



SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

17 MAY -9 P 6:30

RECEIVED BY: *[Signature]*

SENATE Bill No. 1443

Introduced by SENATOR CYNTHIA A. VILLAR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FARM SCHOOL IN EVERY TOWN IN THE COUNTRY AND PROVIDE AGRICULTURAL SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS AS PART OF THE TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL TRAINING FUNDS OF THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

The Philippines is basically an agricultural country with 32.4% percent of its land devoted to agricultural production. The country has five major crops - coconut, rice, corn, sugarcane and banana. The agricultural labor force is 11.8 Million or about 30 percent of the whole work force in the country. A typical Filipino farmer is usually working on the land of about one hectare or less and has an average age of 57 years old. (PSA)

Fishermen and farmers consistently posted the highest poverty incidences among the country's basic sectors. In 2012, 39.2% of the fishermen are poor while 38.3% of the farmers are poor vis-à-vis a national poverty incidence of 25.2% (PSA). This compares to 41.3% and 38% seen three years earlier (2009) when the Philippines posted a 26.3% poverty incidence. Agriculture has become the seat of poverty in the country. Seventy percent (70%) of the poor can be found in the rural areas compared to thirteen (13) percent in urban areas and only 3.9 percent in Metro Manila. Agriculture has remained backwards and still grossly underdeveloped.

Compared to our ASEAN neighbors, our rural poverty incidence is three times higher. Vietnam's rural poverty is only 17%, while Thailand and Indonesia – 14% and Malaysia has 8%. (Habito, 2016)

The industry and the services sectors performed better than the agriculture sector which has yielded the lowest productivity and lowest incomes over the years. The labor

productivity in agriculture barely improved. In the 90s, it grew at an average rate of only 0.7 percent, less than half of the corresponding productivity growth in our neighboring countries. The total factor productivity, which embodies technology and efficiency, grew annually in the sector by an average of only 0.4 percent since the 1980's as well – way behind the corresponding growth in most of the countries in the region. From 1961-2012, data showed that the annual growth rate in agricultural productivity in the Philippines was only at 2.87 percent, the lowest among Asean countries.

Comparatively, neighboring countries showed better performance with 3.73 percent of Indonesia, 4.10 percent of Malaysia, 3.21 percent of Thailand, 3.67 percent of Myanmar, 4.16 percent of Vietnam, and 4.32 percent of China. (Dar, 2016)

Average annual growth of the agriculture sector over the past six years has only been 1.3 percent, less than 3.2 percent posted in the previous six years. The industry sectors grew to 7.4 percent, nearly twice the 4% posted in the previous six-year period or from 2004-2009. The Philippine services sector's growth has also improved to 6.6 percent from previous period of 6.2 percent. Based on the Philippine Statistical Authority's 2014 report, the contribution to Gross Domestic Product of the three sectors are as follows – Agriculture – P1.423Trillion or 10%; Industry – P3.9 Trillion or 33.9 percent and the Services Sector, the biggest, or 46.9 percent or P7.248 Trillion. (PSA)

To improve rural income, achieve food security and inclusive growth, the role of the agriculture sector cannot be overly emphasized. Agriculture could do more to match the improvements and achievements in the industry and services sector. (Habito, 2016, PDI). Agriculture can create jobs, and has the greatest potential for high productivity, and should be the main driver of growth. It will provide food and vital raw materials for the rest of the economy. It is necessary in the pursuit of a broad-based economic growth and development.

Based on studies, the barriers to agricultural growth and higher productivity are: lack of technology, lack of mechanization, lack of financial literacy and the inability to access socialized credit – which are all indications of very low levels of education and human capital in the sector. More so, the failure of the public higher education system and the Local Government Units to do their extension mandate also contributed to the stagnation of our agriculture sector.

This representation believes, thus, that higher productivity in agriculture can come about through intensified technology generation, the promotion of high yielding and quality farm inputs, more infrastructure such as farm to market roads and post harvest facilities, and – most importantly – a better quality and accessible agriculture education to farm workers and owners as well.

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is an agency of government primarily responsible for the formulation of continuing, coordinated and fully integrated technical education and skills development policies, plans and programs. It is the leading partner in the development of the Filipino workforce with world-class competence and positive work values. It has listed among its Key Result Areas *rapid, inclusive and sustained economic growth and poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor and the vulnerable by improving their human capabilities*. Considering the catch up plan for our agriculture sector to reach the 11.8 million farm workers to make them better skilled and competent in the face of the ASEAN economic integration, a TESDA farm school in every town is necessary.

One of the major TESDA programs is the Training for Work Scholarship (TWSP) that aims to support rapid, inclusive and sustained economic growth through course offerings to key employment generators in the areas of agriculture and fisheries, agribusiness, agro-industrial, tourism, information technology-business process management, semi-conductors and electronics, automotive and visual arts, manufacturing, logistics and general infrastructure and other new and emerging sectors. (TESDA, website)

In 2015, the TWSP has been given a budget of P2 Billion, in 2016, some P2.2 Billion and in 2017 P2.4 Billion for an estimated 322,000 enrollees. The amount given to agriculture in the past three years has always been P500 million or twenty five percent of the TWSP allocation.

No less than our 1987 Constitution states that, the goals of the national economy are a more equitable distribution of opportunities, income and wealth; a sustained increase in the amount of goods and services produced by the nation for the benefit of the people; and an expanding productivity as the key to raising the quality of life for all, especially the underprivileged.

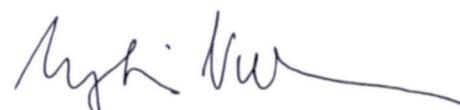
This bill seeks to assist the country's small farmer sector by providing greater assistance and new opportunities for learning updated agricultural knowledge and skills, as well as capacity building in order to hasten the absorption and adoption of farm technologies that contribute to raising farm yields and overall rural productivity. It mandates the government to take the necessary appropriate steps to make education and training accessible to all.

The bill also recognizes the vital and strategic importance of the private sector, civil society groups and local government units as key partners in the provision of human resource development programs, including formal and non-formal education and training, with the end in view of establishing a more productive rural sectors and an agricultural system geared towards higher productivity.

A farm school in every rural town in the country can empower the rural sectors and small-hold farmers of a sustainable family enterprise. Farmers can by themselves be the owners of these farm schools or teachers too and access a new income stream aside from production, marketing, probably, farm tourism as well.

TESDA with its budget and mandate directed towards building an agriculture focus can improve the productivity of farmers and fisher folks. Courses that teach them to use and maintain farm machineries and introducing them to scientific production methods, processing and marketing, promoting organic and natural farming to lower cost of production inputs and livestock feeds, and operating their farms as a business, among others, may as well be the way to bring our rural folks out of poverty.

The farms once transformed into a successful income generating endeavor will bring back the interest of the youth to the farm and make them proud of tilling the soil, raising poultry and livestock, and may be teach other farmers too. After all, lifting them from subsistence farming to make them businessmen and women will assure the country of an improved economy, food security and is a trickle down strategy for the benefits of progress to be shared by the greater number which has always been an elusive dream to Filipinos.



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Sources:

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Poverty incidence among Filipinos registered at 21.6% in 2015 - PSA. <https://psa.gov.ph/poverty-press-releases>

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**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FARM SCHOOL IN EVERY TOWN IN THE COUNTRY
AND PROVIDE AGRICULTURAL SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS AS PART OF THE
TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL TRAINING FUNDS OF THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION
AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

- 1 SECTION I. Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Farm School and Agriculture
2 Training Scholarship Act of 2017”.
- 3 SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – Section 1, Article XII of the 1987 Constitution
4 states:
5 “The goals of the national economy are a more equitable distribution of opportunities,
6 income and wealth; a sustainable increase in the amount of goods and services
7 produced by the nation for the benefit of the people; and an expanding productivity as
8 the key to raising the quality of life for all, especially the underprivileged.
9 Towards this end, the State shall endeavor to assist the country’s small farmer sector by
10 providing greater assistance and new opportunities for learning updated agricultural
11 skills, as well as capacity building in order to hasten the absorption and adoption of farm
12 technologies that contribute to raising farm yields and overall rural productivity. The
13 state shall take the necessary appropriate steps to make education and training
14 accessible to all.
- 15 The State recognizes the vital and strategic importance of the private sector, civil
16 society groups and local government units as key partners in the provision of human
17 resource development programs, including formal and non-formal education and
18 trainings, with the end in view of establishing a more productive rural sectors and an
19 agricultural system geared towards higher productivity.
- 20 SECTION 3. Objectives. – The objectives of this Act are as follows:

- 1 a) To promote rural and agricultural productivity by way of empowering human
- 2 development in the countryside;
- 3 b) To give support and assistance to providers of agricultural learning systems of
- 4 technical-vocational or non-formal education for farmers;
- 5 c) To formulate the long and short range skills and technical training programs
- 6 calculated to achieve major self-sufficiency, efficiency, and stability in the food
- 7 production system;
- 8 d) To formulate and establish comprehensive support programs and policy
- 9 guidelines for the development of the technical training institutions and human
- 10 resource development support for farmers, including the rural non-farm sectors,
- 11 especially for crops, animal and fisheries production, farm mechanization, farm
- 12 management using new and scientific technologies, post-harvest processing and
- 13 marketing activities, financial literacy and how to access socialized credit;
- 14 e) To coordinate, integrate, and establish the effectiveness of the human resource
- 15 policies and programs of all government agencies charged with the
- 16 implementation thereof.

17 SECTION 4. Farm School Promotion and Accreditation. – TESDA shall facilitate the
18 promotion and development and accreditation of Farm Schools nationwide and
19 encourage farmers' participation through:

- 20 ➤ A system of accreditation to ensure the quality of agricultural education
- 21 instruction and learning;
- 22 ➤ Special modules on agricultural technology, farm mechanization, financial literacy
- 23 and how to access socialized credit;
- 24 ➤ A scholarship program that will fund the farmers' involvement in human capacity
- 25 building programs for enhanced farm productivity and income.

26 SECTION 5. Minimum Requirements on Farm Schools. In order to ensure and
27 enhance the effectiveness of the Farm Schools, the following features shall be
28 considered as minimum requirements for accreditation, to wit:

- 29 a). One farm lot with at least a hectare as a technical site
- 30 b). A classroom that can accommodate 25 trainees at a time
- 31 c). A library that can provide reference materials on the particular focus of the school
- 32 d). At least one (1) resident trainer who has an agricultural degree or one with a trainer
- 33 certificate from
34 the TESDA or the DA-ATI;
- 35 e). Minimum security and safety facilities and equipment
- 36 f). Standard registration and clearances, such as local business licenses, barangay
- 37 and police clearances, registration from DA-ATI or any government agency giving
- 38 recognition to train such as the DOLE, DAR, DTI.

39

1 SECTION 6. Scholarship Funds. The TESDA shall henceforth set aside at least thirty
2 percent (30%) of its training funds for scholarship in the accredited farm schools.

3

4 SECTION 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. Within three (3) months from the
5 effectivity of this Act, the Director General of the TESDA, and the National Director of
6 the DA-Agricultural Training Institute and the Undersecretary of the Department of
7 Agrarian Reform in-charge of the development and capacity building of Agrarian Reform
8 Beneficiaries (ARBs) shall form an ad hoc committee composed of two representatives
9 from each of their agencies to formulate the implementing Rules and Regulations of this
10 Act. Two representatives from the Agriculture Committee of both Houses of Congress
11 shall join the meetings as observers.

12

13 SECTION 8. Appropriations. - An initial fund of P500 million shall be appropriated for
14 the immediate implementation of this Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary
15 for the continued operations and maintenance of the program shall be included in the
16 annual General Appropriations Act; Provided that thirty (30) percent of the training and
17 scholarship funds in the TESDA shall henceforth be set aside for the training and
18 scholarship programs under the Farm School Act.

19

20 SECTION 9. Repealing Clause. - All laws, degrees, executive orders, rules and
21 regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or
22 modified accordingly.

23

24 SECTION 10. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is declared
25 unconstitutional or invalid, other provisions thereof which are not affected thereby shall
26 continue in full force and effect.

27

28 SECTION 11. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its
29 publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation.

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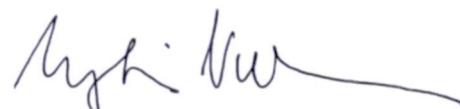
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