

SENATE
S. No. **2531**

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

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EXPLANATORY NOTE

“Food deserts” are areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food. In many Philippine cities and rural areas, economic, demographic and land use changes over the past several years have created communities where supermarkets are non-existent and where poor quality food, limited choices, and lack of affordable food impact large segments of the population.

This bill proposes to create an office under the Department of Agriculture focused on strengthening Philippine agriculture by diversifying food production – moving from reliance on globally consolidated and industrial food chains to a system that includes local production.¹

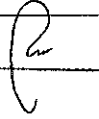
The objective of the bill is to pursue better coordination to empower communities to eliminate food deserts, purchase and produce food locally, create sustainable food systems, and connect better the existing programs that can and should be used to alleviate pockets of hunger and severe food insecurity.²


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

¹ http://www.maryknollogc.org/newsnotes/35.3/greening_urban_food_deserts.html

² <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h111-4971>

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1 AN ACT
2 ESTABLISHING A NEW OFFICE UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO
3 INCREASE THE EMPHASIS ON URBAN AGRICULTURAL ISSUES, EFFECTIVELY
4 ENCOURAGE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AND INCREASE THE
5 AVAILABILITY OF FRESH FOOD IN URBAN AREAS, PARTICULARLY
6 UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCING HUNGER, POOR NUTRITION,
7 OBESITY, AND FOOD INSECURITY

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

8 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This law shall be known as the “Greening Food Deserts Act”.

9 SECTION 2. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the term:

10 (a) “Department” refers to the Department of Agriculture.

11 (b) “Secretary” refers to the Secretary of Agriculture.

12 (c) “Underserved community” refers to a community that, as determined by the
13 Secretary, has:

14 (1) limited access to affordable, healthy foods; including fresh fruits and vegetables;

15 (2) a high incidence of a diet-related disease (including obesity) as compared to the
16 national average;

17 (3) a high rate of hunger or food insecurity; or

18 (4) severe or persistent poverty.

19 SECTION 3. *Creation of a New Office.* – The Secretary shall establish within the
20 Department an office for the purpose of coordinating activities throughout the Department
21 related to urban agriculture and nutrition.

22 The Office shall be responsible for coordinating Department activities and conducting
23 oversight in the following mission areas:

1 (a) Ensuring that Department authorities are used to effectively encourage
2 agricultural production in underserved communities to combat hunger, poor nutrition, obesity,
3 and food insecurity.

4 (b) Ensuring that Department authorities are used to empower communities,
5 especially communities with a large percentage of low-income residents, to eliminate shortage of
6 affordable, fresh food products, increase the local production and sale of food, and create
7 sustainable food systems.

8 (c) Developing a unified strategy to link the agricultural production and nutrition
9 programs administered by the Department as a tool for economic development in underserved
10 communities in a manner that addresses local conditions and engages local residents through
11 agricultural economic development.

12 (d) Conducting systematic and regular reviews of Department authorities and making
13 policy recommendations to Congress and the Secretary on new authorities or regulation changes
14 to assist underserved communities to combat hunger, poor nutrition, obesity, and food insecurity.

15 (e) Ensuring that the programs established by this Act are implemented in a manner
16 consistent with the goal of eliminating underserved communities.

17 SECTION 4. *Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Assistance in Support of*
18 *Backyard Conservation and Community Gardening Programs.* –

19 (a) *Authority to Provide Assistance.* – The Secretary shall provide technical
20 assistance in support of backyard conservation and community gardening programs involving
21 small-scale subsistence and personal-use agriculture for the purpose of achieving expanded and
22 improved production; and implementing conservation methods related to small-scale and
23 personal-use production.

24 (b) *Use of Botanical Gardens.* – To provide technical assistance under this Act, the
25 Secretary shall seek to certify botanical gardens as third-party providers.

26 SECTION 5. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be declared
27 unconstitutional, any other provision not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

1 SECTION 6. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations, or
2 parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

3 SECTION 7. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication
4 in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,

/fldp