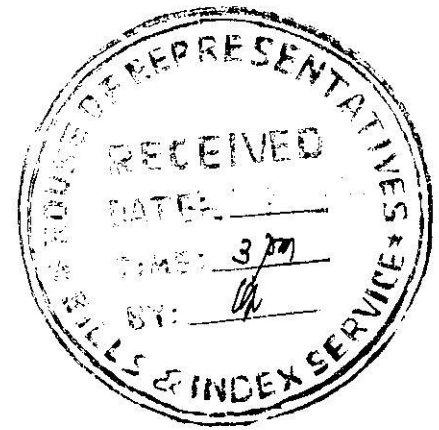


**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City**

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session**

House Bill No. 217



**Introduced by Representatives
MIKAELA ANGELA B. SUANSING and HORACIO P. SUANSING, JR.**

**AN ACT
TO PROTECT WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES FROM THE HAZARDS OF
WORKING IN AGRICULTURAL SITES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 16 of the 1987 Constitution expressly states:

“The State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.”

A report from the Philippines Statistics Authority released in 2020 reinforces the salience of agriculture as a pillar of the national economy. As of 2020, the agriculture sector absorbed 9.72 million persons, contributing 22.9 percent to the national employment.¹ Given the large number of Filipinos who work in agriculture, the Philippine Government, through the Department of Agriculture, has sought to funnel funds into various programs for farmers and farm workers (*kabesilyas*), such as providing for farm equipment, skills development and loan programs, along with supporting local crop development research through agencies such as the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice).

However, despite these beneficial programs, the protection for agricultural workers in the country remains insufficient in certain aspects, particularly with regard to working conditions in farms that use pesticides. As early as 1990, a task force of the World Health Organization has estimated that about one million unintentional pesticide poisonings occur annually, leading to approximately 20,000 deaths.² Further, in a systematic review of scientific literature published between 2006 and 2018, it is estimated that about 385 million cases of unintentional pesticide poisoning occur annually worldwide including around 11,000 fatalities.

¹ 2020 Selected Statistics on Agriculture, Philippine Statistics Authority

² Wolfgang Boedeker, Meriel Watts, Peter Clausing & Emily Marquez. The global distribution of acute unintentional pesticide poisoning: estimations based on a systematic review. October 27, 2021. Retrieved June 22, 2022 from <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-020-09939-0>

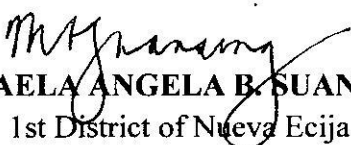
Considering the worldwide farming population of approximately 860 million, about 44% of farmers are estimated to be poisoned by pesticides every year.³

A study from the Journal of Rural Medicine found that in the Philippines the number of young children, aged six to nine years old, either exposed or working in agricultural sites has increased. Likewise, there have been numerous reports of symptoms of pesticide poisoning such as headaches, skin irritation and abdominal pain among children after being exposed to pesticide chemicals.⁴ Another study by the United States Government's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative reveals that there is an extensive risk of pesticide poisoning among vegetable farmers in the Philippines given the nature of the chemical used in planting vegetable crops and the largely-manual techniques used.⁵ Moreover, a more recent study shows that farmers do not have adequate knowledge of pesticides including its proper use, management and disposal, thereby affecting not only their livelihood, but more so their personal well-being.⁶

This bill seeks to establish measures ought to be taken by farm owners and operators to ensure the safety of their workers and their respective families. Specifically, it aims to address the health hazards presented to agricultural workers by the presence of organophosphate pesticides, which produce both short-term (acute poisoning) and long-term (chronic) effects that affect various organs. Prolonged exposure to these pesticides also increases the potential risks of developing abnormalities in the genes and human reproductive system.

As the nation's food providers, farmers, farm workers including their families must be accorded with the highest regard of protection and safety against the hazards of modern agriculture. It is not only necessary but more importantly just, to put their welfare at the forefront of public service. For a country cannot sustain itself without the hands and sweat of the people who toil the land at the expense of their own personal gain and well-being.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


MIKAELA ANGELA B. SUANSING
1st District of Nueva Ecija


HORACIO P. SUANSING, JR.
2nd District of Sultan Kudarat

³ Ibid.

⁴ Lu, J. et al. (2010) Trends of Pesticide Exposure and Related Cases in the Philippines. *Journal of Rural Medicine*, 5, 5, 153-164.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lu, J. (2022) Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices on Pesticide among Farmers in the Philippines. Retrieved on June 22, 2022 from <https://actamedicaphilippina.upm.edu.ph/index.php/acta/article/view/3868/3070>

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 217

Introduced by Representatives
MIKAELA ANGELA B. SUANSING and HORACIO P. SUANSING, JR.

AN ACT
TO PROTECT WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES FROM THE HAZARDS OF
WORKING IN AGRICULTURAL SITES

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “Farm Workers’ Protection Act.”

2 **SEC. 2. *Requirements.*** – The following requirements shall be imposed at any agricultural site
3 to which pesticides have been or will be applied. Farm owners or operators shall:

4 (A) Conduct or cause to have conducted mandatory testing for the presence of
5 organophosphate pesticides for all handlers of pesticides, including applicators and
6 mixers of pesticides. This testing shall be conducted within one week of the departure
7 of such workers from the site;

8 (B) Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) which has been fit-tested to all individuals
9 who are required to wear such in the course of their work, and which is readily available
10 to any worker needing to wear or use such equipment;

11 (C) Provide education and information to farm workers and their families about the hazards
12 of exposure to pesticides, how to avoid such exposures among children, personal
13 clothing and possessions, and what to do if pesticide exposure or contamination occurs;

14 (D) Report to the Department of Agriculture every incident of pesticide exposure among
15 farm workers or their families, whether by direct exposure to pesticide applications or
16 from drift of pesticides from the application site. Such reporting shall occur within 24
17 hours of such pesticide exposure and shall include the day and time of day the exposure
18 occurred and the pesticides to which the individuals were exposed;

19 (E) Provide on-site washing machines for workers to clean pesticide-contaminated
20 clothing, which are separate from clothes washing facilities used by families. The farm

owner or operator shall be responsible for providing instruction on the proper handling of clothing contaminated with or exposed to pesticides;

(F) Provide one shower facility for every five workers, with separate facilities for males and females, for the removal of pesticide residues and other contaminants;

(G) Provide one or more public telephones for workers to report medical emergencies, including pesticide exposures or contamination; and

(H) Ensure that all new housing for farm workers are located at least fifty feet (50) from any field or site, except for enclosed facilities such as greenhouses, which may be treated with pesticides. Existing housing which does not comply with this paragraph shall be replaced within five (5) years or ceases to be used after that time.

SEC. 3. *Penalty.* – The Department of Agriculture is hereby empowered to establish and assess penalties or fines against the farm owners and operators for violations of this Act. In no circumstance will any penalty or fine exceed One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P100,000.00).

SEC. 4. *Annual Report.* – The Department of Agriculture shall issue an annual report of all farm inspections done in the previous calendar year to the legislature on or before the 1st of March, including compliance with the requirements contained in this Act, enforcement action, fines and penalties for non-compliance resulting from such inspections, and pesticide exposure or contamination reports submitted to the Department of Agriculture.

SEC. 5. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 6. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any provision of this Act is declared to be unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 7. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,