



SENATE  
S.B. 1617

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**Introduced by Senator Villar**

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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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

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.

  
**MANNY VILLAR**

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics of the Commission on Higher Education, 2007, as published in their website

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