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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
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SENATE

S. No. 2918

Introduced by Senator Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada

**AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE NATIONAL CONVERGENCE STRATEGY FOR
SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT BASED ON THE "RIDGE-TO-REEF"
APPROACH, PROVIDING THE IMPLEMENTING MECHANISMS AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II Section 21 of the 1987 Constitution provides that, "The State shall promote comprehensive rural development and agrarian reform."

Pursuant to this state policy, the Common Framework for Sustainable Rural Development was devised and operationalized in 1999. It was aimed to address the fragmented and piecemeal delivery of rural development efforts. Through the years, the convergence initiative was refined and expanded with four government agencies taking the lead – Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

The strategy anchored on the holistic protection and rehabilitation of natural resources, particularly within major river basins and watersheds, and the establishment of sustainable and environment-friendly agriculture, forestry, and fisheries enterprises, proved successful in reducing poverty incidence and enhancing agricultural yield and income as seen in these examples¹:

¹ National Convergence Initiative for Sustainable Rural Development (NCI-SRD) FAQs.
<https://ncisrd.da.gov.ph/faqs/>

1. Decrease in poverty incidence in Pili Watershed Convergence Area in Bicol region from 41.3% to 32.4%;
2. Increase in rice production in Carood Watershed Convergence Area in Central Visayas from 80 cavans per hectare to 180 cavans per hectare; and
3. Increase in cacao production in Suawan Kulafu Subwatershed Convergence Area located in Davao from 342 kg per hectare to 440 kg per hectare.

This measure seeks to institutionalize the National Convergence Strategy for Sustainable Rural Development (NCS-SRD) that is currently being implemented under DA-DAR-DENR-DILG Joint Administrative Order No. 1, series of 2020.

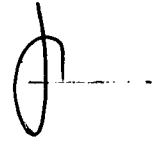
Considering the lamentable fact that farmers, fisherfolk, and individuals in rural areas remained the poorest sectors of our society based on official government statistics despite the immense economic opportunities therein, it is imperative that policies aimed towards inclusive growth and prosperity in the countryside be strengthened.

This measure is also aligned with a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically:

- SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms;
- SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources; and
- SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this measure is recommended.


JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA



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

CHAPTER I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

1
2
3 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "National Convergence
4 Strategy for Sustainable Rural Development (NCS-SRD) Act."

5 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
6 promote and prioritize agricultural development as a means to ensure food security
7 and to provide agro-economic opportunities especially among the rural folks by
8 developing, operationalizing, and harmonizing a common framework for equitable,
9 inclusive, and sustainable rural development through the convergence of the
10 resources of the rural development agencies namely the Department of Agriculture
11 (DA), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Environment and Natural
12 Resources (DENR), and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

13 Towards this end, conservation, protection and rehabilitation of natural
14 resources, including rivers and watersheds, with the establishment of sustainable and
15 environment-friendly agriculture, forestry, and fisheries enterprises are hereby

- 1 d) Civil Society Organization (CSO) – Non-state and non-profit association that
2 works to improve society and human conditions. Basic types of CSOs include
3 non-government organizations, people’s organizations, cooperatives, social
4 movements, professional and business groups.
- 5 e) Convergence Area – Physical area where the NCS-SRD is implemented,
6 which is identified based on a selection criterion, supported by a
7 Convergence Area Development Plan (CADP), proposed by the LGU and
8 approved by the NCS-SRD Executive Board (NEB).
- 9 f) Convergence Area Development Plan (CADP) – A comprehensive plan that
10 contains the strategies, programs, activities, and projects that will promote
11 holistic and sustainable management of all resources within the
12 convergence area.
- 13 g) Convergence Initiative – Complementation of efforts and resources between
14 and among the DA, DAR, DENR, DILG, LGUs, and relevant stakeholders to
15 promote and harmonize the delivery of AFF and rural development services
16 towards sustainable rural development.
- 17 h) Ecosystem – A community of living organisms interacting with each other
18 and with their physical environment.
- 19 i) Information, Education, Communication and Motivation (IECM) –
20 Approaches to combine information, education, communication and
21 motivation into products that could be transmitted over communication
22 channels or multimedia in order to interest or capture targeted clients.
- 23 j) Inclusive Growth – Growth that is rapid enough to matter, given the
24 country’s large population, geographical differences, and social complexity.
25 It is sustained growth that creates jobs, draws the vast majority into the
26 economic and social mainstream, and continuously reduces mass poverty.
- 27 k) Information and Communications Technology (ICT) – Totality of electronic
28 means to access, create, collect, store, process, receive, transmit, present,
29 and disseminate information.
- 30 l) Indigenous People (IP) – Group of people or homogenous societies
31 identified by their self-ascription and ascription by others, who have
32 continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and

1 defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time
2 immemorial, occupied, possessed customs, tradition and other distinctive
3 cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and
4 cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and culture,
5 became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos.

6 m) Key Production Area (KPA) – Priority area, which includes among others
7 Agrarian Reform Areas (ARAs), whose agro-climatic and market conditions
8 favor the production, processing and marketing of specific AFF products.

9 n) Knowledge Management (KM) – Range of strategies and practices used so
10 that pertinent data and information is gathered, processed, disseminated,
11 shared, and utilized to enable the adoption of insights and experiences and
12 to ensure that NCS-SRD programs, activities, and projects are designed,
13 implemented, and monitored in an efficient and effective manner.

14 o) LGU alliances – Inter-local cooperation formed through appropriate
15 ordinances for the purpose of consolidation or coordination of efforts,
16 services, and resources commonly beneficial to them.

17 p) Participatory Approach – Systematic involvement of communities in various
18 aspects and stages of decision-making pertaining to government programs,
19 projects and other interventions.

20 q) People’s Organization (PO) – Grassroots organization legally registered or
21 accredited whose membership is composed of smallholder farmers, small
22 fisherfolk, industrial laborers, women, youth, and others which are formed
23 at the local, regional and national levels. It also includes cooperatives,
24 associations, etc.

25 r) Provincial Commodities Investment Plan (PCIP) – A strategic plan that
26 rationalizes the interventions with the various segments of the value chain
27 of priority commodities that are of significance to the province and that will
28 contribute to the national goals of the agriculture and fishery sectors. It is
29 a three (3)-year rolling consensus plan between the DA and the LGU based
30 on the value chain analyses of these commodities, conducted with strong
31 participation of the various stakeholders.

- 1 s) Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) System – Management
2 tool that aims to keep track of the progress and end result of the project
3 implementation within the convergence areas.
- 4 t) Ridge-to-Reef Approach – Holistic, collaborative, multiple use and
5 sustainable management of all resources within the watershed.
- 6 u) Rural Development – Strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor
7 rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of
8 what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who
9 seek a livelihood in rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits
10 of rural development. The group includes smallholder farmers, small
11 fisherfolk, tenants, and the landless.
- 12 v) Fisherfolk – People directly or personally and physically engaged in taking
13 and/or culturing and processing fishery and/or aquatic resources.
- 14 w) Smallholder Farmers – Marginal and sub-marginal farm households that own
15 and/or cultivate not more than 3.0 hectares of land.
- 16 x) Sustainable Integrated Area Development (SIAD) – Strategy that takes into
17 account area-based interventions, and concepts on integrated island
18 development, and has people and integrity of nature at its core. This is
19 grounded on the basic principles of the Philippine Agenda 21, specifically on
20 the integration of the various overarching dimensions and components of
21 sustainable development and the need for participation of government,
22 business, and civil society as provided for under Executive Order No. 15, s.
23 1992 and Executive Order No. 370, s. 1996.
- 24 y) Sustainable Rural Development (SRD) – Improving the quality of life for the
25 rural poor by developing capacities that promote community participation,
26 health and education, food security, environmental protection, and
27 sustainable economic growth, thereby enabling community members to
28 leave the cycle of poverty and achieve their full potential for the present
29 and future generations.
- 30 z) Watershed – Land area drained by a stream or fixed body of water and its
31 tributaries having a common outlet for surface run-off.

1 **CHAPTER III**

2 **FRAMEWORK AND OPERATIONALIZATION**

3 *Sec. 5. The National Convergence Strategy for Sustainable Rural Development*
4 *(NCS-SRD).* – The National Convergence Strategy for Sustainable Rural Development
5 (NCS-SRD) is a government strategy to address the fragmented delivery of rural
6 development services. Adopting the ridge-to-reef approach as the intervention
7 framework in the convergence areas, the NCS-SRD shall be operationalized in the
8 identified convergence areas, where complementation of efforts and concerted and
9 coordinated interventions from NCS-SRD agencies and other relevant stakeholders
10 interplay to achieve optimum results.

11 *Sec. 6. Criteria for Selection of Convergence Areas.* – The identification and
12 selection of convergence areas shall conform to the ridge-to-reef approach based on
13 the following must and prioritization criteria, which shall be reviewed periodically:

14 **Must Criteria**

- 15 a) *Completeness of ecosystem zones.* The convergence areas should cut
16 across the various ecosystems or should be combination of at least two (2)
17 ecosystems.
- 18 b) *Passer of Good Financial Housekeeping.* This is proof that the LGU has good
19 governance performance in internal housekeeping, particularly in sound
20 fiscal management.

21 **Prioritization Criteria**

- 22 a) *Presence of key production areas for increased productivity and income.* The
23 convergence areas should have tracts of land identified for agro-forestry
24 and fisheries development for major production or with potential for
25 expansion/scaling up and/or connection to allied industries/services for
26 backward and forward integration.
- 27 b) *Combination of areas across major poverty groups.* The convergence areas
28 should cover a significant number of smallholder farmers/agricultural
29 workers, including actual and potential ARBs, small fisherfolk, IPs, upland
30 dwellers, and rural women.
- 31 c) *Involvement of local government leaders of LGUs/LGU alliances.* The
32 convergence area should have LGUs/LGU alliances whose Local Chief

1 Executives (LCEs) and *Sanggunian* are willing to support the Convergence
2 Initiative.

3 d) *Presence of relevant stakeholders/CSOs.* The convergence areas should
4 have active CSOs that are willing to support the Convergence Initiative and
5 be a conduit of interventions in the convergence area. The presence of
6 private business and academic/research institutions that are willing to
7 partner within the convergence area should be an advantage.

8 Additional Criteria

9 a) *Presence of traditional AFF ecosystems and local/indigenous knowledge*
10 *systems and traditional practices.* The convergence areas should have
11 conventional or traditional practices in the AFF ecosystem.

12 b) *Performs as a buffer zone of a protected area.* The convergence areas may
13 be adjacent to a protected area and serve as a buffer zone to provide an
14 added layer of protection to the protected area.

15 c) *Availability of a Local Climate Change Action Plan.* The LGU in the
16 convergence area has an existing plan to address climate change stressors
17 and there may be an organization present that leads in implementing
18 strategies to reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts.

19 CHAPTER IV

20 IMPLEMENTING STRUCTURE AND MECHANISM

21 *Sec. 7. NCS-SRD Agencies.* – The DA, DAR, DENR, and DILG are considered as
22 NCS-SRD agencies. These agencies shall serve as the central planning, coordinating,
23 implementing, and monitoring and evaluating body of the NCS-SRD.

24 *Sec. 8. NCS-SRD Executive Board (NEB).* – The NEB shall act as the policy-
25 making body of the NCS-SRD. The NEB shall be composed of the following or their
26 duly-designated permanent alternates with a rank of an Undersecretary, whose acts
27 shall be considered as the acts of their principals:

28 Lead Convenor : DA Secretary

29 Co-Convenors: : DAR Secretary

30 DENR Secretary

31 DILG Secretary

32 Advisory Board : National Focal Person (Assistant Secretary)

1 In the implementation of this Act, the NCS-SRD Executive Board shall perform
2 the following functions:

- 3 a) Provide overall policy directions for the implementation of
4 programs/activities/projects (PAPs) under the NCS-SRD;
- 5 b) Review the fulfillment of commitments of the respective agencies relative to
6 the implementation of the NCS-SRD;
- 7 c) Appoint or designate the National Focal Person (NFP) with a rank of
8 Assistant Secretary, a Deputy National Focal Person (DNFP) with a rank of
9 Director IV as the permanent alternate representative of the NFP, and a
10 Head National Secretariat. The NFP, DNFP, and Head National Secretariat
11 shall come from the DA as the lead agency, for efficiency purposes;
- 12 d) Approve the implementation and coordination structure of the NCS-SRD,
13 including the membership to the NTWG and the four (4) CWGs through the
14 issuance of a Special Order (SO);
- 15 e) Approve/ratify policy instruments and PAPs pertaining to the operation of
16 the NCS-SRD; and allocate and approve resources to carry out the PAPs of
17 the NCS-SRD, including third-party impact assessment of the convergence
18 areas.

19 *Sec. 9. National Focal Person (NFP) and Deputy National Focal Person (DNFP).*

20 – The NFP shall have a rank of Assistant Secretary and a Deputy National Focal Person
21 (DNFP), as the designated permanent alternate representative to the NFP, shall have
22 a rank of Director IV. The NFP shall directly supervise the National Secretariat which
23 shall have a Head and Deputy Head Secretariat. Plantilla positions shall be created for
24 the NFP and DNFP. The NFP shall convene the members of the NCS-SRD TWG to
25 discuss the status of the NCS-SRD programs, projects, and activities before the
26 conduct of Board meetings. The NFP shall come from the DA as the lead department,
27 the DNFP shall come from the DENR, DAR, or DILG.

28 *Sec. 10. NCS-SRD Secretariat.* – NCS-SRD Secretariat shall be created at the
29 national, regional, provincial and municipal levels.

- 30 a) National Secretariat – The National Secretariat, composed of seven (7)
31 plantilla positions for its technical and administrative functions, shall serve
32 as the main coordinating body of the NCS-SRD. It shall provide technical

1 and administrative support to the four Component Working Groups, NTWG,
2 and the NEB. The National Secretariat shall be lodged at the DA as the Lead
3 Convenor of the NCS-SRD. Filling up the plantilla positions shall prioritize
4 the existing staff of the National Secretariat to ensure continuity of
5 operations. The National Secretariat shall also be headed by a Head
6 Secretariat, followed by the Deputy Head Secretariat, Secretariats for each
7 of the four Component Working Groups and an administrative officer.

8 b) Regional Secretariat – The regional secretariat will be composed of three
9 (3) personnel per region.

10 Sec. 11. *National Technical Working Group (NTWG)*. – The NTWG shall serve
11 as the advisory and recommendatory body of the NEB on matters related to the
12 implementation of the NCS-SRD. It shall be composed of the following or their
13 designated permanent alternate representatives/s:

| | | | |
|----|--------------|---|--------------------------|
| 14 | Chairperson | : | NFP or DNFP |
| 15 | Core members | : | Chairperson, PA CWG |
| 16 | | | Chairperson, AFFECBD CWG |
| 17 | | | Chairperson, CD CWG |
| 18 | | | Chairperson, KM CWG |
| 19 | Secretariat | : | National Secretariat |

20 Sec. 12. *Component Working Groups (CWGs)*. – The planning, budgeting,
21 implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the NCS-SRD shall be done through
22 the four (4) CWGs. These four (4) CWGs are: Policy and Advocacy (PA); Agriculture,
23 Forestry, and Fisheries (AFF)-Enterprise Cluster and Business Development
24 (AFFECBD), Capacity Development (CD), and Knowledge Management (KM). They
25 shall serve as the horizontal or cross-cutting components on issues related to all
26 ecosystems using the ridge-to-reef approach.

27 Each CWG shall have a Chairperson who shall serve on a rotation basis among
28 the DA-DAR-DENR-DILG for a term of three (3) years.

29 Sec. 13. *Regional, Provincial, and Municipal/City Convergence Initiatives*
30 *Technical Working Groups (TWGs)*. – Regional, Provincial, and Municipal/City
31 Convergence Initiatives Technical Working Groups (TWGs) shall be created. It shall

1 act as the regional, provincial, and municipal/city arm of the NTWG and shall mirror
2 the aims of NCS-SRD at the grassroots.

3 *Sec. 14. Other Partner Agencies and Institutions.* – The NCS-SRD agencies, its
4 CWG and TWGs, shall coordinate with other partner agencies and institutions to
5 ensure the complementation and alignment of NCS-SRD interventions with that of
6 other related agencies, offices, and institutions. They shall likewise work with NGOs,
7 coalition groups, farmer and fisherfolk associations and groups, SUCs, and private
8 sector/business groups.

9 *Sec. 15. Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME).* – An RBME system
10 based on indicators of performance aligned with the PDP Results Matrix shall be
11 developed and implemented.

12 **CHAPTER V**

13 **TRANSITORY AND FINAL PROVISIONS**

14 *Sec. 16. Convening of NCS-SRD National Secretariat Office.* – Within sixty (60)
15 days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall convene the
16 NCS-SRD National Secretariat Office.

17 *Sec. 17. Appropriations.* – Funds necessary to carry out the implementation of
18 the NCS-SRD shall be taken from the available funds of the DA, DAR, DENR and DILG
19 under the current General Appropriations Act. Salary for the created plantilla positions
20 of the NFP, DNFP and NCS-SRD National Secretariat shall come from dedicated funds
21 under the DA Office of the Secretary in consideration of the DA as the lead convenor.
22 Salary for the regional secretariat shall come from dedicated funds of their regional
23 office. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the full operation of the NCS-
24 SRD and the staggered implementation of the NCS-SRD plans and programs shall be
25 included in the respective annual budget of the aforementioned Departments in the
26 annual General Appropriations Act.

27 *Sec. 18. Grants and Additional Funding.* – Other sources of funds such as
28 grants, donations, and other forms of assistance from donor agencies, other
29 government agencies, and local and international business community/private sector
30 may be tapped and facilitated by NCS-SRD Executive Board to support the PAPs of the
31 Convergence Initiative, subject to regular auditing guidelines and procedures. Cost-
32 sharing and/or counter parting schemes among NGAs, LGUs, NGOs, private sector,

1 and other institutions shall be encouraged to support the implementation of the NCS-
2 SRD.

3 *Sec. 19. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The implementing rules and
4 regulations of this Act shall be jointly formulated by the NCS-SRD agencies within
5 ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.

6 *Sec. 20. Non-Impairment Clause.* – Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to
7 diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or available to marginalized or
8 basic sectors under existing laws.

9 *Sec. 21. Separability Clause.* – If for any reason, any provision of this Act is
10 declared unconstitutional or invalid, such parts not affected thereby shall remain in
11 full force and effect.

12 *Sec. 22. Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and
13 regulations and other issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Act
14 are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

15 *Sec. 23. Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
16 publication in the *Official Gazette* or a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,