

SENATE

Senate Bill No. 2414

INTRODUCED BY SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The coconut industry is a top dollar earner chalking \$900 million to about \$1 billion, and a potential annual earner of \$2 billion if rehabilitated. As a dollar earner, the coconut and all its by-products surpass other export products, as it requires no import casts. In fact, the Philippines is one of the world's biggest exporters of coconut oil, which is either used for food or other industries.

Unfortunately, unstable trends in production and world market prices lead observers to view the industry as a sunset industry, which will eventually die and stop bringing income to those who depend on it for a living. The number one problem is the dwindling supply of coconut. Coconut trees are cut down for lumber, while some cocolands are being converted to avoid the operation of land reform. Thus, the marginal coconut farmer is now in quandary. Most of them are seriously thinking of selling their cocolands, or of converting it, and leaving coconut farming in favor of promising opportunities in other areas of endeavor.

Hence, it is incumbent upon Congress to address these conditions afflicting the coconut industry, which comprises a substantial sector of Philippine agriculture and a major source of our export earnings.

This bill seeks, therefore, to alleviate the present condition of the coconut industry and ensure its continuity and substantially by classifying it as last priority for coverage in the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program of the government so as not to discourage coconut farmers in investing further in coconut farming.

This measure also provides for a stricter or higher penalty for violations of the prohibited acts and omission under Republic Act No. 6657.

Early approval of this bill is earnestly requested.


JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA
Senator

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AN ACT

AMENDING CERTAIN SECTIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NUMBER SIX THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED FIFTY SEVEN (R.A. 6657), AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW OF 1998", AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Section 7 of Republic Act Numbered Six Thousand Six Hundred Fifty Seven (R.A. 6657), as amended, otherwise known as the "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1998" is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Section 7. *Priority.* – The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) in coordination with the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) shall plan and program the acquisition and distribution of all agricultural lands through a period of ten (10) years from effectivity of this Act. Land shall be acquired and distributed as follows:

Phase One: Rice and corn lands under Presidential Decree No. 27; All idle or abandoned lands; all private lands voluntarily offered by the owners for agrarian reform; all lands foreclosed by government financial institutions; all lands acquired by the presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG); and all other lands owned by the government devoted to or suitable for agriculture, which shall be acquired and distributed immediately upon the effectivity of this Act, with the implementation to be completed within the period of not more than four (4) years.

Phase Two: all alienable and disposable public agriculture lands; all arable public agricultural lands under agro-forest, pasture and agricultural leases already cultivated and planted to crop in accordance with Article XIII of the Constitution; all public agricultural lands which are to be opened for new development and resettlement; and all private agricultural lands in excess of fifty (50) hectares, insofar as the excess hectarage is concerned, to implement principally the rights of farmers and regular farm workers, who are landless, to own directly or collectively the lands they till, which shall be distributed immediately upon the effectivity

SEC 3. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be held to be unconstitutional, the remainder of the Act not otherwise be affected and shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC 4. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, orders, rules and regulations, or any part thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC 5. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect thirty (30) days after its complete publication in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation or in the Official gazette.

Approved,