

SENATE

S. No. 853

'19 AUG -1 P2 :46

Introduced by SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA

RECEIVED BY: 

AN ACT
GRANTING FREE TERTIARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION, AND
OTHER RELATED COURSES TO ALL DEPENDENT CHILDREN OF
REGISTERED INDIGENT FARMERS IN THE COUNTRY, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines is primarily an agricultural country. It still remains the major source of food security for our people, with the vast fertile land of the country producing various agricultural products. It likewise serves as a key source of income for a number of Filipinos.

According to official data released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the Philippine economy posted a 6.1% growth in the fourth quarter of 2018. This growth was mainly driven by the Services sector's 56.2% share to our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), followed by Industry (34.8%) and Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry and Fishing (8.9%)¹.

Even in terms of employment, labor in the agriculture sector comprises a large part of the scene:

Workers in the agriculture sector comprised the second largest group making up 22.1 percent of the total employed in January 2019, while workers in the industry

¹ Philippine Statistics Authority. *Employment Rate in January 2019 is Estimated at 94.8*. 7 March 2019. Retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph/content/employment-rate-january-2019-estimated-948-percent>

sector made up the smallest group registering 19.7 percent of the total employed².

Despite this encouraging scenario, however, the agricultural sector has greatly suffered a major setback in the recent years caused by environmental damage, the rampant conversion of agricultural land into golf courses, residential subdivisions, and industrial parks or resorts, and lack of efficient irrigation system, to name a few factors.

According to the PSA Performance of Philippine Agriculture for January to March 2019, agriculture grew by 0.67 percent. It encompassed increases in production for livestock, poultry and fisheries. Crops, however, recorded a decrease in output. Palay and corn production declined by 4.46% and 2.07%, respectively. Other decreases were also noted among major crops such as banana, tobacco, mango and cassava. The gross value of agricultural production amounted to P429.7 billion, which represented a 3.12% reduction from the previous year's level³.

This downfall has certainly affected the country's numerous farmers and other agricultural workers. Farmers hold a distinct and important role in the country as the main driver of economy. However, it is often ironic that farmers, as food production workers, are the ones suffering from extreme hunger and food insufficiency. In fact, according to the PSA 2015 Poverty Statistics for Basic Sectors report, farmers, fishermen and children are the sectors with the highest poverty incidence, among the nine basic sectors identified in the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act or the Republic Act No. 8425. Specifically, the poverty incidence for the sector of farmers was recorded at 34.3%. The sector of farmers is consistently registered as one of the three top sectors with the highest poverty incident in 2006, 2009 and 2012⁴.

Naturally, families of farmers are adversely affected by this economic fallback. As a grim consequence, children of farmers face the risk of not being able to attend school for lack of sufficient funds for their education.

² Ibid

³ Philippine Statistics Office. *Performance of Philippine Agriculture, January-March 2019*. 8 May 2019. Retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph/content/performance-philippine-agriculture-january-march-2019>

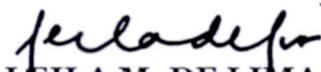
⁴ BusinessWorld Online. *Farmers, fishermen are PHL's poorest*. 4 July 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Economy&title=farmers-fishermen-are-phl&id=147655>

In order to provide the much needed succor to the country's farmers, this bill proposes free tertiary agricultural education to their qualified dependent children. This is in recognition of the indispensable role of farmers in the Philippine economy, and the country's way of showing gratitude to them for their sacrifices in providing food security for our people.

This legislative proposal will likewise encourage young people to consider agriculture as their alternative career and prepare them for advanced agricultural jobs.

With a more informed citizenry on agriculture, this initiative will accelerate agricultural growth and higher productivity, not just in the countryside, but the whole nation as well.

Approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


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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 Free Tertiary
2 Agricultural Education Act.”

3 Sec. 2. *Statement of Policy.* — It is the declared policy of the State to promote
4 sound agricultural development in the country and to achieve global competitiveness
5 in the agricultural sector. Towards this end, agriculture education and trainings shall
6 be encouraged among the youth in order to inculcate the latest agricultural principles
7 and techniques. The State, therefore, shall extend the avenue for this learning process
8 by providing accessible education on agriculture and other related courses.

9 Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* — As used in this Act, the following terms shall be
10 defined as:

- 11 1. *Agriculture* — refers to the practice of agricultural land utilization and
12 management, crop production, livestock and poultry.
13 2. *Agricultural Education* — involves academic program focused on the
14 principles and techniques on agricultural land management, crop production,
15 livestock and poultry offered in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs).

1 3. *Qualified Dependent Children* – refers to the legitimate or illegitimate
2 children of indigent farmers who are enrolled or about to enroll in SUCs
3 where Agriculture and its related courses are offered.

4 4. *Registered Indigent Farmers* – are those indigent individuals whose sole
5 source of income is agriculture, who actually cultivate or till of the land,
6 whether as owner or lessee of the land, or who actually engage in crop
7 production, livestock and poultry farming, and who are included in the
8 registry of farmers of the Department of Agriculture.

9 5. *Other related agricultural courses* – include agro-forestry, agricultural
10 engineering, agribusiness/management, agricultural entrepreneurship,
11 animal health management and agri-technology.

12 Sec. 4. *Implementation of Free Tertiary Agricultural Education.* – The
13 system of Free Tertiary Agricultural Education as provided in this Act shall
14 commence in the School Year following approval of this Act. Qualified dependent
15 children of registered indigent farmers intending to enroll or already enrolled in an
16 Agricultural courses or any related field offerings in state colleges and universities
17 shall be exempt from payment of tuition and other school fees and shall be entitled to
18 such other incentives or subsidies, including living and transportation allowance, as
19 may be granted in accordance with such rules and regulations to be promulgated to
20 carry out the provisions of this Act; *Provided*, That they meet the admission
21 requirements of the SUCs where they intend to enroll in.

22 Sec. 5. *Qualified Student.* – For this purpose, students whose parents have no
23 visible means of income other than agriculture, as identified by the Department of
24 Agriculture (DA), based on specific criteria, shall be considered qualified to avail of
25 the free tertiary agricultural education provided for under this Act.

26 Sec. 6. *Appropriations.* – For the initial implementation of this Act, an
27 amount of Five Hundred Million Pesos (₱500,000,000) is hereby allotted for this
28 purpose. Thereafter, the sum necessary for its implementation shall be in the Annual
29 Appropriations Act.

30 Sec. 7. *Implementing Agencies.* – The Department of Agriculture (DA),
31 Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), together with the

1 Commission on Higher Education (CHED), shall jointly implement the provisions of
2 this Act.

3 *Sec. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days after
4 the effectivity of this Act, the DA, DSWD and the CHED shall issue the necessary
5 guidelines, rules and regulations for the proper implementation of the provisions of
6 this Act.

7 *Sec. 9. Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance,
8 executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation
9 contrary to or is inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed,
10 modified, or amended accordingly.

11 *Sec. 10. Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part hereof is held invalid
12 or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected
13 shall remain valid and subsisting.

14 *Sec. 11. Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
15 complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) national newspapers
16 of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,