

[REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11573, July 16, 2021]

AN ACT IMPROVING THE CONFIRMATION PROCESS FOR IMPERFECT LAND TITLES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 141, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE PUBLIC LAND ACT," AND PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1529, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "PROPERTY REGISTRATION DECREE"

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the declared policy of the State to simplify, update and harmonize similar and related provisions of land laws in order to simplify and remove ambiguity in its interpretation and implementation. It is also the policy of the State to provide land tenure security by continuing judicial and administrative titling processes.

SEC. 2. Section 44 of Commonwealth Act No. 141, as amended by Republic Act No. 6940, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 44. Any natural-born citizen of the Philippines who is not the owner of more than twelve (12) hectares of land, and who, for at least twenty (20) years prior to the filing of an application for agricultural free patent, has continuously occupied and cultivated, either personally or through a predecessor-in-interest, a tract or tracts of alienable and disposable agricultural public lands subject to disposition, and who shall have paid the real estate tax thereon shall be entitled, under the provisions of this Chapter, to have a free patent issued for such tract or tracts of such land not to exceed twelve (12) hectares."

SEC. 3. Section 45 of Commonwealth Act No. 141, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 45. All applications for agricultural free patents shall be filed before the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). For provinces with no CENRO, the application shall be filed with the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO).

"The CENRO or the PENRO, as the case may be, is mandated to process the application within one hundred and twenty (120) days from filing, including compliance with the required notices and other legal requirements. The CENRO shall thereafter forward its recommendation to the PENRO if the area of the land is below five (5) hectares; to the DENR Regional Director if the area of the land is at least five (5) up to ten (10) hectares; and to the Secretary of the DENR if the area of the land is more than (10) up to twelve (12) hectares.

"Upon receipt of the recommendation from the CENRO, or upon the completion of the processing of the application within the reglementary period, the PENRO, DENR Regional Director, or the Secretary of the DENR, as the case may be, shall approve or disapprove the application for agricultural free patent within five (5) days. In case of approval, the agricultural free patent shall forthwith be issued.

"In case of conflicting claims among different claimants, the parties may seek the proper administrative and judicial remedies."

SEC. 4. Section 47 of Commonwealth Act No. 141, as amended by Republic Act No. 7196, is hereby repealed.

SEC. 5. Section 48 of Commonwealth Act No. 141, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 48. The following-described citizens of the Philippines, occupying lands of the public domain or claiming to own any such lands or an interest therein, but whose titles have perfected or completed, may file a petition at any time, whether personally or through their duly authorized representatives, in the Regional Trial Court of the province where the land is located, for confirmation of their claims and the issuance of a certificate of title to land not exceeding twelve (12) hectares:

"(a) Those who by themselves or through their predecessors-in-interest have been in open, continuous, exclusive, and notorious possession and occupation of alienable and disposable agricultural lands of the public domain, under a *bona fide* claim of ownership, for at least twenty (20) years immediately preceding the filing of the application for confirmation of title except when prevented by war or *force majeure*. They shall be conclusively presumed to have performed all the conditions essential to a Government grant and shall be entitled to a certificate of title under the provisions of this Chapter.

"(b) Those who have acquired ownership of private lands or abandoned riverbeds by right of accession or accretion under the provision of existing laws; and

"(c) Those who have acquired ownership of land in any other manner provided by law."

SEC. 6. Section 14 of Presidential Decree No. 1529 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"SECTION 14. *Who may apply.* The following persons may file at any time, in the proper Regional Trial Court in the province where the land is located, an application for registration of title to land, not exceeding twelve (12) hectares, whether personally or through their duly authorized representatives:

"(1) Those who by themselves or through their predecessors-in-interest have been in open, continuous, exclusive and notorious possession and occupation of alienable and disposable lands of the public domain not covered by existing certificates of title or patents under a *bona fide* claim of ownership for at least twenty (20) years immediately preceding the filing of the application for confirmation of title except when prevented by war or *force majeure*. They shall be conclusively presumed to