

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **2818**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Introduced by Representative Estrellita B. Suansing

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Agriculture is the perennial backbone of the Philippine economy. Using contemporaneous Philippine statistics, the sector employs a substantial 65%-70% of our workforce. While farming has always been associated with rural areas and done on vast farmlands, farming can also be done in the cities – a practice called urban agriculture. In fact, urban agriculture is now being practiced in many countries all over the world, and in recent years, has been introduced in the country.

This proposed measure seeks to institutionalize integrated urban farming in the highly urbanized cities and municipalities nationwide. This, in turn, will help address food security concerns and regenerate ecosystem functions.

The world population will double in 50 years. Studies have shown that new land will be needed to grow enough food for everyone. Urban agriculture and vertical farming will not only clean our environment and avoid further climate change, but also provide residents with safer, healthier food, at the same time keeping farmers in business. Furthermore, urban agriculture and vertical farming will help reduce poverty.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.¹


ESTRELLITA B. SUANSING

¹ This bill is a re-file of House Bill No. 5597 filed during the 16th Congress.

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House Bill No. _____

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AN ACT
PROMOTING INTEGRATED URBAN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ALL
METROPOLITAN AREAS NATIONWIDE TO ADDRESS FOOD SECURITY CONCERNS
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

1 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Integrated Urban
2 Agriculture Act.”

3 SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
4 reaffirm the fundamental right of every person to adequate food and to be free from hunger.
5 Towards this end, the State shall endeavor to achieve self-sufficiency in food production and
6 the building of climate-resilient communities in the metropolitan areas through the promotion
7 of key reforms for the development and promotion of modern, appropriate, cost-effective and
8 environmentally safe agriculture technologies in order to ensure food security, promote a
9 healthy citizenry and advance an improve quality of life for urban dwellers.

10 SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the term:

11 (a) *Food security* refers to a situation wherein food staples are available at all
12 times, and where all people have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to
13 maintain a healthy and active life;

14 (b) *Integrated urban agriculture* refers to the developmental paradigm that
15 encompasses principles, management, technologies, and the policies relating to the
16 practice and application of agricultural production of food and goods in urban areas;

17 (c) *Urban agriculture* refers to the practice of cultivating, processing and
18 distributing food in or around a village, town or city including animal husbandry,
19 aquaculture, agro-forestry and horticulture;

20 (d) *Urban farming* refers to any act of farming in a city using land or the space of
21 a building, including the roof of a building that is partially or completely covered with
22 vegetation through the use of any growing medium such as pots, plots and
23 membranes;

1 (e) *Vertical farming* refers to the method of farming that is brought to the urban
2 space by employing concepts of indoor agriculture in skyscrapers and other modern
3 buildings;

4 (f) *Community gardens* refer to any piece of land gardenized by a group of people
5 using either individual or shared plots on public or private land with the consent of the
6 owner, to produce edibles, such as herbs, vegetables, fruits or ornamentals.
7 Community gardens may be found in neighborhoods and schools, or connected to
8 institutions such as hospitals or located on the grounds of shared housing such as
9 tenements, apartment complexes and shanty towns;

10 SECTION 4. *Office of Urban Agriculture.* – The Secretary of the Department of
11 Agriculture shall establish within the Department an office to be known as the Office of
12 Urban Agriculture.

13 (a) *Purpose.* – The Office of Urban Agriculture is established for the purpose of
14 coordinating activities throughout the Department related to urban agriculture.

15 (b) *Specific Responsibilities.* – The Office of Urban Agriculture shall be
16 responsible for coordinating Department activities and conducting oversight in the
17 following areas:

18 (1) Ensuring that Department authorities are used to effectively
19 encourage agricultural production in urban communities to combat hunger and food
20 insecurity.

21 (2) Ensuring that Department authorities are used to empower
22 communities, especially communities in urban areas with a large percentage of low-
23 income residents, to eliminate shortages of affordable, fresh food products, increase
24 the local production and sale of food, and create sustainable food systems.

25 (3) Developing a unified strategy to link the agricultural production and
26 nutrition programs administered by the Department as a tool for economic
27 development on urban communities in a manner that addresses local conditions and
28 engages local residents through agricultural economic development.

29 (4) Conducting systematic and regular reviews of the Department's
30 authorities and making policy recommendations to Congress and the Secretary on
31 new authorities or regulation changes to assist urban communities to combat hunger,
32 poor nutrition and food insecurity.

33 (5) Ensuring that the programs established by this Act are
34 implemented in a manner consistent with the goal of poverty reduction, food security
35 and healthy eating habits in urban communities.

36 SECTION 5. *Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Assistance.* – The
37 Secretary shall provide technical assistance in support of backyard and community
38 gardening programs involving small-scale subsistence and personal-use agriculture for the
39 purpose of achieving expanded and improved production, and implementing conservation
40 methods related to small-scale and personal-use production.

1 SECTION 6. *Creation and Composition of the Urban Agriculture Council of the*
2 *Philippines (UACP).* – To carry out the purpose of this Ac, there is hereby established an
3 Urban Agriculture Council of the Philippines (UACP) which shall be attached to the
4 Department of Agriculture. Its task is to promote urban agriculture in the country. The
5 Council shall meet every three (3) months or as often as necessary. The UACP shall be
6 composed of thirteen (13) members:

- 7 (a) The Secretary of the DA, who shall serve as the Chair of the UACP;
- 8 (b) The Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources
9 (DENR);
- 10 (c) The Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- 11 (d) The Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);
- 12 (e) The Director General of the National Economic Development Authority
13 (NEDA);
- 14 (f) The Representative from the National Urban Poor Sector Council of the
15 National Anti-Poverty Commission (NUPSC-NAPC);
- 16 (g) The National President of the League of Cities;
- 17 (h) The National President of the League of Municipalities;
- 18 (i) The Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Food of the Senate;
- 19 (j) The Chair of the Committee on Food Security of the House of
20 Representatives;
- 21 (k) The Representative from the Academe;
- 22 (l) The Representative from the private sector who has the expertise in urban
23 farming; and
- 24 (m) The Lead Convenor of the Urban Agriculture Practitioners Network of the
25 Philippines.

26 The Office of Urban Agriculture which shall be under the Office of the Secretary of
27 the Department of Agriculture shall be the secretariat of the Urban Agriculture Council of the
28 Philippines.

29 SECTION 7. *Powers and Functions of the Council.* – The Council shall have the
30 following duties, powers and functions:

- 31 (a) Formulate the implementing guidelines, programs and operating principles
32 of this Act;
- 33 (b) Study and make recommendations regarding the impact of urban farming in
34 metropolitan communities;
- 35 (c) Monitor and carry out the implementation of this Act;

1 (d) Submit to Congress a report of its findings and recommendations;

2 (e) To exercise all powers and functions necessary for the objectives and
3 purpose of this Act.

4 SECTION 8. *Comprehensive Research on Urban Agriculture.* – For the purpose of
5 this Act, the respective Secretaries of the DA, DOST, DENR and the academic community
6 shall help develop research agenda on urban agriculture and vertical farming in the country's
7 metropolitan areas as an instrument to address food security concerns and regenerate
8 ecosystem functions in the country.

9 Towards this end, idle and/or abandoned government lots and buildings owned by
10 either the national governments or local governments or available land resources in state
11 colleges and universities shall be considered for growing crops livestock and producing food
12 using the said methods.

13 Safety standards, good agricultural practices and good handling practices must be
14 emphasized and promoted at all times, such that DA, DOST, and the local government units
15 (LGUs), together with pertinent agencies should see to its implementation in the promotion
16 of urban agriculture to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards.

17 SECTION 9. *Inclusion of Urban Agriculture in the Educational System.* – Urban
18 agriculture and vertical farming as used in agricultural production shall be integrated in the
19 academic curriculum for elementary, secondary and tertiary level students of both public and
20 private academic institutions for those studying in Agriculture, Practical Arts, Home
21 Economics and/or other subjects related to agriculture.

22 A course curriculum on urban agriculture shall also be developed and included into
23 the regular curriculum of both elementary and secondary education.

24 For colleges and universities, urban agriculture shall form part of the required period
25 of time spent by students in the National Service Training Program (NSTP) or the Citizens
26 Military Training (CMT). A plan, therefore, for the utilization or maximizing space occupied by
27 schools shall be formulated specifically for urban agriculture. Instructional materials shall
28 also be developed.

29 The Department of Education (DepED), in coordination with the Commission on
30 Higher Education (CHED), shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the
31 implementation of this Section within six (6) months from the date of effectivity of this Act.

32 SECTION 10. *Responsibility of Local Government Units.* – The LGUs shall formulate
33 policy on the practice of urban agriculture, utilizing unused spaces and idle lands consistent
34 with its existing policy on the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) and zoning ordinances.
35 This shall require the enactment of local legislation institutionalizing urban agriculture in the
36 LGU and also the enactment of measures or ordinances that will include urban agriculture as
37 a regular component in the annual appropriations of the LGU.

38 All metropolitan LGUs are required to provide assistance in the form of training as
39 well as other benefits or incentives under this Act to residents who adopt urban agriculture.
40 Towards this end, a model or demonstration urban farm/garden shall be developed and
41 which shall be open to the public for visitation and educational purposes.

1 All homeowners' associations, neighborhood associations, community associations,
2 and people organizations including local business establishments shall be encouraged by
3 the LGU shall grant necessary incentives under existing laws for the benefit of the members
4 of the concerned associations or organizations engaged in urban agriculture.

5 SECTION 11. *Information and Education Campaign.* – In order to raise public
6 awareness, and provide education on urban agriculture, the DA shall engage the assistance
7 of the Philippine Information Agency (PIA), the Public Information Office of the urban cities
8 and municipalities, in coordination with the DILG, the DepED, and the CHED, to undertake a
9 national education information campaign.

10 SECTION 12. *Appropriations.* – The funds necessary to carry out the provisions of
11 this Act shall be included and incorporated in the annual general appropriations of the DA
12 under the Office of the Secretary.

13 SECTION 13. *Tax Incentive and/or Tax Credits.* – The owner of the building or a
14 parcel of land utilized for urban agriculture, as defined in this Act, shall receive a real
15 property tax credit for every square meter, consistent with existing tax laws.

16 SECTION 14. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within six (6) months from the
17 effectivity of this Act, the DA and the DOST shall promulgate such implementing rules and
18 regulations necessary for the proper implementation of this Act.

19 SECTION 15. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be declared
20 unconstitutional, any other provision not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

21 SECTION 16. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, issuances, rules and
22 regulations, or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed,
23 modified or amended accordingly.

24 SECTION 17. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
25 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

26 Approved,