

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 3566



Introduced by Rep. Wilfrido Mark M. Enverga

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In 1999, the government launched the "convergence strategy" as a mechanism to achieve institutional coordination and eventually success in rural development. The 2011-2016 Philippine Development Plan (PDP) reaffirmed the mechanisms and objectives of the National Convergence Initiative towards more efficient use of resources.

Notwithstanding these policy pronouncements, the achievements of the "convergence strategy" have been limited for the past two decades. More so, the implementing mechanisms and operational details have yet to be finalized by the three principal rural development agencies, i.e. Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), responsible for rural development. Much remains to be done to ensure that the plan itself is founded on successful experience in rural development, and is specified to a state that is operational and may be monitored as to its achievements in institutional coordination—particularly in terms of the direct involvement of local government units (LGUs)—and success in sustainable rural development and poverty reduction.

The current institutional structure reveals a multiplicity of national government agencies presently involved in managing the development of agriculture, agrarian reform and natural resources. With no less than six departments, i.e. DA, DAR, DENR, Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), involved in sector development, functional overlaps, gaps, as well as fragmentation of responsibilities have become apparent in many areas, such as but not limited to:

1. Upland development and mangrove development and management (including enforcement of appropriate regulations on conversion of mangroves into fishponds provided under RA 8550) where there is a need to clearly delineate the scope of responsibilities between the DA and DENR;
2. Provision of support services to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) by DAR vis-avis DA 's programs on increasing agricultural productivity;
3. Research and development, wherein current efforts in agriculture and fisheries are fragmented with the existence of the DA's Bureau of Agricultural Research on the one hand, and the DOST's PCARRD and PCAMRD on the other; and,
4. Infrastructure development which involves various agencies such as the DPWH, DILG, DA, DAR, and the LGUs.

Institutional weaknesses also exist within the three principal rural development agencies. Operations have become fragmented, thus weakening the impact of development activities on the intended beneficiaries. To mitigate the institutional coordination problems, the government has underlined in the last three PDPs that the three departments need to adopt and implement joint and complementary initiatives in the rural areas.

Indeed, various formal issuances over the two decades or so, within individual departments and inter-departmental Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) or Understanding (MOU) among the three departments attest of their compliance to the broad development strategy. Yet despite these efforts at vertical and horizontal coordination, assessments of sector progress have time and again pointed to poor coordination as a serious institutional problem and constraint.

What is of particular concern is that there is no discussion nor even mention in the documentation of the process and procedures through which the lessons learned in the convergence sites are to be applied in the three departments—as whole departments. Typically, the departments deal with the convergence effort as **just another project** in specified areas where collaboration with other departments is required. While the departments have each allocated some resources and personnel to convergence-related activities in the identified model sites, the rest of their respective strategies, plans, budgets and operations in other parts of the country continue in their "unconverged" states.

More specifically, the departments have assigned specific officials and personnel to the Steering Committee and Technical Working Group at the national level. Specific personnel have been assigned to convergence activities at the regional level. Specific

"area investment plans", consisting of a set of projects, are being identified and reviewed for the model sites. Yet these assignments and activities only comprise but a negligible proportion of the resources and more importantly, the mind-set of the three departments. **Convergence is more of an attitude and a modus operandi, not a set of projects.**

More telling is the fact that there are no major changes in the budgetary presentations of each of the three departments that are attributable to the convergence framework. While the supporting presentations of the three departments made mention of the convergence strategy, such pronouncements have not been translated into any significant budget reallocations that indicate the actual and sustained reallocation of resources to achieve true integration of development and service goals and activities.

Finally, the current design of the convergence framework as reflected in available documents provides nominal attention to the integrative and local development governance role of the LGUs. Note that the criteria for the selection of sites were wholly national in origin. The ongoing design, appraisal, decision-making and resource mobilization of projects is wholly national-based. Finally, the framework does not provide for any activities which build the capacity of the LGUs to perform the tasks associated with the achievement of sustainable rural development.

In summary, in institutionalizing the convergence framework, Congress hopes to bring the efforts of the three key departments to bear on the challenge of rural development—and ultimately contribute to the betterment of the quality of life in the countryside.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this proposed measure is earnestly sought.



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**AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE CONVERGENCE STRATEGY FOR
SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDING THE IMPLEMENTING
MECHANISMS THEREFORE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

**CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTORY PROVISIONS**

SECTION 1. Title. This Act shall be known as the **National Convergence Initiative Act of 2022.**

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policies and Objectives. It is the policy of the State to promote agricultural development as a means to ensure food security and alleviate poverty especially among the rural folks. Towards this end, the State shall develop and operationalize a common framework for sustainable and equitable rural development that will facilitate the convergence of the resources of the principal rural development agencies to maximize its impact.

The implementation of the National Convergence Strategy shall be guided by the following principles:

- (a) The Department of Agriculture-Department of Agrarian Reform-Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DA-DAR-DENR) National Convergence shall be treated as an institutionalized complementation strategy between and among the three rural development agencies. Whenever the opportunity arises, the Convergence shall work with other national line agencies, donor agencies,

international and local non-government organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs) mentioned in Section 6 hereof;

- (b) The primacy of the Local Government Units (LGUs) as the integrating and converging force for sustainable rural development at the local level shall be emphasized;
- (c) The participatory approach shall be adopted in all phases of development: from planning and budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation;
- (d) Complementation of resources and expertise of the concerned agencies and LGUs shall take primordial consideration in the implementation of the Convergence Initiative;
- (e) Convergence shall be mainstreamed in all programs, projects and activities of the national government agencies and concerned LGUs;
- (f) Networking and linkaging with other government entities such as, but not limited to, the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), State Colleges and Universities (SUCs), and Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs), shall be undertaken by the three rural development agencies for coverage of potential areas under the Convergence Initiative for rural development;
- (g) Instituting relevant measures for an enabling environment to encourage investment by the private sector.

SECTION 3. Scope. This Act shall apply to all rural development areas primarily inhabited by the convergence initiative programs targeted beneficiaries - the marginalized farmers (both agrarian reform beneficiaries and non-agrarian reform beneficiaries), fisherfolks, upland dwellers, and indigenous people.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITIONS

SECTION 4. **Definition of Terms.** As used in and for purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- (a) Agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) refer to farmers who were granted lands under Presidential Decree No. 27, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law and Republic Act No. 9700 or the "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Extension with Reforms" and regular farm workers who are landless, irrespective of tenurial arrangement;
- (b) Agricultural lands refer to lands devoted to or suitable for agricultural activity and not classified by law as mineral, forest, residential, commercial or industrial land;
- (c) Agro-based cluster refers to the concentration of producers, agribusiness and institutions that are engaged in the same agricultural or agro-industrial sub-sector, and inter-connect;
- (d) Coastal areas refer to a band of dry land and the adjacent ocean space (water and submerged land) in which terrestrial processes and uses directly affect oceanic process and uses, and vice versa. For purposes of initiating and implementing the Convergence Initiative, it shall include foreshore land;
- (e) Ecosystem refers to the complex relationships among the living resources, habitats, and residents of an area. It includes plants, trees, animals, fish, birds, micro-organisms, water, soil, and people;
- (f) Enhanced National Convergence Initiative (Enhanced NCI) refers to the National Convergence Initiative Strategy provided for under DA-DAR-DENR Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, Series of 2010;
- (g) Farmers refer to natural persons whose primary livelihood is cultivation of land or the production of agricultural crops, agro-forestry products, livestock and/or fisheries, either by himself/herself, or primarily with the assistance of his/her immediate farm household, whether the land is owned by him/her or by another person under a leasehold or share tenancy agreement or arrangement with the owner thereof;

- (h) Fisherfolks refer to people directly or personally and physically engaged in taking and/or culturing and processing fishery and/or aquatic resources;
- (i) Good agricultural practices refer to applying available knowledge to addressing environmental, economic and social sustainability dimensions for on-farm production and post-production processes, resulting in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products;
- (j) Local Government Units refer to government units at the sub-national level or government units at the regional, provincial and municipal levels;
- (k) Mangrove forests refer to silt-rich, saline (brackish water) habitat generally found along large rivers, deltas, and estuaries in the coastal areas. It is characterized by low tree diversity with a low broken canopy. It serves as barrier to strong tidal waves and habitat of various aquatic species;
- (l) Primary forests or old growth forests refer to untouched, pristine forest that exists in its original condition and has been relatively unaffected by human activity;
- (m) Ridge-to-Reef strategy refers to the development approach to improve the lives of the ARBs and small farmers, indigenous peoples, marginalized dwellers and fisherfolks (that is from upland and forest areas, in middle and lowland areas, down to the coastal areas);
- (n) Rural development agencies refer to the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources;
- (o) Strategic Agricultural and Fisheries Development Zones (SAFDZ) refer to areas within the Network of Protected Areas for Agricultural and Agro-industrial Development (NPAAAD) identified for production, agro-processing and marketing activities to help develop and modernize, with the support of the government, the agriculture and fisheries sectors, in an environmentally and socio-culturally sound manner;

- (p) Secondary growth forests refer to the largest and most dynamic natural forest ecosystem in the Philippines. For purposes of this Act, it shall refer to as an area number of ways from degraded forest recovering from selective logging to areas cleared by slash-and-burn agriculture or “kaingin” that have been reclaimed by forest. It also characterized be a less developed canopy structure, smaller trees, and less diversity;
- (q) Sustainable rural development refers to the development objectives of meeting the needs of the present generation in the rural communities, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs consistent with the principles of social equity, efficiency and environmental integrity;
- (r) Upland / forest ecosystems refer to areas with at least 18% slope. For purposes of this Act, it shall also refer to an area that provides ecological benefits and support to agricultural production, industries, water, and power needs. Timber production as well as agroforestry activities may be promoted in these areas to maximize their utilization;
- (s) Watershed refers to a topographically delineated area of land from which rainwater can drain as surface run-off vis-à-vis a specific stream or river system to a common outlet point which may be a dam, irrigation system or urban water supply take-of point, or where the stream discharges into a river, lake or the sea.

CHAPTER III PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK

SECTION 5. Guiding Framework. The convergence strategy shall adopt the watershed and ecosystem management approach as the intervention framework in the convergence areas. This is primarily because the “ridge to reef” convergence strategy is an environmentally sustainable approach to development as human interventions in the forest and upland areas would impact on the lowland areas, and this in turn would affect the coastal and marine areas. Selection of convergence zones shall likewise take into consideration the SAFDZ provision of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) of 1997.

SECTION 6. Criteria for Selection of Convergence Areas. The following criteria shall guide the selection of convergence for the agro-enterprise cluster:

- (a) Completeness of ecosystem zones. The convergence sites should cut across the various ecosystems or should be a combination of two or more ecosystems;
- (b) Key production zones, agrarian reform communities (ARCs) and clusters with connectivity for increased productivity and income. The convergence sites should be current key production areas or with potential to substantially expand and scale-up production. As such, the area may transform; from mono-cropping to integrated, multi-cropping or high value farming system. In terms of connectivity, the key production zone may be linked with surrounding areas for allied industries/services or for backward linkages;
- (c) Combination of sites across major poverty groups. The convergence sites must cover a significant number of small farmers/agricultural workers including actual and potential ARBs, fisherfolks , indigenous people, a rural women and upland dwellers;
- (d) Presence of development-oriented local government leaders and LGU alliances. The convergence sites should have LGUs and Local Chief Executives (LCEs) that share a common perspective in rural development and are willing to support the convergence initiative;
- (e) Presence of NGOs, POs, private sector and academic/research community. The convergence sites should have active POs and/or NGOs that are willing to support the convergence initiative. Presence of private/business and academic/research institutions that are willing to partner within the convergence framework shall be an advantage.

CHAPTER IV

NCI TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS (TWGs) AND COMPONENTS

SECTION 7. Technical Working Groups of NCI. The implementation of the NCI shall be done through Technical Working Groups along ecosystem. The three working groups shall be mutually re-enforcing and are equally important in ensuring that the objectives are achieved and is seen to improve institutional efficiencies in the governance of sustainable rural development.

- (a) **TWG on Coastal and Marine Resources Management** – shall address the issues and concerns on pertaining to the use and management of coral reefs, sea grasses and algal beds, brackish wetland areas, mangroves and beach forests ecosystems. The TWG shall be composed of concerned agencies / units of the DA, DENR and the DILG. Other government agencies, NGOs/ POs, the academe, private sector or business groups / associations may also be part of the TWG whenever necessary.
- (b) **TWG on Lowland Sustainable Agriculture** – shall address issues and concerns on the use and management of the agricultural ecosystems through application of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). The TWG shall be composed of concerned agencies / units of the DA, DAR, DENR, and DILG. Other government agencies, NGOs / POs, the academe, private sector or business groups / associations may also be part of the TWG whenever necessary.
- (c) **TWG on Forestry and Upland Development** – shall address issues and concerns on the use and sustainable management of the upland areas and forests ecosystems through conservation of biodiversity, protection of primary or old growth forests and secondary growth forest, and rehabilitation of degraded and denuded ecosystems. The TWG shall be composed of concerned agencies / units of the DA, DAR, DENR, and DILG. Other government agencies, NGOs/ POs, the academe, private sector or business groups / associations may also be part of the TWG whenever necessary.

SECTION 8. **Components of NCI.** The following shall serve as cross cutting components of the three TWGs.

- (a) **Policy and Advocacy.** The component shall address the issues and problems of conflicting, overlapping, and other unclear policies related to land administration, regulatory, framework, operational strategies and jurisdictional boundaries.
- (b) **Agro-Enterprise and Agribusiness Development.** The component shall facilitate enterprise development and agribusiness within the convergence sites through the establishment of agro-enterprises clusters in all provinces. These clusters shall be the focus for agribusiness initiatives based on the potential of the areas especially those designated as strategic zones as identified by the SAFDZ maps.
- (c) **Capacity Development.** The component shall ensure the organizational preparedness of the three agencies and capability of the implementers and other stakeholders to implement the convergence initiative.

(d) Knowledge Management. The component shall ensure that NCI programs, projects and initiatives are implemented and monitored in an efficient and effective manner. It shall likewise ensure that innovations are documented for possible adoption, expansion and scaling up.

CHAPTER V IMPLEMENTING STRUCTURE AND MECHNISM

Article I National Policy Administration

SECTION 9. Creation of the National Convergence Initiative Administration (NCIA). The National Convergence Initiative Administration is hereby created. The NCIA shall be the primary coordinating body of the NCI program and shall be under the Office of the President. As a primary coordinating body it shall also be the convenor of the current National Convergence Initiative - Technical Working Group (NCI-TWG).

SECTION 9 - A. Composition. The NCI -TWG to be convened by the NCIA shall have the following members:

- (a) Administrator
- (b) Deputy Administrator
- (c) Chairperson, TWG on Coastal and Marine Resources Management
- (d) Chairperson, TWG on Lowland Resources Management
- (e) Chairperson, TWG on Forestry and Upland Development
- (f) Chairperson, Working Group on Policy and Advocacy
- (g) Chairperson Working Group on Agro-Enterprise Development
- (h) Chairperson, Working Group on Knowledge Management
- (i) Chairperson, Working Group on Capacity Development
- (j) Convergence Focal Person, DA
- (k) Convergence Focal Person, DAR
- (l) Convergence Focal Person, DENR
- (m) Head, NCI Secretariat

SECTION 9 - B. Powers and Functions of the NCIA. The NCIA shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Formulate sustainable rural development framework and recommend to the Board (Section 13) necessary adjustments;
- (b) Integrate, harmonize and oversee the implementation of the convergence initiative plans and programs of the sub-national TWGs;
- (c) Recommend to the Executive Board the operational plans, programs, and guidelines relevant to the NCI Framework;
- (d) Carry out data-based management of convergence area and prospective convergence areas nation-wide;
- (e) Mobilize concerned personnel to actively participate in various activities relative to the Convergence Initiative;
- (f) Thoroughly evaluate memorandum of agreements and other agreements;
- (g) Facilitate the formation of Convergence teams together with other concerned stakeholders;
- (h) Monitor and evaluate the progress of implementation of Convergence projects/activities;

SECTION 9 - C. Powers and Functions of the NCIA Administrator. The Administrator shall also have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Act as the executive head of the of the NCIA and Secretary of the Board and perform the powers and functions incident to the said positions;
- (b) Be responsible for the implementation and overall execution of the policies, rules and regulations and decisions adopted by the Board and as such, shall issue the corresponding implementing administrative issuances and promulgate opinions and interpretative circulars and rulings to ensure expeditious and effective implementation thereof;
- (c) Approve plans and programs prepared by the Regional, Provincial and Municipal Convergence Initiative Technical Working Group;
- (d) Review fulfillment of the commitments of the respective agencies related to the implementation of the NCI; and
- (e) Perform other powers and functions as may be inherent, incident, or related to the foregoing;

SECTION 9 - D. Qualifications of the Administrator. The Administrator must have a background or significant training preferably in the field of economics, business economics, agriculture, agribusiness, land resources management, and development planning and management for a period of at least five (5) years. The Administrator shall be appointed by the President of the Republic of the Philippines and shall have the rank of Undersecretary.

SECTION 9 - E. Deputy Administrator. The Administrator shall be assisted by a Deputy Administrator who shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines upon the Board's recommendation. The Deputy Administrator shall have the same qualifications as the Administrator and shall have the rank of Assistant Secretary.

The Deputy Administrator shall be the operational and administrative manager of the NCIA and shall assist the administrator in routine housekeeping functions.

SECTION 10. NCIA Executive Board. The NCIA shall have an Executive Board hereinafter referred to as the Board which shall act as the policy making body of the NCI. The Board shall direct the implementation of the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 10 - A. Composition. The Board shall be composed of five (5) voting members:

- (a) The Secretary of the Department of Agriculture as Chairperson;
- (b) The Secretaries of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Agrarian Reform as Vice Chairpersons;
- (c) The Secretaries of the Department of Interior and Local Government and the Director-General for the National Economic Development Agency as members;
- (d) The Administrator of NCIA, as ex-officio member, who shall likewise act as Secretary to the Board.

The Secretaries may appoint their respective permanent alternate representatives with a rank of not lower than Undersecretary.

SECTION 10 - B. **Powers and Functions.** The NCIA Executive Board shall assume the following powers and functions of the current National Steering Committee, namely:

- (a) Provide overall policy directions for the implementation of programs/projects and other related activities under the NCI;
- (b) Approve/ratify implementing rules and regulations, programs, projects and plans pertaining to the operation of the NCI;
- (c) Consult with other concerned national government agencies, stakeholders, and partner agencies on policies and major programs related to sustainable rural development;
- (d) Approve of Memorandum of Agreements with investors and funding agencies being recommended for approval by the NCIA;
- (e) Regularly advise the President on all matters concerning the implementation of convergence initiative strategies;

SECTION 10 - C. **Meetings.** The Board shall meet on a quarterly basis and may hold special meetings as deemed necessary. However, hosting of NSC meetings may rotate amongst the three rural development agencies.

SECTION 11. **Technical Working Groups and Components of the NCI-TWG.** The Administrator shall convene the members of the respective Working Groups to elect amongst them the Chairperson for each Working Group. The Chairperson of each Working Group shall then designate or appoint a Coordinator from their respective agency. The functions and composition of the Technical Working Groups and Components shall remain in force until revised by the NCIA Board.

SECTION 12. **Convergence Focal Person.** Each agency shall designate a Convergence Focal Person who shall be responsible for the coordination and management of the convergence program in their respective agency (national and field levels). The agency Convergence Focal Person shall likewise be a member of the NCIA TWG. The agency Convergence Focal Person shall work closely with the NCI Secretariat for effective coordination of concerns of NCI and the working groups relative to their respective agency.

SECTION 13. National Convergence Initiative Secretariat. The Board shall appoint the Head of the NCI Secretariat with the Coordinators of each of the Technical Working Groups and components as members. There will also be permanent members of the Secretariat coming from the three agencies on top of the coordinators of each working group. The NCI Secretariat shall work closely with the NCIA Administrator, the Chairperson of the different Working Groups and the agency Convergence Focal Person.

SECTION 13 - A. Functions of the NCI Secretariat. The NCI Secretariat shall:

- (a) Implement approved plans and projects;
- (b) Facilitate the provision of administrative and logistics support to the Board and the NCIA;
- (c) Ensure that appropriate actions are taken on agreements reached during meetings/workshops;
- (d) Submit monitoring/progress reports to the Board through the NCIA and to other oversight bodies;
- (e) Work closely with the NCIA and the Working Groups;
- (f) Together with the NCIA Administrator, convene the members of each Working Group and conduct election for the Chair of the Working Groups;
- (g) Maintain effective and efficient data management system of the NCI.

Article Two

Sub-National Level Administration

SECTION 14. Regional Convergence Initiative–Technical Working Group (RCI-TWG). Parallel to the NCI-TWG, the RCI-TWG shall manage and supervise the programs, projects, and other related activities at the regional level. The RCI-TWG shall be the regional arm of the NCIA in carrying out its functions.

SECTION 14 - A. Duties and Responsibilities.

- (a) Work closely with other government line agencies and offices and with the Regional Development Council (RDC) and concerned Provincial Development Council (PDC) to ensure that the enhanced convergence initiative interventions are aligned with the regional development agenda and initiatives;
- (b) Facilitate complementation of efforts and resources for greater impact;

(c) Coordinate and work closely with the Provincial LGUs in the implementation of the NCI plans, programs, projects, and other related activities. The Regional Directors of DA, DAR, and DENR may enter into an agreement with the Provincial Governor or LGU leagues, as necessary;

(d) Meet monthly or as deemed necessary.

SECTION 14 - B. Composition of the RCI-TWG. The RCI-TWG shall be composed of:

(a) DA, DAR or DENR Regional Director as Chairperson

(b) Depending on the result of the election, the two latter directors will act as Co-Chairpersons

(c) Regional Focal Persons for all the departments and Head RCI-TWG Secretariat as Members.

The Chairperson of the RCI-TWG shall be a convergence champion and shall be decided by and among the Regional Directors of DA, DAR and DENR. Upon the completion of the RCI-TWG composition, a resolution to that effect shall be submitted to the NCI Secretariat. Membership of the RCI-TWG may be expanded to include representatives from the Provincial LGUs and other agencies as deemed necessary.

The RCI-Secretariat shall be created and would be composed of representatives from the regional offices of DA, DAR, and DENR. The RCI Secretariat shall be headed by the Regional Focal Person. The Regional Focal Persons and the members of the RCI Secretariat shall be designated by the chairperson of RCI-TWG (from the agency where the Chairperson belongs).

SECTION 15. Provincial Convergence Initiative Technical Working Group (PCI-TWG). The PCI-TWG shall be responsible in implementing plans, programs, projects, and other related activities of the NCI at their respective provinces in collaboration with RCI-TWG. The PCI-TWG shall identify or determine appropriate interventions, resources, and support services needed such as, but not limited to infrastructure, logistics, extension, inputs, lands, and institutional development for the implementation of the NCI plans and programs.

The Chairperson of the PCI-TWG shall be the Provincial Governor and the Provincial head of DAR and DENR shall be the Co-Chairpersons. The members of the PCI-TWG are the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO), Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer (PARO), Provincial Agriculture Officer (PAO), and Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator (PPDC), and Provincial Government – Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PG-ENRO).

The respective interface mechanisms shall be LGU-led with DA, DAR, and DENR providing technical and operational support. Existing LGU mechanisms may be adopted to spearhead or manage the convergence initiatives at the LGU level.

SECTION 16. Municipal Convergence Initiative Technical Working Group (MCI-TWG). The MCI-TWG shall be responsible in implementing plans, programs, projects, and other related activities of the NCI at their respective municipalities in collaboration with the PCI-TWG. The MCI-TWG shall identify or determine appropriate interventions, resources, and support services needed such as, but not limited to, infrastructure, logistics, extension, inputs, lands, and institutional development for the implementation of the NCI plans and programs.

The Chairperson of the MCI-TWG shall be headed by the Municipal / City Mayor. The Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer (MARO) and the Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO) shall act as Co-Chair. The members of the MCI-TWG are the Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO), City/Municipal Environment and Natural Resource Officer (C/MENRO), Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer (MARO), Municipal Agriculture Officer (MAO) and concerned City/Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (C/MPDC).

The respective interface mechanisms shall be LGU-led with DA, DAR, and DENR providing technical and operational support. Existing LGU mechanisms may be adopted to spearhead or manage the convergence initiatives at the LGU level.

Article Three

Other National Government Agencies and Local Government Units

SECTION 17. **Scope and Nature of Support from Government Line Agencies and Offices.** The NCIA shall work closely with other government line agencies and offices to ensure complementation and alignment of NCI interventions with that of other related agencies and offices. Conversely, all concerned National Government agencies/bodies shall render technical and administrative support if called upon by the NCIA relative to the implementation of the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 18. **Local Government Units.** The Local Government Units which have the mandate to coordinate and manage local development shall take an active role in the implementation of an institutionalized convergence strategy.

CHAPTER VI

TRANSITORY AND FINAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 19. **Convening of NCIA.** Within thirty (30) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall convene the NCIA. The current head of the Enhanced National Convergence Initiative Secretariat shall sit temporarily as Administrator and ex-officio member of the NCIA Executive Board until such time that a regular Administrator has been appointed by the President.

SECTION 20. **Implementing Rules and Regulations.** The said rules and regulations shall be submitted to the Congressional Oversight on the National Convergence Initiative as created by the succeeding provision for approval.

SECTION 21. **Congressional Oversight Committee on the National Conversion Initiative.** There is hereby created a Congressional Oversight Committee composed of five members each from the Committee on Agriculture of the Senate of the Philippines and the Committee on Rural Development of the House of Representatives. The members from the Senate shall be appointed by the Senate President based on proportional representation of the parties or coalitions therein with at least two (2) senators representing the minority. The members from the House of Representatives shall be appointed by the Speaker also based on proportional representation of the parties or coalitions therein with at least two (2) congressmen representing the minority.

The oversight committee which shall function for a period of not more than five (5) years, shall have the power to review the implementing rules issued by NCIA within thirty (30) days from the promulgation of the said rules and oversee the implementation of this Act: Provided, That the Secretariat of the Oversight Committee shall be drawn from the existing Secretariat personnel of the committees comprising the oversight.

Funding shall be taken from the appropriations of both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

SECTION 22. Effectivity of the Creation of the NCIA. Until such time that the NCIA has been organized and fully operational, the current operational set-up on the NCI as provided for under DA-DAR-DENR Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, Series of 2010, and its relevant amendments, shall continue. Hiring, separation, replacement, and appointment of personnel shall be in accordance with existing Civil Service rules and regulations.

SECTION 23. Structure and Staffing Pattern. Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the NCIA Board Chairperson shall formulate and submit to the Congressional Oversight Committee for its review and approval, the NCIA's proposed organizational structure and staffing pattern. After such review and approval, the proposed organizational structure and staffing pattern of the NCIA shall be submitted to the President for final approval through the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) within ninety (90) days.

SECTION 24. Appropriations. Funds necessary to carry out the implementation of the NCI shall be taken from the available funds of the three rural development agencies under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its staggered implementation shall be included in the respective annual budget of the aforementioned rural development agencies in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

Other sources of funds such as grants, donations, and other forms of assistance from donor agencies and other public or private entities may be tapped and facilitated by NCI Board and/or the NCIA to support the program, subject to regular auditing guidelines and procedures. Cost-sharing or counter-parting schemes among national government and LGUs is also encouraged to support the implementation of the Convergence Initiative.

SECTION 25. **Non-Impairment Clause.** Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or available to marginalized or basic sectors under existing laws including but not limited to Republic Act Nos. 8371, 8550 and 6657.

SECTION 26. **Separability Clause.** If for any reason or reasons, any part or provision of this Act shall be declared or held to be unconstitutional or invalid, other parts or provisions hereof, which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 27. **Effectivity Clause.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.