

Comments on **Senate Bill No. 337**, authored by Sen. Cynthia A. Villar, entitled: “*Bamboo Industry Development in the Philippines*” and **Senate Bill No. 524**, authored by Sen. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, entitled: “*Bamboo Industry Development in the Philippines*”.

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Mr. Chair, your Honors, distinguished resource persons and guests, good morning.

Having participated in a previous TWG meeting on the proposed Philippine Bamboo Industry Act or PBIDA, I am happy to note that recommendations based on related policy research have been incorporated, most notably the elimination of cutting and transport permits.

I do raise a concern about the provision that bamboo pole exports be subject to Council regulation whereas bamboo product exports are unrestricted. I acknowledge the objective of this provision to favor the domestic bamboo value chain; however, a strong foreign demand for bamboo poles may be precisely the incentive needed for investors to go into bamboo plantations (coupled with liberalization of bamboo harvesting and marketing). Even local bamboo processors will benefit from expansion of bamboo plantations; it is better for these processors to compete at world prices for their raw material.

I also raise a concern about the specification of the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Roadmap objectives. These should be treated as programmatic objectives and targets, without the force of law, even though these are mentioned explicitly in the PBIDA.

I also recommend that the PBIDA have a provision identifying the official agency for collecting data on the industry, which I suggest be assigned to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Furthermore, there are some points that require clarification, such as:

- Definition of bamboo plantation to qualify for incentives (i.e. planting density requirements);
- Whether cutting or transport of bamboo poles will still require documentation, i.e. proof of harvest from a registered plantation, which will defeat the purpose of the deregulation;

I do note though that the clarifications may be forthcoming in the IRR. Thank you.

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