

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

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS**  
**First Regular Session**

House Bill No. 4279



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

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**AN ACT**  
**PROMOTING FOOD FOREST GARDENING, PROVIDING FUNDS**  
**THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Food forest gardening is seeing resurgence in urban areas worldwide. A food forest is a system of gardening using perennial vegetables chosen to complement and support each other, minimizing weeds, pests, and maintenance while providing a rich variety of harvests. There is a need to adopt the concept of forest gardening to ensure a sustainable method of food production with minimal cost.

This bill seeks to promote and institutionalize Food Forest Gardening in the country as a sustainable land-use system to address the limited resources for sustainable food production with minimal farming costs but increased harvests even in small plots of land. The Philippine Food Forest Gardening Commission (PFFGC) shall be created, attached to the Department of Agriculture (DA), and shall act as the policy-making body for the effective implementation of this Act.

Local Government Units (LGUs), educational institutions, and other stakeholders are mandated to participate in the program. Likewise, the Philippine Center for Food Forest Gardening (PCFFG) shall be established under the Commission to provide information, training, education, expertise, and best practices to implement the Food Forest Gardening Act.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toff/De Venecia', written in a cursive style.

**HON. CHRISTOPHER "TOFF" V.P DE VENECIA**

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

Section 1. *Short Title.* — This Act shall be known as the “Food Forest Gardening Act”

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* — It is hereby declared the policy of the State to build, preserve, and maintain a healthy ecosystem; protect and develop biodiversity and habitats for wildlife; conserve the country’s crop genetic diversity and heirloom plants as a strategy for climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience; and promote public awareness on ecological and sustainable use of land resources for food production and other products. Toward this end, the government, in coordination with the stakeholders in the business Sector, such as land developers and social entrepreneurs, and the civil society, shall promote and integrate Food Forest Gardening by establishing and developing community gardens in the country as a form of sustainable land use system for food production and other agricultural products for economic and societal development.

Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* — For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- a. *Agro-Forestry* — a land use management system in which trees or shrubs are grown around or among crops or pasture land and combines shrubs and trees in agricultural and forestry technologies to create more diverse, productive, profitable, healthy, ecologically sound, and sustainable land-use systems;

- b. *Companion Planting* — planting of different crops in close proximity for ecological pest control, pollination, providing habitat for beneficial creatures, maximizing the use of space, and otherwise increasing the crop productivity;
- c. *Crop Rotation* — the practice of successive planting of different crops on the same land to improve soil fertility and crop yield, reduce soil erosion and help control insects and diseases;
- d. *Ecosystem* — a complex set of relationships among the living resources, habitats, and residents of an area which includes plants, trees, animals, fish, birds, microorganisms, water, soil, and people;
- e. *Forest Gardening* — “multi-layered crop farming” or low maintenance and sustainable method of food production that is based on woodland ecosystems, incorporating fruit and nut trees, shrubs, herbs, vines, and perennial vegetables that yields directly useful to humans and a system of agroforestry that creates a diverse, productive, healthy, ecologically-sound and sustainable system of land use;
- f. *Perennial Vegetables* — plants that live for more than two (2) years; and,
- g. *Sustainable Land-Use Management* — refers to the use of land resources, including soil, water, animals, and plants, for the production of goods to meet changing human needs while simultaneously ensuring the long-term productive potential of these resources and the maintenance of their environmental functions.

Sec. 4. *Institutionalization of the Philippine Food Forest Gardening Program.* — To ensure food security and regenerate ecosystem functions through a system of layers of vegetation, the Philippine Food Forest Gardening Program, hereinafter referred to as the “Program”, is hereby institutionalized. For this purpose, Food Forest Gardening may be established in the following places:

- a. Any parcel or portion of land;
- b. Public spaces such as urban yards or city and municipal parks;
- c. Unutilized and idle public land;
- d. Community or common spaces of land developments;
- e. Portions of rural farms;
- f. Urban housing projects
- g. Idle parcels of land in schools, colleges, and universities; and,
- h. Actual yards of households.

Sec. 5. *Objectives of the Program.* — The following are the objectives of the Program:

- a. To introduce low-maintenance food production through agroforestry;
- b. To establish sustainable food forest gardening using mostly perennial vegetables through crop rotation and companion planting in the country;
- c. To maximize land use and provide a significant source of income for urban and rural communities;
- d. To transform farmers from mere mono-crop cultivators to multi-crop agripreneurs;
- e. To utilize idle lands and consequently create beautiful living spaces;
- f. To serve as a model for the youth inspiring them towards sustainable agriculture; and,
- g. To help farmers build productive farming communities and produce high-quality crops for the country's economy.

Sec. 6. *Creation and Composition of the Philippine Food Forest Gardening Commission.* — There is hereby created the Philippine Food Forest Gardening Commission, hereinafter referred to as the "Commission", which shall be attached to the Department of Agriculture (DA) and shall act as a policy-making body for effective and continuing implementation of the provisions of this Act. It shall be headed by the Secretary of the DA, as Chairperson, and the Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) as Co-Chairperson. The following shall be its members:

- a. Director of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI);
- b. a representative of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
- c. a representative of the Department of Finance (DOF);
- d. a representative of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- e. a representative of the Department of Education (DepEd);
- f. a representative of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);
- g. 2 representatives of the land developers associations; and,
- h. 2 representatives of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in the field of agro-forestry.

Sec. 7. *Powers and Functions of the Commission.* — The Commission shall have the following powers and functions:

1. Formulate framework, plan, and policy for the Philippine Food Forest Gardening at both national and local levels;
2. Prepare a comprehensive manual for the Philippine Food Forest Gardening Program;
3. Formulate guidelines for the food forest gardening training program for Local Government Units (LGUs), concerned agencies, and offices; teachers or instructors of both public and private schools teaching subjects related to agriculture, particularly those under the K to 12 program, and other interested members of society, such as non-government organizations (NGOs);
4. Devise and implement resource development scheme to ensure continued allocation of funds;
5. Assess the overall progress of the food forest training program and review the monitoring and evaluation of results; and
6. Perform such other tasks necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

Sec. 8. *Participation of LGUs.* — All LGUs are hereby mandated to establish the Program which shall focus on implementing comprehensive food forest gardening in their respective levels and jurisdictions. The concerned LGUs shall encourage all home developers, homeowners, neighborhoods, communities, and/or people's organizations to participate in the Program.

Sec. 9. *Incentives.* — Those participating in the Program shall be granted incentives including, but not limited to, exemption from payment of real estate tax, exemption from existing rules and regulations prohibiting farming or growing food in backyards, patios, or houses, and other incentives as may be provided by the Commission and the law.

Sec. 10. *Establishment of the Philippine Center for Food Forest Gardening.* — The Philippine Center for Food Forest Gardening is hereby established, which shall be under the Commission and shall provide information, training, education, expertise, best practices, and networking to implement the food forest gardening program. It shall likewise provide the necessary Secretariat, administrative, and technical support to the Commission.

Sec. 11. *Management Fund.* — For the implementation of this Act, a management fund shall be established for the following purposes:

- a. Research and Development of Food Forest Gardening programs;
- b. Public information and educational campaigns;
- c. Training and capacity buildings; and
- d. Pilot programs of the Commission.

Sec. 12. *Integration of the Program in School Curriculum.* — The Program shall be integrated into the academic curriculum for senior high school and college students taking up Agriculture, Practical Arts, Home Economics, and/or other subjects related to agriculture.

Sec. 13. *Reportorial Requirement.* — The Commission shall be required to submit an annual report on the implementation of this Act to the Senate and House of Representatives on or before the 30th of June of every calendar year.

Sec. 14. *Appropriations.* — The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act is hereby authorized to be appropriated from the budget of the DA, DILG, DOST, DepEd, CHED, and DENR not otherwise appropriated. Thereafter, the funds shall be included in the annual budget of the aforementioned agencies.

Sec. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* — The DA, in coordination with the DILG, DOST, DepEd, CHED, DENR, and other stakeholders, shall promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

Sec. 16. *Separability Clause.* — If any provision of this Act, or any part thereof, shall be declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue in full force and effect.

Sec. 17. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, presidential decrees, proclamations, executive orders, rules, and regulations or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 18. *Effectivity.* — This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in at least a newspaper of general circulation.

*Approved,*