

Impact of AFMA on Irrigation and Irrigated Agriculture

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Compliance with the provisions and stipulations of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) on irrigation had been very minimal. As a result, AFMA had very little positive impact on irrigation and irrigated agriculture. After 5 yr of implementation of AFMA, the engineering performance of existing gravity irrigation facilities continued to be mediocre. In terms of cost-effectiveness, irrigation service area and irrigation intensity, AFMA had negligible impact. However, there seems to be a modest increase in the yield of irrigated rice from pre- to post-AFMA years.

Despite a massive investment of over PHP5.5 billion per year on national and communal irrigation systems, the aggregate service area of such systems increased by only 9,000 ha per year from 1998–2004. The existing systems are deteriorating at a rate of about 134,000 ha per year.

There was no improvement in irrigation intensity in the national irrigation system (NIS) and communal irrigation system (CIS) service areas. To gain insights on the reasons behind the poor engineering performance of existing irrigation systems, field studies on sample irrigation systems selected at random were conducted. The results of the studies in the sample province of Ilocos Norte in the Philippines showed an average irrigation intensity of only 27% during the dry season. This low rate was traced to design mistakes and over-optimistic estimates of the irrigation service area during the planning stage.

The impressions and expectations of stakeholders on the irrigation component of the Act conform to the findings on the tangible impact of AFMA.

Key Words: AFMA, compliance, cost-effectiveness, impact, irrigation design shortcomings, irrigation intensity, irrigation performance, irrigation trends, unit area productivity

Abbreviations: AFMA – Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act, BAS – Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, CIS – communal irrigation system, COCAFM – Congressional Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization, DA – Department of Agriculture, IA – irrigators association, IRR – implementing rules and regulations, LGU – local government unit, LLP – low-lift pump, NAFC – National Agriculture and Fishery Council, NIA – National Irrigation Administration, NIS – national irrigation system, O&M – operation and maintenance, RAFC – Regional Agriculture and Fishery Council, RDE – research, development and extension, RIS – River Irrigation System, SAFDZ – Strategic Agriculture and Fisheries Development Zones, STW – shallow tube well, SWIP – small water impounding project

INTRODUCTION

The Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) of 1997

The AFMA (Republic Act 8435) embodies the legal and policy framework for the agricultural development of the country. Signed into law in December 1997, it became effective in July 1998 when the Department of Agriculture (DA) issued its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRRs).

The effectivity of the law was for 5 yr but in February 2004, its implementation was extended until 2015.

The AFMA envisions a modern Philippine agriculture and fisheries sector that is dynamic, small holder-based, private sector-led and market-driven. To be dynamic, it has to be a technology-based, rather than a resource-based, industry (Sections 2 and 3). It has to have a strong research, development and extension (RDE) network that generates appropriate technologies. To be smallholder in orientation, it should empower small farmers and fisherfolk