



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

**MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR**

No. 12  
Series of 2021

**SUBJECT: ESTABLISHING A SUSTAINABLE AND EFFECTIVE BIOSAFETY, -SECURITY AND -SURVEILLANCE (BSS&S) SYSTEM IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND ADOPTING THE PLAN OF ACTION AND MILESTONES (POA&M) AS ITS ROADMAP**

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Agriculture (DA), through the "One DA" holistic approach strategies, envisions a food-secure Philippines with prosperous farmers and fisherfolks, aims to accelerate the Philippine agriculture sector's transformation towards inclusive modernization and industrialization, and strengthen institutional capacity to implement food safety measures for both local and export products and ensuring industry compliance to various food safety codes, rules and regulations; and consistent with Memorandum Order No. 11, s. 2021 (Establishing Food Safety Unit and Inclusion of Food Safety Line Budget in the Department of Agriculture (DA) Central Office, Regional Field Offices, Food Safety Regulatory Agencies (FSRAs) and Support Agencies (ATI, BAFS, FDC));


**WHEREAS**, Article III, Section 5, (a) 3 and 4 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of RA No. 10611 or the Food Safety Act of 2013 provides that the health of plants and animals from where food is derived, and the effects of feeds, crop protection chemicals, and other production inputs on otherwise healthy plants and animals are to be considered whether food is unsafe;

**WHEREAS**, the DA Food Security Development Framework (FSDF) aims to provide overall vision and high-level goals for the agricultural sector to strengthen the food security and food safety in the country;

**WHEREAS**, the Philippine agriculture sector has experienced extensive losses brought about by pests and diseases such as, but not limited to World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) notifiable pests and diseases, African Swine Fever (ASF), Avian Influenza (AI) and Newcastle disease (ND), Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Fall Armyworm (FAW), White Spot Disease (WSD) and Acute Hepatopancreatic Necrosis Disease (AHPND);

**WHEREAS**, the various regulatory agencies of the DA with their respective mandates, are tasked to address and contain the threats of pests and diseases that pose risks to Philippine agriculture;

**WHEREAS**, while there exist technical protocols in managing these threats, BSS&S measures need to be updated and systematized for better management and quicker

  
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recovery efforts. Disease surveillance in domestic and international territories also needs upgrading in terms of consistency, modern tools and methods so that pests and disease spread is more effectively prevented from breaching the borders of the country;

**WHEREAS**, in light of the above, it is imperative to establish a sustainable and effective system in the country, i.e. build capabilities for accurate and rapid pest and disease diagnosis and reporting, and to develop a roadmap for the institutionalization of the system;

**WHEREAS**, the DA, in collaboration with United States-Defense Threat Reduction Agency (US-DTRA) under the Biological Threat Reduction Program, developed the DA BS&S Institutionalization: Plan of Actions and Milestones (POA&M)- a reference document which outlines an integrated multi-agency plan over the next five years for the attainment of a biosafety, -security and -surveillance system within the Department;

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM D. DAR, PhD**, Secretary of Agriculture, by the power vested in me by law, hereby issue this Memorandum Circular directing the establishment of biosafety, -security and -surveillance system by adopting the POA&M as the roadmap for implementation.

## **SECTION I OBJECTIVE**

This Memorandum Circular aims to establish a sustainable and effective DA BSS&S system and to promulgate the adoption of the POA&M (Annex 1) as a roadmap for implementation.

## **SECTION II DEFINITION OF TERMS**

- A. *Biosafety* refers to the containment principles, technologies and practices that are implemented to prevent unintentional exposure to biological agents or their accidental release. For purposes of this Memorandum Circular, genetically-modified plant and plant products derived from the use of modern biotechnology are not covered as it is covered under DOST-DA-DENR-DOH-DILG Joint Department Circular No. 1, series of 2016 (Rules and Regulations for the Research and Development, Handling and Use, Transboundary Movement, Release into the Environment, and Management of Genetically-Modified Plant and Plant Products Derived from the Use of Modern Biotechnology).
- B. *Biosecurity* refers to principles, technologies and practices that are implemented for the protection, control and accountability of biological materials and/or the equipment, skills and data related to their handling. Biosecurity aims to prevent their unauthorized access, loss, theft, misuse, diversion or release.



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- C. *Biosurveillance* refers to the process of gathering, integrating, interpreting, and communicating essential information related to all-hazards, threats or disease activity affecting human, animal, or plant health to achieve early detection and warning, contribute to overall situational awareness of the health aspects of an incident, and to enable better decision making at all levels.

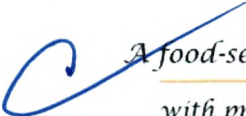
### **SECTION III SCOPE AND COVERAGE**

This Memorandum Circular covers all relevant divisions of the DA Agencies and Operating Units listed below:

1. Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI)
2. Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)
3. Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI)
4. National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS)
5. Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA)
6. National Dairy Authority (NDA)
7. Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA)
8. Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA)
9. Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering (BAFE)
10. Information and Communications Technology Service (ICTS)
11. Food Development Center (FDC)
12. Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS)
13. Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA)
14. National Tobacco Authority (NTA)
15. Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM)
16. Philippine Carabao Center (PCC)
17. Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech)
18. Agricultural Training Institute (ATI)
19. Regional Field Offices

### **SECTION IV GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. The POA&M is promulgated to provide organizational structures and processes for the establishment of BSS&S system within the Department.
2. The POA&M is a reference document that aims to capture the goals and planned activities of the DA for the next five years to attain BSS&S culture within the Department. The POA&M provides a basis for multi-year budgeting to be proposed to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and other funding sources, and for collaborations with private or public organizations pursuing the same goals.
3. The POA&M shall be reviewed and revised in a periodic cycle with an annual review of performance. The POA&M shall be aligned with the National Strategic Plan of DA

  
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and of DA Laboratories.

4. Under the oversight of a designated senior official, heads of participating agencies and operating units shall ensure the progress and implementation of their activities and provide quarterly reports, or as necessary.

## SECTION V

### BSS&S FUNCTIONAL LINKAGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DA OFFICES

A hierarchical structure with institutional links among DA offices, agencies and operating units shall be established for biosafety, -security and -surveillance in risk assessment and management of emerging pests and diseases outbreaks. Agencies may submit proposals, independently or in collaboration with others, that are in accordance with the DA BSS&S POA&M; and strategic plans, guidelines and procedures set by the following:

**National Steering Committee:** The National Steering Committee (NSC) will serve as the overall policy-making body for all DA programs, projects and activities (PAPs) related to BSS&S. It shall provide overall guidance to the BSS&S Coordinating Office.

NSC is also tasked to address program-related issues, e.g. implementation issues. It shall meet as necessary to render decisions and recommendations on issues concerning the programs in the Department. As deemed necessary, the NSC shall create Technical Working Groups to provide scientific advice in BSS&S policy formulation and in implementation of activities.

NSC shall be chaired by the Undersecretary for Regulations, and vice-chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Regulations. The Directors of BAI, BPI, BFAR and NMIS shall serve as Members of the NSC. Heads of other DA Agencies and Operating Units as enumerated in Section III shall be invited as deemed necessary by the NSC.

**BSS&S Coordinating Office:** The BSS&S Coordinating Office shall lead the overall coordination and facilitation of program implementation, and shall be supervised by the Assistant Secretary for Regulations. The BSS&S Coordinating Office shall be identified and tasked through a Special Order issued by the Department Secretary.

The responsibilities of the BSS&S Coordinating Office include the following, among others:

1. Spearhead the drafting, implementation, monitoring and updating of a BSS&S Strategic Plan;
2. Identify sources of funding for projects;
3. Facilitate trainings and workshops for Project Management Offices;
4. Develop policy proposals using research findings; and
5. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the program and provide recommendations.



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**Project Management Offices:** A Project Management Office is an ad hoc unit operated by the proponent or the main beneficiary of an approved project proposal related to biosafety, -security, and-surveillance. It is responsible for implementing project activities and regularly reporting the progress and outputs to the BSS&S Coordinating Office.

**Information and Communication Technology Service (ICTS):** The ICTS shall provide the over-all orchestration and guidance in the development, implementation, and maintenance of the DA Laboratory Information Management System (DA LIMS) which will be linked with Agency Units and DA offices to facilitate the communication for:

- a. Regulatory and enforcement purposes, e.g. surveillance;
- b. Research and Development;
- c. Standards development;
- d. Production, extension, and marketing services;
- e. Contaminant monitoring; and
- f. Database on national food safety situation.

In this regard, BAFS shall collaborate with ICTS in this endeavor to collect laboratory data and information for standards development and other purposes.

The ICTS shall also ensure the inclusion of the needed ICT resources in the DA Information Systems Strategic Plan (DA-ISSP) to support the development, implementation, and maintenance of the DA LIMS.

**Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Engineering (BAFE):** The BAFE is responsible in overseeing and providing technical assistance to the operations of the Regional Agricultural Engineering Division (RAED) of the DA Regional Field Offices, as well as providing guidance to the DA bureaus, attached agencies, and corporations on the integration of biosafety and -security measures in DA Laboratory infrastructures. Further, it shall oversee the implementation of engineering and administrative overhead expenses (EAO) in proposals for the construction and maintenance of DA Laboratory infrastructures in accordance with the DA Integrated Laboratory Master Plan.

## SECTION VI FUNDING

Lead agencies and participating agencies and operating units identified in Section III of this Memorandum Circular shall include funding for activities and other necessary resources identified in the POA&M roadmap in their annual budgetary proposals. Banner programs shall also provide funding support for the implementation of the POA&M roadmap.

The DA, through the Planning and Monitoring Service (PMS), Financial and Management Service (FMS), Project Development Service (PDS) and the International Affairs Division (IAD) shall endeavor to identify sources to augment funds from the General Appropriations Act (GAA) and other sources through timely approval of the proposals.



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## SECTION VII IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVITY

This Memorandum Circular shall be implemented under the overall guidance of the Undersecretary for Regulations who shall regularly report its progress to the Secretary.

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

Done this 22nd day of June, 2021.



**WILLIAM D. DAR, Ph.D.**  
Secretary

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
  
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