

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1749



Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Clamor for a better food system and higher food budget among the country's prison facilities have been heard as far back the early 2000s. This led to the passage of the Bureau of Corrections Act of 2013 which mandated decent provisions of living quarters, food, water and clothing to inmates. However, the call for a raise in the food budget for the inmates still persisted. This is only expected to rise as the number of admitted inmates swelled by as much as 40 percent in the latter half of 2017². Early this year, the Manila City Jail resorted to buying commercial rice despite its higher price tag due to lack of supply from the National Food Authority³.

To address the need for access to adequate food for the country's penal institutions, this bill proposes to implement Prison Agricultural programs in prison facilities. The program will provide training to prisoners who will be allowed to work and cultivate the arable areas and perform farming activities for their own consumption or to be sold for profit. It aims to help increase rice and food production and recoup money for the inmates' welfare.

The concept of Prison Farms is not new to the Philippines—the Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm in Palawan is one of the many that practice maintaining open-air jails. Along other colony-type penal institutions, there is definitely room for improvement in the penitentiary system in the country.

As such, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.

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Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.**

**AN ACT MANDATING ALL PENAL INSTITUTIONS WITH AREAS SUITABLE FOR
AGRICULTURE TO IMPLEMENT A VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOOD
PROGRAM FOR PRISONERS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

SECTION 1. Prison Agricultural Program. — The Bureau of Corrections shall in coordination with the Department of Agriculture, implement a voluntary agricultural livelihood program in all penal institutions with areas suitable for agriculture. The program shall provide training within their respective penal institution to prisoners who will be allowed to work and cultivate the arable areas and perform farming activities to produce crops and goods for their own consumption or to be sold for profit. The profits derived from the program shall be credited to the Prison Agriculture Revolving Fund.

SECTION 2. Role of the Department of Agriculture. — The Department of Agriculture shall supply the seeds, fertilizers, equipment and other implements necessary for the voluntary agricultural livelihood program and shall provide technical support and advice to prison personnel on the management and maintenance of the prison farm. It shall also provide the prisoners who will participate in the program the necessary training on agriculture, equipment operations, and farming procedures.

The head of the penal institution shall act as the custodian of the agricultural supplies and equipment.

SECTION 3. Voluntary Participation of Prisoners and Their Wages. — The prisoners who will work in the farm shall be chosen upon the recommendation by the head of the penal institution concerned based on a criteria that shall be determined by the Department of Justice (DOJ).

The chosen prisoners shall work on a voluntary basis only, in which case the participant shall be paid the minimum wage rate that is prevailing in the area where the penal institution is located. The compensation shall be paid from the Prison Agriculture Revolving Fund.

SECTION 4. Prison Agricultural Revolving Fund. — Every penal institution implementing the agricultural program shall establish the "Prison Agricultural Revolving Fund," consisting of the earnings derived from the program.

The Prison Agriculture Revolving Fund shall be exclusively and primarily used for the following:

- a. Payment of wages of inmates who work in the prison farm; and
- b. Acquisition of agricultural inputs, seeds and fertilizers and other provisions for farming.

At the end of the year, fifty percent (50%) of the Prison Agricultural Revolving Fund shall be given as dividends to all inmates who participated in the agricultural program; twenty percent (20%) shall be utilized for the improvement of the penal or prison facility; and the remaining thirty percent (30%) shall be the start-up funds for the succeeding year.

SECTION 5. Reportorial Requirement. — The Bureau of Corrections shall, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture, conduct a review of the Prison Agricultural Program every two (2) years and submit a report to both Houses of Congress. Said report shall contain the following information:

- a. Rate of success, failure of the program;
- b. Expenses incurred in the implementation of the program per cropping season;
- c. List of inmates who participated in the program;

- d. Benefits of the program;
- e. Problems encountered in the implementation of the program; and
- f. Recommendation of the heads of each of the penal institutions.

SECTION 6. Appropriations. — The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged to the appropriations for the Department of Agriculture. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Justice shall, in coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture, issue such rules and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 8. Separability Clause. — Should any provision herein be declared unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity of the other provisions of this Act.

SECTION 9. Repealing Clause. — All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other issuances or parts inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. Effectivity Clause. — This Act shall take effect in fifteen (15) days after publication in the Official Gazette or in one (1) newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,