

**[ REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9700, August 07, 2009 ]**

**AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM (CARP), EXTENDING THE ACQUISITION AND DISTRIBUTION OF ALL AGRICULTURAL LANDS, INSTITUTING NECESSARY REFORMS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6657, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW OF 1988, AS AMENDED, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

SECTION 1. Section 2 of Republic Act No. 6657, as amended, otherwise known as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 2. *Declaration of Principles and Policies.* — It is the policy of the State to pursue a Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). The welfare of the landless farmers and farmworkers will receive the highest consideration to promote social justice and to move the nation toward sound rural development and industrialization, and the establishment of owner cultivatorship of economic-size farms as the basis of Philippine agriculture.

"The State shall promote industrialization and full employment based on sound agricultural development and agrarian reform, through industries that make full and efficient use of human and natural resources, and which are competitive in both domestic and foreign markets: *Provided,* That the conversion of agricultural lands into industrial, commercial or residential lands shall take into account, tillers' rights and national food security. Further, the State shall protect Filipino enterprises against unfair foreign competition and trade practices.

"The State recognizes that there is not enough agricultural land to be divided and distributed to each farmer and regular farmworker so that each one can own his/her economic-size family farm. This being the case, a meaningful agrarian reform program to uplift the lives and economic status of the farmer and his/her children can only be achieved through simultaneous industrialization aimed at developing a self-reliant and independent national economy effectively controlled by Filipinos.

"To this end, the State may, in the interest of national welfare or defense, establish and operate vital industries.

"A more equitable distribution and ownership of land, with due regard to the rights of landowners to just compensation, retention rights under Section 6 of Republic Act No. 6657, as amended, and to the ecological needs of the nation, shall be undertaken to provide farmers and farmworkers with the opportunity to enhance their dignity and improve the quality of their lives through greater productivity of agricultural lands.

"The agrarian reform program is founded on the right of farmers and regular farmworkers, who are landless, to own directly or collectively the lands they till or, in the case of other farmworkers, to receive a just share of the fruits thereof. To this end, the State shall encourage and undertake the just distribution of all agricultural lands, subject to the priorities and retention limits set forth in this Act, taking into account ecological, developmental, and equity considerations, and subject to the payment of just compensation. The State shall respect the right of small landowners, and shall provide incentive for voluntary land-sharing.

"As much as practicable, the implementation of the program shall be community-based to assure, among others, that the farmers shall have greater control of farmgate prices, and easier access to credit.

"The State shall recognize the right of farmers, farmworkers and landowners, as well as cooperatives and other independent farmers' organizations, to participate in the planning, organization, and management of the program, and shall provide support to agriculture through appropriate technology and research, and adequate financial, production, marketing and other support services.

"The State shall recognize and enforce, consistent with existing laws, the rights of rural women to own and control land, taking into consideration the substantive equality between men and women as qualified beneficiaries, to receive a just share of the hits thereof, and to be represented in advisory or appropriate decision-making bodies. These rights shall be independent of their male relatives and of their civil status.

"The State shall apply the principles of agrarian reform, or stewardship, whenever applicable, in accordance with law, in the disposition or utilization of other natural resources, including lands of the public domain, under lease or concession, suitable to agriculture, subject to prior rights, homestead rights of small settlers and the rights of indigenous communities to their ancestral lands.

"The State may resettle landless farmers and farmworkers in its own agricultural estates, which shall be distributed to them in the manner provided by law.

"By means of appropriate incentives, the State shall encourage the formation and maintenance of economic-size family farms to be constituted by individual beneficiaries and small landowners.

"The State shall protect the rights of subsistence fishermen, especially of

local communities, to the preferential use of communal marine and fishing resources, both inland and offshore. It shall provide support to such fishermen through appropriate technology and research, adequate financial, production and marketing assistance and other services. The State shall also protect, develop and conserve such resources. The protection shall extend to offshore fishing grounds of subsistence fishermen against foreign intrusion. Fishworkers shall receive a just share from their labor in the utilization of marine and fishing resources.

"The State shall be guided by the principles that land has a social function and land ownership has a social responsibility. Owners of agricultural land have the obligation to cultivate directly or through labor administration the lands they own and thereby make the land productive.

"The State shall provide incentives to landowners to invest the proceeds of the agrarian reform program to promote industrialization, employment and privatization of public sector enterprises. Financial instruments used as payment for lands shall contain features that shall enhance negotiability and acceptability in the marketplace.

"The State may lease undeveloped lands of the public domain to qualified entities for the development of capital-intensive farms, and traditional and pioneering crops especially those for exports subject to the prior rights of the beneficiaries under this Act."

SEC. 2. Section 3 of Republic Act No. 6657, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 3. *Definitions.* — For the purpose of this Act, unless the context indicates otherwise:

"x x x

"(f) Farmer refers to a natural person whose primary livelihood is cultivation of land or the production of agricultural crops, livestock and/or fisheries either by himself/herself, or primarily with the assistance of his/her immediate farm household, whether the land is owned by him/her, or by another person under a leasehold or share tenancy agreement or arrangement with the owner thereof.

"x x x

"(l) Rural women refer to women who are engaged directly or indirectly in farming and/or fishing as their source of livelihood, whether paid or unpaid, regular or seasonal, or in food preparation, managing the household, caring for the children, and other similar activities."

SEC. 3. Section 4 of Republic Act No. 6657, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 4. *Scope.* — The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988 shall cover, regardless of tenurial arrangement and commodity produced, all public and private agricultural lands as provided in Proclamation No.

131 and Executive Order No. 229, including other lands of the public domain suitable for agriculture: *Provided*, That landholdings of landowners with a total area of five (5) hectares and below shall not be covered for acquisition and distribution to qualified beneficiaries.

"More specifically, the following lands are covered by the CARP:

"(a) All alienable and disposable lands of the public domain devoted to or suitable for agriculture. No reclassification of forest or mineral lands to agricultural lands shall be undertaken after the approval of this Act until Congress, taking into account ecological, developmental and equity considerations, shall have determined by law, the specific limits of the public domain;

"(b) All lands of the public domain in excess of the specific limits as determined by Congress in the preceding paragraph;

"(c) All other lands owned by the Government devoted to or suitable for agriculture; and

"(d) All private lands devoted to or suitable for agriculture regardless of the agricultural products raised or that can be raised thereon.

"A comprehensive inventory system in consonance with the national land use plan shall be instituted by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), in accordance with the Local Government Code, for the purpose of properly identifying and classifying farmlands within one (1) year from effectivity of this Act, without prejudice to the implementation of the land acquisition and distribution."

SEC. 4. There shall be incorporated after Section 6 of Republic Act No. 6657, as amended, new sections to read as follows:

"SEC. 6-A. *Exception to Retention Limits.* — Provincial, city and municipal government units acquiring private agricultural lands by expropriation or other modes of acquisition to be used for actual, direct and exclusive public purposes, such as roads and bridges, public markets, school sites, resettlement sites, local government facilities, public parks and barangay plazas or squares, consistent with the approved local comprehensive land use plan, shall not be subject to the five (5)-hectare retention limit under this Section and Sections 70 and 73(a) of Republic Act No. 6657, as amended: *Provided*, That lands subject to CARP shall first undergo the land acquisition and distribution process of the program: *Provided, further*, That when these lands have been subjected to expropriation, the agrarian reform beneficiaries therein shall be paid just compensation."

"SEC. 6-B. *Review of Limits of Land Size.* — Within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act, the DAR shall submit a comprehensive study on the land size appropriate for each type of crop to Congress for a possible review of limits of land sizes provided in this Act."

SEC. 5. Section 7 of Republic Act No. 6657, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 7. *Priorities.* — The DAR, in coordination with the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) shall plan and program the final acquisition and distribution of all remaining unacquired and undistributed agricultural lands from the effectivity of this Act until June 30, 2014. Lands shall be acquired and distributed as follows:

"Phase One: During the five (5)-year extension period hereafter all remaining lands above fifty (50) hectares shall be covered for purposes of agrarian reform upon the effectivity of this Act. All private agricultural lands of landowners with aggregate landholdings in excess of fifty (50) hectares which have already been subjected to a notice of coverage issued on or before December 10, 2008 rice and corn lands under Presidential Decree No. 27; all idle or abandoned lands; all private lands voluntarily offered by the owners for agrarian reform: *Provided*, That with respect to voluntary land transfer, only those submitted by June 30, 2009 shall be allowed *Provided, further*, That after June 30, 2009, the modes of acquisition shall be limited to voluntary offer to sell and compulsory acquisition: *Provided, furthermore*, That all previously acquired lands wherein valuation is subject to challenge by landowners shall be completed and finally resolved pursuant to Section 17 of Republic Act No. 6657, as amended: *Provided, finally*, as mandated by the Constitution, Republic Act No. 6657, as amended, and Republic Act No. 3844, as amended, only farmers (tenants or lessees) and regular farmworkers actually tilling the lands, as certified under oath by the Barangay Agrarian Reform Council (BARC) and attested under oath by the landowners, are the qualified beneficiaries. The intended beneficiary shall state under oath before the judge of the city or municipal court that he/she is willing to work on the land to make it productive and to assume the obligation of paying the amortization for the compensation of the land and the land taxes thereon; all lands foreclosed by government financial institutions; all lands acquired by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG); and all other lands owned by the government devoted to or suitable for agriculture, which shall be acquired and distributed immediately upon the effectivity of this Act, with the implementation to be completed by June 30, 2012;

"Phase Two: (a) Lands twenty-four (24) hectares up to fifty (50) hectares shall likewise be covered for purposes of agrarian reform upon the effectivity of this Act. All alienable and disposable public agricultural lands; all arable public agricultural lands under agro-forest, pasture and agricultural leases already cultivated and planted to crops in accordance with Section 6, Article XIII of the Constitution; all public agricultural lands which are to be opened for new development and resettlement: and all private agricultural lands of landowners with aggregate landholdings above twenty-four (24) hectares up to fifty (50) hectares which have already been subjected to a notice of coverage issued on or before December 10, 2008, to implement principally the rights of farmers and regular farmworkers, who are landless, to own directly or collectively the lands they till, which shall be distributed immediately upon the