

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

Seventeenth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4894**



Introduced by Representative Sharon S. Garin

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In recent times, multiple statistics from studies conducted by multiple agencies reveal a problematic trend of hunger, wasting, and undernutrition in our young children, particularly our school children.

According to 2012-2013 figures of the Department of Education (DepEd), more than half a million or 534,054 Filipino schoolchildren are malnourished and severely wasted, meaning that they are too thin for their height. The most recent Global School-based Health Survey by the World Health Organization (WHO) from 2011 also reported that 11.8% of surveyed Filipino students aged 13-15 years old were underweight.

This is problematic as though a student's life can be exciting and exhilarating, it can also be grueling and exhausting. Undernutrition and hunger adversely affects a child's ability to learn and hinders them from achieving their full potential. It disrupts a child's mental and physical development, which may ultimately lead to poor productivity in adulthood. Furthermore, it makes them more vulnerable to diseases, disabilities, and even death.

This bill seeks to battle undernutrition, as well as promote health and nutrition in school children and the community in general. This is done by establishing a National Farm to School Program, which is a school-based strategy that focuses on creating a healthy school food environment. This program has already been implemented in various states and locales in the United States resulting in great outcomes. Farm to School implementation differs by location but almost always include the following: (a) *Procurement*, where local foods are purchased, promoted, and served to school children; (b) *Education*, where students participate in educational activities related to agriculture, food, health and nutrition; and (c) *School Gardens*, where students engage in hands-on learning through in-school farming and gardening.

Farm to School Programs provide a variety of benefits to students, parents, schools, communities and food producers. Key outcomes in student health and achievement have included improvement in early childhood eating behaviors, including choosing healthier options in school canteens, consuming more fruits and vegetables through supplementary feeding programs, and willingness to try new foods and healthier options. There is also anecdotal evidence that children are more inclined to eat healthier when they or their friends grew their own food or they know the garden where it was grown.

Farm to school programs also provide benefits to education by promoting food and agriculture-based learning activities to enhance the quality of the educational experience. This leads to an increase in knowledge and awareness about gardening, agriculture, and instill in children the values of good health, proper nutrition, hard work, and responsibility. All this, ultimately leads to enhanced overall academic achievement for our school children.

Farm to school likewise provide economic development opportunities to local economies by mandating the procurement of food from local farms and producers to be used in its program components.

With this novel, integrated, and common sense approach to child nutrition, Farm to School will provide far more cross-sectoral benefits than other regular health and nutrition programs of the government. It is the hope of this Representation, that this bill be approved for the benefit of the school children and their communities.



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1 entrepreneurs to local communities to promote nutrition, facilitate agricultural
2 productivity, stimulate local economy and provide cross-sectoral benefits in
3 areas of public health, economy, education and the environment to achieve the
4 following objectives:

5 a) Ensure that proper health and nutrition information are given to
6 school children throughout their childhood years;

7 b) Improve child nutrition by focusing on creating a health food
8 environment in schools and early care educational institutions;

9 c) Support and influence children's development towards healthy
10 eating habits through proper education on good food sources and teach them
11 how to make informed food choices, such as preferences for fruits and
12 vegetables;

13 d) Establish and maintain school gardens as accessible and readily-
14 available sources of healthy and nutritious vegetables and food for school
15 children;

16 e) Ensure access of students to healthy and nutritious food through
17 supplementary school-based feeding programs to mitigate malnourishment
18 among school children; and

19 f) Enhance the general well-being of the community by encouraging
20 schools, their students and their families to purchase from local producers of
21 healthy and nutritious foods at the same time stimulating local economies and

1 providing economic development opportunities to local food producers and
2 laborers, distributors, processors and others who support the local food system.

3 SEC. 3. *Farm to School Program.* – To carry the out the policy
4 mentioned under Section 2 of this Act, there shall be established a Farm to
5 School Program through which primary and secondary schools provide
6 education to school children on food and nutrition, health and agriculture and
7 undertake activities to ensure the availability of and accessibility to safe,
8 healthy, nutritious and locally produced agricultural food products in school.
9 The Farm to School Program shall have the following components:

- 10 a) In-School Farm Program;
- 11 b) National School Feeding Program; and
- 12 c) Farm Visits Program.

13 For the purpose of this Act, “*farm to school program*” refers to an
14 alternative approach of enriching the connection that school communities have
15 with fresh and healthy agricultural food and their local producers by educating
16 and undertaking experiential learning activities with the goal of improving the
17 nutrition and food purchasing practices of children and at the same time
18 strengthening the local economy. It includes health and nutrition promotion
19 through integrated academic lesson on vegetable production, farming and
20 animal rearing as well as hands-on and practical application through in-school
21 projects and out-of-school excursions, provision for supplementary nourishment

1 for school children, sectoral collaboration and partnership with community
2 organizations.

3 SEC. 4. *In-School Farm Program.* – As one major component of Farm
4 to School Program, the Department of Education (DepEd) shall establish and
5 maintain an in-school farm or garden in every primary and secondary school
6 and implement an In-School Farm Program to:

7 a) Establish and promote vegetable production in public elementary
8 and secondary schools;

9 b) Serve as a hands-on educational laboratory in teaching agriculture
10 and agricultural concepts; and

11 c) Raise the awareness of school children on the nutritional and health
12 value of agricultural food products and instill the importance of good health,
13 proper nutrition, and hard work.

14 The DepEd shall be the lead agency in the implementation of the in-
15 school farm program and shall formulate a guideline of requirements in the
16 implementation of the program. The DepEd shall structure a timetable to
17 ensure that primary and secondary schools have their own garden for healthy
18 fruits and vegetables.

19 In line with this, the DepEd shall closely coordinate with the Department
20 of Agriculture, the National Nutrition Council, the Department of the Interior
21 and Local Government (DILG) and local government units (LGUs) for the

1 construction and funding requirements necessary in the proper implementation
2 of the program.

3 SEC. 5. *Role of the Department of Agriculture.* – The Department of
4 Agriculture shall identify and accredit farmer organizations and cooperatives
5 who may supply the provisions for gardening. It shall also provide technology
6 and technical assistance and conduct trainings and seminars to teach students,
7 teachers and parents about school gardening.

8 SEC. 6. *Role of the National Nutrition Council.* – The National
9 Nutrition Council shall provide a list of preferred vegetables that help address
10 malnutrition problems in schools that prioritize planting.

11 SEC. 7. *Role of the Department of the Interior and Local Government.*
12 – The Department Interior and Local Government and the local government
13 units shall assist the schools by providing idle government lands and land
14 resources to be used in the in-school farm program.

15 SEC. 8. *Inclusion of Vegetable Production in Academic Curriculum.* –
16 Subjects and lessons in vegetable production shall be included in the academic
17 curriculum for primary and secondary level students of both public and private
18 schools to develop the skills and knowledge in vegetable production and
19 promote agricultural literacy.

20 SEC. 9. *Product Utilization.* – Products from in-school farm program
21 shall be primarily used for the national school feeding program. Surplus

1 vegetables may be sold to generate income for the purchase of other food
2 supplies for the national school feeding program or additional resources for the
3 improvement of the school gardens.

4 SEC. 10. *National School Feeding Program (NSFP)*. – The National
5 School Feeding Program is hereby established as an alternative approach of
6 providing free supplementary meals to students. The DepEd shall design a
7 program menu using the product from the in-school farm program and other
8 healthy foods sold by local producers.

9 In coordination with the DepEd, the following national government
10 agencies are tasked to make available such resources as may be necessary to
11 ensure the successful implementation of the NSFP:

12 a) The DA and the National Food Authority shall tap farmers
13 associations and cooperatives in the locality for possible sources of food
14 supplies and shall share with the DepEd any available resources and facilities
15 that may be used for the NSFP;

16 b) The DILG shall enlist the support of LGUs as DepEd partners in
17 the operation of the NSFP, including the possibility of utilizing the services of
18 barangay nutrition scholars and barangay health workers; and

19 c) The National Nutrition Council, in coordination with the Food and
20 Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), shall provide the menu consisting of a

1 combination of foods that meet the recommended energy and nutrient intake of
2 children and use locally produced food and food products as far as possible.

3 SEC. 11. *Priority LGUs.* – In case of shortage of funds, priority in the
4 implementation of the NSFP shall be given to municipalities and cities which
5 are determined by the National Nutrition Council or by any competent
6 government agency to have high malnutrition rates.

7 SEC. 12. *Participation of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs).* – The
8 DepEd shall promote the involvement of parents through the PTAs in the
9 planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the school feeding
10 program.

11 SEC. 13. *Procurement, Storage and Handling System.* – The
12 procurement, storage and handling of appropriate food supplies by the
13 DepEd shall be upon the recommendation of the National Nutrition Council, the
14 FNRI and other appropriate government agencies.

15 In the procurement process, priority shall be given to the utilization of
16 locally produced food supplies, as well as the products of the in-school farm
17 program and the products of community gardens as part of convergence efforts
18 to increase food supplies at the local level.

19 The DepEd shall issue the guidelines necessary for the effective
20 implementation of the procurement, storage and handling system.

1 SEC. 14. *Farm Visits Program.* – The DepEd shall require that at least
2 25% of educational tours and field trips to be conducted by public and private
3 primary and secondary schools every academic year shall be devoted to local
4 farms and factories of local food producers or in those places involved in the
5 planting, growing, harvesting, processing, packaging or distribution of food
6 products from agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries; this also includes those
7 involved in the raising, rearing or of animals and livestock including pork, beef,
8 poultry, and other farm animals.

9 This further includes Farm Tourism Camps, as defined in RA 10816,
10 which refer to any farm area that allows visitors and tourists to visit, get
11 involved in farm activities, and to enjoy and learn rural lifestyle.

12 SEC. 15. *Monitoring and Evaluation System.* – The DepEd shall
13 establish a monitoring and evaluation system for the nationwide implementation
14 of the Farm To School Program, which shall incorporate periodic reports from
15 the schools division and regional offices. The report provides, among others,
16 the needed information that may determine whether or not the program has
17 achieved its objectives, including the identification of issues and constraints as
18 well as the corresponding appropriate recommendations.

19 SEC. 16. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial
20 implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriation of

1 the DepEd. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for its continued
2 implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

3 SEC. 17. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90)
4 days from the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Education shall, in
5 coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture and consultation with the heads
6 of government agencies, formulate the necessary rules and regulations for the
7 effective implementation of this Act.

8 SEC. 18. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held
9 invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in
10 full force and effect.

11 SEC. 19. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and
12 regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
13 repealed or amended accordingly.

14 SEC. 20. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
15 its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

16 Approved,