to carry out urban agriculture programs.

Likewise, LGUs, with the assistance of the DA, Department of Interior and Local Government and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), shall establish and maintain a digital information system to facilitate the efficient collection, management and analysis of urban food system, agriculture and nutrition data, as well as monitoring and evaluation of LGU performance vis-à-vis the food system, agriculture and nutrition targets, to inform local planning, policy-making and programming, and to ensure open public access to data.

SEC. 7. Urban Agriculture/ Aquaculture Education. The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Educations (CHED), with the technical assistance of the DA, shall integrate urban agriculture in the academic curriculum for elementary, secondary and tertiary level students of both public and private academic institutions offering courses in Agriculture, Practical Arts, Home Economics and other subjects related to agriculture. A course

curriculum on gardening shall be developed and included in the regular curriculum of elementary and secondary education. Instructional materials shall likewise be developed utilizing advanced techniques of crop and food animal production, urban agriculture and farming, and cultivating awareness and appreciation of genetic biodiversity, heirloom and endemic flora and fauna, and agro-ecological principles.

The DepEd, with the assistance of the DA, shall strengthen the implementation of *Gulayan sa Paaralan* Program in elementary and secondary schools. The establishment of school gardens shall be encouraged to ensure continuous supply of vegetables for school feeding, in accordance with Republic Act No. 11037, otherwise known as the “*Masustansyang Pagkain Para sa Batang Pilipino Act*”.

For universities and colleges, urban agriculture shall form part of the required period of time spent by students in the National Service Training Program.

A plan for the utilization or maximization of space occupied by schools shall be formulated specifically for urban agriculture purposes.

SEC. 8. Urban Agriculture Awareness Campaign. The DILG, The National Nutrition Council, and LGUs are mandated to formulate policies on urban farming in consonance with the provisions of this Act and be at the forefront of community-based education and awareness campaigns. For this purpose, LGUs shall mobilize existing structures and local bodies such as the provincial, city and municipal agricultural offices, the provincial, city, municipal and barangay agriculture and fishery councils, the barangay, municipal, city and provincial federation of *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK) and the youth sector represented in any local special body under LGUs.

The Department of Social Work and Development shall integrate urban agriculture and community nutrition in the seminar-workshops and training programs to educate qualified household-beneficiaries of the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps).

SEC. 9. Research and Development. The DA and the DOST, as well as relevant state universities, government research and development institutions, and the private sector, shall intensify research on methods and technologies to support urban agriculture, including the development and operation of sustainable demonstration urban community gardens, food forest gardens, greenhouse, indoor, roof and vertical farms.

SEC. 10. Incentives. Compliance by subdivision and condominium developers and/or owners with Section 5 of this Act may qualify them for incentives provided for under Republic Act No. 10771, otherwise known as the “Philippine Green Jobs Act of 2016”, subject to the rules and regulations promulgated by the Department of Finance and the DHSUD.

The commitment and performance of LGUs in the implementation of this Act shall be included in the criteria for the awarding of the Seal of Good Local Governance and the provision of incentives, provided for under Republic Act No. 11292, otherwise known as “The Seal of Good Local Governance Act of 2019.”

Loans extended by government and private banks to participating individuals, corporations and partnerships shall be treated as compliance to Republic Act No. 10000, otherwise known as “The Agri-Agra Reform Credit Act of 2009”.

SEC. 11. Inter-Agency Coordination. There is hereby established a National Convergence Program on Urban Agriculture and Aquaculture. The DA is hereby designated as the Lead Implementing Agency and the Secretariat of the Convergence Program. The following agencies shall perform duties and responsibilities in order to develop and sustain concerted action to promote urban agriculture:

- a. The DA shall provide technical assistance and support services to LGUs, community-based cooperatives, homeowners’ associations, neighborhood associations and people’s organizations to ensure the viability and cost-effectiveness of urban agriculture projects and through its Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering (BAFE), shall provide the design, specifications, establishment strategies, promotion, regulation and technical assistance in the fabrication of production models of indoor farming, vertical farming and other urban agriculture machineries, equipment and facilities;
- b. The DHSUD shall encourage the integration of urban agriculture principles, policies, strategies, frameworks and standards in the design and development of subdivisions and condominium projects. The DHSUD shall ensure such integration in public housing projects and in the preparation or updating of development and investment plans, CLUPs and zoning ordinances of LGUs. The DHSUD shall also promulgate the necessary rules and monitor compliance therewith. The DHSUD shall provide assistance to homeowners’ associations to strengthen their capacity to undertake urban agriculture or aquaculture projects in their neighborhoods and communities
- c. The DILG shall monitor the compliance of LGUs with the provisions of this Act in order to determine their qualification for incentives provided for under Republic Act No. 11292;
- d. The DepEd shall integrate the principles and practice of urban agriculture using advanced crop production techniques like soilless agriculture, indoor farming or vertical farming to include modern methods of irrigation and automated systems into primary and secondary education curricula, including the establishment of school gardens under the *Gulayan sa Paaralan* Program. DepEd shall ensure the adequate capacity building programs such as training-workshop, hands-on training or immersion program of teachers and the development of appropriate instructional materials such as educational video and manual for this purpose;

- e. The DOST shall conduct research on modern, cost-effective methods and technologies to support urban agricultural production, as well as post-harvest handling of surplus produce from urban agriculture projects;
- f. The DTI shall provide technical assistance in processing and packaging of surplus produce from urban agriculture and aquaculture projects and ensure access of local government units, cooperatives, homeowners' associations, and people's organizations to markets;
- g. The DOF shall administer the grant of incentives under Section 10 of this Act to qualified persons based on their compliance to Section 5 of this Act;
- h. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) shall ensure adequate funding for the functions and programs provided for by under this Act;
- i. The CHED shall develop and implement curriculum on capacity building programs such as training-workshop, hands-on training or immersion program and related standards and instructional materials in support of urban agriculture;
- j. The DPWH in compliance with RA 6716 is mandated to undertake construction of water wells, rainwater collectors, development of springs and rehabilitation of existing water wells in all barangays in the Philippines, taking into consideration the population, hydrologic conditions, costs of project development and operations, financial and economic factors and institutional arrangements.
- k. The National Nutrition Council and The Food and Nutrition Research Institute shall assist the DepEd in identifying the crops to be cultivated in schools' farms and in preparing nutritious food, pursuant to standardized menus to ensure child nutrition provided for under Republic Act No. 11037, and in developing the modules on nutrition.
- l. The CDA shall provide guidance and assistance to LGUs in the development of cooperatives within their jurisdiction;
- m. The Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor shall undertake social preparation activities to encourage participation and empower poor and underprivileged communities from the preparation and planning to implementation and evaluation of urban development projects; and,

- n. The Philippine Information Agency shall undertake a nationwide information campaign, utilizing all forms of media, to raise awareness and encourage participation of the public in the implementation of this Act, in close coordination with other cultural agencies such as the National Commission for Culture and Arts (NCCA) and the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP)
- o. The Council for the Welfare of Children shall integrate urban agriculture in the formulation of programs and measures providing dynamic leadership in ensuring a child-friendly and child sensitive society.
- p. The National Youth Commission, as the Philippine government's sole policy-making body on youth affairs and consistent with its role in coordinating and implementing programs designed to help the youth become more aware of the issues surrounding them, shall include an appreciation of urban agriculture.

SEC. 11. Performance Report to Congress. The DA and partner agencies in the National Convergence Program on Urban Agriculture and Aquaculture shall submit annual performance reports to Congress.

SEC. 12. Appropriations. The funds necessary to carry out the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the respective budget of concerned agencies for the current year. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 13. Implementing Rules and Regulations. Within ninety days (90) from the effectivity of this Act, the agencies under the National Convergence Program on Urban Agriculture and Aquaculture shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 14. Separability Clause. If any part or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, other parts or provisions hereof which are not affected shall continue to remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 15. Repealing Clause. All laws, executive orders, issuances, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby amended, repealed or modified 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,