

ENHANCING LABELING, STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE, ORGANIC AND ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Go Organic! Philippines is a movement of people’s organizations, non-government organizations, members of the academe and local government officials that aims to systematically promote organic agriculture in the Philippines. For more information please go to www.goorganicphilippines.com.

Executive Summary

Sustainable, organic and ecological (SOE) agriculture in the Philippines today is steadily being mainstreamed in official government policy as a key strategy for broad based growth and development. It is a change strategy that aims at addressing the long standing problems faced by the sector including (a) declining farm productivity; (b) declining incomes, increasing indebtedness and persistent poverty among farmers and fisherfolks; (c) increased health risks of farms and the consuming public; and, (d) deteriorating condition of the environment.

While the Philippine government has taken the important steps in defining the policy environment, instituting programs and even allocating financial resources for the promotion of SOE agriculture, there remains much work to be done in terms of harmonizing all available policy tools to markedly contribute to the speedy migration of agriculture in the country from being predominantly conventional to being predominantly SOE. This includes enhancing the policy and regulations governing labeling, standards and certification.

As such it is critical for the country to have in place a comprehensive and well defined labeling, standards and certification system that will address the following social and economic objectives: (a) for producers, better prices for their products as well as the shift in consumer preference; (b) for consumers, better informed choices and protection from unscrupulous sellers; and, (c) for the public and society in general, improved welfare, in terms of health and the environment. It should not simply serve as a regulatory instrument aimed at consumer protection. It should be an integral component of government's incentive structure for SOE agriculture producers as well.

Consequently, there is a need to develop a labeling, standards and certification policy that (a) recognizes the current state of SOE agriculture in the Philippines; and, (b) encourage and provide price and market incentives for agriculture producers and farmers who are shifting to and pursuing SOE agriculture.

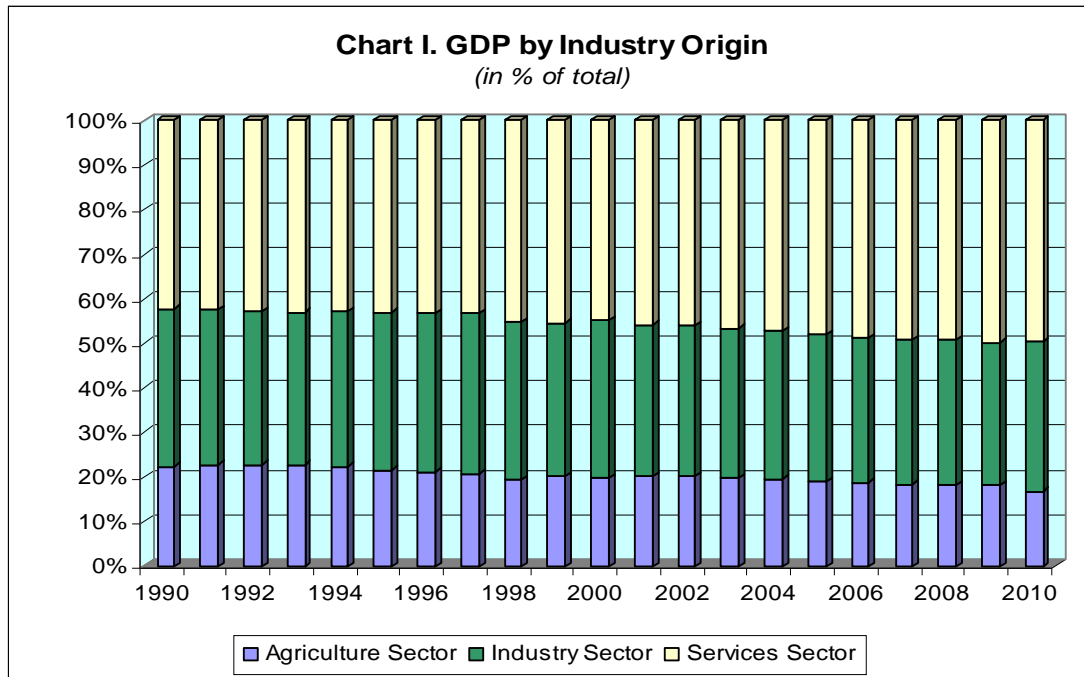
As it is currently framed the current policy environment on labeling, standards and certification only contributes to these defined goals and objectives in a limited way. As such these policies must be enhanced. In the immediate, there is a need update the Philippine National Standard on Organic Agriculture and a need to review the prescribed transition period which will eventually disallow non-third party certification for organic products in the country.

More importantly, however, there is a need to develop and institute labeling, standards and certification for products of farms still on their transition to becoming fully organic. Agriculture product labeling should, in fact, extend to requiring products grown using conventional technologies to be labeled with appropriate information on fertilizers and pesticide they utilized.

In doing so, agricultural product labeling, standards and certification, serves a contributing rather than a hindering/limiting factor in terms of achieving the country's agriculture sector growth and development.

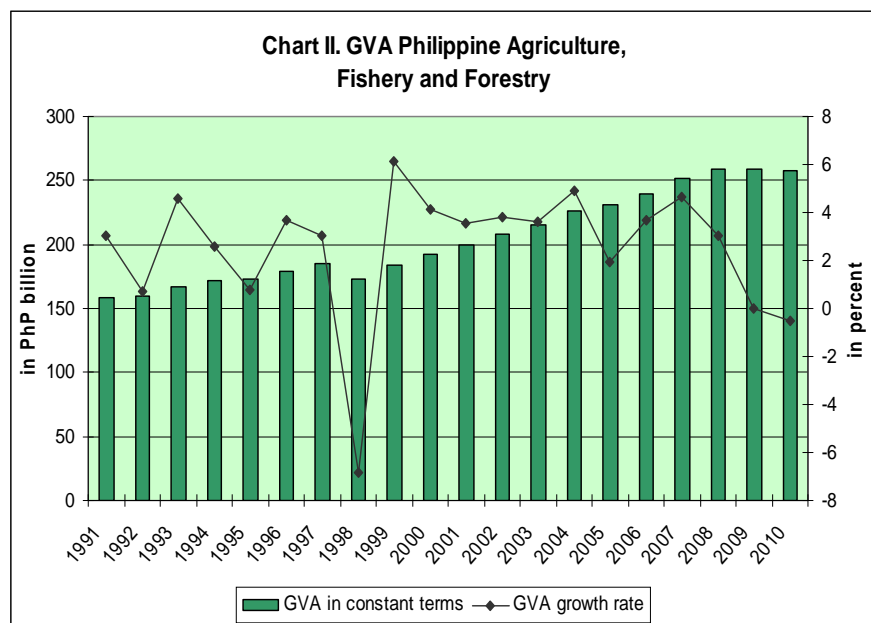
1.0 Brief Overview of the Philippine Agriculture Situation

While the Philippine has been often described as a primarily agricultural economy, a review of country's income accounts shows the declining share of agriculture, fishery and forestry production to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). In the span of 25 years, sector share of agriculture to GDP is down to 16.8 percent by 2010 from almost 25 percent in 1985.



Source: Economic and Social Statistics Office, National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB)

Nevertheless, almost half of the country's lands or 13 million hectares is devoted to agriculture production. There is a steady although small increases in agriculture, fishery and forestry production over the past 20 years with the sector's gross value added (GVA) reaching PhP 258,081 million in 2010.

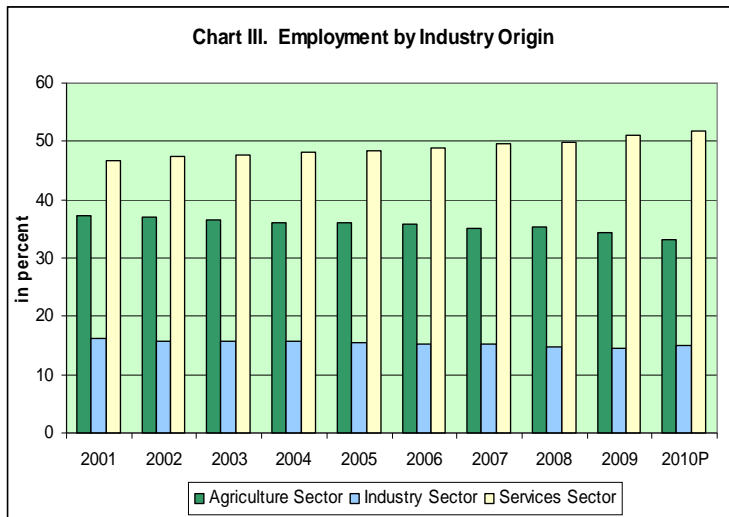


Source: NSCB

However, GVA growth has been cyclical due to the sector's increasing vulnerability to extreme weather events. As seen in Chart II, every three (3) years there is a

period of high growth, followed by a two (2) year decline in GVA growth with the third year in the cycle posting the lowest GVA growth rate. There are two exceptions. In 2004, a period of high growth was recorded instead of the usual low growth on the third year of the cycle while in 2010, GVA growth rate dropped to -0.52 percent instead of an expected period of high growth.

In 2010, the agriculture, fishery and forestry sector employed almost 12 million individuals accounting for 33 percent of total employment in the country. Over the past ten years, there is a slow but steady decrease in agriculture sector employment.



Source: Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics

Compounding the challenges faced by the Philippine agriculture sector is the fact that it accounts for majority of the Philippine's poorest, an estimated 66 percent. Philippine farms are characterized by stagnating productivity and declining farmers' income. On the average annual income of farm households are almost 30 percent lower than the average family income in the Philippines. Poverty incidence among fisherfolks and farmers are estimated at 49.9 percent and 44 percent respectively.¹

The stark irony of Philippine agriculture is best exemplified by its rice industry. By 2009, the Philippines stand as the 8th largest rice producer in the world producing an estimated 2.8 percent of global rice production. Ironically, by 2010 the Philippines also became the world's largest rice importer.²

Average Annual Family Income, Philippines <i>from the National Statistics Office</i>	PhP 148,000.00
Average Annual Farm Household Income <i>from the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics</i>	PhP 106,181.00
Variance	PhP 41,819.00
Variance in percent	28.26 %

Many studies undertaken by members of the academe, institutes, non-government organizations both local and international as well as some government institutions attribute

¹ 2006 Poverty Statistics for the Basic Sectors, National Statistical Coordination Board, June 2009.

² "2009 Crop Production Statistics". FAO Stat. FAO Statistics, retrieved 30 March 2011 and "Factbox - Top 10 rice exporting, importing countries". Reuters. 28 January 2011, retrieved 30 March 2011.

the dire situation of the country's agriculture sector on the weaknesses in public policy, program support and institutional environment.³ These include inadequate public investments in critical local rural infrastructure like irrigation; post-harvest facilities and equipment; technology capacity building at the local or community level; research and development; capital and credit assistance; and, product development and marketing support.

At the core of the agriculture sector's problem is the failed promise of modern conventional agriculture. For the past 40 years the Philippine government's program for agriculture has been anchored on the "Green Revolution". This has structurally shaped the practice of agriculture in the following ways: (a) increase in rice mono-cropping; (b) increase in the use of hybrid seed varieties; (c) increase in the use of chemical fertilizers; (d) increase in the use of chemical pesticides; and, (e) increase in the use of powertillers.⁴

Within this system farmers' indebtedness has increased; net income of farmers have declined; health risks among farmers from the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides increased; and, health risks among the general public due to residual chemical content of food products increased. In addition, chemical intensive farming has contributed to at least 33 percent of the country's green house gas emissions.⁵

The clamor to effect a decisive shift in public policy towards mainstreaming sustainable, organic and ecological agriculture systems began earlier on and heightened during the mid 1980's when it was clear that the "green revolution" could not address sustainably the deteriorating condition of the country's agriculture sector. Among the first and most ardent advocates for this policy shift came from citizens' organizations, non-government organizations, people's organizations and members of the academe.



³ See references, as cited, on Agriculture and Organic Agriculture Situation in the Philippines.

⁴ Zamora (2009).

⁵ Merila, M.G.A.D. (2001).

Sustainable, organic and ecological (SOE) agriculture is a broad based growth and development strategy aimed at revitalizing the flailing Philippine agriculture sector. In particular, it seeks to address several inter-linked objectives:⁶

- ❑ Improving farm productivity primarily addressing the poverty situation of farmers. Job generation in the agriculture sector can only be achieved if the sector becomes a viable livelihood for farmers, farm workers and farming communities.
- ❑ Increased farmers income result from enhanced capacity of farmers, affordability of farm/production inputs, crop diversification and risk management among others. Viable farms boost over-all agricultural productivity, competitiveness and ultimately contributing to national food security.
- ❑ Apart from contributing to agricultural productivity, SOE agriculture also minimizes health risks of farmers that are repeatedly exposed to toxic and hazardous materials resulting from conventional chemical intensive farming practices.
- ❑ Making available agricultural products from SOE also promote over-all food and nutrition security of the country. A shift to unpolished rice can have an immediate impact on the rice stock consequently rice self sufficiency targets of the country. Estimated loss due to milling, when shifting to unpolished rice, is reduced by 20 percent. SOE agriculture products are also healthier since it does not use chemical inputs.
- ❑ SOE agriculture can contribute to developing an export niche for the country's agricultural produce given the growing global demand for organic and organically grown products. Value-adding can also be integrated to SOE agriculture given the growing global demand for organic and organically grown herbal and medicinal products.
- ❑ With SOE farming and production systems combined with traditional and indigenous farmers practice and knowledge, the coping and adaptive capacity of farms in building resilience to climate related impacts can be increased and the vulnerability and risks can be spread and minimized.

2.0 Recent Developments on Sustainable, Organic and Ecological Agriculture (SOE) in the Philippines

The past decade saw the institutionalization of landmark national policy initiatives on organic agriculture in the Philippines. Providing significant contribution to these gains are the non- government organizations (NGOs), citizen leaders, church people and the academe who have worked and advocated for the mainstreaming of sustainable, organic ecological agriculture as the appropriate development strategy for Philippine agriculture.

⁶ Adopting Sustainable, Organic and Ecological Agriculture as a Priority Strategy for Broad-Based Growth for the Chapter on Agriculture of the 2011-2016 MTPDP, by the La Liga Policy Institute and Go Organic! Philippines, November 2010.

Also contributing to the improvement in the policy environment catapulting SOE agriculture as a national policy priority are the following factors:

- a. The global fuel and food crisis that resulted in the increase of cost of synthetic and chemical based farm inputs resulting to decreasing agricultural production and declining income margins among farmers. The decrease in production due to the high cost of farming inputs led to shortage in the supply of basic food commodities and staples.
- b. Climate change has increased the vulnerability of the Philippine agriculture. Extreme weather events such as super typhoons, severe flooding and drought have altered production patterns and contributed further to the deterioration of soil quality and water supply.
- c. The changing lifestyle among a growing number of Filipinos particularly those living in urban areas led to an increased demand for healthier food and preference for chemical free agricultural produce.

Slowly SOE agriculture found its place in the national policy agenda for Philippine agriculture. And in recognition of the key role and influence played by non state actors in the mainstreaming of SOE agriculture, most policies that were crafted promotes and institutionalizes partnership mechanisms and collaborative efforts among the state and citizens groups in policy enhancement and program implementation. Among the more notable policies undertaken within the past 10 years are discussed below.

2.1 Executive Order (EO) 481 of 2005 This Presidential directive declared organic agriculture as a state policy and seeks its development and promotion nationwide. The EO created the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB) as a mechanism for the formulation of policies, programs and projects on organic agriculture. The NOAB is composed of representatives from national line agencies, farmers, producers, traders and NGOs.

2.2 Department of Agriculture Special Order 470 of 2008: The Organic FIELDS Support Program (OFSP) OFSP was a complementary program to the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Rice Self-Sufficiency Program that trained and organized a targeted number of farmer beneficiaries on organic fertilizer production and organic farming. It also promoted awareness and strengthened partnerships between DA, LGUs, NGOs, community based organizations and the academe around sustainable agriculture. Complementing this project was a commitment by the DA to convert 10 percent of Philippine rice lands into organic farms.

2.3 Republic Act (RA) 10068: The 2010 Philippine Organic Agriculture Law RA 10068 is the law that governs organic agriculture in the Philippines. It provides for a clear appropriation in the DA's annual budget for the support and promotion of the country's organic agriculture program. It instituted mechanisms for national and local implementation of organic agriculture that involves national line agencies and local government units. The participation of citizens in the development, implementation and monitoring of plans to be pursued by the national government

for organic agriculture is also guaranteed. The law also prescribes guidelines for labeling and certification procedures for organic agriculture products.

2.4 Department of Agriculture's Agri-Pinoy Agri-Pinoy is the ongoing strategic framework being pursued by the incumbent leadership of the Philippine DA which seeks to improve the condition of Philippine agriculture and achieve food self sufficiency within the next three years. The program is rooted on sustainable farming systems. It seeks to promote interventions that would increase productivity and ensure sustainability of resources and at the same time minimizing the dependence of the country on food imports. The program also includes promotion of agriculture among the next generation of Filipinos.

2.5 Philippine Development Plan (PDP) for 2011 to 2016 The PDP serves as the development blueprint of the Philippine government. Under its chapter on agriculture, the PDP has recognized as a key national strategy the promotion of environment friendly sustainable production systems, such as organic agriculture and good agriculture practices. The Plan incorporated climate change as a cross cutting strategy to address the problems besetting Philippine agriculture. The new PDP also prescribed as one of its legislative agenda the enactment of a Food Safety and Labeling Law.

2.6 Several Modes of SOE Agriculture in the Philippines

At present, there are several sustainable agriculture systems practiced in the Philippines in contrast to conventional or chemical farming. These systems can be considered as part of an overall process towards conversion to full organic agriculture although they can be treated as a distinct and viable agriculture approaches. The following are the prevalent modes of SOE agriculture practice in the Philippines:

- a. **Balanced Fertilization System (BFS)**, a sensible use and combination of organic and inorganic fertilizers to address the increasing costs for fertilizers while sustaining the targeted optimum yield.
- b. **Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture (LEISA)**, combines the best traditional inputs with organic, mineral, and inorganic sources to suit crop and soil requirements in order to attain higher agricultural yields.
- c. **Biodynamic Farming**, activates the life of soil and plants through application of substances derived from animal manure, herbs and mineral in very small amounts.
- d. **Organic Agriculture**, a system that dramatically reduces external inputs by refraining from the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and pharmaceuticals and a system of crop cultivation that uses biological methods of fertilization and pest control.

2.7 Estimates of Organic Agriculture Production in the Philippines

There is no official baseline information on organic agriculture production in the Philippines. The broad description is that the organic agriculture section in the country is at its infancy

stage and therefore the volume of production as well as area planted to organic products remains small. Table II summarizes varying estimates on the size of organic agriculture in the country.

Organic Produce (General)	Certified	Vol., in Kgs	Hectares	Estimate as of (year) and Source of Data
	-	-	2,000	Foreign Agriculture Service, USDA
	-	-	3,500	2004, IFOAM
	Y*		14,410	International Trade Center Data
	Y*		39,459	2006, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)
	Y**		25,310	2006, DTI
	-		2000	1997, Willer and Yussefi (2004)
	-		2,250	2004, PhilDRHHA
Rice	-	3,827,391	7,066	2009, Organic Certification Center of the Philippines (OCCP)
	-		1,754	MASIPAG
	-	1,754		2001, PhilDHRRA
	-	6,000		2000, Briones (2002)
Sugar	Y*		150	2006, DTI
	-	10,000	122	2009, OCCP
Coconut	Y*		450	2006, DTI
	-	1,440	64	2009, OCCP
Banana	Y*		225	2006, DTI
	-		509	2009, OCCP
Coconut and Banana	Y*		13,550	2006, DTI
Abaca	-	2,000	-	2009, OCCP
Cassava	-	74,000	-	
Corn	-	89,573	26	
Elemi Resin	-		10	
Fruits	-	486,300	76	
Fruits and Vegetables	-	64,400	15	
Henna	-	1,000	39	
Herbal Crops	-	-	39	
Lemon Grass	-	21,000	5	
Mango	-	23,500	1	
Papaya	-	22,281	15	2009, OCCP
Peanuts	-	19,500	13	
Root Crops	-	63,050	-	
Upland Rice	-	250	1	
Vegetables	-	62,387	12	
Watermelon	-	1,902	-	

*certified by Foreign Certifying Bodies

**BCS-OEKO Certified (Independent Certifying Body based in Germany)

2.8 Growing Local and Export Demand for SOE Agriculture Products

The organic market in the Philippines has been described as a “niche” market and one rarely sees organic products being sold within communities or on wet markets. Largely since organic products are marketed at a considerably higher price.

Based on the 2000 data by the Foreign Agriculture Service of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), the local organic product market in the Philippines is estimated to be worth UsD 6.2 million.⁷ In contrast, more recent data from the Philippine Development Assistance Program (PDAP) estimate the local organic product market to be worth between UsD 20 million to UsD 30 million.⁸

To date, organic products are slowly penetrating the shelves of large supermarket chains and restaurants, with prices almost in parity with conventional agriculture counterparts. This is due to the growing health and wellness trends in the country.

On the other hand, exports of Philippine organic product are estimated to have reached UsD 18 million in 2006.⁹ Majority of the crops organically grown in the Philippines, mainly fruits and sugarcane, actually target the export market.

3.0 Labeling, Standards and Certification as Key Policy Tool for SOE Agriculture

Revitalizing the Philippine agriculture sector is an urgent and huge task faced by all development stakeholders. The government in particular has taken the important step of defining the policy, development plan, program environment and even the initial resource allocation for the scaling up of SOE agriculture in the country. To promote on a nationwide scale the shift to sustainable agriculture, the necessary package of public investments must be made available, policy tools implemented and appropriate incentives provided to farms (whether small or commercial) and to farmers who will undertake the shift to SOE agriculture as well as incentive mechanisms for SOE product wholesalers, retailers, buyers and consumers.

Among the important policy tool available to government that can potentially promote the shift to SOE agriculture is the policy on labeling, standards and certification. Worldwide there are a growing number of organically grown and organic food products that are enjoying a price premium because a generation of consumers, although still not a majority, has proven that they are willing to pay higher prices for agricultural products that are produced, manufactured and processed without chemical fertilizers and pesticides. A well defined labeling, standards and certification policy has the potential to address the following social and economic objectives: (a) for producers, better prices for their products

⁷ Pearl 2 (2007) "Technical Paper #1: State of the Sector Report – Philippine Organic Products", downloaded from www.philexport.ph, May 5, 2011.

⁸ PDAP (n.d) "PDAP as an Institution", downloaded from www.pdap.net, May 5, 2011.

⁹ Cruzada E. (n.d) "Masipag farmers: Beyond putting food on the table", downloaded from www.masipag.org, May 5, 2011.

as well as the shift in consumer preference; (b) for consumers, better informed choices and protection from unscrupulous sellers; and, (c) for the public and society in general, improved welfare, in terms of health and the environment.

The labeling, standards and certification policy should not simply serve as a regulatory instrument aimed at consumer protection. More importantly, it should be an integral component of government’s incentive structure for SOE agriculture producers. Consequently, there is a need to develop a labeling, standards and certification policy that (a) recognizes the current state of SOE agriculture in the Philippines; and, (b) encourage and provide price and market incentives for agriculture producers and farmers who are shifting to and pursuing SOE. Agricultural product labeling, standards and certification, over-all must contribute to rather than become a hindering factor in terms of achieving the country’s agriculture sector growth and development.

4.0 Labeling, Standards and Certification in the Philippines

4.1 Historical Background of Organic Agriculture Standards and Certification in the Philippines

Although SOE agriculture has been practiced in the Philippines as early as the mid ‘80s, its recognition in official Philippine policy can be traced back in 1992 when the National Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted. However, it was only during the last decade, beginning 2000, when significant policies on organic agriculture standards and certification were adopted following the growing global demand for organic products and the initiatives of the Philippine government to promote its exports. By 2010, the Organic Agriculture Act of the Philippines was passed and it now serves at the defining policy for organic agriculture and organic agriculture standards and certification in the country. Table III summarizes the major policy developments on organic standards and certification.

TABLE III. POLICY DEVELOPMENTS on ORGANIC AGRICULTURE STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION in the PHILIPPINES		
Year	Policy Developments	Key Players
1992	Philippine Agenda 21 or National Agenda for Sustainable Development contains provisions to support organic agriculture.	Philippine Council for Sustainable Development, composition includes government and non-government institutions.
1996	Philippine Basic Standards for Organic Agriculture and Processing – developed based on International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. Undergone both National and Sub National consultations	FOODWEB - an informal network formed by members of IFOAM in the 4 th Asian Conference and General Assembly
1997	Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (Republic Act 8435) called for the reduction of agro-chemicals utilization. RA 8435 mandates the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Products Standards to strictly enforce standards of quality in processing, packaging and labeling of organic produce.	Philippine Congress, National Government and NGOs.

TABLE III. POLICY DEVELOPMENTS on ORGANIC AGRICULTURE STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION in the PHILIPPINES		
Year	Policy Developments	Key Players
2000	Organic Certification and Inspection Program – born out of the growing demand for organic products in the international market and the need to enhance capacities of local organic agriculture stakeholder to compete in the international market.	Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), the export promotions agency of the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry. CITEM acted as the overall secretariat. Groups forming the Organic Technical Working Committee (OTWC) which included Alliance of Volunteers for Development Foundation, Philippine Development Assistance Programme, Organic Producers and Traders Association, MASIPAG, FOODWEB, Rizal Dairy Farms, Herbana Farms, Gratia Plena, AGTALON
2001	Manuals of Operation and Certification and Inspection – formulated to address the gaps and inconsistencies of the Organic Certification Standards of the Philippines.	OTWC
2001	Philippine Basic Standards on Organic Agriculture was renamed as the Certification Standards of the Philippines – to operationalize the Manuals of Operation and Certification and Inspection. Also marked the launch of the OCCP.	OTWC
2004	Philippine National Standard on Organic Agriculture - provide a uniform approach to the requirements for conversion to organic agriculture, crop production, livestock, processing, special products and consumer information which shall serve as a guide for organic agriculture practitioners	Department of Agriculture with the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Products Standards
2005	Executive Order No. 481: Promotion and Development of Organic Agriculture - significant policy advancements in terms of promoting and sustaining organic agriculture and organic products certification and standards. Institutionalized the National Organic Agriculture Program and the National Organic Agriculture Board.	National Government
2010	Philippine Organic Act of 2010 (Republic Act 10068) – was a concrete step towards institutionalizing both government and private sector thrusts to further develop and implement organic agriculture in the Philippines. The RA 10068 also includes formulation on regulation, registration, accreditation, certification and labeling of products.	National Government, Department of Agriculture with due consultation with various Civil Society Organizations, People's Organizations and organic agriculture advocates
2010	The Implementing Rules and Regulations for the Philippine Organic Act of 2010 (Republic Act 10068) – provided an opportunity to settle perennial issues on	National Government, Department of Agriculture with due consultation with various

TABLE III. POLICY DEVELOPMENTS on ORGANIC AGRICULTURE STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION in the PHILIPPINES

Year	Policy Developments	Key Players
	operationalizing accreditation of organic certifying bodies, certification of organic farms and products and labeling of organic produce. Key provisions of the IRR include: a) undertaking measures to for the international recognition of locally certified products; b) transition period of two (2) years before the implementation of mandatory 3 rd party certification; c) equal recognition of PGS during the said transition period; d) re-evaluation of current organic seeds certification procedures; e) Only 3 rd party certified products can be labeled as “Organically Produced”; and, f) Provision of government subsidies for certification and other support services to facilitate organic certification.	Civil Society Organizations, People’s Organizations and organic agriculture advocates including La Liga Policy Institute and Go Organic! Philippines.

4.2 The Philippine National Standard on Organic Agriculture (PNSOA)

The Philippine Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS) approved the PNSOA in 2004. The PNSOA provides a uniform approach to the requirements for (a) conversion to organic agriculture, (b) crop production, (c) livestock, (d) agriculture processing, (e) special products, (f) labeling and consumer information servings as the guide for organic agriculture producers. Table IV summarizes highlights of the PNSOA.

TABLE IV. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PNSOA		
Requirements	Evaluation Parameters	Philippine standard
Conversion of Farms	Conversion Period Farms	A 3-year conversion period (before the start of the production cycle) is required on lands heavily treated with synthetic chemicals over several years.
	Conversion Period Crops	For annual crops, at least twelve (12) months conversion period is prescribed. On the other hand, perennial crops require at least eighteen (18) months.
	Transitions: Prolonging	Residue of chemical inputs must decrease to an acceptance level.
	Transitions: Shortening	If all basic requirements for the conversion of farms are met as well as if organic agriculture is already practiced on-farm for two (2) years. Also, the utilization of virgin or permanent prairies requires no conversion period.
Seeds	Seeds and Plant Materials	Should be from certified seeds if available. If

TABLE IV. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PNSOA		
Requirements	Evaluation Parameters	Philippine standard
		unavailable conventional seeds could be used provided it did not undergo any chemical treatment. Treated seeds can only be used as prescribed by the Government to prevent the spread of endemic diseases. Conventional measures could also be used in case of floods, droughts or other natural disasters.
	Genetically engineered seeds, transgenic plants or plant materials	Not allowed.
Soil Management Practices	Crop Rotation, perennial crops, tillage and cultivation, water conservation measures	Green manuring or rotation with legumes or other nitrogen fixing plants should be applied, depending on the intensity of cultivation. Intercropping, cover crops or mulching must ensure that the soil is sufficiently covered for the most part of the year. Cultivation equipments shall be used in a manner that would increase soil physical and biological quality.
Fertilizers	Use of fertilizers	Based on biodegradable materials of microbial, plant or animal origin.
	Balanced Fertilization	Could be used in the case of unavailability of sufficient amounts of biodegradable materials.
	Fertilizer application	Only 170 kg of Nitrogen from biodegradable materials could be applied every year. Raw and uncomposted manure should be applied in a manner that it minimizes contamination of the crops, soil, or water by bacteria, pathogenic microbes and other harmful materials.
	Contamination	Runoff diversions or other means must be implemented to prevent contamination of crops from adjacent areas.
	Sewage	Shall not be used on production for human consumption if it contains human feces, unless treated accordingly.
Commercial Production of Organic Fertilizers	Compost activation	Appropriate plant-based preparations or micro-organism preparations, not genetically modified may be used to hasten decomposition. This includes vermiculture or vermicomposting. Synthetic nitrogenous additives are not allowed.
	Fertilizer quality	Organic fertilizers produced should not have traces of plant and animal pathogen and should have no less than 20% of organic matter.
	Packaging	Should be environmentally friendly.
Pest, Weed and Disease Management	Synthetic pesticides	Prohibited. Organically prepared product for pest, weed and disease management is allowed.
		Thermic weed control and physical methods for pest, disease and weed management are permitted. Thermic sterilization could be allowed

TABLE IV. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PNSOA		
Requirements	Evaluation Parameters	Philippine standard
		by a certifying body if proper rotation or renewal of soil cannot take place.
Growth Regulators	Growth regulators and Dyes (e.g.) cosmetic alteration of products	Prohibited. Organically prepared products to be used as a growth regulator is however, allowed.
Processing	Post harvest operations	Organic produce shall neither be mixed nor switched with other produce as well as handlers of organic produce must not mingle with other handlers. Processing of organic produce should be done separately in time, or place from processing of non-organic products.
	Storage and transportation	Organic and non organic products must not be stored or transported together.
	Pest control in storage	Fumigation, irradiation or treatment of storage organic products is not allowed.
	Other ingredients and processing	The use of additives and processing aids are restricted
	Processing	Processing methods such as Biological processes, Smoking, Drying, Extraction, Precipitation and Filtration can be used. By undergoing these processes however, organic products must retain its "food grade" quality and must not have or contaminated by harmful/chemical substances.
Labeling	Labels	Only products that are produced, handled and processed according to these Standards may be labeled as "produce of organic agriculture" or similar. Organic products containing conventional agriculture ingredients may still be labeled as organic as long as 95% of the ingredients are of organic origin.
	Conversion labels	Products may be sold with an indication referring to the conversion to organic farming. Conversion labels however, must be distinguishable full organic labels.
	Wild products	Products coming from wild ingredients shall be labeled as "wild". If mixed however, with organic ingredients, it can be labeled as organic.

Organic certification in the Philippines is fundamentally based on the PNSOA. During the time it was being formulated, it was informed by IFOAM Basic Standards and the Codex Guidelines for Production, Processing, Marketing and Labeling of Organically Produced Foods (CAC/GL 32).

At the same time, it was developed with due consultation from national line agencies like the Department Trade and Industry, member networks of the Organic Certification Center of the Philippines (OCCP) and organic agriculture advocates and practitioners.

However, the PNSOA has not proven itself to be at par with organic agriculture international standards that is acceptable or recognized by the European Union, Japan and USDA. Philippine exporters of organic products despite receiving 3rd party certification from the OCCP are still required to secure organic agriculture certification from foreign certifying bodies.

The more recent consensus, thus, is that the PNSOA must be revisited and reviewed to harmonize and establish its equivalence with international standards. As well as reflect the adjustments made by foreign governments, post 2004 in terms of the acceptable organic agriculture standards.

4.3 OA Certifying Bodies in the Philippines

OA Certification is becoming increasingly important in the Philippines due to the long-term impacts caused by consumer confusion and loss of confidence in the organic product market.

OCCP is the only accredited 3rd Party Certifying Body in the Philippines. Their certification, however, is only recognized locally. To assist in certifying organic products for exports, OCCP has established a partnership with foreign certifying bodies such as Ceres-Cert and Certification Alliance.

On the other hand, 1st and 2nd party certification, adhering to Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) is a certification process widely practiced in the

FEATURE: The Story of AlterTrade and Organic Muscovado Sugar

During the 1980's when the local sugar industry collapsed around 350,000 farmers in the Philippine province of Negros Oriental were gravely affected. It was during this time when the Alter Trade Cooperative (AlterTrade) was born. The cooperative started out small conducting trainings for farmer members, enhancing their skills on organic sugar farming. The initial challenges were great given that farmers are new to the organic agriculture technology and their lands were yet suitable for organic agriculture. AlterTrade provided a host of services to its members including capital/credit assistance, technical assistance like soil check-ups quality control, trading and marketing support.

AlterTrade when it began engaged in the fair trade system which linked them to socially responsible consumer groups in Japan who wanted aid the small and poor farmers. By 1987 AlterTrade was able to export organic "muscovado" sugar to Japan and by 1989 Balangon bananas. During this time, AlterTrade was able to export even without any formal certification although they did invest in eco-labels identifying their product as organic. This was possible through their partnership with foreign consumer groups.

Since then, the demand for "muscovado" sugar grew gradually reaching the markets of United States, France, and other countries in Europe. By 2004 AlterTrade has received 3rd party certifications from Naturland, USDA-Organic, Bio Suisse and Nihon Organic Agricultural Products Association.

Currently, the partner-growers of AlterTrade number 1,821. Out of the 1,130 metric tones of organic "muscovado" sugar produced by AlterTrade, 73 percent is exported.

The story of AlterTrade is a living proof that there is success in organic farming and exemplifies how 3rd party certification can be a goal rather than a pre-requisite for small farmers to engage in organic farming.

Philippines at present. PGS is implemented by various agriculture based citizen's organizations in the Philippines based on organic agriculture internal control systems.

Another non-third party certifier in the Philippines is the "Philippine Organic Guarantee Incorporated" (POGI) which was established by an NGO named Alliance of Volunteers for Development Foundation. POGI is based on the IFOAM Basic Standards.

FEATURE: PGS Certification and MASIPAG

Magsasaka at Siyentipiko Para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura (MASIPAG) Foundation was formed in 1985 to respond to the failures of the "Green Revolution" in the Philippines. Composed of farmers, scientists and NGOs, the Foundation seeks to promote and institutionalized alternative farming system that utilizes agro-biodiversity and technology adapted to the conditions and needs of the poor farmers in the country.

With MASIPAG, farmers received training from scientists on rice breeding to enable them to develop their own seed variety appropriate with their environment. The foundation believes that Filipino farmers can sustainably grow rice and attain food security without having to rely on buying seeds and using chemical inputs, sophisticated tools and equipment. MASIPAG has partner farmers numbering 20,864 nationwide with 18,605 having adopted alternative farming technologies.

MASIPAG introduced the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), which they renamed as the MASIPAG Farmer's Guarantee System (MFGS). Through the PGS/MFGS, MASIPAG is able to sell organically grown rice both in the local and global market.

The Philippine Organic Act of 2010 addresses the need for more certifying bodies through its policy on accreditation. This provides access to organizations aiming to become registered and recognized certifying bodies. The BAFPS, according to the law, is the official accreditation body for 3rd party certifiers in the Philippines.

Currently, there are seven (7) documented foreign certifying bodies operating in the Philippines. These foreign certifying bodies provide certification to most organic product exporters.

TABLE V. FOREIGN CERTIFYING BODIES IN THE PHILIPPINES	
Foreign Certifying Body	International Standard Compliance
CERES-CERT - A foreign certifying body based in Germany and a partner of the OCCP for international certification of Organic Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EU Standards ▪ US - National Organic Program ▪ Japanese Agricultural Standard ▪ Global Gap
ECO CERT – An Organic Certifying Body based in France. Among the seven, Ecocert is the most active in providing certification and inspection in the Philippines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EU Standards ▪ US - National Organic Program ▪ Japanese Agricultural Standard
NATURLAND – An association for organic agriculture based in Germany. Naturland provides certification for organic products exported by the Philippines to EU.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EU Standards ▪ US - National Organic Program ▪ IFOAM Basic Standards
SGS – A company based in Switzerland that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ISO Guide 65/EN4501 by the Dutch

TABLE V. FOREIGN CERTIFYING BODIES IN THE PHILIPPINES	
Foreign Certifying Body	International Standard Compliance
provides Organic Certification in the Philippines for export.	Accreditation Agency RVA.
DOALNARA – An organic certifying body based in Korea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IFOAM Basic Standards
Certification Alliance – An international partnership of organic certification bodies, inspectors and supporting development organizations. Currently a partner of the OCCP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EU Standards ▪ US - National Organic Program ▪ Japanese Agricultural Standard
BCS-OEKO – An independent and private controlling agency which certifies organic products worldwide in accordance with international regulations and private standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EU Standards ▪ US - National Organic Program ▪ Japanese Agricultural Standard

4.4 Cost of 3rd Party Certification

Among the key concerns when it comes to undertaking 3rd party certification in the Philippines is its cost. Small farm holders given their limited income have difficulty shouldering the additional cost of certification.

Table VI identifies the schedules of fees for 3rd party certification in the country. The duration from certification to inspection is roughly three to six (3 to 6) months while the validity of the certification lasts up to 18 months. Cost can reach up to UsD 2,000.

On the other hand, cost of 3rd party certification for foreign certifying agencies is estimated at UsD 4,000 to UsD 5,000 a year.

TABLE VI. Schedule of Fees for 3rd Party Certification	
Application Fee	UsD 46.50
Certification Fee	UsD 581.40
Inspection Fee	(variable) \$116.30/day approximately covers ten (10) hectares or fifteen (15) hectares for coconut. This excludes the inspection of processing plants.
Transport and Logistics cost	(variable) to be shouldered by the applicant
Group Certification	UsD 627.90

5.0 Policy Issues and Recommendations

A review of organic standard and certification history, policy and procedures in the Philippines surface the following observations and policy issues. It is very much apparent that standards and certification in the country is relatively well developed for full, pure or complete organic agricultural products with the policy frame heavy on 3rd party certification.

There is no denying of the substantial steps undertaken by Philippine government agencies in partnership with non-government and people's organization networks in formulating an

organic agriculture standard and certification process that is compliant with international standards.

While the PNS might be dated, since it was developed in 2005 and has not been updated to include more recent consensus in Asian and international standards, at the time it was crafted and finally adopted as official policy of the Philippine government it was informed both by the IFOAM Basic Standards and the CAC/GL 32.

There is, however, a very serious limitation to the Philippine organic agriculture labeling, standards and certification policies as it is currently framed.

For one, there is little mention of non-third party certification including 1st and 2nd party certification and participatory guarantee systems. While no systematic baseline exists, many estimate a bigger number of full, pure and complete organic farms that follow internal control systems but can not afford 3rd party certification and/or those who are not targeting the export market. Initially practitioners of SOE agriculture in the country were small farm holders and community based initiatives. Consequently, the more prevalent practice when it comes to organic product labels were voluntary and farmer or second party certified.

There is a need to improve the current policy language on organic agriculture labeling, standards and certification to put equal emphasis on non-third party certification. Documentation of labeling and non-third party certification practices is very much needed in order to develop more comprehensive options for organic agriculture certification. This will necessitate a review of the current Philippine Organic Agriculture Act as well as its implementing rules and regulations. In particular, key provisions of the IRR on the transition period for 1st and 2nd party certification must be seriously reconsidered.

More critically, labeling, standards and certification policies only cover and are applicable to full, pure and/or completely organic agricultural products. In the case of the Philippines, this really covers less than 1 percent of SOE agriculture production. The current policy environment is silent when it comes to the more significant section of SOE agriculture practices in the country. There are no labeling requirements, protocols and standards requirement or any certification procedure for products that are produced through more prevalent SOE agriculture practices in the country. This includes products generated through the Balanced Fertilization Strategy; Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture; Bio-dynamic farming, or the many variants in between those that are conventionally farmed and organically farmed.

Much will be gained by developing and instituting standards and protocols defined according to the varying stages/practices of SOE agriculture in the country and matching these with a labeling system with clear government check mechanism for the validity of labels. Concretely, labels, standards and certification should be developed not just for full, pure or completely organic agriculture products but also for products of farms still on their transition to becoming full organic.

This means developing labels and standards for products that range from organic, semi-organic, organically grown, naturally farmed, pesticide free or less chemicals. And for policy

consistency as well as in the spirit of the consumers' right to full information, agriculture product labeling should extend to requiring products grown using conventional technologies to be labeled and provide information on fertilizer and pesticides used during their production stage.

While the current labeling, standards and certification policy clearly contribute to protecting the consumer of organic agricultural products as well as facilitating a price premium for organic producers, it only marginally contributes to the over-all goal of promoting the shift to SOE agriculture. It is a clear reward mechanism for farmers and agricultural producers who are already practicing organic agriculture.

Broadening the labeling, standards and certification policy to cover the bigger section of SOE agriculture practices can potentially contribute a higher value-added in terms of the over-all growth and development goal of the country's agriculture sector – the shift towards more sustainable, organic and ecological agriculture. This broadening will not just reward existing organic agriculture practitioners but provide the appropriate incentives for farmers (small and commercial) to undertake the shift to SOE agriculture, to those who currently in transition from conventional to organic agricultural production. While full organic agriculture production remains ideal, there is still much social good - it is in the interest of the broader public to make available in the market agricultural products that use production technologies that utilize less and less chemical inputs and that are less and less harmful to the environment, farmers' and consumers' health.

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