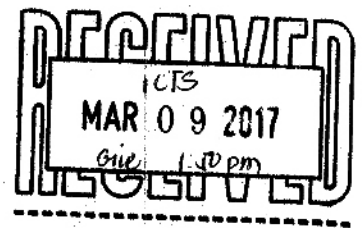




Republic of the Philippines
Department of Agriculture
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Elliptical Road, Diliman
Quezon City 1100, Philippines



06 February 2017

DEPARTMENT ORDER

No. 04
Series of 2017

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT POLICY ON RATIONALIZING AND STRENGTHENING DA NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LABORATORY SERVICES

WHEREAS, there are 174 laboratories under the Department of Agriculture (DA) with no sustainable development policy, no coordination mechanism, and analyzing the same matrix (Flavier, 2009).

WHEREAS, efforts to rationalize DA laboratory services were done in the past, such as through DA Administrative Order No. 13 Series of 2009, which designated the Food Development Center (FDC) of the National Food Authority (NFA) as the Official Laboratory of the Department of Agriculture for the Analysis of Contaminants in Agricultural, Fisheries and Animal Foods and Food Products, and Executive Order 366 or the Rationalization Plan, but these efforts need to be further strengthened and supported;

WHEREAS, in light of the above, it is imperative to optimize the utilization and efficiency of DA laboratories and ensure these can provide accurate data for regulatory and enforcement purposes, research and development, standards development, production, extension and marketing services for the agriculture and fishery sectors;

WHEREAS, it is essential to develop a National Strategic Development Plan that will rationalize all laboratory services provided by the DA National Agencies, including the Food Safety Regulatory Agencies (FSRAs), and the DA Regional Field Offices (DA RFOs) through their Regional Integrated Agricultural Laboratory (RIAL) Division, and facilitate the accreditation of the laboratories to ISO 17025;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, EMMANUEL F. PIÑOL, Secretary of Agriculture, by the powers vested in me by law, hereby issue this Department Order directing the implementation of the following policy and approaches to rationalizing DA laboratory services, optimizing the use of existing laboratory resources, and formulating and implementing a National Strategic Development Plan for DA laboratories.

SECTION I
SCOPE AND COVERAGE

This Department Order covers all existing laboratories of the DA Food Safety Regulatory Agencies (DA FSRAs), other DA National Agencies and Regional Offices listed below, which shall henceforth be collectively referred to as "DA Laboratories":

DA FSRAs per the Food Safety Act of 2013 and its IRR

- a. Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI)
- b. Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)
- c. Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI)

- d. National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS)
- e. Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA)

Other DA National Agencies

- a) Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA)
- b) National Tobacco Authority (NTA)
- c) Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice)
- d) Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech)
- e) Philippine Carabao Center (PCC)
- f) Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM)

Regional Integrated Agricultural Laboratories (RIALs) of the DA Regional Offices and Regional Laboratories of DA-FSRAs and other DA National Agencies

This Order also provides for coordination with FSRAs and other concerned offices not under the administrative control of the DA, such as, but not limited to the following:

- 1. Food Development Center of the National Food Authority (FDC-NFA)
- 2. Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA); and
- 3. Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA)

SECTION II
INSTITUTIONAL AND COORDINATION MECHANISM

Under the guidance of the Undersecretary for Policy and Planning, Project Development, R&D, and Regulations and the supervision of the Assistant Secretary for Regulations, the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) is hereby designated as the Coordinating Agency for the rationalization of DA Laboratories.

BAFS shall carry out the policy and planning activities needed to optimize the utilization and efficiency of DA laboratories. In this regard, BAFS shall have the following responsibilities:

- 1. Prepare together with the DA Laboratories, a National Strategic Development Plan aimed at rationalizing laboratory services and optimizing the use of existing laboratory resources. This Plan shall be supported by appropriate and adequate funding for required resources, training and education of laboratory analysts, and regular assessment of their level of competence;
- 2. Coordinate with the agencies listed in SECTION I. SCOPE AND COVERAGE in developing and implementing the testing programs and monitoring and surveillance plans of their respective laboratories, for use in the development of standards, regulations, policy recommendations, and for other purposes.

Coordinate with the National Dairy Authority (NDA) which currently has no laboratory but tasked to regulate milk production and postharvest handling.

- 3. Consolidate and analyze data generated by DA Laboratories for regulatory and enforcement purposes, research and development, standards development, production, extension and marketing services. For this purpose, develop, establish, and serve as overall administrator of a DA National Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).

4. Assist laboratories to obtain ISO 17025 accreditation and ensure adoption of Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) in all DA laboratories. In this regard, provide proficiency testing services for the DA Laboratories through coordination and collaboration with the NFA-FDC and other proficiency testing service providers.
5. Establish the list of the DA Official References for Methods of Analysis and Method Validation;
6. Undertake the necessary coordination with the FSRAs and agencies which are not under the administrative control of the DA to ensure comprehensive implementation of this Order;
7. Monitor the implementation of this Order and submit regular reports on compliance and accomplishments

SECTION III CATEGORIZATION OF DA LABORATORIES

The DA Laboratories shall be categorized as Level 1A, 1B, 2A or 2B, defined as follows:

1. **Level 1 Laboratories** are the central and regional laboratories of DA FSRAs and other DA National Agencies listed in Section I (Scope and Coverage).

Level 1A Laboratories are the central laboratories of DA FSRAs and other DA National Agencies

Level 1B Laboratories are the regional laboratories of the DA FSRAs and other DA National Agencies.

2. **Level 2 Laboratories** are the Regional Integrated Agricultural Laboratories (RIALs) managed by the DA Regional Offices and, as prescribed in the approved DA Rationalization Plan per EO 366, are composed of the a) Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory; b) Feed Control Laboratory; c) Soils Laboratory; and d) Crop Protection Laboratory.

Level 2 Laboratories are further classified as **Level 2A** or **Level 2B**, based on:

- a. status of building, equipment and facilities;
- b. availability of competent laboratory analysts; and
- c. proximity to major seaports and airports where inspection and sampling are usually carried out.

Based on these criteria:

- a. **Level 2A Laboratories** are the RIALs of DA Regions 2, 3, 7 and 11
- b. **Level 2B Laboratories** are the RIALs of DA CAR, Regions 1, 4A, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, ARMM, CARAGA, MIMAROPA, NIR

The foregoing basis for categorization shall guide the DA and concerned offices in prioritizing the development of the laboratories towards ISO 17025 accreditation. In this regard and without precluding Level 2B Laboratories in eventual further capacity development, Level 2A Laboratories shall be given **priority** in developing their facilities and meeting the requirements for ISO 17025 accreditation.

As higher level of competence is attained, classification of DA RIALs may be upgraded from Level 2B to Level 2A.

SECTION IV
FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DA LABORATORIES, BY LEVEL

1. Level 1A Laboratories:

- a. Shall develop and implement their testing program and monitoring and surveillance plans
- b. Shall manage and perform analysis requiring complex instrumentation and implementing methods at levels of high sensitivity
- c. Shall conform to the national and/or international standards for Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) and method validation
- d. Shall subscribe to proficiency tests and national inter-laboratory tests;
- e. Shall regularly submit reports to BAFS for the DA National Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)
- f. Shall provide guidance to RIALs in conducting tests on samples under their respective jurisdiction and/or specialization
- g. Shall develop budgetary proposals (BPs) and Work and Financial Plans (WFPs), including those of the Level 1B laboratories under their management, that are responsive to the testing requirements of their agencies and of stakeholders

2. Level 1B Laboratories:

- a. Shall perform laboratory functions as assigned and in accordance with the standards and requirements set by the National Agency managing them
- b. Shall regularly submit reports to their respective agency for onward transmittal to BAFS for the DA National Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).
- c. In coordination with their national agency, develop budgetary proposals (BPs) and Work and Financial Plans (WFPs) that are responsive to the testing requirements of their agencies and of stakeholders

3. Level 2A and 2B Laboratories

- a. Shall cover major and common contaminants
- b. Shall perform screening and/or diagnostic tests and when capable, perform plant and animal disease diagnosis and analyze soil, water fertilizer and feed quality
- c. Shall conduct sampling, collect samples, and document sample information
- d. Shall conform to the national and/or international standards for Good Laboratory Practices (GLP)
- e. Interpret results and provide advice to clients (i.e. farmers, MSMEs)
- f. Correlate laboratory results or findings to good practices in primary production (i.e. GAP, GAHP, GAqP)
- g. Shall ensure the sharing of resources especially large analytical equipment
- h. Shall participate in national inter-laboratory tests to be organized by BAFS
- i. Shall develop budgetary proposals (BPs) and Work and Financial Plans (WFPs) that are responsive to the requirements of their stakeholders

SECTION V
CAPACITY BUILDING AND ACCREDITATION TO ISO 17025

All DA FSRAs and National Agencies operating as central laboratories (Level 1A) shall seek accreditation of their laboratories to ISO 17025 at the soonest time possible.

The capacity of DA Laboratories shall be continuously enhanced through appropriate training and capacity building programs, with the end-goal of accreditation to ISO 17025.

The laboratories may send samples to the higher-level laboratories for tests when competence in their laboratory is lacking.

The competence of the laboratory analysts shall be regularly assessed for this purpose.

SECTION VI
RECOGNITION OF PRIVATE TESTING LABORATORIES

Consistent with Section 30 (e) of the Food Safety Act (FSA) of 2013, DA agencies may recognize private testing laboratories accredited by the Department of Trade and Industry-Philippine Accreditation Bureau (DTI-PAB) to support their testing needs.

Accreditation shall be in accordance with the definition as prescribed in Section 4, Rule 4.1.a of the FSA.

SECTION VII
FUNDING

1. The DA shall ensure provision of the necessary funding to support the implementation of this Department Order.
2. The use of income from laboratory fees to support regular laboratory operations shall be proposed by DA under a special provision of the General Appropriations Act.
3. Laboratories of the DA National Agencies and DA Regional Offices shall be guided by the following policies and procedures in the preparation of budgetary proposals (BPs) and Work and Financial Plans (WFPs):
 - a. The laboratories shall prepare their respective BPs, including for any upgrading of facilities, and WFPs in accordance with the categorization of their laboratories as provided in this Order.
 - b. The laboratories through their respective National Agencies or Regional Offices shall submit their BPs to BAFS for review and consolidation.
 - c. BAFS shall submit the consolidated BP to the DA Planning Service Division for inclusion in the DA submission to the Department of Budget and Management.

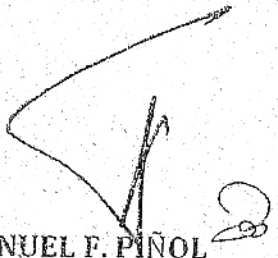
**SECTION VIII
REPEALING CLAUSE**

DA Administrative Order No. 13 Series of 2009 designating the Food Development Center (FDC) of the National Food Authority (NFA) as the Official Laboratory of the Department of Agriculture for the Analysis of Contaminants in Agricultural, Fisheries and Animal Foods and Food Products is hereby repealed.

All Circulars, Orders and issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Order are likewise revoked.

**SECTION IX
EFFECTIVITY**

This Order shall take effect immediately and shall remain in force until revoked or amended.


EMMANUEL F. PIÑOL
Secretary

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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