Denic Petro Recretary

FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES First Regular Session

7 EP 19 15 1

S E NATE S.B. <u>161</u>7

WECENED BY: 4

Introduced by Senator Villar

AN ACT

STRENGTHENING THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND VETERINARY MEDICINE EDUCATION, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8178, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Section 8 of Republic Act Number 8178, entitled 'An Act Replacing Quantitative Import Restrictions on Agricultural products, Except rice, with Tariffs, Craeting the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, and For Other Purposes" is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Sec. 8. Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund. X x x

 $x \times x$

The Committees on Agriculture and Food, Appropriations and Finance of both the Senate and the House of Representatives shall conduct a period review of the use of the Fund. The Fund shall have a life of [nine (9)] FIFTEEN years, after which the remaining balance shall revert to the General Fund.

FOR PURPOSES OF THE EXTENSION OF THE UTILIZATION PERIOD OF THE FUND, THE STRENGTHENING OF THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND VETERINARY MEDICINE EDUCATION THROUGH THE ALLOTMENT OF ONE BILLION PESOS (PHP 1,000,000,000,000) SHALL BE MADE. THE FOLLOWING AREAS ARE LIKEWISE ACCORDED PRIORITIES: ASSISTANCE TO FILIPINO FARMERS AND FISHERFOLKS, COOPERATIVES; AND SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SCALE ENTERPRISES ENGAGED IN THE AGRICULTURAL, PRODUCTION, FARMING, FISHERIES, AGRI-BUSINESS AND SIMILAR ACTIVITIES."

SECTION 2. Implementing Rules and Regulations. The Department of Agriculture (DA) in consultation with all concerned stakeholders shall promulgate within thirty (30) days from the effectivity of this Act the necessary implementing rules and regulations.

SECTION 3. 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,

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FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES First Regular Session

7 SEP 19 P3:13

S ENATE S.B. <u>161</u>7 MECTIVES 30 : months framework

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Explanatory Note

Young Filipinos think that enrolling in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary medicine will not usher them to good opportunities in the future. In the profiling made by the Commission on Higher Education (CHEd) covering the last seven years, enrolment in the said courses marked a sharp decline by 17.60 %. As compared to 94,900 college students studying agriculture-related education in 2000, there are 78,201 tertiary students majoring in the said courses at present.¹

It is alarming considering that agriculture is considered a lynchpin of the Philippine economy. Agriculture accounts for about 20 percent of the country's total gross domestic product (GDP). The last decade showed that agriculture contributed an average of 42 % of the total employment or about 11.3 million jobs annually.²

Against these backdrop, this legislation is submitted. It seeks to strengthen, expand and encourage scholarships in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary medicine. This education sector must be supported for the continuous development of our people. And it should be sourced from the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (ACEF).

For the purpose, the extension of the utilization period of the ACEF is recommended but other than assistance to farming, fisheries and creating more opportunities to agriculture, scholarships for agriculture-related courses must be made. Thus, the availability of the ACEF will thus provide farmers, fisherfolks, agricultural workers and families who are opting to provide agricultural education to their children, of a vast source of funds for their competitive enhancement activities.

Early cognizance of this bill is honestly sought.

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¹ Statistics of the Commission on Higher Education, 2007, as published in their website

² Experts Review of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA), Center for Research and Communications, May 2007