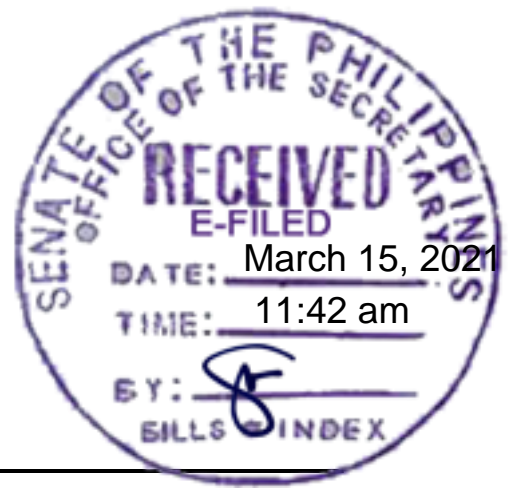


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



SENATE

S. No. 2100

Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A COVID-19 EMERGENCY CASH GRANT TO SMALL-
SCALE FARMERS AND MUNICIPAL FISHERFOLK LIVING BELOW THE
POVERTY LINE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only severely impacted our public health, but has also debilitated many industries and has caused our economy to go into recession. Among the worst hit economic sectors are those of the farming and fishing industries, particularly small-scale farmers and municipal fisherfolk. Farmers and fisherfolk are facing challenges on multiple fronts as consumers have been forced to tighten their belts due to the extended lockdowns and shortages and supply chain disruptions have caused the prices of basic goods and commodities to soar. Add to the fact that the national government remains reluctant to spend for programs providing direct subsidies and emergency aid to the sectors most affected by the pandemic, and it is no longer surprising that farmers and fisherfolk have become an even more vulnerable sector than ever before.

The 1987 Constitution declares that the State “shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all.”¹ However, decades after the provision was so nobly crafted, there is still much to be desired, and so much must still be done in order to eradicate poverty in all its forms.

¹ Art. II, Sec. 9.

Even before the spread of the pandemic, the Philippines Statistics Office (PSA) had already reported that both farmers and fishermen consistently ranked as two of the most impoverished sectors in society. In 2018, farmers and fisherfolk registered the highest poverty incidence rates among the basic sectors at 31.6 and 26.2 percent, respectively.² This has been exacerbated by the pandemic, with stringent health protocols and quarantine measures that were put in place which put a grinding halt to their livelihood. Fishing communities bore the brunt of lockdowns. Processing companies have slowed down and prices dropped – but life went on for fishermen whose daily survival depended on the sea. Imuk Montebon, a 62-year-old fisherman based in Gigantes Island, only had this to say while he and many others endured the additional burdens: “...but we cannot stop fishing. This is the only livelihood we know.”³

The pandemic also brought hard times to farmers who were still reeling from the onslaught of typhoons, as strict quarantine guidelines have made the farmers’ movements more controlled. Many of them were left to watch their hard grown harvest to rot since the lockdowns and health requirements prevented them from travelling to markets to sell their produce. Verily, “during the pandemic, the farmers, fisherfolk, workers and informal settlers are forgotten. Their intention must be given attention. We have to create a roadmap, an action plan based on social justice and rights to reshape our society.”⁴

To help these industries, this bill seeks to provide direct cash assistance to small-scale farmers and municipal fisherfolk whose livelihoods have been most severely impacted by the prolonged lockdowns and economic recession brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Urgent passage of this measure is earnestly sought.


LEILA M. DE LIMA

² Philippine Statistics Authority. (2018) *Farmers, Fisherfolks, Individuals Residing in Rural Areas and Children Posted the Highest Poverty Incidences Among the Basic Sectors in 2018*. Retrieved 21 February 2021, from: <https://psa.gov.ph/poverty-press-releases/nid/162541>

³ Ocampo, Karl. (2020) *Fishing communities bear brunt of lockdown*. Retrieved 21 February 2021, from: <https://business.inquirer.net/294753/fishing-communities-bear-brunt-of-lockdown>

⁴ Novio, E. (2020) *Webinar Report: Farmers, fisherfolk lament limited aid, logistical challenges brought by COVID19*. Retrieved 04 March 2021, from: <https://www.greenpeace.org/philippines/story/9589/webinar-report-farmers-fisherfolk-limited-aid-logistical-challenges-covid19/>

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POVERTY LINE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

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

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “COVID-19 Emergency
2 Cash Grant to Farmers and Fisherfolk Act.”

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The Sate recognizes the adverse impact that the
4 COVID-19 pandemic has brought to our health and economy. The State shall uplift the
5 standard of living and quality of life of the poor and maintain the existing gains of
6 interventions of the government for economic growth and development to the poor,
7 marginalized sectors and low-income households of our society exposed to various
8 risks in this pandemic.

9 Sec. 3. *Emergency Cash Subsidy for Small-Scale Farmers and Municipal*
10 *Fisherfolk.* – All households of small-scale farmers and municipal fisherfolk registered
11 before the appropriate offices of the Department of Agriculture within their respective
12 districts or provinces, certified by the barangay concerned as such farmer or fisherfolk,
13 who are living below the poverty line based on the threshold determined by the
14 National Economic and Development Authority, and whose primary means of earning
15 livelihood and/or generating income have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19
16 pandemic, shall be entitled to a cash grant of One Thousand Pesos (₱1,000.00) per
17 month for a period of one year. *Provided,* That only one beneficiary shall be eligible

1 for households with several small-scale farmers or municipal fisherfolk living under
2 one roof.

3 Small-scale farmers and municipal fisherfolk who are receiving conditional
4 cash transfer or recipients of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) Act from the
5 government shall not be entitled to receive the emergency cash grant mandated by this
6 Act while they are receiving such conditional cash transfer or 4Ps.

7 *Sec. 4. Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of
8 this Act shall be charged against the current and subsequent appropriations of the
9 Department of Agriculture and other departments, agencies or instrumentalities
10 tasked to implement this Act under the General Appropriations Act.

11 *Sec. 5. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from
12 the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Agriculture shall, in coordination with
13 appropriate government departments and agencies and with the participation of local
14 government units, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the
15 provisions of this Act.

16 *Sec. 6. Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its
17 publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in
18 the Philippines.

Approved,