

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 2353



Introduced by

HON. YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ
and
HON. JUDE A. ACIDRE

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE YOUNG FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK CHALLENGE
PROGRAM, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE YOUNG FARMERS AND
FISHERFOLK CHALLENGE COUNCIL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to engage the youth in pursuing a career in agriculture and agri-business and actively participate in recognition of their crucial role in nation-building as agents and partners for development.

To this end, the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Council is sought to be created, composed of various national government agencies to spearhead policy formulation and program implementation for the benefit of the youth belonging to eighteen (18) to thirty (30) years of age, who are engaged in farming and fisheries activities, and are included in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA).

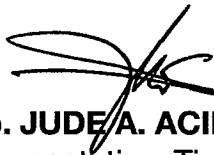
Also, in light of the 2020 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World of the Food and Agriculture Organization which reported that the Philippines recorded the most number of food insecure people in Southeast Asia in 2017 to 2019, with 59 million Filipinos suffering from moderate to severe

lack of consistent access to food, this bill seeks to support government programs towards improving food security through a whole of government approach. National government agencies will likewise be engaged through this legislation to improve accessibility to green jobs, opportunities for knowledge and information enrichment, financial services, and land for the benefit of young Filipino farmers.

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



Rep. YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ
Representative, Tingog Sinirangan



Rep. JUDE A. ACIDRE
Representative, Tingog Sinirangan

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

Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Act*”.

Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to recognize and engage the role of the youth in nation building and rural development, providing for this purpose access to knowledge, information and education, access to land, new sources of financial services and capital, green jobs, access to new and niche markets, and participation in policy dialogue.

Section 3. *Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program.* - There is hereby established a Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program, hereinafter referred to as the “Program”, that shall support and

empower the young farmers and fisherfolk to be active partners in food security and agricultural development and modernization. The Program shall encourage the youth to pursue a career or engage in activities related to agriculture, ensure young farmers and fisherfolk participation in policy formulation and program implementation relative to the agriculture sector, and provide institutional support for agri-business and agri-entrepreneurship initiatives of the youth to fully realize their role as agents and partners for development.

Section 4. *Beneficiaries of the Program.* - The Program is intended to support young farmers and fisherfolk between eighteen (18) to thirty (30) years of age, who are engaged in farming and fisheries activities, and are included in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA). The Department of Agriculture (DA) shall update its existing database to reflect these indicators.

Section 5. *Creation of a Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Council.* – There is hereby created the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Council, hereinafter referred to as the Council, to properly oversee the implementation of the Program. The Council shall be composed of the following:

- (a) Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) or a duly authorized representative who is at least an Undersecretary, who shall be the Chair;
- (b) Representative of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) who shall likewise be an Undersecretary;
- (c) Representative of the Department of Education (DepEd) who shall likewise be an Undersecretary;
- (d) Representative of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- (e) Representative of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);

- (f) Representative of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR);
- (g) Representative of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA);
- (h) Representative of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG);
- (i) Representative of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT);
- (j) Representative of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
- (k) Representative of the National Youth Commission (NYC);
- (l) Representative of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP);
- (m) Representative of a national organization of young farmers' cooperative or association, provided that the representative shall be between fifteen (15) to forty (40) years of age;
- (n) Representative of a national organization of fisherfolk's cooperative or association, provided that the representative shall be between fifteen (15) to forty (40) years of age;
- (o) Representative of a farmers' women organization or cooperative, provided that the representative shall be between fifteen (15) to forty (40) years of age;
- (p) Representative of a national organization for agritourism;
- (q) Representative of state universities and colleges (SUCs);
- (r) Representative of private educational institutions (PEIs); and
- (s) Representative of a national organization for food, restaurant, and business sectors.

The Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF) shall serve as its Secretariat.

Section 6. *Powers and Functions of the Council.* – Powers and Functions of the Council. - The Council shall have the following powers and functions:

- a. Formulate the "Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program", hereinafter referred to as the "Program," in consultation with research institutions such as the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD), University of the Philippines - Los Baños (UPLB) and other relevant State Universities and Colleges;
- b. Develop, in coordination with various departments and agencies, specific action plans for unambiguous tasking and quick implementation;
- c. Create special programs for marginalized sectors such as youth from urban poor, women, indigenous people, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM);
- d. Develop initiatives in new farm sectors such as "smart farming" farm tourism, agro-, aqua-, and hydroponics, organic and boutique vegetables;
- e. Identify relevant training and livelihood budgets in the different departments and agencies, including start-up capital;
- f. Implement the departments' and agencies' action plans, engaging the assistance of the Local Government Units (LGUs) and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK);
- g. Identify the best practices in the implementation of the program as well as emerging best practices in agriculture such as smart farming and farm tourism in compliance with Republic Act No. 10816, or the "Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016";
- h. Foster the formation of new ideas and technologies by assisting agricultural enterprises of qualified young farmers and fisherfolk entrepreneurs, pursuant to Republic Act No. 11337, otherwise known as the "Innovative Start-up Act of 2018";
- i. Initiate new packaging, promotion, and marketing events;

- j. Ensure scholarships and subsidized tuition fees for young farmers and fisherfolk in SUCs;
- k. Package incentive and recognition programs/awards system for the youth;
- l. Participate in agri- and food tourism marketing events, nationally and internationally;
- m. Provide on-the-job training programs for young farmers and fisherfolk in areas such as "green jobs", reforestation, coastal management, fisheries, and other rural-based jobs, through the DOLE's Special Program for Employment of Students (SPES) and other livelihood and training programs;
- n. Establish linkages with agricultural representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other international farming youth associations;
- o. Engage national and international leaders in formulating policies directly addressing young farmers and fisherfolk concerns; and
- p. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of this Act as well as its impact on the participants and beneficiaries.

Section. 7. *Access to Knowledge, Information, and Education.* - A whole government approach shall be utilized to inform and enlist young farmers and fisherfolk in agriculture:

- a. **Role of the DepEd** - The DepEd shall include at all levels, but particularly in its K-12 program, elective subjects focused on agriculture, such as garden farming, urban greening, reforestation, and coastal management;
- b. **Role of the TESDA** - The TESDA, in coordination with the DICT and the DOST, shall add subjects in their training centers for agricultural entrepreneurship, "smart farming", and other advanced farming technologies, prioritizing programs focused on agriculture. The

TESDA shall also provide scholarships and subsidized tuition fees for young farmers and fisherfolk;

- c. **Role of the DOLE** - The DOLE shall provide on-the-job training (OJT) programs for young farmers and fisherfolk, including the Special Program for Employment of Students (SPES);
- d. **Role of the CHED, SUCs, and Agricultural Schools** - The CHED, SUCs, and agricultural schools shall provide scholarship grants, stipends, and subsidies to qualified young farmers and fisherfolk. Likewise, the CHED, SUCs, and agricultural schools shall provide schemes for distance, remote, and digital learning. The CHED shall likewise encourage the private colleges and universities to provide similar opportunities and schemes to qualified recipients. The CHED shall include agriculture in its National Service Training Program (NSTP) curriculum, such as garden farming, urban greening, and coastal management. CHED shall likewise promulgate the policies, standards and guidelines for agriculture courses which shall focus on sustainability and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Scholarships for post-graduate and doctoral degrees shall be provided by CHED: *Provided*, That private universities and colleges are also enjoined to provide the same.
- e. **Role of the DA, ATI and PCAF** - The DA, through the 4-H Club of the ATI and the Agricultural and Fishery Youthpreneur Council (AFYC) of the PCAF, shall provide for scholarship grants and stipends to qualified young farmers and fisherfolk, targeting specific marginalized sectors such as women, indigenous people, and persons with disabilities (PWDs);
- f. **Role of the DOST and DICT** - The DOST and DICT shall develop portals, utilize social media, and exploit other electronic technologies, to publicize the Program; and
- g. **Role of the LGU and the SK** - The LGU shall inform and enlist the SK who shall act as trainer-leaders to qualified and interested young farmers and fisherfolk.

Section 8. *Access to Land.* - Short-leases, free land and agrarian reform schemes shall be developed to provide access to land for young farmers:

- a. **Role of the DENR** - The DENR shall explore the possibilities of extending short-term leases of public land to young farmers, provide free or subsidized land for cultivation, and develop such other packages as would allow young farmers to use available or unutilized agricultural land. In coordination with the LGUs and SK, the Department may also create lease-to-buy programs;
- b. **Role of the DAR** - The DAR shall facilitate and expedite the lease, distribution, and award of agrarian reform land to young beneficiaries;
- c. **Role of the LGU and the SK** - The LGU shall prioritize the lease and acquisition of land for cultivation by young farmers. Further, the LGU and SK shall distribute hillside or other under cultivated lands to young farmers, for farming and other agricultural purposes;
- d. **Role of the SUCs** - Whenever SUCs own or occupy excess landholdings, young farmers shall be given first option to use and cultivate such landholdings for agricultural purposes.

Section 9. *Access to Financial Services.* - Young farmers and fisherfolk shall be provided financial assistance and given access to financial services:

- a. **Role of the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP)** - The LBP shall develop favorable financial packages for young farmers and fisherfolk, waiving collateral, salary, and other typical bank requisites;
- b. **Role of the DA** - The DA shall develop financial packages specifically targeting young farmers and fisherfolk;

- c. **Role of the DTI** - The DTI, through the Small Business Corporation (SB Corp), shall extend loans to the young farmers and fisherfolk for the trade and marketing of their agricultural products;
- d. **Role of the DOST, DICT, and DTI** - The DOST, DICT and the DTI, pursuant to Republic Act No. 11337, otherwise known as the "Innovative Start-up Act of 2018," and other programs shall include agricultural enterprises for qualified young farmer- and fisherfolk-entrepreneurs in their incubation efforts;
- e. **Role of CHED and TESDA** - CHED and TESDA shall provide financial literacy trainings particularly in handling and managing loans and grants;
- f. **Role of the Private Sector** - The private sector is encouraged to subcontract, partner, and extend financial grants, initiate social partnerships and rural development initiatives, as well as mentor young farmers and fisherfolk on livelihood strategies, as part of their corporate social responsibility and other community participation;
- g. **Role of the LGU** - The LGU, in coordination with the SK, shall provide funding and livelihood opportunities to young farmers and fisherfolk;
- h. **Role of the SK** - The SK, using its ten percent (10%) Development Fund, and other funds, shall provide entrepreneurial and finance packages for young farmers and fisherfolk;
- i. **Role of the NYC** - The NYC, in tandem with potential youth agri-entrepreneurs, shall initiate donation and fundraising drives for the Program, exploiting for this purpose online advertising, "crowd-sourcing", and other digital means to generate funds for the Program.

Section 10. Access to "Green Jobs." - Young farmers and fisherfolk shall be given priority in access to green jobs, as follows;

- a. **Role of the DOLE** - The DOLE, through the SPES, shall include "green jobs", reforestation, coastal management, fisheries, and

other rural-based jobs, in cooperation with LGUs. The DOLE shall prioritize young farmers and fisherfolk for employment in public projects or private agro-industries and corporations. The Department shall also offer returning youth Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) with a menu of possible investment projects where they will be assisted in terms of proposal packaging, training, and management assistance during the early stage, marketing, and linking with government financial institutions (GFIs) and investment promotion agencies in case they qualify for fiscal and nonfiscal incentives pursuant to R.A. No. 11534 or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) Act;

- b. **Role of the TESDA** - The TESDA shall develop on-the-job trainings, job fairs, employment bridging initiatives, and private partnerships in producing, processing, packaging, and marketing youth products;
- c. **Role of the DOT** - The DOT shall prioritize the employment of young farmers and fisherfolk in eco- and agro-tours, and encourage youth entrepreneurship in farm and fishery tourism;
- d. **Role of the PEZA** - The PEZA shall prioritize young farmers and fisherfolk for jobs in agro-industrial ecozones, provide access to modern farm technology, promote linkages in agriculture-related enterprise, and accelerate the creation of "green jobs" for young farmers and fisherfolk;
- e. **The DA and the ATI** - The DA, particularly the 4-H Club of the ATI, shall provide jobs and embark upon farming start-ups in new and niche agricultural sectors such as organic farming, agroponics, aguaponics, hydroponics, dairy, livestock, coffee, cacao, and other areas of farming and fishing. The DA and ATI shall also create opportunities for youth leaders to harness their leadership skills especially during the international month for youth.

Section 11. *Access to Markets.* - Young farmers and fisherfolk shall have access to markets through the following:

- a. **Role of the DTI** - The DTT shall assist young farmers and fisherfolk in the packaging, marketing, and promotion of their products, including branding, advertising, and subsidizing their participation in trade fairs and exhibits;
- b. **Role of the LGU** - The LGU shall provide subsidized rental rates for public retail areas and public markets, encourage agricultural tourism, and develop other opportunities for young farmers;
- c. **Role of the Department of Tourism (DOT)** - The DOT shall promote the products of young farmers and fisherfolk through tourism conventions, events, and other tourist souvenir sales opportunities;
- d. **Role of the Private Sector**- The private sector is encouraged to market and promote the products of young farmers and fisherfolk, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and other development efforts;
- e. **Role of the Media** - The media shall promote and advertise the products of the young farmers and fisherfolk and the Program.

Section 12. *Engagement in Policy Dialogue.* – The young farmers and fisherfolk are encouraged to participate in policy dialogues, as follows:

- a. **Role of the NYC** - The NYC shall ensure that young farmers and fisherfolk are represented in all decision-making bodies relating to the establishment of mechanisms for the promotion and protection of the rights of young farmers and fisherfolk;
- b. **Role of the SK** - The SK, through local and Congressional youth representatives, shall liaise with the Local Government Leagues and the Congress of the Philippines to consult and engage young farmers and fisherfolk in policy making;

- c. **Role of the DA** - The DA shall ensure that young farmers and fisherfolk are equitably represented and consulted in its decision-making process to fully realize the young farmers' and fisherfolk's role as agents and partners for national development.

Section 13. *Waiver of Government Fees and Charges.* - Subject to the exceptions provided in Sec. 8 of Republic Act No. 11261, otherwise known as the "First-Time Jobseekers Assistance Act", all government agencies and instrumentalities, including government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), LGUs, and government hospitals shall not collect fees or charges from any young farmer and fisherfolk. *Provided*, That such fee or charge is paid in connection with the application for and the granting of licenses, proofs of identification, clearances, certificates, or other documents usually required in the course of employment locally or abroad. *Provided further*, That the benefit provided shall only be availed of once.

Section 14. *Annual Report.* - The Council shall submit to the President and to both Houses of Congress, not later than the 30th of March of every year following the effectivity of this Act, a report giving a detailed account on the effective implementation of this Act, and recommended legislation where applicable and necessary.

Section. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DA and DAR, in coordination with the DOST, DICT, DOLE, DENR, DepEd, CHED, LBP, and NYC, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act, which shall include the creation of a database of youth involvement and interventions provided by government agencies, a special desk for the youth, and an aggressive communication plan to upscale youth involvement.

Section 16. *Appropriations.* - The amount needed to initially implement the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the

appropriations of the current year of the concerned departments and agencies. Thereafter, such sums, as may be necessary for its continued implementation, shall be included in the appropriation of the concerned departments and agencies in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

Section 17. *Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 18. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or parts thereof that are inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 19. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation or in the *Official Gazette*, whichever comes first.

Approved,