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SENATE

RECEIVED BY: 

Senate Bill No. 371

INTRODUCED BY SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The continued importation and use of chemical or inorganic fertilizers, pesticides, weedicides, and other farm inputs has long been – wellspring of protest and debate in the agriculture sector.

The use of these farm inputs has caused environmental degradation. It has resulted to the decrease in our soil's fertility and the destruction of aquatic and semi-aquatic life not only in the fields but also in our waters. Moreover, these pungent chemicals cause various ailments to farmers and their animals as well as the to consumers of agricultural produce.

The need to explore and adopt alternative measures is evident. Western nations have, for the past many years, gone back to bio-organic farming.

Bio-organic farming is-defined as an agricultural production system which avoids the use of chemical or inorganic farm inputs, pesticides, weedicides and feed additives and relies on biological means of conditioning and enriching the soil and controlling pests.

While reducing pollution and the destruction of useful organism for the agricultural ecosystem, it also helps solve the problem of waste and garbage disposal through the use of plant and animal waste and crop residue. It should also be noted that bio-farming does not require any importation.

Many aspects of bio-farming methods, such as vermiculture, the production and application of bio-organic fertilizers and other farm inputs, and the technique of "integrated pest management" have been developed and applied for some years now in the Philippines. However, much more can and should be done.

It would be to the advantage of our environment, our economy and ultimately our people, to adopt this measure providing for the promotion of bio-organic farming in the Philippines

Approval of this bill is earnestly requested.


JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA
Senator

SEC. 4. *Bio-Organic Farming Authority.* To carry out the policy and the program provided in this Act, there is hereby created a Bio-Organic Farming Authority (BOFA) under the Offices of the President. The BOFA shall have jurisdiction personality and shall consist of a Board of Members (hereinafter referred to as the Board) which shall provide direction and general guidelines for the program, with an Executive Directorate which shall implement the program in its various aspects in accordance with the direction and guidelines of the Board. The various government departments and agencies and the officials thereof named in this Act, in collaboration with private individuals and groups also herein named, are hereby directed to intensify and coordinate their activities with the program of the BOFA.

The BOFA shall ensure the full participation of people's organization (PO's) non-government organizations (NGOs), the general public through mechanism, such as but not limited to, public hearing, meetings, and joint projects.

SEC. 5. *The Board.* Aside from providing the direction and general guidelines for the program, the Board shall supervise its implementation and shall exercise all the powers not otherwise conferred on other bodies and individuals under this Act.

SEC. 6. *Composition of the Board.* The Board shall consist of:

- the Secretary of Agriculture and Food, Chairman;
- the Secretaries (or representatives) of the Department of Science and Technology, Environment and Natural Resources, Education and Culture and Sports, and Local Government;
- the Chairman of the Fertilizer and Pesticides Authority (PFA)
- two (2) representatives of small farmers;
- two (2) representatives of non-government organizations involved in sustainable agriculture for at least three (3) years; and
- two (2) representatives of agriculture state and private colleges and universities, Members.

The representatives of small farmers and of NGOs, and of agricultural state and private colleges shall be chosen by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Food and Science and Technology, respectively, from among nominees submitted to the agency concerned by their respective national organizations. They shall be conversant with bio-organic farming and committed to the policies and program provided under this Act.

SEC. 7. *Organization of the Board.* Within sixty (60) working days from the effectivity of this Act, the national organizations of small farmer, of NGOs, and agricultural colleges and universities shall submit respective nominees the Secretary of Science and technology, as the case may be, who shall evaluate the qualifications of the nominees and appoint the most qualifies member of the Board.

The Chairman shall call the members of he Board, or a majority thereof in not all have designated, a meeting organize themselves and prescribe its rule and procedures for the attainment of the objectives of this Act. A majority if al the members of the Board shall constitute a quorum.

They shall also determine its budget, including travel expenses, allowances and per diems of its non-governmental members when attending official Board meetings or attending to them, and costs of office space, equipment and supplies.

The Board may appoint full-time assistants, Secretaries, and other employees, subject to existing Civil Service rules and regulations.

SEC. 8. Executive Directorate. The Executive Directorate, hereinafter referred to as the Directorate, shall be headed by a full-time Executive Director who shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines not later than thirty (30) working days organizational meeting and whose compensation shall be fixed by the Board. The Executive Director shall be assisted the members of the Directorate, who shall be composed of the following officials and public representatives of private groups, and who are hereby directed to full support and cooperation;

- The Director, Bureau of Soils and Water Management, DAF
- The Director, Bureau of Plant Industry, DAF
- The Director, Agriculture Trading Institute, DAF
- The Director, Bureau Research. DAF
- The Executive Director, Fertilizer Pesticide Authority (FPA)
- A representative, to be designated by the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology;
- A representative, to be designated by the Secretary of the Department of Environment Resources
- A representative, to be designated by the Secretary of the Department of Education.
- A representative, to be designated by the Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government;
- The Executive Director, Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD)
- A representative from the Farmers Cooperative Sector;
- Two (2) other NGOs involved in sustainable agriculture or development from the past three (3) years be chosen by the Secretary of Agriculture and Food from among the nominees of the NGOs sector;
- A representative each of agricultural state and private colleges and universities, to be chosen from among the nominees of national organizations of said colleges universities; and
- Three (3) representatives of small farmers to be chosen by the Secretary of Agriculture and Food from among the nominees of national organizations of small farmers;

All the members or representatives in the Executive Directorate shall conversant with bio-organic farming and committed to the policies and program provided under this Act.

The Executive Director is hereby empowered to call upon any government agency for assistance in the performance of his tasks.

The Department of Agriculture and Food and of Science and Technology shall jointly provide an office and staff for the Directorate.

The salary and office expenses of the Executive Director and the members and staff of the Directorate well as the traveling expenses, allowances

and per diem private representatives in the Directorate attending official Directorate meetings and performing other tasks assigned to them, shall be taken from the appropriations provided under this Act.

SEC. 9. *Appointment of Task.* The Executive Director shall apportion and coordinate the tasks embraced by the program provided in this Act among the various members of the Directorate according to their field(s) of specialization. Such shall include, but are not limited to education, research, extension, training of farmers, training of trainers including the giving or acquisition scholarships and observation grants of here and abroad, pesticide-free IPM, small scale and commercial production of organic farm inputs, an accreditation system to insure sustained their quality, and sustained promotional campaigns. The members the Directorate shall at all times observe cooperation with one another, complement and/or supplement offices and/or organizations in the accomplishment of such tasks.

SEC. 10. *Bio-organic Farming and Protection of the Environment.* Within sixty (60) working days after assuming office and after the first organizational meeting of Directorate, the Executive Director shall and after the first organizational meeting of Directorate, the Executive Director shall submit top the office of the President for approval.

- (a) A report on the setting-up and organization of the Directorate and staff;
- (b) A scheme of distribution and complementation of functions among the members Directorate;
- (c) A plan of bringing the program down to the grassroots, utilizing available personnel and facilities on the local level and those of local government units;
- (d) A pattern of cooperation and mutual assistance with local Government units, POS and NGOs, which will maximize people empowering and participatory approaches to program formulation, implementation and monitoring; and
- (e) A schedule pf short-term, medium-term, and long-term targets.

SEC. 11. *Bio-organic Farming and Protection of the Environment.* The BOFA shall constantly devise implement ways and means not only producing bio-organic of fertilizers other farm inputs and needs on and off the farm but also of helping alleviate to the problems of industrial waste and community garbage disposal through appropriate methods of sorting, collecting, and composting.

Likewise, the BOFA in coordination with the Department of Education shall set-up Bio-organic demonstration farms in various schools nationwide.

The Executive Director shall conduct continuing studies, with consultations among the people and officials as Pos and NGOs, in order to advise local, governments, from the Barangay to the Provincial level, on collection and disposal of garbage and waste in such a way as to provide for the production of organic fertilizer and other farm inputs.

SEC. 12. *Incentives.* The Government shall extend incentives for manufacture and propagation of bio-organic farm inputs by maximizing their use in all government-supported agricultural production, research and programs. The Department of Agriculture (DAF), Department of Science and Technology

(DOST), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Land Bank and other government lending non-leading institutions shall assist organic input procedures through marketing and other services and resources.

SEC. 13. Appropriations. The sum of fifty million pesos (P50,000,000.00) for the effective implementation this Act is hereby appropriated out of any funds in the National Treasury not otherwise appropriated. Thereafter, such amount as maybe necessary for the continuous implementation of the program shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

At least seventy-five percent (75%) of the BOFA's percent budget shall be allotted holistic and integrated scientific research, information, and training of farmers and demonstrations on the farm level, including the provisions of full-time bio-farming extention workers who will work with farmers' associations and cooperatives, Pos, NGOs, barangay assemblies, rural communities, and other groups.

SEC 14. Separability Clause. If any provision of this Act or the application of such provision to any person or circumstance is held invalid for any reason, the other provisions or their application to other persons or circumstances and effect.

SEC 15. Repealing Clause. All laws, decrees, orders, rules, regulations and issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 16. Effectivity. This shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved,