

Republic of the Philippine
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

19TH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2983



Introduced by Honorable Michael L. Romero

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines as an agriculture-based country has 29.187 million hectares that are devoted to intensive cultivation for farm production. About 4.27 million hectares are devoted for rice production, and the rest are for other agricultural commodities such as corn, coconut, sugarcane and high value commercial crops.

However, these Philippine farms, particularly our rice farms have fragmented, narrow, irregularly-shaped and small farm sizes which are inherent structural defects directly contributing for unsuitable farm mechanization, inefficient irrigation and lack of economies of scale resulting to low farm productivity and income, thereby poverty remains in rural agrarian sector¹.

As agricultural mechanization becomes now the center-piece program of the national government, with P5 billion appropriations for the provision of rice machineries and equipment for the next six years under Rice Tariffication Law (R.A. No. 11203), these farms need to be immediately levelled, restructured or reconstructed for efficient mechanization and irrigation. This is to attain the objective of farm mechanization to lower down the cost of production, at the same time increasing farm productivity and farmers income.

Based on the study of PhilRice and IRRI, a well-levelled farm land shall increase water use efficiency by up to 15% as it improves the timeliness and efficiency of land preparation, sowing, and harvesting through more even wetting and drying in the field. This results in a more uniform crop at harvest and better grain quality. It also improves water coverage thus reduces weeds by up to 40% and reduces weeding time by 15-20 days per hectare; and improves planting efficiency by reducing time of planting. Level fields require

¹ Source: *End of Term Report of Sec. Virgilio de los Reyes*
Sugarcane RoadMap 2020, SRA

50% less seeds when direct seeding and also increase opportunity to use other techniques such as seed drills and mechanical transplanting. Ultimately, land leveling will increase rice yields by up to 15-20%.

Countries like Korea, Vietnam, China and Japan have been implementing farm land leveling and reconstruction which greatly contributes to increase farm productivity and income.

Approval of the bill is earnestly requested.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael L. Romero', written over a horizontal dashed line.

MICHAEL L. ROMERO

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AN ACT
TO PROMOTE AND ACCELERATE FARM LAND LEVELING
AND RECONSTRUCTION IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION
AREAS OF THE COUNTRY

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representative of the Philippines
in Congress Assembled:*

SECTION 1. TITLE. - This Act shall be known as the “**Farm Land Leveling and Reconstruction Act**”

SECTION 2. DECLARATION OF POLICY- It is hereby declared a policy of the State to achieve modern farms and food security by increasing farm productivity, reduce postharvest losses and improve product quality and competitiveness through complete farm mechanization and efficient land management.

In the pursuance of this policy, the State shall promote and accelerate farm land leveling and reconstruction in all agricultural areas of the country in order to ensure efficient farm mechanization, irrigation, transport and economies of scale.

SECTION 3. DEFINITION OF TERMS- The following terms are defined, as follows:

- (a) “*Farm Land Leveling and Reconstruction*” refers to the process of restructuring the farm area by maintaining smooth and/or uniform

elevation of the soil surface by scraping high points or (soil mounds) and moving soil to low points (depressions), to increase the sizes of farm plots which will result to a uniform distribution of irrigation across the field and increases the efficiency in the use of production inputs and machines and higher yields.

- (b)** Contiguous farming refers to a farming system comprising the development and organization of parcels of adjoining or adjacent agricultural lands with a minimum total area of 50-ha for the synchronized production of a particular crop such as but not limited to rice, corn, sugarcane, coconut and high value commercial crops utilizing agricultural mechanization technology. It shall include the necessary physical and institutional infrastructures. Physical infrastructures include the overall design layout of the area (e.g. field plot size, irrigation canal, farm drain, farm ditch, farm roads, postharvest facilities, etc.) while institutional infrastructures consist of the social base by which contiguous farming scheme shall operate.
- (c)** Farm Development Plan refers to a plan containing the right and appropriate kind/s of crops, livestock and fisheries to be planted or raised in the farm, as well as its irrigation, farm-to-market roads/farm access roads, agricultural and fisheries machineries and equipment, postharvest and agro-processing facilities to be established, constructed, operated and maintained which will ensure sustainable development, modernization and increase farm production, productivity and competitiveness. It also include the improvement and maintenance of agricultural spatial and bio-physical conditions in these farms to ensure accessibility, economies of scale of agricultural machineries and equipment, optimum utilization of lands, improvement of plant rooting and prevent soil erosion and flooding.

SECTION 4. NATIONAL FARM LAND LEVELING AND RECONSTRUCTION

PROGRAM- There is hereby established the “National Farm Land Leveling and Reconstruction Program”, herein referred to as the Program with comprehensive set of objectives, targets and holistic approach in promoting and accelerating farm land leveling and reconstruction in all agricultural production areas of the country. The Program shall be integrated and be made consistent and complement with the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Plan, Agricultural and Fisheries Mechanization Program, Land Consolidation, Contiguous or Block Farming Program.

The Program shall:

- a) Provide assistance to farmers and land owners to level and reconstruct their farm lands towards attaining suitable shapes and sizes for efficient irrigation, mechanization, transport and economies of scale, as well as farm development planning;
- b) Provide and/or upgrade the facilities and equipment including land laser leveler machines of the Department of Agriculture, Local Government Units and State Colleges and Universities;
- c) Establish and/or strengthen research, development and extension on farm leveling and reconstruction;
- d) Deployment of Agricultural and Bio systems Engineers at the municipal levels to provide professional and technical services in the design and supervision of farm levelling and reconstruction projects and the preparation and implementation of farm development plans.

SECTION 5. COVERAGE- The implementation of farm land leveling and reconstruction program shall cover all irrigated rice lands served by the national and communal irrigation systems and small scale irrigation systems by the National Irrigation Administration, Bureau of Soils and Water Management, Department of Agriculture and Local Government Units, including corn and sugarcane production areas.

SECTION 6. IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES AND PARTNER AGENCIES. — The Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering (BAFE) of the Department of Agriculture shall be the implementing agency of the Program. It shall tap the assistance, expertise and resources of the following agencies, such as the Philippine Rice Research Institute(PhilRice), Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), Philippine Center for Post-Harvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), and the National Irrigation Administration(NIA).

The BAFE shall likewise collaborate with and secure the technical support and assistance of other departments and their attached agencies and corporations to support farm land leveling and reconstruction such as the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of the Interior and Local

Government (DILG) and the Agricultural Engineering Groups of the Local Government Units.

In order for BAFE to effectively carry out this task and its functions under Republic Act No. 10601, the BAFE is hereby transformed and reconstituted as a line bureau of the Department of Agriculture. Its organizational structure shall consist of a head office, regional agricultural and fisheries engineering offices, provincial agricultural and fisheries engineering offices and where and when necessary, municipal and city agricultural and fisheries engineering offices. The existing Regional Agricultural Engineering Division of DA Regional Field Offices are hereby transferred to BAFE. These BAFE field offices shall complement and/or augment the services of the Provincial, City and Municipal Agricultural and Bio systems Engineering Units of the Local Government Units.

The Department of Agrarian Reform shall integrate farm leveling and reconstruction as a requirement in land distribution and support services program under CARP Law.

SECTION 7. ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS AND INCENTIVES- Farmers registered under the RSBA of the Department of Agriculture shall be given priority for farm leveling and reconstruction assistance for free. Moreover, leveled and reconstructed farms shall be given priority as recipients of the farm machinery assistance program and other production inputs subsidy of the government.

SECTION 8. DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS – The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Engineering in collaboration with PhilRice, BAFS, Professional Regulatory Board of Agricultural and Bio systems Engineering and the Philippine Society of Agricultural and Bio systems Engineers shall develop and enforce farm land leveling and reconstruction standards which shall form part of the Philippine Agricultural and Bio systems Engineering Standards (PABES);

SECTION 9. RESEARCH, TRAINING AND EXTENSION- The Philippine Rice Research Institute, BAR, Agricultural Training Institute in coordination and collaboration with State Colleges and Universities and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and LGUs shall undertake research, training and extension program among farmers to adopt farm land leveling reconstruction as well as on water management, proper irrigation, mechanized farming and good agricultural practices. The TESDA shall provide scholarships to farm levelers, farmers, farm workers and trainers.

SECTION 10. IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS. — Within sixty (60) days from the date of effectivity of this Act, the DA, in consultation with various stakeholders shall formulate the rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

SECTION 11. FUNDING- The funding requirement for the implementation of the program shall be incorporated in the budget of BAFE under the General Appropriations Act.

The amount of **P1,000,000,000** shall be initially appropriated for the implementation of the program.

SECTION 12. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE. - If any part or provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 13. REPEALING CLAUSE. - All laws, decrees, executive orders and other administrative issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 14. EFFECTIVITY. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved.