

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 511

Introduced by **Representative Jaime R. Fresnedi**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to address our aging and lack farm workers by granting free tertiary agricultural education and such other allied courses to dependent children of qualified indigent farmers. The Free Tertiary Agricultural Education Program shall cover all dependent children of registered indigent farmers and will cover tuition and other school fees in state universities and colleges (SUCs) that offer agriculture and related courses. It shall also provide additional allowances such as living and transportation subsidies to help ease the financial burden of pursuing higher education.

With a land area of 30 million hectares, of which, only one-third is used for agricultural activities, the Philippines still relies heavily on local food produce. According to the data provided by the Philippine Statistics Authority, this was due to the annual increases in the value of production of crops, livestock, poultry, and fisheries. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing (AFF) accelerated at a faster rate of 2.2 percent in the first quarter of 2023, compared with the 0.2 percent growth in the same quarter of 2022.¹ The Philippine Gross Domestic Product (GDP) posted a growth of 6.4 percent in the first quarter of 2023, of which, one of the major economic sectors, AFF, with 2.2 percent.² However, despite the figure of only one-third of 30 million hectares is used for agricultural activities, it is without a doubt that the agricultural sector still plays a very crucial role in the country's economy especially with the issue on food security.

Despite the importance of agriculture in nation building, its contribution in the economy and the current report which states the increase in the value of production, the agricultural sector is often beset with a myriad of problems that never seem to disappear. The farmers are the ones whose plights are often unheeded. They would till the land hours for them to be able to provide for their families' daily sustenance, but often, their financial capabilities are not enough. Despite globalization and modernization trends, the educational needs of their children are often overlooked. Investments in technology and innovation are necessary to

¹ Gross National Income and Gross Domestic Product, Philippine Statistics Authority-1st Quarter 2023, <https://psa.gov.ph/national-accounts/sector/Agriculture,%20Forestry%20and%20Fishing>, accessed on Jul 18, 2023

² Ibid.

diversify and transform the country's agricultural productivity. Increased production support and improved policies are necessary to achieve the prioritization of the agricultural sector, specifically the farmers and fisherfolks. All these can be achieved by educating the farmers and the future farmers.

Further, the aging farmer population and the seeming disinterest of the youth in farming endanger the future of food security in the country. It is therefore necessary to equip their dependent children with knowledge and skills in food production and at the same time uplift their economic status.

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



JAIME R. FRESNEDI
Representative
Lone District, Muntinlupa City

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HOUSE BILL NO. 511

Introduced by **Representative Jaime R. Fresnedi**

AN ACT
GRANTING FREE TERTIARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND OTHER
RELATED COURSES TO ALL DEPENDENT CHILDREN OF QUALIFIED
INDIGENT FARMERS, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

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 “*Free Tertiary Agricultural Education for Dependent Children of Indigent Farmers Act*”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the declared policy of the State to promote sound agricultural development in the country to achieve global competitiveness in the agricultural sector. Towards this end, education and trainings on Agriculture shall be encouraged among the youth 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. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act, the following terms shall be defined as:

- a. **Qualified Dependent Children** – refers to the children of indigent farmers who are enrolled or about to enroll in State Colleges and Universities where Agriculture and its related courses are offered.
- b. **Registered Indigent Farmers** – are those indigent individuals whose sole source of income is agriculture, who actually cultivate or till the land, whether as owner or lessee of the land, or who actually engage in crop production. Livestock and poultry farming, and who are included in the registry of farmers of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

SEC. 4. *Free Tertiary Agricultural Education Program.* – The DA, in coordination with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall establish a scholarship program for Tertiary Agricultural Education. Qualified dependent children of registered indigent farmers intending to enroll or already enrolled in agricultural courses or any related field offerings in

state colleges and universities shall be exempt from payment of tuition and other school fees and shall be entitled to such other incentives or subsidies, including living and transportation allowance, as may be granted in accordance with such rules and regulations to be promulgated to carry out the provisions of this Act: *Provided*, That within one (1) year from the completion of the course, the scholar shall render a return to service work in the local agriculture sector for a period of not less than one (1) year.

SEC. 5. *Conditions of the Scholarship Grant.* – The Free Tertiary Agricultural Education Program shall have the following conditionalities:

- a. The scholar may be allowed, for valid reasons preventing his enrollment, to defer availment of the scholarship and file a leave of absence for a period not exceeding one (1) school year; and
- b. The scholar shall receive and continue to enjoy the benefits of the scholarship until the completion of the course.

SEC. 6. *Information Dissemination.* – The DA shall conduct regular information dissemination and recruitment with regard to the Free Tertiary Agricultural Education Program to encourage qualified dependent children to become agricultural scholars.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the DA and CHED. Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continuous implementation of the free tertiary agricultural education as provided in this Act shall be included in the universal access to quality tertiary education program of the CHED in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within six (6) months after the effectivity of this Act, the DA and CHED, in consultation with various SUCs shall promulgate the necessary guidelines, rules, and regulations for the proper implementation of the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision, section, or part of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, such judgment shall not affect, invalidate, or impair any other provisions, sections, or parts hereof.

SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, orders, issuances, circulars, rules and regulations or parts hereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,