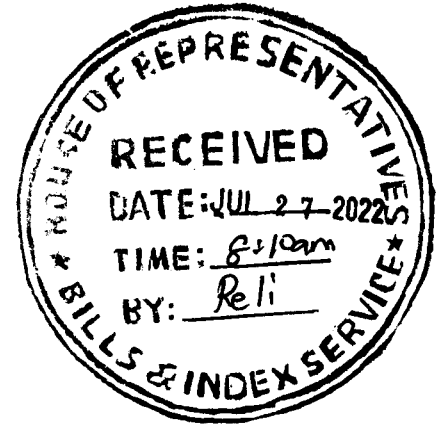


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

2419
HOUSE BILL NO. _____



Introduced by **Representative Wilbert T. Lee**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN INTEGRATED AGRIPRENEURS
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution states that “[t]he State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” Likewise, Section 2(1) of the same mandates the state to “[e]stablish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society;”

Taking into consideration that Philippines is primarily an agricultural country, utmost priority must be given to our agricultural sector. Agriculture today faces escalating challenges in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Aside from food price crises, climate change and rapid urbanization, globalization and market liberalization further threatens a weak agricultural system¹. In 2014, Professor Zamora² of the University of the Philippines Los Baños revealed that of the “three million students enrolled in higher education only 2.8% are enrolled in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries degree programs.” Several reasons he enumerated for the decline in enrollment in agriculture are: a) negative perception of agriculture as a profession; b) insufficient government investment in SUCs; c) rapid urbanization of agricultural areas; and d) devolution of agricultural services to the local government units.

Aside from public investments being funneled to agriculture infrastructure and equipment, we must give equal importance to integrated efforts on investing in human development i.e. education and training of our people in this sector.

¹ Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (n.d) *The role of RAS for inclusive agriprenueurship*. Retrieved last 6 July 2022 from: [https://www.g-fras.org/en/agriprenueurship.html#:~:text=Agriprenueurship%20refers%20to%20entrepreneurship%20in,business%E2%80%9D%20\(Reynolds%20et%20al.](https://www.g-fras.org/en/agriprenueurship.html#:~:text=Agriprenueurship%20refers%20to%20entrepreneurship%20in,business%E2%80%9D%20(Reynolds%20et%20al.)

² Zamora, O. (2014) *Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Agricultural Education in the Philippines and in the ASEAN Region*; Journal of Developments in Sustainable Agriculture 9: pg.29-40

This bill seeks to encourage more students to study agriculture, forestry, and fisheries degree programs with support from the government and empower them to be “agripreneurs” scholars by establishing an integrated agricultural scholarship program. It shall also provide the institutional mechanism for the envisioned sustained human resource development of the Philippine agricultural system. The scholarship program shall provide a total of 1 Billion Pesos support annually to qualified agripreneur scholars and other educational resource support mechanisms for the pursuit of studies in the field of agriculture by deserving and qualified students. Another component of this scholarship program is a mandatory return service program to help improve the agricultural system of the country.

Through these integrated efforts, we are looking forward to a more robust and stronger agricultural system built with agripreneurs that are creatively competing with more sustainable, community-oriented, and digitally-marketed agricultural products.

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



HON. WILBERT T. LEE
Representative
AGRI PARTYLIST

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

SEC. 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the “Agripreneurs Scholarship Program Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is the declared policy of the State to promote sound agricultural development in the country and to achieve global competitiveness in the agricultural sector. Towards this end, agriculture education and trainings shall be encouraged among the youth in order to inculcate the latest agricultural principles and techniques. The State, therefore, shall extend the avenue for this learning process by providing accessible education on agriculture and other related courses.

SEC. 3. *Establishment of the Integrated Agripreneurs Scholarship Program.* There shall be established an Integrated Agripreneurs Scholarship Program (IASP) for deserving Filipino students in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and in partner private higher education institutions (PHEIs): Provided, That the applicant has satisfied the qualifications enumerated in Section 5 of this Act. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) may designate more than one partner higher education institutions (HET) per region, as deemed necessary, upon consultation with the Department of Agriculture (DA).

SEC. 4. Coverage of the Agricultural Scholarship. The student financial assistance under the IASP shall cover the following:

- a) Tuition and other school fees;
- b) Allowance for prescribed books, supplies and equipment;
- c) Clothing or uniform allowance
- d) Allowance for dormitory or boarding house accommodation, or transportation allowance, whichever is more applicable
- e) Internship fees, including financial assistance during the required internship period
- f) Licensure exam fees, if applicable, of the scholar concerned taken within one (1) year after graduation
- g) Subsistence or living allowance.

SEC. 5. Qualification Requirements. An applicant to the IASP shall possess the following qualifications:

- a) Must be a natural-born or naturalized Filipino citizen residing in the Philippines;
- b) Must have a family income not sufficient to support tertiary education;
- c) Must be a senior high school graduating student from any Department of Education (DepEd) recognized educational institution: Provided, That they have maintained a general weighted average of at least a passing grade in the past terms preceding their scholarship application; and
- d) Must have passed the entrance examinations and other related requirements for admission for an agricultural-related degree identified in the SUC or PHEI where the scholarship intends to enroll, as determined by CHED and DA.

SEC 6. Conditions for the Grant of Scholarship. Students accepted to the IASP shall be subject to the following conditions:

- a) Must sign an agreement containing the terms and conditions for the grant of the scholarship as provided under this Act and as may be prescribed in the implementing rules and regulations;
- b) Must enroll, full load of, subjects prescribed per semester by the SUC or the PHEI concerned, and shall under no circumstance, drop a course which will result in underloading;
- c) Must finish the entire bachelor's degree program enrolled within the prescribed time frame of the SUC or PHEI where the scholar is enrolled, subject to the retention policies of the SUC or the PHEI; Provided. That, the scholar may be allowed, for valid and justifiable reasons, to file a leave of absence for one (1) academic year;

- d) Must take the licensure examination within a maximum period of one (1) year after completion of the bachelor's degree, if applicable; and
- e) Must agree to render return of service as provided under Section 8 of this Act.

SEC. 7. *Termination of Scholarship and Penalties.* The grant of benefits under the IASP shall be terminated and the scholar shall repay the full cost of scholarship and related benefits received in case of the following circumstances:

- a) If the scholar fails to comply with any of the conditions for the grant of scholarship as provided under Section 6 of this Act;
- b) If the scholar accepts another scholarship from other government or private agencies or entities while enjoying the benefits under this Act;
- c) If the scholar fails in thirty percent (30%) of the subjects he/she is enrolled in or fails to meet the academic requirements of the SUC or the PHEI or to complete the course within the prescribed period without valid cause as may be determined by the SUC or PHEI, CHED or DA: Provided, That instead of repaying in cash the full cost of the scholarship and related expenses, the terminated scholar may opt to repay the same in kind by working in the agricultural sector or accredited agricultural enterprises for a period equivalent to the number of years the scholarship has been availed; and
- d) While being a scholar, the scholar commits gross misconduct in a manner that would bring significant damage to the SUC or PHEI concerned or to the community as a whole.

SEC. 8. *Mandatory Return Service and Integration into the Public Agricultural System.* Within one (1) year after graduation or passing the licensure examinations, whichever is applicable, the Agripreneur Scholar shall serve in public agricultural institutions or accredited agricultural institutions or companies by the DA. In the event that an agripreneur scholar fails or refuses to serve the return service required under this Act, he/she shall be required to pay the full cost of the scholarship, including other benefits and related expenses incurred by reason of participation in the scholarship program. In case of non-payment, necessary and applicable charges shall be filed against the said scholar: Provided, That the sanction shall not apply to scholars who fail to comply with the required return service on account of, or by reason of, severe or serious illness.

SEC. 9. *Integration of All Nationally-Funded Agriculture Scholarship Programs.* Upon the effectivity of this Act, all nationally-funded agricultural-related scholarship programs shall be harmonized, rationalized, and consolidated under the IASP.

SEC. 10. *Start-up Cash Grants for Agripreneur Scholars.* The DA, in coordination with the relevant government agencies and financial institutions, shall prepare and consolidate cash

grant programs that can be availed by our Agripreneur scholars who wish to venture and establish their Agribusinesses.

SEC. 11. *Appropriations.* An amount of One Billion Pesos (P1,000,000,000) is hereby allotted for this purpose annually. Thereafter, the sum necessary for its implementation shall be in the General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within one hundred eighty days (180) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chairman of CHED, in consultation with various SUCs and PHEIs and other relevant stakeholders, shall jointly promulgate the rules and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

Sec. 13. *Separability Clause.* If any part or provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, other provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Sec. 14. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, other issuances, and parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 15. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in three (3) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,