

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

9 FEB -9 P7:18

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SENATE

S.B. No. **3053**

Introduced by Senator Loren Legarda

EXPLANATORY NOTE

*"Magsasaka lang po ako."* Thus goes a common self-deprecating identification indicative of the prevalent lowly regard for farming. However, despite the upsurge of the service sector and rapid worldwide industrialization in recent years, the Philippines' agriculture sector remains foremost in Philippine economy. In 2006, Agriculture, which is largely farming and fisheries, employed 11.78 million persons or about 32.4 percent of the labor force. It contributes an average of 20 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product. Unfortunate is the trend in recent years which presents a dim picture for the agriculture sector and which culminated in a rice shortage during the first half of 2008, with the government resorting to rationing rice in urban centers.

Unutilized and under-utilized farmlands are extant in the country and this is not because of the lack of competent farmers and farm laborers. It is because of the reluctance of farmers and the youth to go into agriculture, particularly farming and fishing. The pervading perception, quite correct, is that farming is not a lucrative livelihood. And so despite the presence of unutilized and underutilized farming and the marginal potential in farming, enrolment in agriculture courses declined from 94,900 in School Year 2001-2002 to a low of 70,824 in 2004-2005, a reduction of more than 24,000 in just three years.

"Food self-sufficiency and security." That is a usual government exhortation which is largely ignored in policy-making and implementation. Because of the foregoing reasons, the Philippine agriculture sector suffers from insufficiency and insecurity.

This bill seeks to encourage the Filipino youth to pursue farming and fishery as an occupation. Farming and fishing to be attractive to the youth should be productive and profitable for farmers and fishers. Farmers and fishers should not be confined with planting and catching fishes. They must also be equipped with learning in agriculture and with entrepreneurial skills.

Specifically, this bill mandates a scholarship program for agriculture and fisheries students as well as support in agribusiness in exchange of extension services for our farmers and fisherfolks.

Through this bill, it is hoped that the country would attain self-sufficiency and security in due time. Philippine agriculture will soon be in the hands of the youth— subject, of course, to their willingness to be at the helm of ensuring the survival of the present and future generations of healthy and well-fed Filipinos.

In view of the foregoing, support for this bill is urged.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping, sweeping lines that form a cursive representation of the name Loren Legarda.

**LOREN LEGARDA**

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AN ACT  
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE YOUNG FARMERS PROGRAM, PROVIDING  
FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

**Section 1. Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Young Farmers Program Act of 2009.”

**Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to imbue among the Filipino youth a new perspective of farming and fishing, provide them career guidance, equip them with entrepreneurial skills and maximize their learning from school-to-work opportunities in the university’s academic, research and extension activities, inspire and make them productive partners in the development of the country’s agriculture and fishery sector.

**Sec. 3. Statement of Objectives.** – This Act shall have the following objectives:

- a) To attract incoming college students to choose and complete a field in agriculture and fishery as a college course;
- b) To prepare career options for students and graduates of agriculture and fishery courses;
- c) To involve agriculture and fishery students in the extension work of the university; and;
- d) To support students, graduates and out-of-school youth with academic background in agriculture and fisheries in their entrepreneurial pursuits in agribusiness.

**Sec. 4. Definition of Terms.** – The following terms shall be defined under this Act:

- a) “Program” refers to the Young Program or YFP as established under this Act;
- b) “Young Farmers” refers to the following:
  1. State colleges and universities (SCUs) enrollees with a commitment to finish college, diploma or certificate program in agriculture and fisheries under a socialized tuition fee scheme of the Young Farmers Program;
  2. Bachelor degree, diploma or certificate course graduates of any agriculture and fishery courses of SCUs and private colleges and universities enlisted by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)-National Agriculture and Fisheries System (NAFES) as members of the Young Farmers Program; and

3. Out-of-school youth who finished at least two years of college education in agriculture and fisheries and are enlisted by the NAFES-SCUs as members of the YFP.

c) National Agriculture and Fisheries Education System (NAFES) refers to the integrated system of agriculture and fishery education covering both public and private institutions in all three levels of education chaired by the Commission on Higher Education and created by the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997.

**Sec. 5. *Implementation of the Program.*** The Extension Offices of the members of the National Agriculture and Fisheries System are hereby mandated to implement the Young Farmers Program.

The NAFES Committee shall oversee and monitor the implementation of the Program. It shall likewise promulgate the rules and regulations, implement and adopt procedures and guidelines to effectively carry out the Program.

**Sec. 6. *Role of LGUs.*** – The LGUs shall endeavour to support the Program through additional counterpart funding assistance. The Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) shall identify farms or fishfarms in need of assistance to become the field laboratory of currently enrolled Young Farmers in case they have not yet chosen laboratories of their own.

**Sec. 7. *Role of SUC and Private Education Institutions.*** The NAFES-SCUs shall:

a) Establish a Young Farmers Organization (YFO) out of their respective agriculture and fishery enrollees.

b) Create a socialized tuition fee scheme for agriculture and fishery enrollees.

c) Trace graduates and those who finished at least two years of their respective agriculture and fishery programs and invite them to become members of the university/college YFO;

d) Conceptualize and implement an extension partnership with the Provincial Agriculture Offices (PAOs) and Municipal Agricultural Offices;

e) Conceptualize a career path for the young farmers as agriculture and fishery entrepreneurs, support their start-up agri-businesses and forge a contract of service with them stipulating their assistance to small farmers and fisherfolks in exchange of government support.

**Section 8. *Funding.*** The sum of FIFTY MILLION PESOS (PhP50,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated out of any savings or unexpended balance in the National Treasury not otherwise appropriated, to cover the amounts needed for the initial year of implementation. Thereafter, such amount as shall be needed for the Program shall be included in the budget of the SCUs. Amounts needed by the CHED for the management of the program and those of the requirements of private colleges and universities for scholarships shall be released to the CHED-NAFES. All funds currently being appropriated for the Young Farmers Program in the Department of Agriculture shall be transferred to CHED-NAFES. Moreover, the CHED-NAFES and the Agricultural Competitive Enhancement Fund (ACEF) National Committee shall develop a rationalization scheme to allot a portion of ACEF—from both the seed fund as well as from repayments of loans—to the Young Farmers Program. Scholarships of students in private colleges and universities shall be given in the form of vouchers.

Section 9. *Effectivity*. This Act shall effect thirty (30) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,