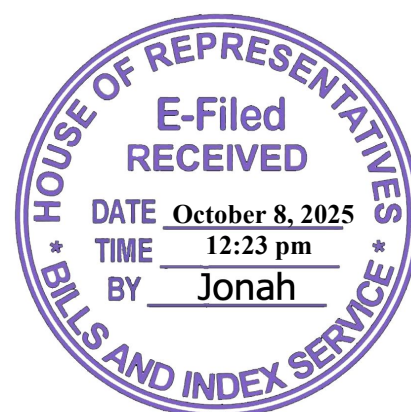


TWENTIETH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



HOUSE BILL NO. 5291

Introduced by Honorable Celso G. Regencia

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippine agriculture sector is on the edge of collapse. The average age of a Filipino farmer is now 56 years old.¹ Within a few years, many of them will no longer be able to plant the fields or fish the waters. At the same time, there is no sufficient influx of young people to take their place. Unless decisive action is taken, the nation's food production chain will break down, jeopardizing the supply of food from cultivation to harvest, as well as from processing to distribution.

This is not a distant or abstract threat. It is a present and measurable decline in the nation's capacity to feed itself. Young Filipinos often leave rural communities because farming is unprofitable.² They also lack security, access to credit, and modern technology. As the older generation ages out without successors, the country moves toward a cliff where higher import dependency, unstable food prices, and widespread rural dislocation will become the norm.

There remains a narrow window to avert this outcome. The country must deliberately and comprehensively build a pathway that draws the youth into agriculture³ and equips them to succeed. This requires more than token participation in councils. It demands education and technical training,

¹ Department of Agriculture. (2024, July 3). *Technology-based farms key to attracting new generation of farmers — DA chief*. <https://www.da.gov.ph/technology-based-farms-key-to-attracting-new-generation-of-farmers-da-chief>

² Cerutti, E. M., & Li, Y. (2021, August 20). *The sudden stop of capital flows to emerging markets: How good is the IMF's early warning system?* IMF Working Papers, 2021(220), 1–37. International Monetary Fund. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/001/2021/220/article-A001-en.xml>

³³ Mercado, K. M. P., & Osbahr, H. (2023). *Feeding the future: Knowledge and perceptions of the Filipino youth toward agriculture*. *Asian Journal of Agriculture and Development*, 20(2), 31–50. <https://doi.org/10.37801/ajad2023.20.2.3>

support for entrepreneurship and livelihood, access to capital and markets, and meaningful representation in the bodies that govern the sector. Only by doing so can we transform agriculture from a declining occupation into a viable profession and enterprise for the next generation.

This bill, therefore, establishes a national program for youth in agriculture. It institutionalizes education, training, and enterprise support while ensuring youth representation in agricultural governance. It is a measure that addresses the imminent generational collapse of the food production chain and lays the foundation for a secure and sustainable future for the nation.

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



CELSO GOMERA REGENCIA
Lone District, Iligan City

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5291

Introduced by Honorable Celso G. Regencia

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PATHWAY FOR THE ENTRY OF YOUNG
FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK INTO AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES,
PROVIDING FOR EDUCATION, TRAINING, LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT, AND
REPRESENTATION IN AGRICULTURAL GOVERNANCE, APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* — This Act shall be known as the “**NextGen Farmers Act.**”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* — It is the policy of the State to safeguard national food security by ensuring the continuity and sustainability of the agriculture and fisheries workforce.

The State shall therefore establish a national pathway that recruits, trains, and supports young farmers and fisherfolk. It shall provide education and technical training, access to credit and modern technology, livelihood and entrepreneurship opportunities, and meaningful representation in agricultural governance.

Through these measures, agriculture and fisheries shall be promoted as viable and dignified professions for the youth, as well as the foundations of national food security and rural development.

SECTION 3. *Young Farmers and Young Fisherfolks.* — For purposes of this Act, the term “young farmers and young fisherfolk” shall refer to

individuals aged fifteen (15) to forty (40) years who are engaged, or seeking to be engaged, in agriculture or fisheries.

SECTION 4. *Creation of the Program.* — There is hereby established a **National Pathway for Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Program**, hereinafter referred to as the Program, to be implemented by the Department of Agriculture (DA) in coordination with the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the National Youth Commission (NYC), and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

The Program shall provide for the recruitment, training, and retention of young farmers and fisherfolk, and shall include access to education and technical training, livelihood and entrepreneurship support, access to credit and markets, and meaningful participation in agricultural governance.

SECTION 5. *Program Components.* — The Program shall consist of the following components:

a. **Recruitment and Awareness.** A nationwide campaign shall be conducted to encourage young farmers and fisherfolk to enter the agriculture and fisheries sectors through information dissemination, education, and community-based outreach.

b. **Education and Training.** The Program shall provide access to formal and non-formal education, technical and vocational training, farm schools, and other capacity-building initiatives, in coordination with higher education institutions and training agencies.

c. **Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Support.** Young farmers and fisherfolk shall be provided access to start-up capital, credit facilities, insurance, modern technology, and market opportunities to promote sustainable livelihoods and agripreneurship.

d. **Policy Participation.** Young farmers and fisherfolk shall be represented in agricultural and fisheries councils at the local and national levels to ensure that their perspectives are integrated into policy formulation and program implementation.

SECTION 6. *Youth Access and Incentives.* — To operationalize the components of the Program under this Act, the following access and incentives shall be mandatorily guaranteed to young farmers and fisherfolk:

a. **Credit and Financing.** Not less than ten percent (10%) of all credit facilities and financing windows administered by government financial institutions and credit programs of the DA shall be reserved for young farmers and fisherfolk. Compliance shall be reported annually to Congress and made available to the public.

b. **Land and Support Services.** The DAR shall allocate no less than ten percent (10%) of available agricultural lands for qualified young farmers and fisherfolk, consistent with agrarian reform laws, and shall ensure the provision of support services, including farm inputs, machinery, and irrigation.

c. **Education and Training.** The DepEd, CHED, and the TESDA shall allocate not less than twenty percent (20%) of their agricultural scholarships, apprenticeships, and technical-vocational slots for young farmers and fisherfolk.

d. **Entrepreneurship and Market Access.** The DTI, in coordination with the DA, shall establish a dedicated youth agripreneurship window and ensure that no less than ten percent (10%) of enterprise development funds and market access programs are reserved for young farmers and fisherfolk enterprises.

e. **Tax and Insurance Incentives.** Agribusiness enterprises owned or led by young farmers and fisherfolk shall enjoy income tax exemptions for their first five (5) years of operation, and a fifty percent (50%) subsidy on agricultural insurance premiums, subject to guidelines to be issued by the Department of Finance and the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation.

SECTION 7. *Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Council.* — There is hereby created a **Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Council**, hereinafter referred to as the Council, which shall serve as the coordinating and consultative body for the implementation of this Act.

The Council shall be composed of:

- a. The Secretary of Agriculture, as Chairperson;
- b. The Secretary of Agrarian Reform, as Co-Chairperson;
- c. The Director of the BFAR;
- d. One (1) representative each from the DTI, the CHED, the DepEd, the TESDA, and the NYC, who shall be of a rank not lower than Director and designated by their respective heads;
- e. Three (3) representatives of accredited youth organizations in agriculture and fisheries, appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture upon recommendation of the NYC, provided that the representatives shall be between fifteen (15) to forty (40) years of age;
- f. One (1) representative of a national organization of women farmers or fisherfolk, provided that the representative shall be between fifteen (15) to forty (40) years of age; and
- g. One (1) representative of a national organization engaged in agripreneurship or food systems.

The Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF) shall serve as the Secretariat of the Council.

SECTION 8. *Powers and Functions of the Council.* — The Council shall have the following powers and functions:

- a. Formulate and approve policies, strategies, and action plans for the implementation of the Program;
- b. Direct national government agencies to integrate youth participation and quotas under this Act in their annual programs and budgets;
- c. Monitor compliance with the mandatory quotas provided in Section 6 of this Act, and recommend sanctions or realignment of funds for agencies that fail to comply;

d. Publish an annual “**State of Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Report**” detailing recruitment, training, land access, credit utilization, and enterprise outcomes;

e. Establish a grievance mechanism to receive complaints from young farmers and fisherfolk on denial of access to benefits guaranteed under this Act;

f. Submit an annual performance report to Congress and the Office of the President, which shall serve as a basis for budget deliberations.

SECTION 9. *Funding.* — The amount necessary to carry out the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the DA and its attached agencies. Thereafter, the funds necessary for the continued implementation of the Program shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

The DA may also mobilize additional resources in support of the Program through partnerships with government financial institutions, local government units (LGUs), international development partners, and private sector entities, subject to existing laws, rules, and regulations.

SECTION 10. *Role of LGUs.* — LGUs shall be responsible for localizing and implementing the Program in coordination with the DA and the Council. For this purpose:

LGUs classified by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), in coordination with the DA, as agricultural or fisheries-based shall allocate not less than five percent (5%) of their annual agriculture budget to programs, projects, and activities designed to support young farmers and fisherfolk, including but not limited to scholarships, livelihood support, farm clustering, or agri-enterprise incubation.

Highly urbanized LGUs or those without significant agricultural or fisheries activity shall support youth engagement in urban agriculture, aquaculture, food processing, or allied enterprises within their jurisdiction.

All LGUs classified by the PSA, in coordination with the DA, as agricultural or fisheries-based shall integrate the Program into their Local Development Investment Programs (LDIPs) and Annual Investment Programs (AIPs), and shall submit annual reports to the Council on the number of youth beneficiaries, incentives accessed, and outcomes achieved.

SECTION 11. *Implementing Rule and Regulations.* — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DA, in coordination with the DAR, the BFAR, the DTI, the CHED, the DepEd, the TESDA, the NYC, and the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Council, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 12. *Separability Clause.* — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 13. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 14. *Effectivity.* — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,