

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1275



Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The average Filipino farmer is 57 years old with an educational attainment of Grade 4. He makes roughly P23,000 (\$529) a year, less than 1/3 of what his Thai counterparts earn. The poverty incidence of workers in the agriculture sector is the highest in the country at 38.3% in 2012¹, and has never gone below 20% since 1970³. These figures clearly show that the people who supply the food that we eat everyday are poor, hungry and aging. Given our ever-ballooning population, serious food inadequacy in the future is a looming threat that must be urgently addressed.

This bill envisions a Philippines with 100% food sufficiency and reduced overall poverty incidence. The first step to which entails a massive upgrade of the agriculture sector which accounts to 32% of the total employment in the country, but contributes a dismal 11% to our gross domestic product (GDP) as per the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)². This representation believes that our land and waters are rich and bountiful, capable of producing enough harvest, catch and other goods not only for Filipinos but for global consumption. We have only to involve this country's best resource — its youth.

Half a million fresh graduates endeavor to join the workforce every year. Unfortunately, work in agriculture is one that is primarily inherited, not pursued in school. In fact, enrollment in agriculture and related courses continues to go down despite the increasing demand for food and other farm products in the country³. This bill recognizes the need to supply the agriculture sector with educated and techsavvy young blood that could meet the needs of the agriculture sector in terms of innovation, policy formulation, and even agri-business integration.

¹ <https://psa.gov.ph/content/fishermen-farmers-and-children-remain-poorest-basic-sectors-0>
<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/money/content/306370/agriculture-the-decline-of-the-poor-mans-sector/story/>

² <https://www.rappler.com/move-pMssues/hunger/52372-agriculture-hunger-food-security>

³ <https://businessmirror.com.ph/enrollment-in-agriculture-courses-continues-to-decline/>

The bill seeks to establish a Tulong Kabataan sa Agrikultura scholarship program in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and related areas which is a ladderized program in Diploma in Agricultural Technology (DAT), Bachelor in Agricultural Technology (BAT) and Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness (BSAgrib). The program will be offered to senior high school students in the agricultural and fisheries tracks, and similarly situated students of agriculture and fisheries in tertiary education who intend to enroll or continue with their education. Beneficiaries shall be granted financial assistance covering tuition and other school fees, monthly living and transportation costs, as well as expenses on books and other school supplies. Through this bill, this representation believes that more of our Filipino youth will be encouraged to pursue studies in agriculture.

A Tulong Kabataan sa Agrikultura Trust Fund shall be created for the implementation and continuance of this bill. The Fund shall be sourced from the General Appropriations Act (GAA), a percentage of the total gross collections from the Professional Registration Fee of the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC), and other sources.

The agriculture industry has steadily declined over the past decades and many reasons have been cited, namely: the lack of government support and investments, absence of true land reform, and even the string of natural disasters that annually devastate some parts of the country. Meanwhile, our population has only increased, and our food inadequacy worsened. From 2010-2012, the Philippines had the 5th highest food inadequacy at 54%, behind Cambodia (27.1%), Myanmar (29.5%), Laos (38.3%), and Timor Leste (46.1%), according to the FAO⁴. The lamentable fact is that we are not producing enough food to feed our current population. Experts warn of a looming national food crisis⁵ should current trends continue.

We cannot overemphasize the need to finally prioritize the agriculture sector and to legislate a Tulong Kabataan sa Agrikultura scholarship program to involve our youth in our pursuit of food adequacy and sustainable and inclusive economic growth. In consideration of the foregoing premises, the passage of this bill is urgently ought.



LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.

⁴ <https://www.rappler.com/move-pMssues/hunger/52372-agriculture-hunger-food-security>

⁵ Ibid

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AN ACT
ENCOURAGING YOUTH SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN THE
AGRICULTURAL
SECTOR, ESTABLISHING; FOR THE PURPOSE A 'TULONG
KABATAAN SA AGRIKULTURA PROGRAM' AND A 'TULONG
KABATAAN SA AGRIKULTURA TRUST FUND', APPROPRIATING;
FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

ARTICLE I GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. Title— This Act shall be known as the "Tulong Kabataan sa Agrikultura Act of 2017".

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy — The State shall give priority to education, science and technology to accelerate social progress and promote development. Towards this end, the government shall provide opportunities for all to obtain quality education and for this purpose, scholarships in Agriculture, Agri-Entrepreneurship, Forestry and Fisheries are hereby strengthened. It is also the policy of the State to develop graduates who will become competent agribusiness managers and entrepreneurs.

SEC. 3. Objectives. — The objectives of this Act are to:

- a) Increase youth participation in the agricultural sector;
- b) Provide opportunities to poor but deserving students to realize their potentials in agribusiness and entrepreneurships;

- c) Develop competency skills and knowledge of students in agricultural technologies and agribusiness;
- d) Increase food production;
- e) Commercialize proven viable technologies to increase food production and income of rural communities through the development of livelihoods and markets;
- f) Provide income to students while doing experiential teaming and on-the-job training which from part of their degree programs;
- g) Link young farmer-students with credit, financing, and marketing institutions; and
- h) Contribute to the alleviation of poverty.

SEC. 4. Definition of Terms. — For the purposes of this Act:

- a) "Tulong Kabataan sa Agrikultura Program" or "The Program" refers to the scholarship program established by this Act which targets poor but deserving graduates of agricultural and fisheries tracks in senior high schools and similarly situated students taking up agriculture and related courses in tertiary education;
- b) "Tulong Kabataan as Agrikultura Trust Fund" or "The Fund" refers to the trust fund created under this Act to ensure the achievement of this Act's incentives;
- c) "Agribusiness Venture Laboratory" refers to agricultural subjects and classes designed as business ventures in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and agri- entrepreneurship including but not limited to raising of poultry, goats, corn or rice or crop production and counted as satisfying the laboratory requirement of a course.

ARTICLE II

THE TULONG KABATAAN SA AGRIKULTURA PROGRAM

SEC. 5. Establishment of a Tulong Kabataan sa Agrikultura Program. — A Tulong Kabataaan sa Agrikultura scholarship program in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and related areas to be administered by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is hereby established. The program shall be a ladder program in Diploma in Agricultural Technology (DAT), Bachelor in Agricultural 1 technology (BAT) and Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness (BSAgrib). The program shall initially be offered by the University of the Philippines - Los Bafios College of Agriculture in the first two (2) years of this Ads effectivity. The program shall be

offered in SUCs which provide courses in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other allied fields.

SEC. 6. Target Beneficiaries. — The Program shall target senior high school graduates of agricultural and fisheries tracks, and similarly situated students of agriculture and fisheries in tertiary education, who have a general weighted average of at least eighty percent (80%) or its equivalent: Provided, that beneficiaries who complete the agriculture and fisheries tracks of senior high and who enroll in an

agriculture, forestry, fisheries, or other similar course in tertiary education shall continue to be covered by the Program.

SEC. 7. Assistance to Grantees. — Beneficiaries of the Program shall be entitled to financial assistance, which shall include the following:

- a) Tuition and other school fees;
- b) Outright grant for prescribed textbooks and essential school supplies;
- c) Transportation expenses; and
- d) Monthly living allowance.

SEC. 8. Curriculum Formulation. — There is hereby established a technical committee which shall design the curriculum of the Program. The Committee shall be composed of the following:

- a) The Chairperson of the CHED, or his permanent representative, as Chairperson of the Committee;
- b) The Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA), or his permanent representative, as the Vice Chairperson;
- c) The Dean of the University of the Philippines-Los Baños College of Agriculture; and
- d) One (1) representative each from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao from other colleges of agriculture, who shall be appointed by the President, and who shall each serve a term of one (1) year.

At least twenty-five percent (25%) of the entire curriculum of the Program shall be in the form of on-the-job training or related learning experience. Laboratory components of various agricultural subjects shall be in the form of agribusiness ventures.

SEC. 9. Strengthening Agri-Fisheries Tracks in Senior High. — To achieve the objectives of this Act, the Department of Education (DepEd) is hereby directed to ensure that agri-fisheries tracks are offered in as many senior high school programs in appropriate areas nationwide.

SEC. 10. Agribusiness Venture Laboratories. — Each agribusiness venture shall be under the supervision of a faculty who is also a technology expert in the chosen commodity. The agribusiness venture laboratory to be developed must have short gestation, around three to twelve (3 to 12) months, should be science and technology based agribusiness, the end products should be highly marketable and the facilities needed should be present within the SUC.

SEC. 11. Use of Idle Lands for the Agribusiness Venture Laboratory. — The

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shall make available untenured public lands under its jurisdiction for the use of students in their agribusiness ventures under appropriate arrangements with CHED and the participating SUCs.

ARTICLE III

THE TULONG KABATAAN SA AGRIKULTURA TRUST FUND

SEC. 12. Tulong Kabataan sa Agrikultura Trust Fund. — To ensure the financial sustainability of this Act, a Tulong Kabataan sa Agrikultura Trust Fund is hereby created. The Fund shall be used exclusively to fund the Program, and shall be funded from the following sources:

- a) The amount of Fifty Million Pesos (Php 50,000,000.00) as seed capital;
- b) The equivalent of ten percent (10%) annual share on the total gross collections of the travel tax;
- c) The equivalent of ten percent (10%) annual share on the total gross collections from the Professional Registration Fee of the Professional Regulatory Commission;
- d) Grants, donations and endowments from domestic and foreign sources, pursuant to existing laws and regulations;
- e) Such amounts as may be indicated under the General Appropriations Act (GAA) for the purpose of sustaining the Fund; and
- f) All interest income of the trust fund.

SEC. 13. Administration of the Fund. — The CHED shall administer the fund and shall make available all records of how the funds are utilized, disbursed, and invested, in accordance with existing laws.

ARTICLE IV FINAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 14. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — The CHED in coordination with the DA, and DENR and relevant private sector stakeholders shall prepare the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of this Act and promulgate it within ninety (90) days after approval of this Act.

SEC. 15. Separability Clause. — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the provisions hereof which are not affected shall continue to have force and effect.

SEC. 16. Repealing Clause. — All laws, decrees, orders, rules or regulations thereof, inconsistent with this Act are hereby modified or repealed accordingly.

SEC. 17. Effectivity. — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation, whichever comes earlier.

Approved,