



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila



Eighteenth Congress

First Regular Session

House Bill No. 3470

Introduced by

**HON. ANNA MARIE VILLARAZA-SUAREZ and
HON. DAVID C. SUAREZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines is primarily an agricultural country with almost 30% of the land area cultivated by 5 million Filipinos. However, through the years, there is a decreasing number of people engaged in agriculture. In 2013, the average age of Filipino farmers is 57 years old with an assumed average life span of 70 years old.¹ This rather high averages of the country's farming population indicate that much of the youth have shunned farming as a profession or business undertaking.

Farming as a profession has become less attractive to the young and educated people. Most of them do not consider agricultural courses as career options due to the hardships and low-income generation associated with farming. Moreover, government policies have provided few incentives to farmers and are generally inclined in favor of white-collar jobs.

It is understandable that the young seek a better life in the future. Thus, they must be assured that a better and sustainable future can be achieved through farm work.

¹. *Farm Land Policy and Financing Program for Young Generation in the Philippines* by Marilyn M. Elauria PhD, June 9, 2015

This bill aims to encourage the youth or young farmers to engage in entrepreneurial pursuits in agribusiness rather than urban employment by demonstrating to them the high-income potentials in agricultural and fisheries undertakings.

Specifically, the measure proposes the establishment of a Young Farmers Program under which young farmers organized for the purpose shall be given priority in the provision of technical and material assistance by concerned government agencies such as socialized tuition fees for students of agricultural and fisheries courses, provision of farm inputs, implements, post-harvest facilities and other extension services, and transfer of technology relating to agricultural and fisheries products development and marketing, all designed to motivate the youth to engage in farming activities and agribusiness.

Under the bill, *young farmers* refer to enrollees in public and private universities and colleges with a commitment to finish diploma or certificate courses in agriculture and fisheries under a socialized tuition fee scheme of the Young Farmers Program, or diploma or certificate course graduates in agriculture and fisheries and listed as members of the Program. They shall include out-of-school youth who finished at least two (2) years of college education in agriculture and fisheries and those who have at least five years of actual experience in farming or agricultural activity and are listed as members under the Program.

Making the youth understand that the agro-fisheries industry is more than just soiling their hands can make them consider farming as a viable professional career or business activity and become active participants in nation-building.

For the foregoing reasons, the immediate consideration and approval of this bill is earnestly urged.



HON. ANNA MARIE VILLARAZA-SUAREZ
REPRESENTATIVE
ALONA PARTYLIST



HON. DAVID C. SUAREZ
REPRESENTATIVE
2ND DISTRICT, QUEZON



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**AN ACT
INSTITUTING THE YOUNG FARMERS PROGRAM AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

SECTION 1. Title - This Act shall be known as the 'Young Farmers Program Act of 2019'.

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to instill in the Filipino youth the dedication and commitment to be active partners in the development of the country's agricultural and fisheries sector. Towards this end, the State shall equip them with the entrepreneurial skills and agricultural knowledge necessary to fulfill such role and provide them with career guidance to the country's agricultural and fisheries sector.

SECTION 3. Statement of Objectives - This Act shall have the following objectives :

- a) To prevent the departure of young farmers, students and graduates of agriculture and fishery courses for urban employment by demonstrating to them the high-income potential in agribusiness;

- b) To encourage students, graduates and out-of-school-youth with academic background or experience in agriculture and fisheries to engage in entrepreneurial pursuits in agribusiness; and,
- c) To underscore to the youth their role in economic development and nation-building.

SECTION 4. Definition of Terms - As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean :

- a) *Program* refers to the Young Farmers Program as established in this Act;
- b) *Young Farmers* refer to enrollees in public and private universities and colleges with a commitment to finish diploma or certificate courses in agriculture and fisheries under a socialized tuition fee scheme of the Young Farmers Program, or diploma or certificate course graduates in agriculture and fisheries and listed as members of the Program. They shall include out-of-school youth who finished at least two (2) years of college education in agriculture and fisheries and those who have at least five years of actual experience in farming or agricultural activity and are listed as members under the Program.

SECTION 5. Young Farmers Program Committee - There is hereby created the Young Farmers Program Committee, hereinafter referred to as the Committee, under the Office of the President and composed of the following :

- a) Commissioner of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) as Chairman;
- b) Representative of the National Agriculture and Fisheries Education System (NAFES) as Vice-Chairman;
- c) Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) or his duly authorized representative;
- d) Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) or his duly authorized representative;
- e) Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) or his duly authorized representative; and,
- f) Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government or his duly authorized representative.

SECTION 6. Implementation of the Program - The Committee shall oversee and monitor the implementation of the Program and shall promulgate the rules and regulations, adopt procedures and guidelines to effectively carry out the objectives of this Act.

SECTION 7. *Role of State Colleges and Universities (SUCs) and Private Educational Institutions* - State colleges and universities and private educational institutions, in coordination with the Committee, shall :

- a) Establish a Young Farmers Organization (YFO) out of their respective agriculture and fishery enrollees whose members shall automatically be listed under the Program;
- b) Create socialized tuition fee schemes for their agriculture and fishery enrollees; and,
- c) Conceptualize and implement extension programs in partnership with the Provincial Agriculture Offices (PAOs) and Municipal or City Agriculture Offices (MAOs / CAOs).

SECTION 8. *Role of the Department of Agriculture* - The Department of Agriculture, in coordination with the Committee, shall prioritize young farmers listed under the Program in the provision of grants or assistance such as but not limited to seedlings, fertilizers, equipment and implements, starting stocks, and other farm inputs, including post-harvest facilities, crop insurance and small irrigation projects.

SECTION 9. *Role of the Department of Trade and Industry* - The Department of Trade and Industry, in coordination with the Committee, shall lend support to young farmers listed under the Program in launching their start-up agri-businesses, such as assistance in the preparation of business plans and in the promotion of their products in the domestic and international markets.

SECTION 10. *Role of the Department of Science and Technology* - The Department of Science and Technology, in coordination with the Committee, shall provide assistance to young farmers listed in the Program in their product development, quality control and packaging needs, and other related concerns.

SECTION 11. *Role of Local Government Units (LGUs)* - Local government units shall, in coordination with the Committee, support the Program through the establishment of Young Farmers Organizations (YFOs) in the city and municipal levels with graduates of diploma or certificate courses in agriculture and fisheries and out-of-school youth deemed young farmers under this Act who are residents thereat as members. Further, LGUs shall endeavor, whenever applicable, to provide counterpart funding assistance to the Program.

SECTION 12. *Appropriations* - The amount of One Hundred Million Pesos (Php 100,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated out of any unexpended balance in the National Treasury not otherwise appropriated for the initial implementation of this Act following its enactment into law. Thereafter, such amount as necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be provided for in the annual General Appropriations Act.

All funds currently being appropriated for the Young Farmers Program in the Department of Agriculture shall be transferred to the Committee. Furthermore, the Committee and the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (ACEF) National Committee shall develop a rationalization scheme to allot a portion of the ACEF for the implementation of the Program.

SECTION 13. *Separability Clause* - If any provision of this Act or any part hereof is declared unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other provisions.

SECTION 14. *Repealing Clause* - All laws, decrees, rules and regulations, and executive orders contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 15. *Effectivity Clause* - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days from its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in any national newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.