

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **2684**



Introduced by Representative Hon. Christopher “Toff” P. de Venecia

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING AN AGRO-INDUSTRIAL BUSINESS CORRIDOR
PROGRAM CREATING FORTHIS PURPOSE THE AQUANEGOSYO CENTERS,
APPROPRIATING FINDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Food security is the primary goal of all nations. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food security exists when “all people have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle at all times”. Over few years, food security has been threatened by challenges which are mainly caused by the rise of population, climate change, occurrence of natural calamities, lack of adequate infrastructure, rising prices, and underdeveloped food production technologies. Based on the Social Weather Station, Filipino who rated themselves hungry are at an estimate 3 million or 11.8 percent of Filipino families. Our country’s hunger profile was categorized as a “serious problem”

As an attempt to curb the hunger problem, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) launched in 2021 their Aqua Negosyo Para sa Pilipino to assist our fisherfolk and other individuals interested in the fisheries sector to be equipped with the proper knowledge and technical skills for a viable agri-business venture.

This bill aims to institutionalize the AquaNegosyo program of the BFAR to provide sustainable fisheries development. This program shall improve value chains, manage spatially defined production clusters along infrastructure corridors, establish public-private-people partnerships, and transform the fisheries sector towards a vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, and equitable Blue Economy. This will allow our aquaculture sector to thrive, and help ease the food security woes of our country.

Thus, support for this bill is earnestly sought.

HON. CHRISTOPHER “TOFF” P. DE VENECIA
Fourth District, Pangasinan

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the ‘*Aqua-Negosyo Program Act*’.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to pursue sustainable economic growth through the rational and sustainable development, conservation, and management of the fishery and aquatic resources in the Philippine waters including those within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and in the adjacent seas, consistent with the primordial objective of maintaining a sound ecological balance, protecting and enhancing the quality of environment in the country.

Towards this end, the State shall implement a long-term program for the development and promotion of aquatic and fisheries resources through conservation and sustainable measures in capture fisheries, scalable aquaculture enterprise development, and technological advances. The State shall also provide a package of support and technical services to the municipal fisherfolk and all relevant stakeholders, including women and youth sectors, for the sustainable development, management and conservation, and protection of the fishery and aquatic resources of the country, consistent with our commitments under international treaties and agreement.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms and phrases shall mean as follows:

- a. **Agro-industrial Business Corridor Program** refers to the program administered by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) of the Department of Agriculture that seeks to promote, establish, and develop sustainable fisheries development by improving food value chains, managing spatially defined

production clusters along infrastructure corridors establishing multi-sectoral public-private-community partnerships, and providing financing for stakeholders.

- b. **Aquapreneurs** refer to fisher folk, budding fish farmers, and other groups or individuals interested in the fisheries sector nationwide with the right knowledge and technical skills for viable agri-business ventures and turn them into entrepreneurs in the fisheries industries.
- c. **Aquatourism** refers to the practice of attracting visitors and tourists to fisheries and aquaculture areas for production, educational, and recreational purposes. It involves any fishery-based operation or activity that brings to a site visitor, tourists, and fisherfolk who want to be educated and trained on fishing, aquaculture, and other related activities, and provides a venue for outdoor recreation and accessible family outings;
- d. **Blue economy** refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, while preserving the ocean ecosystem.

SEC. 4. *The Agro-industrial Business Corridor Program.* – An Agro- industrial Business Corridor Program, herein referred to as the “Program,” is hereby created in every Fisheries Management Area (FMA) to be administered by the BFAR and the NFRDI of the Department of Agriculture.

The Program seeks to promote, establish, and develop sustainable fisheries development by improving food value chains, managing spatially defined production clusters along infrastructure corridors establishing multi-sectoral public-private- community partnerships, and providing financing to transform the fisheries sector towards a vibrant sustainable, inclusive, and equitable Blue Economy.

Under the Program, the NFRDI shall:

- a. Conduct applied research and development for the aquaculture industry with the end-view of increasing productivity, strengthening innovation, and creating employment in the industry, maximizing the DA-BFAR’s capacities and resources including the utilization of the National Technology Centers (NTC) and Technology Outreach Stations (TOS);
- b. Undertake the transfer of completed research outputs and aquaculture technology to end-users or via linkage units of other government agencies;
- c. Create and disseminate to the public relevant and up-to-date instructional materials and modules on aquaculture technology and business processes, ensuring the availability of essential aqua technology information to every Filipino, including Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and fisherfolk Filipinos who can potentially venture into aqua-business;
- d. Undertake provision of technical services and provide training programs to support Aquapreneurs;

Under the Program, BFAR shall:

- a. Optimize the country's existing Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) in the implementation of the Program;
- b. Coordinate with the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Science and Technology in implementing the Program in aspects where collaboration is optimal including scaling, facilities development, and information dissemination;
- c. Achieve global competitiveness of the Philippine aquaculture industry and its ancillary industries;
- d. Identify qualified beneficiaries of the Program, which may include fisherfolk, budding fish farmers, and other individuals interested in the fisheries sector; and
- e. Utilize the facilities of the DA-BFAR as Aqua-tourism sites, in compliance with Republic Act No. 10816 or the '*Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016*,' as a means to popularize the aquaculture industry.

The Program shall be part of the country's Comprehensive National Fisheries Industry Development Plan, the Comprehensive Post Harvest, Marketing and Ancillary Industries Plan, and the FMA Plan of each FMA Management Body.

SEC. 5. General Program Objectives. – The Program shall have the following objectives:

- a. Achieve food security as the overriding consideration in the utilization, management, development, conservation and protection of fishery resources in order to provide the food needs of the population;
- b. Encourage Filipinos to enter into aquaculture businesses as a source of sustainable livelihood;
- c. Develop and utilize technologies and other technological innovations, in compliance with Republic Act No. 11293 or the '*Philippine Innovation Act*,' to improve the productivity of the country's aquaculture industry and the quality of Filipino aquaculture products;
- d. Instill entrepreneurial values to Filipinos, regardless of social class and geographical circumstances;
- e. Improve the lives of fisherfolks, especially of the local communities with priority to municipal fisherfolk;
- f. Attain countryside development by harnessing the natural resources available in the respective localities; and
- g. Achieve a Blue Economy for the country through the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of ocean ecosystem.

SEC. 6. General Benefits, Incentives, and Privileges of Beneficiaries. – Under the Program, registered fisherfolk, budding fish farmers, and other groups or

individuals interested in fisheries shall be granted access to facilities, new research outputs, technologies, instructional materials, and training programs of the DA-fisheries through BFAR and NFRDI.

The strategies in the ABCs may employ varying production schemes including the provision of support facilities and services to ensure the efficiency of the value chains within the ABCs. The support facilities may include production facilities to ensure the availability of quality feeds, fries, or fingerlings, technology incubation parks for facilitating the maturation of technologies, and mariculture parks.

The Program, which has an integrative strategy, will create an environment for industrial proliferation thereby generating more jobs, upgrading and aligning infrastructure development with urban and social agglomerations, unifying domestic markets, linking production centers with global value chains, decentralizing development away from the country's capital city, and creating markets in the lagging regions.

SEC. 7. *One-Stop-Shop for Aquapreneurs.* – The DA BFAR shall establish one-stop-shops, to be known as ‘Aqua-Negosyo Centers,’ in all National Technology Centers and Technology Outreach Stations for the purposes of this Act.

The Aqua-Negosyo Centers shall have the following functions:

- A. Process manual or electronic submissions of applications from prospective Aquapreneurs, pursuant to Republic Act No. 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business Act;
- B. Grant ease of access to the programs of the BFAR and NFRDI; and
- C. Coordinate with other relevant government agencies and institutions in securing access to various forms of financing, including venture capital, for Aquapreneurs.

The DA-BFAR, on behalf of the Aqua-Negosyo Centers, may enter into agreements with relevant agencies to simplify and streamline procedures for licensing and permitting of operating an aquaculture enterprise.

SEC. 8. *Monitoring and Evaluation.* – The DA-BFAR shall issue guidelines and criteria to ensure the efficacy and effectiveness of the Program towards achieving its objectives.

SEC. 9. *Aquatourism.* – The DA-BFAR shall endeavor to promote its facilities in the FMAs as tourism destinations to maximize earning potential, as well as to popularize the Program and aquaculture in general. To this end, the DA-BFAR may collect fees, which shall be used exclusively for the implementation of the Program.

SEC. 10. *Annual Report.* – The DA-BFAR shall submit to the President of the Philippines and to both houses of Congress, not later than the 30th of April of every year following the effectivity of this Act, a report giving a detailed account of the effectivity

and implementation of this Act, including any recommended legislation if applicable and necessary.

SEC. 11. Appropriations. – The amount needed to initially implement the provisions of the Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the current year of the concerned department and agencies. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its implementation shall be included in the appropriation of the concerned department and agencies in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 12. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture shall, in consultation with other concerned government agencies, the industry representatives and non-government organizations promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 13. Separability Clause. – If any part or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 14. Repealing Clause. – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations and other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 15. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,