

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1639**



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**Introduced by Representative Paolo Henry M. Marcoleta**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The Philippines is blessed with vast and bountiful agricultural resources. Being a tropical archipelago, it is among the most agriculturally diverse and rich countries in Asia, if not the world. Thus, the agricultural sector has long been a fundamental economic development of the country.

Unfortunately, despite these blessings and considering the importance of this sector, our agriculture is currently in need of substantial improvement.

The first quarter of 2025, the Gross Domestic Product from agriculture decreased to Php 456, 664.44 Million from Php 523, 784.28 Million in the fourth quarter of 2024.<sup>1</sup> Also, a large number of the nation's agricultural sector workers, which comprises around twenty-five percent (25%) our labour force, actually live below the poverty line.<sup>2</sup>

In 2018, the agriculture sector employed 10 million workers which correspond to 24.3% of the national employment data. Poverty prevailed among agricultural workers with poverty incidence at its highest among farm workers at 41% compared to the national poverty incidence of 27%. Incidentally, according to a report from the World Bank in the Philippines, the output per worker has importantly increased over the last decade, but real wages have stagnated.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/philippines/gdp-from-agriculture>; accessed 5 July 2025.

<sup>2</sup> ILO STUDIES IN PHILIPPINES' AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

A significant challenge faced by the agricultural sector is the waning interest among Filipino students in pursuing agricultural education. This is due to continuous lack of opportunities and financial growth as well as rampant poverty prevalent among Filipinos working in the agriculture sector. During the recent years, there has been a notable decline in enrolment in agriculture-related courses across the Philippines, with the latest amounting to 1.5% decrease in enrolment each year.<sup>4</sup>

This downward trend raises a very serious concern for the future of the Philippine agriculture sector, reflecting a diminishing enthusiasm among the younger generation to continue and build careers in agriculture.

In response to this serious concern, it is imperative to encourage student enrolment in agricultural programs to ensure the sustained development of the agricultural sector.

This bill seeks to address the issue by providing free tertiary education in agriculture and other related courses to qualified Filipino students, especially those children of our farmers, farm workers, and fisherfolks. It aims to serve as an incentive for the younger generation to pursue careers in agriculture by granting them access to quality education and training them in accordance with the latest trends and development in the agriculture industry.

In addition to fostering a robust agricultural system within the country, this proposed measure aims to enhance and stimulate agricultural research — a vital component in advancing the sector. Through the free tertiary agricultural education to the qualified students, the state can help mitigate the declining interest in agricultural studies among students and contribute to maintaining the sector's competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

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



**PAOLO HENRY M. MARCOLETA**  
Representative, SAGIP Partylist

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.searca.org/press/declining-agriculture-enrollment-poses-threat-to-food-security>; accessed 5 July 2025.

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**AN ACT**  
**GRANTING FREE TERTIARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION,**  
**AND OTHER RELATED COURSES TO ALL DEPENDENT CHILDREN**  
**OF QUALIFIED FARMERS, FARM WORKERS OR FISHERFOLKS,**  
**AND DESERVING FILIPINO STUDENTS,**  
**AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

1       **SECTION 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as “The Free Tertiary  
2       Agricultural Education Act.”

3  
4       **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** - It is the declared policy of the State to  
5       promote sound agricultural development in the country and to achieve global  
6       competitiveness in the agricultural sector. Towards this end, education and  
7       trainings on Agriculture shall be encouraged among the youth to inculcate the  
8       latest agricultural principles and techniques.

9  
10       The State, therefore, shall extend the avenue for this learning process by  
11       providing accessible education on agriculture and other related courses.

12  
13       **SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** - As used in this Act, the following terms  
14       shall be defined as:

15

- 1 a. *Financially-Incapacitated Household* refers to a family who is not  
2 classified as indigent but demonstrates clear inability to pay or spend for  
3 necessary basic expenditures for daily living, as determined and assessed  
4 by a social worker;  
5  
6 b. *Qualified Dependent Children* refers to the children of farmers, farm  
7 workers, or fisherfolks who have completed Grade 12 from any Philippine  
8 high school, are enrolled or about to enroll in any state college or university  
9 where agriculture and its related courses are offered;  
10  
11 c. *Qualified Filipino Student* refers to any Filipino student who comes from  
12 an indigent or financially-incapacitated household that has completed  
13 Grade 12 from any Philippine high school, or who is enrolled or about to  
14 enroll in any state college or university where agriculture and its related  
15 courses are offered;  
16  
17 d. *Registered Farmers* are those individuals whose sole source of income is  
18 agriculture, who actually cultivate or till the land, whether as owner or  
19 lessee of the land, or who actually engage in crop production, livestock and  
20 poultry farming, and who are included in the registry of farmers of the  
21 Department of Agriculture (DA); and,  
22  
23 e. *Farm Workers* are individuals who do not own any farm land but, instead,  
24 are seasonably employed to perform agricultural work and services.  
25

26 **SEC. 4. *Free Tertiary Agricultural Education Program (FTAEP)*** - The  
27 Commission on Higher Education (CHED), in coordination with DA, shall  
28 establish a scholarship program for deserving Filipino students who want to  
29 pursue a degree in tertiary agricultural education. Qualified students shall receive  
30 the following:  
31

- 32 a. Free tuition fee, miscellaneous fee, and other school fees;  
33  
34 b. Allowance for learning materials, supplies and equipment;  
35  
36 c. Clothing or uniform allowance;  
37

- d. Allowance for dormitory or housing accommodation;
- e. Transportation allowance;
- f. Internship fees, including financial assistance during on-the-job practicum training;
- g. Agriculturists board review fee;
- h. Annual medical insurance; and
- i. Other education-related miscellaneous subsistence or living allowance.

Provided, that within one (1) year from the completion of the program, the scholar shall render a return to service work in the local agriculture sector for a period of not less than one (1) year, with corresponding salary and benefits. Graduates of this program shall have priority application to any work under the DA and its attached agencies.

**SEC. 5. *Qualifications for the Scholarship Grant*** - An applicant for the FTAEP shall possess the following qualifications:

- a. Must be a Filipino citizen residing in the Philippines;
- b. Must be a graduating Grade 12 student or a graduate of Grade 12 from any Philippine high school, duly recognized by the Department of Education, who belongs to an indigent or financially incapacitated household duly assessed by a social worker; or a dependent child of a registered indigent farmer, farm worker or fisherfolk; and
- c. Must have passed the entrance examination and complied with other related requirements for admission in an agriculture program or any related course thereto.

**SEC. 6. *Conditions for the Grant of Scholarship***. – Deserving students accepted to the FTAEP shall be subject to the following conditionalities:

- a. Must sign an agreement stating the terms and conditions of the scholarship program on a form duly prescribed by the CHED and the DA;
- b. Must carry the minimum load of subjects as prescribed by the State university or college (SUC) or higher education institution (HEI);
- c. The scholar may be allowed, for valid reasons, to file for a leave of absence for a period not exceeding one (1) school year;
- d. The scholar shall receive and continue to enjoy the benefits of the scholarship until the completion of the course, provided that he or she will not exceed the maximum residency rule of the program; and
- e. Must render return of service in the local agriculture sector, within one (1) year from the completion of the course, for a period not less than one (1) year.

**SEC. 7. *Information Dissemination.*** - The CHED and DA shall conduct regular information dissemination and recruitment with regard to the FTAEP to encourage qualified students to become agricultural scholars.

**SEC. 8. *Training While Serving Mandatory Return Service and Plantilla Positions.*** - The CHE and DA shall develop programs and seminars for the continuous training of scholars while serving the mandatory return service under this Act.

In addition, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), DA, and local government units (LGUs) where applicable, shall ensure that all scholars required to render return service under this Act shall be appointed to appropriate plantilla positions commensurate to their merit and fitness.

**SEC. 9. *Role of CHED.*** - The CHED shall have the following functions:

- a. Ensure the timely and adequate release to partner-SUCs and HEIs of the funds necessary for the implementation of the MSRS Program, and monitor the timely and adequate release of the same by the partner-SUCs and HEIs to the scholar- beneficiaries under the MSRS Program;

- 1
- 2 b. Require SUCs and HEIs to implement and submit a tracking, monitoring,
- 3 evaluation and assistance system in order to determine the whereabouts of
- 4 the medical scholars after graduation from SUCs or HEIs; and,
- 5
- 6 c. Recommend, in coordination with partner-SUCs and HEIs, to the DBM the
- 7 amount necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.
- 8

9 **SEC. 10. *Role of SUCs, Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) and HEIs.***

10 – The SUCs, LUCs and HEIs shall have the following functions:

11

- 12 a. Monitor the progress of all scholars in their respective educational
- 13 institutions, identify those who have low or failing grades, and counsel
- 14 them to improve their academic performance;
- 15
- 16 b. Coordinate with the CHED to ensure the timely release and accurate
- 17 distribution of allowances and other fees to the scholars;
- 18
- 19 c. Make an annual report to the CHED on the performance of scholars and
- 20 other necessary or vital information regarding the FTAEP;
- 21
- 22 d. Assist the CHED in the conduct of regular information dissemination on,
- 23 and recruitment to, the FTAEP;
- 24
- 25 e. Recommend strategies to CHED and DOH to improve the implementation
- 26 of the MSRS Program; and,
- 27
- 28 f. Conduct a tracer study on the whereabouts of their respective scholars after
- 29 graduation from their institution and submit the results thereof to the
- 30 CHED.
- 31

32 **SEC. 11. *Role of DA and LGUs.*** – The DA and LGUs shall have the

33 following functions:

34

- 35 a. Assist the CHED in the conduct of the regular information dissemination
- 36 on the FTAEP and in the recruitment of scholar-applicants;
- 37

- 1 b. Develop a career pathway for graduates and agriculturists who are  
2 beneficiaries of the FTAEP in the national agriculture service system to  
3 incentivize scholars to continue serving therein;  
4  
5 c. Create a mechanism or system to provide the necessary support, including  
6 support to ensure their safety and protection, for the integration of scholars  
7 who will be assigned to the LGU; and,  
8  
9 d. Recommend to the CHED any strategies to improve the implementation of  
10 the FTAEP.  
11

12 **SEC. 12. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary to carry out the  
13 implementation of this Act shall be included in the Universal Access to Quality  
14 Tertiary Education under CHED in the annual General Appropriations Act.  
15

16 **SEC. 13. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days  
17 from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED and DA shall, in coordination with  
18 public and private HEIs, promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively  
19 implement the provisions of this Act.  
20

21 **SEC. 14. Separability Clause.** – If any provision or part of this Act is  
22 declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts not affected shall remain  
23 in full force and effect.  
24

25 **SEC. 15. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, presidential decrees, executive  
26 orders, letters of instructions, administrative orders, proclamations or  
27 administrative regulations that are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are  
28 hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.  
29

30 **SEC. 16. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
31 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.  
32

33 ***Approved,***