

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

20th CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 3738

Introduced by **REP. JUAN CARLOS "ARJO" C. ATAYDE**

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE YOUNG FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK CHALLENGE
PROGRAM, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE YOUNG FARMERS
AND FISHERFOLK CHALLENGE COUNCIL, AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In the Philippines, the average age of our farmers as of 2018 is 57 years old and the majority of the youth are no longer interested in agriculture. The predominant notion of an ordinary youth is that agriculture will not get them out of poverty.

The number of farm workers has been declining over the past years of around 1.5% per year since 2007. Those employed in agriculture declined from 11.84 million in 2015 to 9.8 million in 2020.

To address the declining interest of the youth in the farming industry, the Department of Agriculture through the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service (AMAS) implemented the Young Farmers Challenge Program for FY 2021. The program provided start-up capital in the form of financial grant to a total of 1,276 youth beneficiaries for their proposed agri-fishery enterprise. The program likewise assisted the youth beneficiaries through the provision of business development services.

This measure aims to institutionalize the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge program to ensure continuity in the availability of assistance to our youth from the farming and fisheries sector.

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



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

1 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Young Farmers and
2 *Fisherfolk Challenge Act*".

3 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
4 recognize and engage the role of the youth in nation-building and rural development,
5 providing for this purpose access to knowledge, information and education, access to
6 land, new sources of financial services and capital, green jobs, access to new and niche
7 markets, and participation in policy dialogue.

8 SEC. 3. *Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program.* - There is hereby
9 established a Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program, hereinafter referred
10 to as the "*YFFC Program*", that shall support and empower the young farmers and
11 fisherfolk to be active partners in food security and agricultural development and
12 modernization. The Program shall encourage the youth to pursue a career or engage

1 in activities related to agriculture, ensure young farmers and fisherfolk participation
2 in policy formulation and program implementation relative to the agriculture sector,
3 and provide institutional support for agri-business and agri-entrepreneurship
4 initiatives of the youth to fully realize their role as agents and partners for
5 development.

6 SEC. 4. *Beneficiaries of the YFFC Program.* - The Program is intended to support
7 young farmers and fisherfolk between eighteen (18) to thirty (30) years of age, who
8 are engaged in farming and fisheries activities, and are included in the Registry
9 System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA). The Department of Agriculture (DA),
10 in coordination with the Local Government Units (LGUs) shall update its existing
11 database to reflect these indicators.

12 SEC. 5. *Creation of a Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Council.* - There is
13 hereby created the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Council, hereinafter
14 referred to as the "Council", to properly oversee the implementation of the Program.

15 The Council shall be composed of the following:

- 16 a. Secretary of the DA or a duly authorized representative who is at least an
17 Undersecretary, who shall be the Chair;
- 18 b. Representative of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) who shall
19 likewise be an Undersecretary;
- 20 c. Representative of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- 21 d. Representative of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR);
- 22 e. Representative of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
23 (TESDA);
- 24 f. Representative of the Department of the Interior and Local Government
25 (DILG);

1 g. Representative of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources
2 (DENR);

3 h. Representative of the National Youth Commission (NYC);

4 i. Representative of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP);

5 The Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF) shall serve as its
6 Secretariat.

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

9 a. Formulate the YFFC Program, in consultation with research institutions such
10 as the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in
11 Agriculture (SEARCA), Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and
12 Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD), University of the
13 Philippines - Los Baños (UPLB) and other relevant State Universities and
14 Colleges;

15 b. Develop, in coordination with various departments and agencies, specific
16 action plans for unambiguous tasking and quick implementation;

17 c. Create special programs for marginalized sectors such as young farmers and
18 fisherfolk from urban poor, women, indigenous people, and the Bangsamoro
19 Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM);

20 d. Develop initiatives in new farm sectors such as "smart farming" farm tourism,
21 agro-, aqua-, and hydroponics, organic and boutique vegetables;

22 e. Identify relevant training and livelihood budgets in the different departments
23 and agencies, including start-up capital;

24 f. Implement the departments' and agencies' action plans, engaging the
25 assistance of the LGUs and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK);

- 1 g. Identify the best practices in the implementation of the program as well as
2 emerging best practices in agriculture such as smart farming and farm tourism
3 in compliance with Republic Act No. 10816, or the "Farm Tourism
4 Development Act of 2016";
- 5 h. Foster the formation of new ideas and technologies by assisting agricultural
6 enterprises of qualified young farmers and fisherfolk entrepreneurs, pursuant
7 to Republic Act No. 11337, otherwise known as the "Innovative Start-up Act of
8 2018";
- 9 i. Initiate new packaging, promotion, and marketing events;
- 10 j. Package incentive and recognition programs/awards system;
- 11 k. Ensure participation of young farmers and fisherfolk in agri and food tourism
12 marketing events, nationally and internationally;
- 13 l. Provide on-the-job training programs for young farmers and fisherfolk in areas
14 such as "green jobs ", reforestation, coastal management, fisheries, and other
15 rural-based jobs, through the DOLE, TESDA, and other livelihood and training
16 programs;
- 17 m. Establish linkages with agricultural representatives of the Association of South
18 East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other international farming and fisherfolk
19 youth associations;
- 20 n. Engage national and international leaders in formulating policies directly
21 addressing young farmers and fisherfolk concerns; and
- 22 o. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of this Act as well
23 as its impact on the participants and beneficiaries.

24 SEC. 7. *Access to Knowledge, Information, and Education* - A whole-of-
25 government approach shall be utilized to inform and enlist young farmers and
26 fisherfolk in agriculture:

- 1 a. *Role of the DepEd*- The DepEd shall include at all levels, but particularly in its K-
2 12 program, elective subjects focused on agriculture, such as garden farming,
3 urban greening, reforestation and coastal management;
- 4 b. *Role of the TESDA* - The TESDA, in coordination with the DICT and the DOST,
5 shall add subjects in their training centers for agricultural entrepreneurship,
6 "smart farming", and other advanced farming technologies, prioritizing
7 programs focused on agriculture;
- 8 c. *Role of the DOLE* - The DOLE shall provide on-the-job training (OJT) programs
9 for young farmers and fisherfolk, including the Special Program for
10 Employment of Students (SPES);
- 11 d. *Role of the CHED, SUCs, and Agricultural Schools* - The CHED, SUCs, and
12 agricultural schools shall provide scholarship grants, stipends, and subsidies
13 to qualified young farmers and fisherfolk. Likewise, the CHED, SUCs,
14 and agricultural schools shall provide schemes for distance, remote, and digital
15 learning. The CHED shall likewise encourage the private colleges and
16 universities to provide similar opportunities and schemes to qualified
17 recipients.
- 18 The CHED shall include agriculture in its National Service Training Program
19 (NSTP) curriculum, such as garden farming, urban greening, and coastal
20 management. CHED shall likewise promulgate the policies, standards and
21 guidelines for agriculture courses which shall focus on sustainability and the
22 achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Scholarships for
23 post-graduate and doctoral degrees shall be provided by CHED: *Provided, That*
24 private universities and colleges are also enjoined to provide the same.
- 25 e. *Role of the DA, ATI and PCAF* - The DA, through the 4-H Club of the ATI and
26 the Agricultural and Fishery Youthpreneur Council (AFYC) of the PCAF,
27 shall provide for scholarship grants and stipends to qualified young farmers
28 and fisherfolk;

1 f. *Role of the DOST and DICT* - The DOST and DICT shall develop portals, utilize
2 social media, and exploit other electronic technologies, to publicize the
3 Program; and

4 g. *Role of the LGU and the SK* - The LGU shall inform and enlist the SK who shall
5 act as trainer-leaders to qualified and interested young farmers and fisherfolk.

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

8 a. *Role of the DENR* - The DENR shall explore the possibilities of extending short-
9 term leases of public land to young farmers and fisherfolk, provide free or
10 subsidized land for cultivation, and develop such other packages as would
11 allow young farmers to use available or unutilized agricultural land;

12 b. *Role of the DAR* - The DAR shall facilitate and expedite the lease, distribution,
13 and award of agrarian reform land;

14 c. *Role of the LGU and the SK* - The LGU shall help assist the DENR in identifying
15 the young farmers and fisherfolk who shall benefit the lease agreements; and

16 d. *Role of the SUCs* - Whenever SUCs own or occupy excess landholdings, young
17 farmers shall be given the first option to use and cultivate such landholdings
18 for agricultural purposes.

19 SEC. 9. *Access to Financial Services*. - Young farmers and fisherfolk shall be
20 provided financial assistance and given access to financial services such as loan/s or
21 grant/s:

22 a. *Role of the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP)* - The LBP shall develop favorable
23 financial packages for young farmers and fisherfolk, waiving collateral, salary
24 and other typical bank requisites;

25 b. *Role of the DA* - The DA shall develop financial packages specifically targeting
26 young farmers and fisherfolk;

- 1 c. *Role of the DTI* - The DTI, through the Small Business Corporation (SB Corp),
2 shall extend loans to the young farmers and fisherfolk for the trade and
3 marketing of their agricultural products;
- 4 d. *Role of the DOST, DICT, and DTI* - The DOST, DICT, and the DTI, pursuant to
5 Republic Act No. 11337, otherwise known as the "*Innovative Start-up Act of*
6 *2018*" and other programs shall include agricultural enterprises for qualified
7 young farmers and fisherfolk-entrepreneurs in their incubation efforts;
- 8 e. *Role of CHED and TESDA* - CHED and TESDA shall provide financial literacy
9 trainings particularly in handling and managing loans and grants;
- 10 f. *Role of the Private Sector* - The private sector is encouraged to subcontract,
11 partner, and extend financial grants, initiate social partnerships and rural
12 development initiatives, as well as mentor young farmers and fisherfolk on
13 livelihood strategies, as part of their corporate social responsibility and other
14 community participation;
- 15 g. *Role of the LGU* - The LGU, in coordination with the SK, shall provide funding
16 and livelihood opportunities to young farmers and fisherfolk;
- 17 h. *Role of the SK* - The SK, using its ten percent (10%) Development Fund, and
18 other funds, shall provide entrepreneurial and finance packages for young
19 farmers and fisherfolk; and
- 20 i. *Role of the NYC* - The NYC, in tandem with potential youth agri-entrepreneurs,
21 shall initiate donation and fundraising drives for the Program, exploiting for
22 this purpose online advertising, "crowd-sourcing", and other digital means to
23 generate funds for the Program.

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

- 26 a. *Role of the DOLE* - The DOLE, through the SPES, shall include '*green jobs*',
27 reforestation, coastal management, fisheries, and other rural-based jobs, in

1 cooperation with LGUs. The DOLE shall prioritize young farmers and
2 fisherfolk for employment in job fairs, public projects or private agro-industries
3 and corporations;

4 b. *Role of the TESDA* - The TESDA shall develop on-the-job trainings, employment
5 bridging initiatives, and private partnerships in producing processing,
6 packaging, and marketing young farmers and fisherfolk products;

7 c. *Role of the DOT* - The DOT shall prioritize the employment of young farmers
8 and fisherfolk in eco- and agro-tours, and encourage entrepreneurship in farm
9 and fishery tourism;

10 d. *Role of the PEZA* - The PEZA shall prioritize young farmers and fisherfolk for
11 jobs in agro-industrial ecozones, provide access to modern farm technology,
12 promote linkages in agriculture-related enterprise, and accelerate the creation
13 of "green jobs" for young farmers and fisherfolk; and

14 e. *The DA and the ATI* - The DA, particularly the 4-H Club of the ATI, shall embark
15 upon farming start-ups and provide training/s in new and niche agricultural
16 sectors such as organic farming, agroponics, aquaponics, hydroponics, dairy,
17 livestock, coffee, cacao, and other areas of farming and fishing. The DA and
18 ATI shall also create opportunities for young farmers and fisherfolk to harness
19 their leadership skills.

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

22 a. *Role of the DA* - The DA shall assist the young farmers and fisherfolk in selling
23 the products through the Kadiwa stores in strategic locations.

24 b. *Role of the DTI* - The DTI shall assist young farmers and fisherfolk in the
25 packaging, marketing and promotion of their products, including branding,
26 advertising, and subsidizing their participation in trade fairs and exhibits;

- 1 c. *Role of the DOST* - The DOST shall assist the young farmers and fisherfolk in
2 providing assistance and research in the food analysis of the product's
3 nutritional component and content, among others.
- 4 d. *Role of the LGU* - The LGU shall provide subsidized rental rates for public retail
5 areas and public markets, encourage agricultural tourism, and develop other
6 opportunities for young farmers and fisherfolk;
- 7 e. *Role of the Department of Tourism (DOT)* - The DOT shall promote the products
8 of young farmers and fisherfolk through tourism conventions, events, and
9 other tourist souvenir sales opportunities;
- 10 f. *Role of the Private Sector* - The private sector is encouraged to market and
11 promote the products of young farmers and fisherfolk, as part of their
12 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and other development *efforts*; and
- 13 g. *Role of the Government Media* - The government media shall promote and
14 advertise the products of the YFFC Program.

15 SEC. 12. *Engagement in Policy Dialogue*. - The young farmers and fisherfolk shall
16 be encouraged to participate in policy dialogues, as follows:

- 17 a. *Role of the NYC* - The NYC shall ensure that young farmers and fisherfolk are
18 represented in all decision-making bodies relating to the establishment of
19 mechanisms for the promotion and protection of the rights of young farmers
20 and fisherfolk;
- 21 b. *Role of the SK* - The SK, through local and Congressional youth representatives,
22 shall liaise with the Local Government Leagues and the Congress of the
23 Philippines to consult and engage young farmers and fisherfolk in
24 policymaking; and
- 25 c. *Role of the DA* - The DA shall ensure that young farmers and fisherfolk are
26 equitably represented and consulted in its decision-making process to fully

1 realize the young farmers' and fisherfolk' role as agents and partners for
2 national development.

3 SEC. 13. *Waiver of Government Fees and Charges.* - Subject to the exceptions
4 provided in Sec. 8 of Republic Act No. 11261, otherwise known as the "*First-Time*
5 *Jobseekers Assistance Act*" all government agencies and instrumentalities, including
6 government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), LGUs, and government
7 hospitals shall not collect fees or charges from any young farmers and fisherfolk.
8 *Provided, That* such fee or charge is paid in connection with the application for and the
9 granting of licenses, proofs of identification, clearances, certificates or other
10 documents usually required in the course of employment locally or abroad. *Provided,*
11 *Further* That the benefit provided shall only be availed of once.

12 SEC. 14. *Annual Report.* - The Council shall submit to the President and to both
13 Houses of Congress, not later than the 30th of March of every year following the
14 effectivity of this Act, a report giving a detailed account on the effective
15 implementation of this Act, and recommended legislation where applicable and
16 necessary.

17 SEC. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within ninety (90) days from the
18 effectivity of this Act, the DA, in coordination with the DTI, DAR, DOST, DICT, DOLE,
19 and DENR shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of
20 this Act.

21 SEC. 16. *Appropriations.* - The amount needed to initially implement the
22 provisions of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the current year
23 of the concerned departments and agencies. Thereafter, such sums, as may be
24 necessary, for its continued implementation shall be included in the appropriation of
25 the concerned departments and agencies in the annual General Appropriations Act
26 (GAA).

27 SEC. 17. *Separability Clause.* - Any portion or provision of this Act that is
28 declared unconstitutional shall not have the effect of nullifying other portions or

1 provisions hereof as long as such remaining portions can still subsist and be given
2 effect in their entirety.

3 SEC. 18. Repealing Clause. - All laws, ordinances, rules, regulations, other
4 issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with this Act, are hereby repealed
5 or modified accordingly.

6 SEC. 19. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following
7 its publication in the official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

8 *Approved,*