

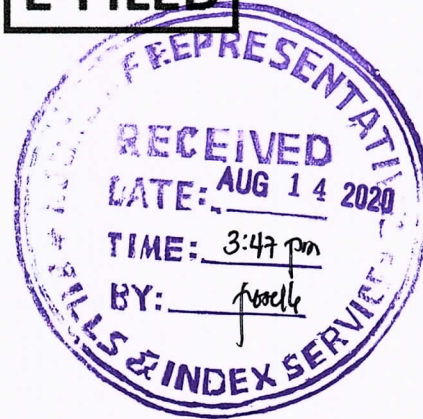


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7389

E-FILED



Introduced by MAGSASAKA Party-List Representative
ARGEL JOSEPH T. CABATBAT

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The current health crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic has one very chilling outcome: the impending global food shortage. A troubling outlook for the Philippines which was ranked 64th among 113 countries in the 2019 Global Food Security Index, based on a benchmark model that measures food affordability, availability, and quality. Moreover, the country is increasingly relying on imports to supply its needs for livestock and poultry products as well as other agricultural commodities. While our rice import dependency ratio (IDR) registered a twofold increase with 13.83 percent in 2018 from 6.56 percent in 2017 as reported by the Philippine Statics Authority (PSA).

This marked dependency on the importation of agricultural products further puts the Philippines in a precarious situation because the looming global food crisis means that countries are bound to prioritize the security of their food supply before exporting. For this reason, it has become imperative to create the necessary long-term policy framework that will ensure a self-reliant and food secure Philippines through a viable, sustainable, and technology-advanced agriculture sector.

Critical to achieving long-term progress in agriculture is through the cultivation of our youth's attitude and outlook. A clear and readily available program integrating agriculture and education will provide an enabling environment necessary to ensure a progressive and sustained shift in our policy framework. Hence, the scholarship and return service program of the proposed bill gives our youth access and opportunities to actively engage and participate in the development of our agriculture.

In view of the foregoing reasons, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

ARGEL JOSEPH T. CABATBAT



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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING AGRICULTURAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM
FOR DESERVING STUDENTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 “*Agricultural Scholarship and*
2 *Return Service Act*”.

3 SEC 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State recognizes the primary role of agriculture in
4 developing a self-reliant and independent national economy. For this purpose, the State
5 shall strengthen its agriculture through knowledge and skills development, technology
6 advancement, appropriate research studies, and innovation, as well as adequate financial,
7 production, marketing, and other support services.

8 The State shall protect and promote the citizens’ right to quality education at all
9 levels. The State shall also establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student
10 loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives that shall be available to deserving
11 students in both public and private schools, especially to the underprivileged.

12 Towards this end, the State shall establish an agricultural scholarship and return
13 service program to deserving students seeking a profession in agriculture who shall
14 render government service in the field of agriculture. This shall stimulate revitalization
15 and ensure the continuing development of the country’s agriculture.

16 SEC. 3. *Establishment of Agricultural Scholarship and Return Service (ASRS) Program* –
17 There shall be established an Agricultural Scholarship and Return Service Program for
18 deserving students in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) or in private higher
19 education institutions (PHEIs) offering degree and non-degree programs in agriculture,
20 fisheries, livestock and poultry raising, animal husbandry, and other agriculture-related

1 courses; *Provided*, That the applicant has passed the admission and other qualifying
2 requirements of the SUCs and PHEIs.

3 SEC. 4. *Scope*. – The ASRS Program established under this Act shall be made available
4 to deserving Filipino students who want to pursue a profession in agriculture, fisheries,
5 livestock and poultry raising, animal husbandry, and other agriculture-related courses.

6 The ASRS Program shall provide financial assistance to students including:

- 7 (a) Matriculation and other school fees;
- 8 (b) Prescribed books, supplies, and equipment allowance;
- 9 (c) Clothing or uniform allowance;
- 10 (d) Research allowance;
- 11 (e) Dormitory or boarding house rental allowance with one-time relocation
12 allowance to scholars who have to study outside their region;
- 13 (f) Transportation allowance;
- 14 (g) Internship fees;
- 15 (h) Graduation fees;
- 16 (i) Board review fees;
- 17 (j) One-time roundtrip fare to and from the place of residence to be given at the
18 start and end of the scholarship period.

19 SEC. 5. *Qualification Requirements*. – An applicant for the ASRS Program shall possess
20 the following qualifications:

- 21 (a) Must be a natural-born Filipino citizen residing in the Philippines;
- 22 (b) Must be a graduating senior high school student or an undergraduate student
23 of a non-agriculture course who desires to pursue a profession in agriculture
24 and agriculture-related course;
- 25 (c) Must not have been a delinquent scholar of a previous scholarship;
- 26 (d) Must have passed the entrance examination required by the SUC or PHEI
27 where the applicant intends to enroll.

28 SEC. 6. *Grant of Scholarship Requirements*. – Recipients of the ASRS Program shall be
29 required to satisfy the following conditionalities:

- 30 (a) Must sign an agreement stating the terms and conditions of the scholarship on
31 a prescribed form of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the
32 Department of Agriculture (DA);
- 33 (b) Must carry the minimum required course load per semester or term by the SUC
34 or PHEI, and shall not drop a subject which will result to course underload,
35 except for senior students in their final semester who need fewer course load
36 to graduate;
- 37 (c) Must complete the entire degree or non-degree program within the required
38 duration of the SUC or PHEI where the scholar is enrolled in;
- 39 (d) Must conduct the required research and thesis work relevant to the priority
40 programs and development of the agriculture sector;

- (e) Must undertake the required internship in a DA-accredited agricultural facility;
- (f) Must take the board licensure examination within one (1) year after completion of the degree program;
- (g) Must serve the mandatory return service in a government agricultural facility determined as a priority by the DA for at least two (2) years for non-degree programs, or four (4) years for degree programs, or five (5) years for degree programs with required board licensure examination, or one (1) year for every scholarship year availed of; *Provided*, That the return service shall be in addition to the return service requirement of the SUC or PHEI; *Provided, further*, That the person rendering return service shall receive appropriate remunerations and other benefits.

Subject to the guidelines and policies of the SUC or PHEI, the scholar may be allowed, for valid reasons preventing the enrollment, to defer availing of the scholarship and file a leave of absence for a period not exceeding one (1) school year.

The scholar who fails to pass the licensure examination within one (1) year after graduation and completion of all academic requirements shall shoulder the necessary expenses for the succeeding professional licensure examinations.

SEC. 7. Disqualifications. – The scholarship grant shall be terminated, and the scholar shall reimburse the full cost of scholarship and related benefits received, including all the expenses incurred on account of participation in the scholarship program, in case of the following circumstances:

- (a) If the scholar concurrently accepts another scholarship from other government or private agency or entity;
- (b) If the scholar fails to comply with the conditions set in the scholarship agreement or, within the control of the scholar, fails to complete the course program within the required period through the scholar's fault or willful neglect and without valid cause as may be determined by the SUC or PHEI, CHED, or the DA;
- (c) If the scholar fails to pass the licensure examination required by the course program for the second time: *Provided*, That a scholar may opt to work within the government-accredited agricultural facility or enterprise for a period equivalent to five (5) years or the mandatory length of service that should have been rendered as stipulated in this Act, instead of reimbursing the full cost of the scholarship grant and related benefits received.

1 SEC. 8. *Mandatory Return Service.* – Upon completing the course program and
2 compliance with all requirements, such as the passing of the licensure examination
3 prescribed by the degree program and conferment of a professional qualification by the
4 Philippine Regulatory Commission (PRC) to practice, the scholar shall render the
5 mandatory return service for a period equivalent to not less than two (2) years for non-
6 degree course program, or four (4) years for degree course program, or five (5) years for
7 a degree program with required board licensure examination, or one (1) year for every
8 scholarship year availed.

9 SEC. 9. *Sanctions.* – A person who has availed of the ASRS Program but fails or refuses
10 to comply with the mandatory return service in a government-accredited agricultural
11 facility or enterprise, as provided under Section 6 (g) of this Act, shall be required to pay
12 twice the full cost of scholarship, including other benefits and expenses incurred under
13 the scholarship program: *Provided, That* a person who has partially served the mandated
14 return service shall be required to pay twice the full cost of the scholarship equivalent to
15 the number of years not served: *Provided, further, That* the scholar who fails to comply
16 with the mandated return service is on account of, or because of, severe or serious illness,
17 the aforesaid penalties shall not apply.

18 SEC. 10. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of the
19 provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the
20 SUCs and the DA. Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continued implementation of
21 this Act shall be included and subsumed into the scholarship program of the SUCs and the
22 CHED in the annual General Appropriations Act.

23 SEC. 11. *Review of the Number of Scholars to be Admitted.* – The CHED, SUCs, PHEIs,
24 and the DA shall conduct a mandatory review after five (5) years from the effectivity of
25 this Act, and every three (3) years thereafter, to determine the number of scholars to be
26 admitted every school year.

27 SEC. 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the
28 effectivity of this Act, the CHED and the DA, in coordination with the Philippine
29 Association of State Universities and Colleges, Coordinating Council of Private
30 Educational Associations, PRC, Department of Science and Technology, Department of
31 Budget and Management, SUCs, PHEIs, and other relevant stakeholders, shall formulate
32 and issue the rules and regulations to fully implement the provisions of this Act.

33 SEC. 13. *Separability Clause.* – If for any reason or reasons, any portion or provision
34 of this Act shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected
35 thereby, shall continue to be in full force and effect.

36 SEC. 14. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules,
37 regulations, and other issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the
38 provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,