[DA ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 21, S. 2005, July 07, 2005]

ESTABLISHING THE AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY CENTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WHEREAS, biotechnology is a vital tool for research and development (R & D) with a great potential for delivering products and technologies that will enhance agricultural productivity and profitability, and eventually improve the well-being of the Filipinos;

WHEREAS, the commercialization of biotech products is needed to enable Filipino farmers to complete in a globalized economy and to deliver solutions to technical problems affecting crops, livestock and fisheries;

WHEREAS, the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) of 1997 recognizes biotechnology as a tool for modernizing agriculture, but only a limited portion of the total annual budget for agricultural research expenditures is being allocated for biotechnology;

WHEREAS, the consolidation of biotechnology into a R & D framework in the DA would facilitate and promote efficient use of government resources, allow scientific exchange between scientists engaged in biotech research and unrestrained access to available technologies, and enable the DA to effectively craft and implement a market-driven national agricultural biotechnology agenda, guided by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's 10-point agenda for national development;

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 162 issued on October 16, 1999 provides that the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture may group, integrate and merge agencies/units to ensure coordination of actions, particularly in the implementation of action programs of the Department, and authorizes him to determine the agencies or attached agencies and corporations necessary to carry out the Department's mandate and reoriented roles as provided under the AFMA;

WHEREAS, this proposal to establish the agricultural biotechnology center will not entail creation of new positions and is consistent with the rationalization efforts of the government;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), having state-of-the-art biotechnology facilities, highly trained biotechnology experts and practitioners, corporate and fiscal flexibility, management and financial experience and expertise essential for commercialization of agricultural biotechnology, and being the lead institution for the national rice R &D network, is the agency that could provide an environment most conducive for conducting and coordinating agricultural biotechnology R & D;

WHEREAS, a network of existing DA research centers is in place that conducts agricultural biotechnology R & D and with facilities and manpower that can be tapped and be pooled to save on meager government resources, consistent with government's rationalization efforts and thrust for establishment of small and medium scale enterprises;

WHEREAS, this network consists of the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA), the National Tobacco Administration (NTA), the Fiber Industry Development Authority (FIDA), the Cotton Development Administration (CODA), the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), National Dairy Authority (NDA), National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS), other agricultural biotechnology research centers of the DA Regional Field Units (RFUs), the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) and its Network of Agricultural Biotechnology R & D Agencies, and others;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARTHUR C. YAP, Secretary of Agriculture, by virtue of the powers vested in me by Section 7 of Executive Order No. 292 (Administrative Code of 1987) dated July 27, 1997 and Sections 2 and 9 of Executive Order No. 162 dated October 18, 1999, do hereby issue this ORDER promulgating a legal and institutional framework for rationalizing agricultural biotechnology R & D and commercialization in the Department of Agriculture within the corporate structure of the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija to be called the Agricultural Biotechnology Center, as follows:

I. GOAL OF THE CENTER

The Center shall have the main goal of implementing a rationalized, effective and efficient agricultural biotechnology research and development agenda for the Department of Agriculture with the end view of generating improved agricultural technologies, productivity and enhanced commercial potential, value, and activities for crops, livestock and fisheries. This goal will result in the creation of more jobs, establishment of small and medium enterprises engaged in the commercialization of agricultural biotechnology, increased farmer and agricultural biotechnology innovators' incomes, and contribute to the attainment of national food security and global competitiveness.

II. POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CENTER

The Center shall have the following powers and functions:

1. To develop and commercialize agricultural biotechnology and derive income thereof for the benefit of its innovators and to support its operations.

2. To rationalize agricultural biotechnology R & D and commercialization agenda for crops, livestock, and fisheries within the DA.

3. To establish and operate a bioinformatics facility, including networks and servers, for efficiently accessing, managing and utilizing biotechnology-related information.

4. To train a cadre of young scientists from the DA, including students, in cutting-edge biotechnology tools and applications, including genomics and bioinformatics, in order to enhance national capacity for biotechnology development and commercialization.

5. To seek, consolidate, process and disseminate relevant information on the benefits and risks of crops, livestock and fisheries biotechnology.

6. To negotiate and receive funding from local and international, public and private, donors communities, and forge modes of beneficial collaborations with them.

7. To extend technical and scientific support to assist the research work of all research centers and units of the Department network engaged in biotech research upon request.

8. To perform other functions necessary for the accomplishment of the goal of the Center.

III. PRIORITY COMMODITIES

Guided by AFMA and the policy and strategic framework of the DA, the Agricultural Biotechnology Center, through its Governing Board shall develop a focused biotechnology R & D agenda initially for the following commodities, and for other crops which it may identify or determine as necessary in the long term;

1. Rice
2. Corn (white corn)
3. Coconut
4. High-Value crops such as mango, garlic, onion, eggplant, cotton, tobacco, sugarcane, banana, abaca and other crops that will be identified later on as priority crops
5. Cattle (dairy and beef)
6. Carabao
7. Small Ruminants (sheep and goat)
8. Non-Ruminants (Hog, chickens and ducks)
9. Fish and other priority aquatic resources such as bangus and tilapia

IV. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

1. State-of-the-art genomics and biotechnology facilities and manpower for the crops, livestock and fisheries sectors are to be put in place at the Agricultural Biotechnology Center based at PhilRice and other centers of excellence;

2. Focused, resource-efficient, globally competitive and market-driven biotechnology agenda for the country's most important crops, livestock and aquatic resources are developed for sustained implementation;

3. Databases and knowledge management systems for bioinformatics are generated and shared among the country's biotechnology practitioners and clients;

4. State-of-the-art biotechnology approaches are applied to enhance productivity and profitability of key crops, livestock, and fishery commodities of the Philippines;

5. Products and processes derived from biotechnology that can increase productivity, profitability, sustainability, and improve human health are developed;