

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8699



Introduced by Hon. Julianne L. Baronda

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Agriculture is an important sector in the Philippines, and it is one of the primary contributors to our economy. According to the data of Philippine Statistics Authority, the agricultural sector comprises of 24% of the Filipino workforce since 2022.¹ The country is one of the leading producers of rice in the world accounting for 2.8% of global rice production, which is the 8th largest rice producer globally.² The Philippines is also the 7th largest market for United States agricultural exports and the top market in Southeast Asia in 2021.³

Suffice it to say, the agricultural sector in the Philippines is a thriving sector that plays an important role in influencing the economy of the country, yet the workforce behind this colossal mechanism is more often taken for granted. Sadly, farmers and fisherfolks residing in rural areas remained the poorest sector in terms of poverty incidence since 2021.⁴ According to the preliminary estimates of the PSA in 2021, the poverty incidence rate of fisherfolks in the country is 30.6% while the farmers are at a poverty incidence rate of 30%.⁵ The grim reality is that notwithstanding our global contribution in the agricultural exports, our own farmers and fisherfolks remain to be the poorest sector of our country and they are begging for our government to aid and support them.

In a study conducted by Florencia Palis of the University of the Philippines Los Banos in 2020 entitled "Aging Filipino Rice Farmers and their aspirations for their children", it is mentioned therein that 65% of farmers believe their children will not have a better future if they will become farmers, and instead wanted their children to obtain college education and work on any occupation not related to farming.⁶ It is haunting to imagine a future of the country wherein one of its thriving and major contributors will be wasted due to lack of manpower in that particular

¹ "Employment situation as of December 2022" Philippine Statistics Authority

² 2009 Crop Production Statistics

³ <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/philippines-agricultural-sectors>

⁴ <https://psa.gov.ph/poverty-press-releases/nid/176572>

⁵ PSA's 2021 Poverty Statistics

⁶ "Aging Filipino Rice Farmers and their aspiration for their Children" Florencia Palis (2020)

sector. In this growing trend of discouraging younger generation of Filipinos to engage in the agricultural sector and instead work in a non-farming occupation, it is only a matter of time before the agricultural sector of the country will be obsolete if not inutile.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JL Baronda', is positioned above the printed name.

Rep. Julianne “Jam” L. Baronda
District Representative

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**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE AGRICULTURAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR
CHILDREN OF FARMERS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

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

Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Aanihin Bill*”

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to provide assistance and support to children of farmers to pursue higher education. This program aims to enhance the agricultural sector by encouraging the next generation to pursue educational opportunities and contribute their knowledge and skills to the development of sustainable and modern agricultural practices in the Philippines.

Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following term is defined as follows:

- a. Farmers* shall refer to those who are primarily engaged in growing crops, raising animals, and harvesting fish and other animals from a farm, ranch, or their natural habitats.
- b. Department* shall refer to the Department of Agriculture.
- c. Beneficiaries* shall refer primarily to the children of the farmer who are still dependent of the latter for their basic needs up to the age of 25.
- d. ASPCF* shall refer to as ‘Agricultural Scholarship Program for Children of Farmers’.
- e. Institution* shall refer to educational institutions offering tertiary courses particularly agricultural science, technology, or related fields whether public or private.

Sec. 4. *Purposes and Objectives.* – The purposes and objectives of this Act are the following:

- (a) To provide support to Farmers in rearing and taking care of their beneficiaries primarily in availing higher education;
- (b) To encourage and motivate Farmers in the country by providing their beneficiaries security in terms of education;
- (c) To motivate the beneficiaries in pursuing higher education and to contribute to the advancement of agricultural practices in the Philippines; and,
- (d) To promote the agricultural sector of the country by taking care of the Farmers and their beneficiaries.

Sec. 5. *Scholarship Program.* The Department, in collaboration with recognized tertiary educational institutions, shall establish the Agricultural Scholarship Program for Children of Farmers (herein referred to as *ASPCF*). The *ASPCF* shall provide financial support and resources to eligible students to enable them to enroll in accredited educational institutions and pursue degrees in agricultural sciences, technology, or related fields.

Sec. 6. *Eligibility.* The *ASPCF* shall be open to Filipino citizens who are children or dependents of farmers engaged in agricultural activities. Priority shall be given to applicants from families residing in rural and agriculture-dependent regions. Eligible students must have completed high school with a good academic record and fulfill other criteria established by the implementing agency.

Section 7. *Scholarship Benefits.* Scholars accepted into the *ASPCF* shall be entitled to full or partial scholarships, covering tuition fees, educational materials, accommodation, and a monthly stipend to support their living expenses. The *ASPCF* shall cater to eligible students studying in both public and private educational institutions. The selection process shall be transparent and accountable, ensuring equitable distribution of scholarships.

Section 8. *Partnerships with Educational Institutions.* The Department shall establish partnerships with recognized educational institutions across the Philippines offering agricultural programs. These institutions shall play a crucial role in the implementation of the program,

including the assessment of applicants, selection of scholars, and monitoring of academic progress. Cooperation between institutions and the Department shall be governed by a mutually agreed-upon memorandum of understanding.

Section 9. *Mentorship and Internship Opportunities.* To enhance practical knowledge and promote the application of agricultural techniques, the ASCPF shall facilitate mentorship programs and internships in coordination with relevant agricultural agencies, non-governmental organizations, and industry stakeholders. These opportunities shall expose scholars to current agricultural practices and foster their growth as future leaders in the field.

Section 10. *Funding and Implementation.* Adequate funding for the ASCPF shall be made available through appropriations by the government from the National Budget, corporate contributions, and individual or organizational donations aimed at supporting educational opportunities for farmer's children. The Department and partner institutions shall be jointly responsible for the efficient implementation, oversight, and periodic evaluation of the program.

Section 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* The Department, in consultation with relevant stakeholders and educational institutions, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to effectively implement this Act within six (6) months from the date of its effectivity.

Section 12. *Periodic Review.* As the need arises or within five (5) years after its effectivity, the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee shall conduct a review of this Act for purposes of determining whether remedial legislation is in order.

Section 13. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid, the validity of the other provisions shall not be affected thereby.

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

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