

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 319



Introduced by: Hon. Iris Marie D. Montes

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES,
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippine Commission on Women, in its discussion of the agriculture, fishery and forestry sector, says that "Although rural women greatly contribute and have vital roles in the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (AFF) sector, they are still marginalized in terms of employment, income, land ownership, access to resources, basic services and participation and decision-making.

According to the data of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), from 2007 to 2016, women comprise about 25% of workers in the agricultural sector. However, official data may not accurately capture women's work in agriculture as it is normally considered to be extensions of their household tasks and therefore not reported as "work." For this reason, despite recognition in policies, women continue to be unaccounted to agriculture work when in fact, they continue to participate in unpaid family work in agriculture in larger numbers as compared to men."¹

Further, "Nominal and real wage rates of women in the agriculture sector are considerable [sic] lower than men. The 2015 data show that the daily nominal wage rate of men is higher by 21 pesos compared to women while the difference in terms of real wage rates is 15 pesos".

The Food and Fertilizer Technology Center for the Asian and Pacific Region, an international agricultural organization, describes Philippine agriculture as male-dominated and one where there is "poor recognition of women as farmers."²

Among its policy recommendations include ensuring that women have equal access to all of the resources and opportunities available to men such as land, credit, participation to decision-making bodies, and capacity building through trainings and extension services.

Meanwhile, women fisherfolk play a vital role in the fisheries sector, particularly in post-harvest activities such as fish processing, marketing, and gleaning.

According to one article, "Over 1.5 million Filipino women depend on fisheries for their livelihood, contributing significantly to the economy and household sustenance. In 2022, of the total 2.30 million registered fisherfolk, 30% were

¹ Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (<https://pcw.gov.ph/agriculture-fisheries-and-forestry/>) Accessed on 17 May 2025

² Transcending Barriers in Agriculture through Gender and Development, Princess Alma B. Ani, Hezron C. Casasola (<https://ap.ffc.org.tw/article/1872>) Accessed on 17 May 2025

women, highlighting their considerable presence in the industry. However, with fishing often seen as “masculine” work, these contributions are often overlooked and unnoticed.”³

In this light, this measure proposes the establishment of a Women in Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Council that will be tasked to formulate the Women in Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Program, which will be designed to capacitate women and harness their participation in agriculture and fisheries towards the goals of rural development and poverty alleviation.

The bill provides women access to various forms of assistance such as knowledge, information, education, and financial services that are vital in ensuring their productive participation in the agriculture and fisheries sector.

Moreover, it provides for the promotion of gender-neutral farm tools and equipment that are suited in ensuring the safe and productive engagement of women in agriculture and fisheries.

In view thereof, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


IRIS MARIE D. MONTES

Kababaihan, Kabalikatan para sa Kapakanan
at Kaunlaran ng Bayan (4K) Party-list

³ Kababaihan at Karagatan: Filipino Women Fisherfolk’s Vulnerability to Climate Change, FACTS Asia (<https://www.factsasia.org/blog/kababaihan-at-karagatan-filipino-women-specific-vulnerability-to-climate-change>) Accessed on 22 May 2025

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 319

Introduced by: Hon. Iris Marie D. Montes

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES,
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Kababaihan Kaagapay sa Kaunlaran ng Kanayunan Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote inclusive economic growth by ensuring equal access to opportunities and rural development by enhancing access of rural communities and agricultural and fisheries households to financial services and programs that increase productivity and improve the welfare and economic prospects of beneficiaries in rural communities.

The State also recognizes that the economic, political, and sociocultural realities affect women's current condition and affirms their role in nation building by promoting their empowerment and pursuit for equal opportunities, ensuring equal access to resources and to development results and outcome.

In pursuance of this policy, the State shall vigorously engage women in rural development by providing them access to knowledge, information, and education, as well as access to new and niche markets, financial services and capital, land, and green jobs.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act:

- (a) *Agricultural machinery* refers to the mechanical devices, including tractors and implements, used in farming to perform various tasks and save labor;
- (b) *Ergonomical characteristics* refer to the capacity of a person to work at different comfort levels and include anthropometric data, muscular strength, and aerobic capacity;
- (c) *Farm tools* refer to simple hand-held tools, usually light and operated manually, used for various tasks in agriculture like planting, weeding, and harvesting;
- (d) *Green jobs* refer to decent jobs that contribute to preserve or restore the environment, be they in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency;
- (e) *Women farmers* refer to small farmers and rural workers, as defined under Republic Act No. 9710, otherwise known as the "Magna Carta of Women", who are engaged directly or indirectly in small farms and forest areas,

workers in commercial farms and plantations, whether paid or unpaid, regular or season-bound. These shall include, but are not limited to, (a) small farmers who own or are still amortizing for lands that is not more than three (3) hectares, tenants, leaseholders, and stewards; and (b) rural workers who are either wage earners, self-employed, unpaid family workers directly and personally engaged in agriculture, small-scale mining, handicrafts, and other related farm and off-farm activities;

(f) *Women-fisherfolk* refers to those directly or indirectly engaged in taking, culturing, or processing fishery or aquatic resources, as defined under the "Magna Carta of Women". These include, but are not to be limited to, women engaged in fishing in municipal waters, coastal and marine areas, women workers in commercial fishing and aquaculture, vendors and processors of fish and coastal products, and subsistence producers such as shell-gatherers, managers, and producers of mangrove resources, and other related producers; and

(g) *Women-friendly agricultural machineries and farm tools* refer to machineries and tools that are designed or adjusted due to different technological needs of women because of their peculiar ergonomical characteristics, experiences, and skills.

SEC. 4. *Women in Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Program.* - There is hereby established a Women in Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Program, hereinafter referred to as the Program, that shall support and empower women in agriculture and fisheries to be active partners in food security and agricultural development. The Program shall encourage the engagement of women in activities related to agriculture and fisheries and ensure their participation in policy formulation and program implementation relative rural development, and provide institutional support for agri-business and agri-entrepreneurship initiatives of women to fully realize their role as agents and partners for development.

SEC. 5. *Women in Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Council.* - The Women in Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Council (WAFRDC), herein referred to as the Council, is hereby created 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 from the Philippine Commission on Women;
- (c) Representative from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);
- (d) Representative from the Department of Science and Technology;
- (e) Representative from the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT);
- (f) Representative from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);
- (g) Representative from the Department of Education (DepEd);
- (h) Representative from the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR);

- (i) Representative from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
- (j) Representative from the governing body of the State Universities and Colleges (SUC) and Private Education Institutions (PEI);
- (k) Representative from the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP);
- (l) Representative from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA); and
- (m) Representative from the private sector.

The Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) shall act as Secretariat to the Council.

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

- (a) Formulate the "Women in Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development 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 Banos (UPLB), and other relevant State Universities and Colleges (SUCs);
- (b) Develop, in coordination with various departments and agencies, specific action plans for unambiguous tasking and quick implementation;
- (c) Develop initiatives in new farm sectors such as smart farming and farm tourism;
- (d) Identify relevant training and livelihood budgets in the different departments and agencies, including start-up capital;
- (e) Implement the departments' and agencies' action plans, engaging the assistance of the local government units (LGUs);
- (f) Identify the best practices in the implementation of the Program;
- (g) Initiate new packaging, promo, and marketing events;
- (h) Participate in agri and food tourism marketing events, nationally and internationally;
- (i) Establish linkages with agricultural representatives of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other international farming women organizations;
- (j) Engage national and international leaders in formulating policies directly addressing women in the AFF sector's concerns; and
- (k) Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of this Act as well as its impact on the participants and beneficiaries of the Program.

SEC. 7. *Access to Knowledge, Information, and Education.* - A whole of government approach shall be utilized to inform and enlist the participation of women in agriculture, fisheries, and rural development:

- (a) The TESDA, in coordination with 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 women farmers and fisherfolk.
- (b) The DOLE shall provide on-the-job training programs for women farmers and fisherfolk.
- (c) The CHED, SUCs, and agricultural schools shall provide stipends and subsidies to qualified women 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. 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.
- (d) The DA shall provide for scholarship grants and stipends to qualified women farmers and fisherfolk targeting specific marginalized women sectors such as indigenous people and persons with disabilities (PWDs).
- (e) The LGUs shall formulate training programs to improve farming practices and enhance skills of women farmers and fisherfolk.
- (f) The DOST and DICT shall develop portals, utilize social media, and exploit other electronic technologies, to publicize the Program.

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

- (a) The DENR shall explore the possibilities of extending short-term leases of public land to women farmers and fisherfolk, provide free or subsidized land for agricultural use, and develop such other packages as would allow women farmers and fisherfolk to use available or unutilized agricultural land. In coordination with the LGUs, the DENR may also create lease-to-buy programs.
- (b) The DAR shall facilitate and expedite the lease, distribution, and award of agrarian reform land to women beneficiaries.
- (c) The LGU shall prioritize the lease and acquisition of land by women farmers and fisherfolk. Further, the LGUs shall distribute hillside or other under-cultivated lands to marginalized women farmers and fisherfolk for agricultural purposes.
- (d) The SUCs and PEIs, whenever they own or occupy excess landholdings, shall give women farmers and fisherfolk first option to use such landholdings for agricultural purposes.

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

- (a) The LBP shall develop favorable financial packages for women farmers and fisherfolk, waiving collateral, salary and other typical bank requisites.
- (b) The DA shall develop financial packages specifically targeting women farmers and fisherfolk.

- (c) The DTI shall extend loans to women farmers and fisherfolk for the trade and marketing of their agricultural products.
- (d) 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 women farmers and fisherfolk in their incubation efforts.
- (e) The private sector shall subcontract, partner, and extend financial grants, initiate social partnerships and rural development initiatives, as well as mentor women farmers and fisherfolk on livelihood strategies, as part of their corporate social responsibility and other community participation.
- (f) The LGUs shall provide funding and livelihood opportunities to women farmers and fisherfolk.
- (g) The PCW, in partnership with potential women 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.

SEC. 10. *Access to Green Jobs.* - Women farmers and fisherfolk shall be given priority in access to green jobs, as follows:

- (a) The DOLE shall promote green jobs, reforestation, coastal management, fisheries, and other rural-based jobs, in cooperation with LGUs. The DOLE shall prioritize women farmers and fisherfolk for employment in public projects or private agro-industries and corporations.
- (b) The TESDA shall develop on-the-job trainings, job fairs, employment bridging initiatives, and private partnerships in producing, processing, packaging, and marketing women farmers and fisherfolk products.
- (c) The DOT shall prioritize the employment of women farmers and fisherfolk in eco and agro-tours, and encourage women entrepreneurship in farm tourism.
- (d) The PEZA shall prioritize women 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 women farmers and fisherfolk.
- (e) The DA and the ATI, shall provide jobs to women farmers and fisherfolk 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.

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

- (a) The DTI shall assist women 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) The LGU shall provide subsidized rental rates for public retail areas and public markets, encourage agricultural tourism, and develop other opportunities for women farmers and fisherfolk.

- (c) The DOT shall promote the products of women farmers and fisherfolk through tourism conventions, events, and other tourist souvenir sales opportunities.
- (d) The private sector shall market and promote the products of women farmers and fisherfolk as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and other development efforts.
- (e) The media shall promote and advertise the products of women farmers and fisherfolk and the Program.

SEC. 12. *Engagement in Policy Dialogue.* - Women farmers and fisherfolk are encouraged to participate in policy dialogues, as follows:

- (a) The PCW shall ensure that women 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 women in the AFF sector; and liaise with the Local Government Leagues and the Congress of the Philippines to consult and engage women farmers and fisherfolk in policy making.
- (b) The DA shall ensure that women farmers and fisherfolk are equitably represented and consulted in its decision-making process to fully realize their role as agents and partners for rural and national development.

SEC. 13. *Women-Friendly Technology.* - The DA, in consultation with the DOST, Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization, Philippine Rice Research Institute, and other concerned agencies and private organizations, shall implement and conduct programs of scientific and technological research and development on women-friendly agricultural machineries and farm tools, including technology dissemination and transfer to qualified farm organizations.

As far as practicable, agricultural machineries and farm tools shall be designed in such a way that it can be easily manipulated by women, push-button, lightweight, height considerate, easy to fix, riding type, and economically affordable.

SEC. 14. *Incentives to Private Enterprises.* - For purposes of attracting investments in the production of specialized equipment to improve efficiency and safety of women farmers and fisherfolk, private enterprises engaged in the development and manufacture of machinery and technology that are designed to improve the productivity of women in agriculture and fisheries, shall be entitled to tax incentives as determined by the Department of Finance.

Any donation, contribution, grant, in cash or in kind, whether local or foreign, which may be made by individuals and organizations, including private entities, which shall provide the appropriate services, technology, facilities, materials and other inputs, and delivery support services for the promotion, development, and distribution of gender-sensitive farm tools and machinery, shall be exempt from the donor's tax and the cost of which shall be considered as an allowable deduction from the gross income of the donor in accordance with the provisions of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended.

SEC. 15. *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 women farmers 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.

SEC. 16. *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.

SEC. 17. *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, CHED, LBP, and PCW, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act.

SEC. 18. *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.

SEC. 19. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act, or part hereof, is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC. 20. *Repealing Cause.* - All provisions of laws, presidential decrees, letters of instruction and other presidential issuances that are incompatible or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed amended or repealed.

SEC. 21. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect within fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,