

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

Second Regular Session

5165
HOUSE BILL NO. _____



**Introduced by Akbayan Representatives Walden F. Bello
and Ibarra M. Gutierrez III**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

One of the greatest ironies of our times is that the country's food producers are also the ones that are highly vulnerable to hunger because of poverty. In the Philippines, poverty is prevalent in the rural areas, especially among small farmers and agricultural producers. In 2006, the National Statistical Coordination Board reports that among the basic sectors, fishermen and farmers are the poorest, with poverty incidences of 49.9 and 44 percent respectively. This indicates that close to half of the population in these basic sectors is considered poor.

The absence of adequate social support and services for small farmers and agricultural producers are exacerbating poverty conditions in agriculture. It is also undermining the productivity and economic viability of the country's food producers. For instance, the lack of adequate educational support, especially in the rural areas limits the development of human resources, and its potential positive effect on innovation and productivity in the sector. A survey on small farmers conducted by Centro Saka shows that, on the average, 52.8 percent of farmers in the rice, corn, coconut, sugar, rubber and banana sectors had not been able to attain education beyond the primary and secondary level.

Additionally, the absence of social services, particularly pension support for aging farmers, heightens vulnerability of stakeholders in the sector, and serves as disincentives to continued agricultural production. After decades of farming, millions of our poor farmers do not have anything to fall back on in their twilight years. It is no wonder then that many of their children are no longer interested to continue farming and producing food and other agricultural products for the country.

This bill seeks to provide essential support services to small farmers and agricultural producers. It aims to provide agricultural scholarship for at least two children of farmers, as a way of encouraging human resource development in the sector. It also extends pension support to senior farmers as a rightful recognition of their contribution to society.

It is my hope that the delivery of these essential social services to small farmers and small agricultural producers will help uplift their condition, minimize their vulnerabilities, and empower them to maximize their contribution to the economy and society.

The passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

A stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop followed by a series of vertical strokes.

WALDEN F. BELLO

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large initial 'I' followed by a complex, swirling flourish.

IBARRA M. GUTIERREZ III

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

5165

HOUSE BILL NO. _____

**Introduced by Akbayan Representatives Walden F. Bello
And Ibarra M. Gutierrez III**

**AN ACT PROVIDING SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PROTECTION FOR SMALL FARMERS
AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS**

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

Section 1. Declaration of Policy.- It is the policy of the State to recognize the vital role played by farmers in the attainment of food security as well as their contribution to economic development. It is also the policy of the State to help provide social support and protection to small farmers on account of their existing vulnerabilities, as incentives for continued agricultural production, as support to local food producers and in pursuit of the attainment of the country's goal of food self-sufficiency and food security.

Section 2. Definition of Terms.- For purposes of this Act:

(a) Agriculture Scholarship shall refer to aid covering the cost of tuition fee, books and a minimum subsistence allowance for the children of farmers enrolled in courses related and relevant to agriculture and agricultural production as defined by the Department of Agriculture in consultation with the Department of Science and Technology, the Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Social Welfare and Development and two representatives from national farmers organizations;

(b) Small Farmers and Agricultural Producers shall refer to men and women engaged in agricultural production including landless farmers and those owning land holdings not exceeding 3 hectares;

(c) Entrance requirements shall refer to the regular admission requirements and procedures imposed by schools, universities and other government and private educational and training institutions;

(d) Pension shall refer to the monthly payment given to a person meeting the requirements set forth in this law.

Section 3. Agriculture Scholarship Programs for Children of Small Farmers and Agricultural Producers.- This Act mandates that every farmer shall have access to agriculture scholarship for at least two of his or her children, provided that the courses undertaken by the latter are included in the list of courses and trainings identified by the

Department of Agriculture as related or relevant to agriculture and agricultural production. The scholarship shall cover the cost of tuition fee and books plus a minimum subsistence allowance.

Section 4. List of Courses Eligible for Agriculture Scholarship. – The Department of Agriculture shall develop the list of degree and training courses eligible for agriculture scholarship in consultation with the Department of Science and Technology, the Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Social Welfare and Development and two representatives from national farmers' organizations to be appointed by the President. This list shall be reviewed and updated every five years, beginning from the implementation of this law.

Section 5. Role of State Universities and Colleges, TESDA and other Government Training Institutions.– State universities and colleges shall provide scholarship to children of farmers in accordance with Section 3 of this Act, provided that the latter meet the regular entrance requirements for students.

Children of farmers who are not able to meet the qualification requirements of state universities and colleges may have access to agriculture related training and certificate courses through TESDA or any government institution providing such trainings, provided that such trainings are included in the list of courses eligible for scholarship as defined in Section 4.

Section 6. Pension and Other Benefits for Senior Farmers.– Farmers aged sixty-five years old and above shall have a monthly pension of Php 1,500 per month. The value of the monthly pension shall be reviewed and adjusted for inflation and other considerations every three years by the Department of Social Work and Welfare, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Finance, the Department of Budget and Management, the Department of Interior and Local Government, and two representatives from two national farmers' organizations to be appointed by the President.

Section 7. Criteria for Beneficiaries.– The following criteria shall be followed in determining the list of farmers qualified to receive pension benefits provided for in Section 5 of this Act:

1. He or she must be engaged in activities directly related to agricultural production for at least ten years;
2. He or she must not own landholdings greater than 3 hectares;
3. He or she must be a bonafide Filipino citizen;

Section 8. Development of Guidelines.– The Department of Social Work, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Interior and Local Government and the Department of Budget and Management shall develop the guidelines for implementation of the scholarship and pension program provided for in Sections 3 and 6 of this Act.

Section 9. Budget Appropriation.– Congress shall allocate annual appropriation for the implementation of this Act.

Section 10. Repealing Clause.– Other laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 11. *Separability Clause.*- If any part, section or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

Section 12. *Effectivity.*- This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or at least two (2) national news papers of general circulation.

Approved,