

Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **5280**



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Introduced by **Rep. ANGELO MARCOS BARBA**  
2<sup>nd</sup> District, Ilocos Norte

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***EXPLANATORY NOTE***

Food security is in peril.

Recent studies have shown that the average age of Filipino farmers today is 57 to 59 years old.<sup>1</sup> Filipino farmers are aging and the interest of the younger generation to pursue a career in agriculture is diminishing. Consequently, the number of enrollees in agriculture courses is declining. This has led to a gap in the agricultural workforce which gravely affects food production in the country.

While the government is working hard to boost the agriculture sector by providing better irrigation facilities, institutional credit, farm subsidies, and introduction of new farm technology, it must also find ways that would not only give farm workers reason to stay in the field, but most importantly, encourage the youth to pursue a career in agriculture. Hence, this bill.

This proposed measure seeks to establish a Young Farmers Challenge Program that shall not only engage the youth in policy formulation and implementation in the agriculture sector, but also ensure government support for agri-business and agri-entrepreneurship.

The bill also proposes the creation of a Young Farmers Challenge Council composed of representatives from all relevant government agencies and promote a whole-of-government approach. Government agencies have also been tasked to formulate policies that shall provide our farmers, especially the young farmers, access to knowledge, information, and education; land; financial services; green jobs, and the market participation.

In light of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

  
**ANGELO MARCOS BARBA**

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<sup>1</sup> De Guzman, Sarah Soliven. (June 18, 2018), *Agriculture is dying in the Philippines*. The Philippine Star. Retrieved from <https://www.pressreader.com/philippines/the-philippine-star/20180618/281625306017934> on October 17, 2019

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**AN ACT ESTABLISHING YOUNG FARMERS CHALLENGE PROGRAM, CREATING THE YOUNG FARMERS CHALLENGE COUNCIL, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

**SECTION 1.** *Short title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Young Farmers Challenge Program Act*”.

**SECTION 2.** *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to recognize and engage the role of the youth in nation building and rural development, providing for this purpose access to knowledge, information and education, access to land, new sources of financial services and capital, green jobs, access to new and niche markets, and participation in policy dialogue.

**SECTION 3.** *Young Farmers Challenge Program.* – There is hereby established a Young Farmers Challenge Program, hereinafter referred to as the Program, that shall engage the younger generation to pursue a career in agriculture, engage the youth in policy formulation and implementation relative to the agriculture sector, and ensure government support for agri-business and agri-entrepreneurship.

**SECTION 4.** *Young Farmers Challenge Council.* – There is hereby created the Young Farmers Challenge Council, hereinafter referred to as the Council.

The Council shall have the following members:

- a. A representative from the National Youth Commission (NYC) or the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK);
- b. A representative from the Department of Agriculture (DA);
- c. A representative from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);



- d. A representative from the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- e. A representative from the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT);
- f. A representative from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);
- g. A representative from the Department of Education (DepEd);
- h. A representative from the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR);
- i. A representative from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
- j. A representative from the governing body of the State Universities and Colleges (SUC) and Private Education Institutions (PEI);
- k. A representative from the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP);
- l. A representative from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA); and
- m. A representative from the private sector, through the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce;

*Provided*, That the majority of the members shall be fifteen (15) to forty (40) years of age from the rural farmer's sector *Provided further*, That the DA shall convene and chair the Council and the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) shall act as its Secretariat.

**SECTION 5.** *Powers and Functions of the Council.* – The Council shall have the following powers and functions:

- a. Formulate the Young Farmers Challenge Program, in consultation with research institutions such as the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD), University of the Philippines – Los Baños (UPLB) and other relevant State Universities and Colleges;
- b. Develop, in coordination with various departments and agencies specific action plans for unambiguous tasking and quick implementation;
- c. Create special programs for marginalized sectors such as women, indigenous people, and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM);

- d. Develop initiatives in new farm sectors such as smart farming, farm tourism, agro-, aqua-, and hydroponics, organic and boutique vegetables;
- e. Identify relevant training and livelihood budgets in the different departments and agencies, including start-up capital;
- f. Implement the action plans of the departments and agencies, engaging the assistance of the Local Government Units (LGUs) and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK);
- g. Identify the best practices in the implementation of the program;
- h. Initiate new packaging, promo, and marketing events;
- i. Participate in agri and food tourism marketing events, nationally and internationally;
- j. Establish linkages with agricultural representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other international farming youth associations; and
- k. Engage national and international leaders in formulating policies directly addressing the concerns of young farmers.

**SECTION 6.** *Access to Knowledge, Information, and Education.* – A whole government approach shall be utilized to inform and enlist young farmers in agriculture:

- a. The DepEd shall include in all levels, particularly in the K-12 program, subjects focused on agriculture, such as garden farming, urban greening, reforestation, and coastal management;
- b. The TESDA, in coordination with the DICT and DOST, shall add subjects in their training centers for agriculture entrepreneurship, smart farming, and other advanced farming technologies, prioritizing programs focused on agriculture. The TESDA shall also provide scholarships and subsidized tuition fees for young farmers;
- c. The DOLE shall provide on-the-job training programs for young farmers, including the Special Program for Employment of Students (SPES);
- d. The CHED, SUCs, and Agricultural Schools shall provide scholarship grants, stipends, and subsidies to qualified young farmers. Likewise, the CHED, SUCs, and agricultural schools shall provide schemes for distance, remote, and digital learning. The CHED shall include agriculture in its National Service Training Program (NSTP) curriculum, such as garden farming, urban greening, and coastal management. Scholarships for post-graduate and doctoral degrees shall be provided by both the CHED and the private colleges;



- e. The DA, in particular the 4-H Club of the ATI, shall provide for scholarship grants and stipends to qualified young farmers, targeting specific marginalized sectors such as women, indigenous people, and persons with disabilities (PWDs);
- f. The DOST and DICT shall develop portals, utilize social media, and exploit other electronic technologies, to publicize the program; and
- g. The LGU shall inform and enlist the SK who shall act as trainer-leaders to qualified and interested young farmers.

**SECTION 7. *Access to Land.*** – Short-leases, free land and agrarian reform schemes shall be developed to provide access to young farmers:

- a. The DENR shall explore the possibilities of extending short-term leases for public land to young farmers, provide free or subsidized land for cultivation, and develop such other packages as would allow young farmers to use available or unutilized agricultural land. In coordination with the LGUs and SK, the DENR may also create lease-to-buy programs;
- b. The DAR shall facilitate and expedite the lease, distribution, and award of agrarian reform land to young beneficiaries;
- c. The LGU shall prioritize the lease and acquisition of land for cultivation by young farmers. Further, the LGU and SK shall distribute hillside or other undercultivated lands to young farmers, for farming and other agricultural purposes; and
- d. Whenever SUCs and PEIs own or occupy excess land holdings, young farmers shall be given first option to use and cultivate such land holdings for agricultural purposes.

**SECTION 8. *Access to Financial Services.*** – Young farmers shall be provided financial assistance and given access to financial services:

- a. The Landbank of the Philippines (LBP) shall develop favorable financial packages for young farmers, waiving collateral, salary and other typical bank requisites;
- b. The DA shall develop financial packages specifically targeting young farmers;
- c. The DTI shall extend loans to young farmers for the trade and marketing of their agricultural products;
- d. The DOST, DICT, and DTI, pursuant to Republic Act No. 11337, otherwise known as the “Innovative Start-up Act of 2018”, and other programs shall include the agricultural enterprises for qualified young farmer-entrepreneurs in their incubation efforts;

- e. The Private Sector shall subcontract, partner, and extend financial grants, initiate social partnerships and rural development initiatives, as well as mentor young farmers on livelihood strategies, as party of their corporate social responsibility and other community participation;
- f. The LGU, in coordination with the SK, shall provide funding and livelihood opportunities to young farmers;
- g. The SK, using its ten percent (10%) Development Fund, and other funds, shall provide entrepreneurial and finance packages for young farmers; and
- h. The NYC, in partnership with potential youth agri-entrepreneurs, shall initiate donation and fundraising drives for the program, exploiting for this purpose online advertising, crowd-sourcing, and other digital means to generate funds for the Program.

**SECTION 9. *Access to Green Jobs.*** – Young farmers shall be given priority in access to green jobs, as follows:

- a. The DOLE, through the SPEs, shall include green jobs, reforestation, coastal management, fisheries, and other rural-based jobs, in cooperation with LGUs. The DOLE shall prioritize young farmers employment in public projects or private agro-industries and corporations;
- b. The TESDA shall develop on-the-job trainings, job fairs, employment bridging initiatives, and private partnerships in producing, processing, packaging, and marketing youth products;
- c. The DOT shall prioritize employment of young farmers in eco and agro-tours, and encourage youth entrepreneurship in farm tourism;
- d. The PEZA shall prioritize farmers for jobs in agro-industrial ecozones, provide access to modern farm technology, promote linkages in agriculture-related enterprise, and accelerate the creation of green jobs for young farmers; and
- e. The DA, particularly the 4-H Club of the ATI, shall provide jobs and embark upon farming start-ups in new and niche agricultural sectors such as organic farming, agroponics, aquaponics, hydroponics, dairy, livestock, coffee, cacao, and other areas of farming.

**SECTION 10. *Access to Markets.*** – Young farmers shall have access to markets through the following:

- a. The DTI shall assist young farmers in the packaging, marketing, and promotion of their products, including branding, advertising, and subsidizing their participation in trade fairs and exhibits;



- b. The LGU shall provide subsidized rental rates for public retail areas and public markets, encourage agricultural tourism, and develop other opportunities for young farmers;
- c. The DOT shall promote the products of young farmers through tourism conventions, events and other tourist souvenir sales opportunities;
- d. The private sector shall market and promote the products of young farmers, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and other development efforts; and
- e. The media shall promote and advertise the products of the young farmers and the Program.

**SECTION 11. *Engagement in Policy Dialogue.*** – The young farmers are encouraged to participate in policy dialogues, as follows:

- a. The NYC shall ensure that young farmers are represented in all decision-making bodies relating to the establishment of mechanisms for the promotion and protection of the rights of young farmers;
- b. The SK, through local and Congressional youth representatives, shall liaise with the Local Government Leagues and the Congress of the Philippines to consult and engage young farmers policy in policy-making; and
- c. The DA shall ensure that young farmers are equitably represented and consulted in its decision-making process to fully realize the young farmers role as agents and partners for national development.

**SECTION 12. *Waiver of Government Fees and Charges.*** – Subject to the exceptions provided in Section 8 of Republic Act No. 11261, otherwise known as the “First-Time Jobseekers Assistance Act”, all government agencies and instrumentalities, including government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), LGUs, and government hospitals shall not collect fees or charges from any young farmer: *Provided*, That such fee or charge is in connection with the application for and the granting of licenses, proofs of identification, clearances, certificates or other documents usually required in the course of employment locally or abroad: *Provided further*, That the benefit provided shall only be availed of once.

**SECTION 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DA and DAR, in coordination with the DOST, DICT, DOLE, DENR, DepEd, CHED, LBP, and NYC shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act.

**SECTION 14. *Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary to initially implement the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the current year of the concerned departments and agencies. Thereafter, such sums, as may be necessary, for its continued implementation

shall be included in the appropriation of the concerned departments and agencies in the annual General Appropriations Act.

**SECTION 15.** *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid, the remainder or any provisions thereof not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

**SECTION 16.** *Repealing Clause.* – All acts and decrees, executive orders, implementing rules and regulations or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

**SECTION 17.** *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect upon its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,