

SENATE

S. No. 2502

(In substitution of Senate Bill No. 884 taking into consideration House Bill No. 9575)

Prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Youth; Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; and Finance with Senators Marcos and Angara as authors thereof

AN ACT

ESTABLISHING THE YOUNG FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK CHALLENGE PROGRAM, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE YOUNG FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK CHALLENGE COUNCIL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “Young Farmers and
2 Fisherfolk Challenge Act”.

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

8 **SEC. 3. *Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program.*** – There is
9 hereby established a Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program, hereinafter
10 referred to as the Program, that shall support and empower the young farmers and
11 fisherfolk to be active partners in food security and agricultural development and
12 modernization. The Program shall encourage the youth to pursue a career or engage

1 in activities related to agriculture, ensure young farmers and fisherfolk participation in
2 policy formulation and program implementation relative to the agriculture sector, and
3 provide institutional support for agri-business and agri-entrepreneurship initiatives of
4 the youth to fully realize their role as agents and partners for development.

5 **SEC. 4. *Beneficiaries of the Program.*** – The Program is intended to support
6 young farmers and fisherfolk between eighteen (18) to thirty (30) years of age, who
7 are engaged in farming and fisheries activities, and are included in the Registry System
8 for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA). The Department of Agriculture (DA) shall
9 update its existing database to reflect these indicators.

10 **SEC. 5. *Creation of a Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Council.*** –
11 There is hereby created the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Council,
12 hereinafter referred to as the Council, to properly oversee the implementation of the
13 Program. The Council shall be composed of the following:

- 14 a. Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) or a duly authorized
15 representative who is at least an Undersecretary, who shall be the Chair;
- 16 b. Representative of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) who shall
17 likewise be an Undersecretary;
- 18 c. Representative of the Department of Education (DepEd) who shall likewise be
19 an Undersecretary;
- 20 d. Representative of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- 21 e. Representative of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);
- 22 f. Representative of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR);
- 23 g. Representative of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
24 (TESDA);
- 25 h. Representative of the Department of the Interior and Local Government
26 (DILG);
- 27 i. Representative of the Department of Information and Communications
28 Technology (DICT);
- 29 j. Representative of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources
30 (DENR);
- 31 k. Representative of the National Youth Commission (NYC);
- 32 l. Representative of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP);

- 1 m. Representative of a national organization of young farmers' cooperative or
2 association, provided that the representative shall be between fifteen (15) to
3 forty (40) years of age;
- 4 n. Representative of a national organization of fisherfolk's cooperative or
5 association, provided that the representative shall be between fifteen (15) to
6 forty (40) years of age;
- 7 o. Representative of a farmers' women organization or cooperative, provided that
8 the representative shall be between fifteen (15) to forty (40) years of age;
- 9 p. Representative of a national organization for agritourism;
- 10 q. Representative of state universities and colleges (SUCs);
- 11 r. Representative of private educational institutions (PEIs); and
- 12 s. Representative of a national organization for food, restaurant, and business
13 sectors.

14 The Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF) shall serve as its
15 Secretariat.

16 **Sec. 6. Powers and Functions of the Council.** - The Council shall have the
17 following powers and functions:

- 18 a. Formulate the "Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program", hereinafter
19 referred to as the "Program," in consultation with research institutions such as
20 the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in
21 Agriculture (SEARCA), Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural
22 Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD), University of the Philippines
23 - Los Banos (UPLB) and other relevant State Universities and Colleges;
- 24 b. Develop, in coordination with various departments and agencies, specific action
25 plans for unambiguous tasking and quick implementation;
- 26 c. Create special programs for marginalized sectors such as youth from urban
27 poor, women, indigenous people, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of
28 Muslim Mindanao (BARMM);
- 29 d. Develop initiatives in new farm sectors such as "smart farming" farm tourism,
30 agro-, aqua-, and hydroponics, organic and boutique vegetables;
- 31 e. Identify relevant training and livelihood budgets in the different departments
32 and agencies, including start-up capital;

- 1 f. Implement the departments' and agencies' action plans, engaging the
2 assistance of the Local Government Units (LGUs) and Sangguniang Kabataan
3 (SK);
- 4 g. Identify the best practices in the implementation of the program as well as
5 emerging best practices in agriculture such as smart farming and farm tourism
6 in compliance with Republic Act No. 10816, or the "Farm Tourism Development
7 Act of 2016";
- 8 h. Foster the formation of new ideas and technologies by assisting agricultural
9 enterprises of qualified young farmers and fisherfolk entrepreneurs, pursuant
10 to Republic Act No. 11337, otherwise known as the "Innovative Start-up Act of
11 2018";
- 12 i. Initiate new packaging, promotion, and marketing events;
- 13 j. Ensure scholarships and subsidized tuition fees for young farmers and fisherfolk
14 in SUCs;
- 15 k. Package incentive and recognition programs/awards system for the youth
- 16 l. Participate in agri- and food tourism marketing events, nationally and
17 internationally;
- 18 m. Provide on-the-job training programs for young farmers and fisherfolk in areas
19 such as "green jobs", reforestation, coastal management, fisheries, and other
20 rural-based jobs, through the DOLE's Special Program for Employment of
21 Students (SPES) and other livelihood and training programs;
- 22 n. Establish linkages with agricultural representatives of the Association of South
23 East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other international farming youth associations;
- 24 o. Engage national and international leaders in formulating policies directly
25 addressing young farmers and fisherfolk concerns; and
- 26 p. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of this Act as well
27 as its impact on the participants and beneficiaries.

28 **SEC. 7. Access to Knowledge, Information, and Education.** – A whole
29 government approach shall be utilized to inform and enlist young farmers and
30 fisherfolk in agriculture:

- 1 a. Role of the DepEd- The DepEd shall include at all levels, but particularly in its
2 K-12 program, elective subjects focused on agriculture, such as garden
3 farming, urban greening, reforestation and coastal management;
- 4 b. Role of the TESDA - The TESDA, in coordination with the DICT and the DOST,
5 shall add subjects in their training centers for agricultural entrepreneurship,
6 "smart farming", and other advanced farming technologies, prioritizing
7 programs focused on agriculture. The TESDA shall also provide scholarships
8 and subsidized tuition fees for young farmers and fisherfolk;
- 9 c. Role of the DOLE - The DOLE shall provide on-the-job training (OJT) programs
10 for young farmers and fisherfolk, including the Special Program for Employment
11 of Students (SPES);
- 12 d. Role of the CHED, SUCs, and Agricultural Schools - The CHED, SUCs, and
13 agricultural schools shall provide scholarship grants, stipends, and subsidies to
14 qualified young farmers and fisherfolk. Likewise, the CHED, SUCs, and
15 agricultural schools shall provide schemes for distance, remote, and digital
16 learning. The CHED shall likewise encourage the private colleges and
17 universities to provide similar opportunities and schemes to qualified recipients.
18 The CHED shall include agriculture in its National Service Training Program
19 (NSTP) curriculum, such as garden farming, urban greening, and coastal
20 management. CHED shall likewise promulgate the policies, standards and
21 guidelines for agriculture courses which shall focus on sustainability and the
22 achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Scholarships for
23 post-graduate and doctoral degrees shall be provided by CHED: *Provided*, That
24 private universities and colleges are also enjoined to provide the same.
- 25 e. Role of the DA, ATI and PCAF – The DA, through the 4-H Club of the ATI and
26 the Agricultural and Fishery Youthpreneur Council (AFYC) of the PCAF, shall
27 provide for scholarship grants and stipends to qualified young farmers and
28 fisherfolk, targeting specific marginalized sectors such as women, indigenous
29 people, and persons with disabilities (PWDs);
- 30 f. Role of the DOST and DICT - The DOST and DICT shall develop portals, utilize
31 social media, and exploit other electronic technologies, to publicize the
32 Program; and

1 g. Role of the LGU and the SK - The LGU shall inform and enlist the SK who shall
2 act as trainer-leaders to qualified and interested young farmers and fisherfolk.

3 **SEC. 8. Access to Land.** - Short-leases, free land and agrarian reform schemes
4 shall be developed to provide access to land for young farmers:

5 a. Role of the DENR - The DENR shall explore the possibilities of extending short-
6 term leases of public land to young farmers, provide free or subsidized land for
7 cultivation, and develop such other packages as would allow young farmers to
8 use available or unutilized agricultural land. In coordination with the LGUs and
9 SK, the Department may also create lease-to-buy programs;

10 b. Role of the DAR - The DAR shall facilitate and expedite the lease, distribution,
11 and award of agrarian reform land to young beneficiaries;

12 c. Role of the LGU and the SK - The LGU shall prioritize the lease and acquisition
13 of land for cultivation by young farmers. Further, the LGU and SK shall distribute
14 hillside or other undercultivated lands to young farmers, for farming and other
15 agricultural purposes;

16 d. Role of the SUCs - Whenever SUCs own or occupy excess landholdings, young
17 farmers shall be given first option to use and cultivate such landholdings for
18 agricultural purposes.

19 **SEC. 9. Access to Financial Services.** - Young farmers and fisherfolk shall be
20 provided financial assistance and given access to financial services:

21 a. Role of the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) - The LBP shall develop favorable
22 financial packages for young farmers and fisherfolk, waiving collateral, salary
23 and other typical bank requisites;

24 b. Role of the DA - The DA shall develop financial packages specifically targeting
25 young farmers and fisherfolk;

26 c. Role of the DTI- The DTI, through the Small Business Corporation (SB Corp),
27 shall extend loans to the young farmers and fisherfolk for the trade and
28 marketing of their agricultural products;

29 d. Role of the DOST, DICT, and DTI- The DOST, DICT and the DTI, pursuant to
30 Republic Act No. 11337, otherwise known as the "Innovative Start-up Act of

1 2018," and other programs shall include agricultural enterprises for qualified
2 young farmer- and fisherfolk-entrepreneurs in their incubation efforts;

3 e. Role of CHED and TESDA – CHED and TESDA shall provide financial literacy
4 trainings particularly in handling and managing loans and grants;

5 f. Role of the Private Sector - The private sector is encouraged to subcontract,
6 partner, and extend financial grants, initiate social partnerships and rural
7 development initiatives, as well as mentor young farmers and fisherfolk on
8 livelihood strategies, as part of their corporate social responsibility and other
9 community participation;

10 g. Role of the LGU - The LGU, in coordination with the SK, shall provide funding
11 and livelihood opportunities to young farmers and fisherfolk;

12 h. Role of the SK – The SK, using its ten percent (10%) Development Fund, and
13 other funds, shall provide entrepreneurial and finance packages for young
14 farmers and fisherfolk;

15 i. Role of the NYC - The NYC, in tandem with potential youth agri-entrepreneurs,
16 shall initiate donation and fundraising drives for the Program, exploiting for this
17 purpose online advertising, "crowd-sourcing", and other digital means to
18 generate funds for the Program.

19 **SEC. 10. Access to "Green Jobs."** - Young farmers and fisherfolk shall be given
20 priority in access to green jobs, as follows;

21 a. Role of the DOLE – The DOLE, through the SPES, shall include "green jobs",
22 reforestation, coastal management, fisheries, and other rural-based jobs, in
23 cooperation with LGUs. The DOLE shall prioritize young farmers and fisherfolk
24 for employment in public projects or private agro-industries and corporations.
25 The department shall also offer returning youth Overseas Filipino Workers
26 (OFWs) with a menu of possible investment projects where they will be assisted
27 in terms of proposal packaging, training, and management assistance during
28 the early stage, marketing, and linking with government financial institutions
29 (GFIs) and investment promotion agencies in case they qualify for fiscal and
30 nonfiscal incentives pursuant to R.A. No. 11534 or the Corporate Recovery and
31 Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) Act;

- 1 b. Role of the TESDA - The TESDA shall develop on-the-job trainings, job fairs,
2 employment bridging initiatives, and private partnerships in producing,
3 processing, packaging, and marketing youth products;
- 4 c. Role of the DOT – The DOT shall prioritize the employment of young farmers
5 and fisherfolk in eco- and agro-tours, and encourage youth entrepreneurship
6 in farm and fishery tourism;
- 7 d. Role of the PEZA - The PEZA shall prioritize young farmers and fisherfolk for
8 jobs in agro-industrial ecozones, provide access to modern farm technology,
9 promote linkages in agriculture-related enterprise, and accelerate the creation
10 of "green jobs" for young farmers and fisherfolk;
- 11 e. The DA and the ATI - The DA, particularly the 4-H Club of the ATI, shall provide
12 jobs and embark upon farming start-ups in new and niche agricultural sectors
13 such as organic farming, agroponics, aguaponics, hydroponics, dairy, livestock,
14 coffee, cacao, and other areas of farming and fishing. The DA and ATI shall
15 also create opportunities for youth leaders to harness their leadership skills
16 especially during the international month for youth.

17 **SEC. 11. Access to Markets.** - Young farmers and fisherfolk shall have access
18 to markets through the following:

- 19 a. Role of the DTI - The DTI shall assist young farmers and fisherfolk in the
20 packaging, marketing and promotion of their products, including branding,
21 advertising, and subsidizing their participation in trade fairs and exhibits;
- 22 b. Role of the LGU - The LGU shall provide subsidized rental rates for public retail
23 areas and public markets, encourage agricultural tourism, and develop other
24 opportunities for young farmers;
- 25 c. Role of the Department of Tourism (DOT) - The DOT shall promote the products
26 of young farmers and fisherfolk through tourism conventions, events, and other
27 tourist souvenir sales opportunities;
- 28 d. Role of the Private Sector- The private sector is encouraged to market and
29 promote the products of young farmers and fisherfolk, as part of their
30 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and other development efforts;
- 31 e. Role of the Media - The media shall promote and advertise the products of the
32 young farmers and fisherfolk and the Program.

1 **SEC. 12. *Engagement in Policy Dialogue.*** - The young farmers and fisherfolk
2 are encouraged to participate in policy dialogues, as follows:

3 a. Role of the NYC - The NYC shall ensure that young farmers and fisherfolk are
4 represented in all decision-making bodies relating to the establishment of
5 mechanisms for the promotion and protection of the rights of young farmers
6 and fisherfolk;

7 b. Role of the SK - The SK, through local and Congressional youth representatives,
8 shall liaise with the Local Government Leagues and the Congress of the
9 Philippines to consult and engage young farmers and fisherfolk in policy-
10 making;

11 c. Role of the DA - The DA shall ensure that young farmers and fisherfolk are
12 equitably represented and consulted in its decision-making process to fully
13 realize the young farmers' and fisherfolk's role as agents and partners for
14 national development.

15 **SEC. 13. *Waiver of Government Fees and Charges.*** - Subject to the
16 exceptions provided in Sec. 8 of Republic Act No. 11261, otherwise known as the
17 "First-Time Jobseekers Assistance Act" all government agencies and instrumentalities,
18 including government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), LGUs, and
19 government hospitals shall not collect fees or charges from any young farmer and
20 fisherfolk. *Provided,* That such fee or charge is paid in connection with the application
21 for and the granting of licenses, proofs of identification, clearances, certificates or
22 other documents usually required in the course of employment locally or abroad.
23 *Provided further,* That the benefit provided shall only be availed of once.

24 **SEC. 14. *Annual Report.*** – The Council shall submit to the President and to both
25 Houses of Congress, not later than the 30th of March of every year following the
26 effectivity of this Act, a report giving a detailed account on the effective
27 implementation of this Act, and recommended legislation where applicable and
28 necessary.

29 **SEC. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** - Within ninety (90) days
30 from the effectivity of this Act, the DA and DAR, in coordination with the DOST, DICT,
31 DOLE, DENR, DepEd, CHED, LBP, and NYC shall issue the necessary rules and
32 regulations for the implementation of this Act which shall include the creation of a

1 database of youth involvement and interventions provided by government agencies,
2 a special desk for the youth, and an aggressive communication plan to upscale youth
3 involvement.

4 **SEC. 16. Appropriations.** - The amount needed to initially implement the
5 provisions of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the current year
6 of the concerned departments and agencies. Thereafter, such sums, as may be
7 necessary, for its continued implementation shall be included in the appropriation of
8 the concerned departments and agencies in the annual General Appropriations Act
9 (GAA).

10 **SEC. 17. Separability Clause.** - If any portion or provision of this Act is declared
11 unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall
12 remain in full force and effect.

13 **SEC. 18. Repeating Clause.** - All laws or parts thereof, decrees, orders, rules
14 and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or
15 modified accordingly.

16 **SEC. 19. Effectivity Clause.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
17 following its publication in a newspaper of general circulation or in the Official Gazette,
18 whichever comes first.

Approved.