

# Philippines Policies in Response to a changing climate:

## A review of natural resource policies

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Will national decision makers ever change their minds? Researchers think they should as the threat of climate change continues to emerge.

Policy makers do not see climate change (adaptation) as a high priority issue in the context of national development plans yet. This is an attempt to provide a comprehensive and updated documentation of policies and programs in the natural resources and agriculture sectors in the Philippines, each of which is examined and assessed in terms of their impact on the vulnerability, or promotion or hindrance to the adaptation, of natural ecosystems and rural communities to climate variability, climate extreme, and climate change.

The increasing degradation of natural ecosystems and rapid depletion of natural resources have been recognized as significant contributors to the country's ecological and socio-economic problems, and eventually led to incorporating environmental dimensions into national development planning. National policies were then developed and established for the integrated environmental protection and natural resources management of the country.

Sectoral legislation deals with three main sectors: natural resources (forestry, fishery, and mineral resources) management and conservation, pollution control, and land use planning and management – all of which relate in one way or another to climate change.

This section discusses some government actions, policies, and programs in relation to climate change in the country. The main features of selected Philippine policies on environment and natural resource management, and their respective possible impacts relating to climate change is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Some Philippine Natural Resource Policies and their Impacts

Philippine Policies	Brief Policy Description	Impacts Relating to Climate Change, Variability or Risks	
		Positive	Negative
<i>Dec 1976: Presidential Decree No.1067 – The Water Code of the Philippines</i>	Revises and consolidates the laws governing the ownership, appropriation, utilization, exploitation, development, conservation, and protection of water resources	The law provides institutional mechanism for wise use of water resources which enhances resilience and ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change on water.	None. Climate change not explicitly considered (?).
<i>June 1977: Presidential Decree No. 1152 – Philippine Environment Code</i>	Establishes specific environment and natural resource management policies and prescribes environment quality standards	Promotes environmental protection which indirectly enhances resilience to climate risks.	None
<i>June 1978: Presidential Decree No. 1586 – Establishment of the Environmental Impact Statement System of the Philippines</i>	Pursues comprehensive and integrated environmental protection supporting socio-economic development	The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) system provides a good platform for the inclusion of climate risks to projects.	Currently, climate change is not explicitly included in the guidelines (?).
<i>Dec 1985: Presidential Decree No. 2001 – Program to Withdraw the Use of Tetraethyl Lead (TEL) in Gasoline</i>	To eliminate the use of tetraethyl lead (TEL) in gasoline, in order to safeguard human health against poisoning from lead particulates in the air	Prevents illnesses related to lead exposure, thereby indirectly enhancing adaptive capacity of the people to climate hazards.	None
<i>June 1988: Republic Act (RA) No. 6657 – Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP)</i>	Promotes a more equitable distribution and ownership of all public and private agricultural lands; and provides incentives to	Can provide farmer-beneficiaries with incentives to invest in farm development and/or modern production	Cultivation of marginal lands by resource-poor farmers makes the natural ecosystem and local community more vulnerable to the

	landowners to invest the proceeds of the program in promoting industrialization, employment and privatization of public sector enterprises	technologies that can minimize the impacts of climate change	impacts of climate variability. Landlord-farmer contracts negating land reform can mean low income for the farmers, leaving them little resources to cope with climate risks.
1997: Republic Act No. 8435 -- Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA)	Prescribes a set of policies and programs to modernize the Philippine agriculture and fisheries sectors	Imply the design of adaptation strategies to address environmental threats brought by climate change	Absence of mitigating actions Production intensification goals may increase pressure on forest and mangrove areas, making these more vulnerable to climate-related risks.
1998: Republic Act No. 8550 -- The Philippine Fisheries Code	Rational and sustainable development, management and conservation of fishery and aquatic resources in Philippine waters	By rationalizing use of aquatic resources, enhances the resilience of natural and social systems to adapt to future climate change.	None.
Presidential Decree 705 - - The Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines	Provides the country's fundamental forestry laws and policies; reinforced the use of license/ lease agreements to utilize natural resources	Includes a provision aimed at preventing flooding and excessive soil erosion and maintaining the hydrological integrity of watersheds	The increase in the number of TLA holders led to increased deforestation.
DENR Administrative Order No. 15-90 - Regulations Governing the Utilization, Development and Management of Mangrove Resources	To sustain optimum productivity by conserving, protecting, rehabilitating and developing remaining mangroves, more with corporate collaboration than individual initiatives	Enhances the protective capability of mangroves against strong currents, winds and high waves	None
June 1992: Republic Act No. 7586 -- National	Regarded as the main strategy in biodiversity conservation through	Conservation strategies may increase the resilience and	None

Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act	the establishment of a comprehensive system of integrated protected areas	adaptive capacity of the local community to climate-related risks	
1995: Executive Order No. 263 -- The Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) Program	Integrated and unified different upland community programs and projects to ensure the sustainable development of forest land resources	CBFM program provides economic benefits to communities with appropriate market linkages, making them less vulnerable to climate variability	None
1997: Republic Act No. 8371 -- Indigenous People's Rights Act	Recognize, protect and promote the rights of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral domains to ensure economic, social and cultural well-being	Could lead to capacity building of indigenous communities which will enhance their resilience to climate risks.	None
March 1995: Republic Act No. 7942 -- Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and Presidential Decree 1899 – Establishing Small-Scale Mining as a New Dimension in Mineral Development	Promotes rational exploration, development, utilization and conservation of all mineral resources, and safeguarding the environment and protecting the rights of affected communities	Increase income for small miners which could lead to greater ability to cope with climate risks.	Destruction of natural resources could lead to greater vulnerability to climate risks such as landslides and soil erosion.
1999: Republic Act No. 8749 – The Philippine Clean Air Act	A comprehensive national multisectoral framework for an air quality management program to reduce GHG emissions	Improved air quality helps reduce the negative impacts of climate variability on human health	None
Aug 2006: Green Philippine Highways Project	Involves planting more than 500,000 ornamental and forest trees along a total of 3,439 kms. of major national highways from	Trees ameliorate microclimate and possibly lead to health benefits, which enhances resilience to climate risks.	Unplanned tree planting near major roads could increase climate hazards such as falling trees during typhoons.

	north to south Philippines		
<i>Jan 2007: Republic Act No. 9367 – Biofuels Act of 2006</i>	Promotes the use of alternative transport fuels	Will mitigate toxic and greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions	Could lead to monoculture plantations of biofuel crops which are more vulnerable to climate risks.
<i>Feb 2007: Administrative Order No. 171 – Creation of the Presidential Task Force on Climate Change (PTFCC)</i>	In general tasked to address the issue of climate change, mitigate its impact, and lead in adapting to these impacts	Will enhance institutions capacity nationwide to address climate change.	None
<i>October 2007. Albay Declaration</i>	Local government support to mainstream climate change adaptation to government programs and activities	Will catalyze the formulation of policies, programs and activities that is aimed at mainstreaming climate change adaptation	None
<i>January 2008. Senate Bill 1890: Philippine Climate Change Act</i>	An act establishing the framework program for Climate Change, creating the climate change commission, appropriating funds therefore, and for other purposes	Will mainstream climate change adaptation into policies, programs and activities at the local and national level	Could conflict with the PTFCC and the IACCC on who should be the agency in-charge of such activities.

Upon reviewing these policies in detail, the following general observations can be made:

- Policies, programs, and actions relating to natural and agricultural resources management are barely designed to address the mitigation of and/or adaptation to the impacts of climate change.
- The policies and programs, while emphasizing a specific sector, may inadvertently impact positively or negatively on other sectors.
- Concerns and issues often arise from policy implementation by government agencies in-charge.
- Usually, results and benefits monitoring and evaluation are found to be insufficient after the implementation of policies and programs have begun. For this reason, empirical evidences of policy impacts vis-à-vis sectoral baseline status are currently unavailable.
- Currently available and accessible data and information relating to environment and environment degradation are yet to be systematically linked or attributed to the trends of climate change in the Philippines.

### **Other Significant Milestones and Activities to Address Climate Change**

In addition to earlier-discussed policies, the national government has in the last 10-15 years undertaken a number of milestones critical to addressing climate change in the Philippines:

- Creation of the Inter-Agency Committee on Climate Change (IACCC) on May 8, 1991 by virtue of Presidential Administrative Order 220. The IACCC is tasked to coordinate various climate change-related activities, propose climate change policies, and prepare the Philippine position to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations;
- Signed the UNFCCC on June 1992 and ratified it on August 2, 1994;
- Creation of the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) on September 1, 1992 by virtue of Executive Order 15. The PCSD is tasked to act as a coordinating mechanism on the provision of assistance and cooperation towards the fulfillment of Philippine commitments to the Rio Summit. It is also mandated to formally adopt a Philippine Agenda 21 and to develop national sustainability plans.
- Completion of the Philippine Agenda 21 (PA 21) in September 1996, pursuant to the PCSD. It serves as the country's blueprint for sustainable development efforts.
- Signed the Kyoto Protocol on April 15, 1998 and ratified it on November 20, 2003 in order to participate in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).
- Designated the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as the National Authority for CDM by virtue of Executive Order No. 320 signed on June 25,

2004, and issued the Implementing Rules and Regulations last August 2005 through DENR Administrative Order 2005-17.

Furthermore, the Philippine government has been implementing a number of measures to reduce and prevent greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions; and prevent, minimize, or adapt to the destructive effects of climate change.

In addition, there have been actions on the provincial government units. The province of Albay pioneered the integration of climate change adaptation into its programs and policies. The first national Climate Change Conference on Climate Change Adaptation has produced the Albay Declaration that will catalyze the mainstreaming of climate change into national policies.

Today, more and more people in the government are working towards formally integrating climate change into local and national policies hence, the passing of Senate Bill 1890 by Senator Loren Legarda.

### **Where do we go from here?**

The Philippines has been considered as highly vulnerable to current, as well as future, risks associated with climate change. Unfortunately, climate change is yet to be mainstreamed into the Philippine development policy arena. An internet search for "Philippine laws relating to environment" easily produced a list of 195 presidential decrees, republic acts, executive orders, government agency administrative orders and memoranda, and LGU ordinances and proclamations from one website alone.

Unfortunately, not many of these laws address even in the slightest the growing concerns brought about by the increasing trend of climate change, climate variability, and risks. Whenever climate change is recognized or acknowledged, the focus and emphasis of national policy has been more of mitigation and adaptation to risks associated with current climate variability and extremes.

Clearly, national decision makers do not see climate change as a high priority issue in the context of national development plans yet because their attention is focused more on the actual destruction caused by yearly climate hazards.

With the above realities, the following recommendations to address climate change in the Philippines are forwarded:

1. aggressive yet systematic information, education and communication (IEC) campaign about climate change, climate variability, and risks;
2. participatory and multi-sectoral/stakeholder approach;
3. climate change technology and policy impact assessment; and
4. regular fund source and intensified fund generation for climate change-related activities.

Finally, while there is no universally applicable list of climate change mitigation or adaptation policies, programs or practices because each will have to be evaluated for individual agricultural systems and settings, it is with growing importance that developing countries like the Philippines begin to seriously factor in climate change issues into the national stream of policymaking and development.

As the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) (2006) puts it, the challenge is to make climate change mitigation and adaptation in poor countries a higher priority. The countries that are most vulnerable to future climate change tend to be most overwhelmed by immediate development concerns.

A logical approach then will be to put across to policymakers the issue of climate change, variability and risks as a current development problem. This means imparting to decision/policy makers that addressing the various difficulties currently confronting the rural communities in many areas – e.g., droughts, floods, low and erratic rainfall, hot temperatures, inadequate infrastructure, lack of access to markets and credit, and other challenges - will contribute to current agricultural development and food security while building resilience to future climate change.

Needless to say, the response of the Philippine government should go beyond having “policies-on-paper” and doing the usual lip service. With the clock of climate change continuously ticking, we all hope to be more than ready when the set alarm is reached.

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