



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 8440

Introduced by Representative Nelson S. Legacion
Third Congressional District, Camarines Sur

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This proposed legislation is designed to address a critical paradox in the Philippines. While the nation is fundamentally an agricultural country, the sector faces a significant decline in new talent. Students are often deterred by the public perception of agriculture as a low-paying, labor-intensive career with little room for growth, and thus opt for fields like Information Technology, Business, and Nursing, which are perceived as more lucrative. This perception is supported by data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which consistently identifies farmers (27.0%) and fisherfolks (27.4%) as the two poorest basic sectors in the country in 2023, posting poverty incidence rates significantly higher than the national average (15.5%). The consequence of this negative public image and economic reality is a critical decline in interest among the youth, directly threatening the agricultural sector's future: the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has reported a 34.6% drop in the number of enrollees in agriculture courses in state colleges and universities between 2016 and 2021, resulting in an average age of Filipino farmers estimated to be as high as 57 to 59 years old. This trend severely threatens the future of the nation's food security and agricultural innovation.

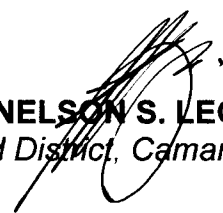
This measure is deeply personal to its author, a son of a farmer from Buhi, Camarines Sur. His background informs a comprehensive legislative strategy to revitalize the agricultural workforce, addressing both institutional supply and student demand.

This bill also complements House Bill No. 2365 - *"An Act Providing for Educational Assistance to the Children and Dependents of Farmers and Fisherfolk, and Appropriating Funds Therefor."* While HB No. 2365 provides focused, needs-based scholarships to the children of marginalized farmers and fisherfolk, this measure broadens the impact by providing universal incentives to attract all talented youth into the sector.

This proposed legislation represents the essential demand-side prong of this strategy. Its primary objective is to make agricultural careers appealing to the next generation by reshaping Public Perception by implementing a nationwide promotional campaign that highlights modern, technology-driven, and economically viable career paths within agriculture. It also provides tangible support by establishing a comprehensive financial assistance program that includes a monthly stipend, book and equipment allowances, and grants for research and internships.

These legislative measures, taken together, form a cohesive and holistic framework that addresses the agricultural crisis from the perspectives of course availability, targeted equity, and universal incentive. This measure is a proactive step toward ensuring that the Philippines has a skilled and enthusiastic workforce equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this proposed measure is earnestly sought to foster a new generation of agricultural professionals and secure the nation's future food production.


NELSON S. LEGACION
Representative, Third District, Camarines Sur



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 8440

Introduced by Representative Nelson S. Legacion
Third Congressional District, Camarines Sur

AN ACT PROMOTING AGRICULTURAL COURSES, INCENTIVIZING ENROLLMENT, STRENGTHENING THE FUTURE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE, AND FORMALLY ESTABLISHING A SUPPLEMENTARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURAL STUDENTS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the "*National Agricultural Workforce Development and Incentives Act*".

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is the declared policy of the State to prioritize the long-term sustainability and modernization of the agricultural sector. This is to be achieved by attracting and encouraging talented young Filipinos to pursue agricultural careers. The State shall undertake a nationwide, multi-platform campaign to raise awareness about the importance, viability, and modern opportunities within agricultural courses and professions, and shall ensure that financial assistance programs are harmonized and complementary to maximize support for students.

SECTION 3. *National Promotion and Career Guidance Program.* The Department of Agriculture (DA), as the lead agency, in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), shall create and implement a National Agricultural Career Promotion Program (NACPP).

The NACPP shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. Information and Education Campaign - a nationwide, sustained multimedia campaign highlighting the importance of agriculture as a science-based, technology-driven, and economically rewarding career

path;

- b. Career Guidance Integration - the integration of comprehensive career guidance on agricultural courses and professions into the Junior and Senior High School curricula and career counseling services;
- c. Exhibitions and Fairs - the conduct of annual national and regional Agri-Career Fairs to showcase modern agricultural technologies, successful agribusinesses, and available scholarships and programs, prioritizing engagement with rural high schools; and
- d. Partnership with the Private Sector - collaborative programs with agribusinesses, cooperatives, and agricultural non-profits to offer dedicated internships, mentorship programs, and scholarships to students of agricultural courses.

SECTION 4. *Financial Assistance for Students of Agricultural Courses.* - To directly encourage enrollment, the DA, in coordination with the CHED and TESDA, shall establish a comprehensive financial assistance program specifically for students enrolled in agricultural degree and non-degree courses.

This assistance shall be supplementary and non-diminutive of any existing government educational assistance programs, including, but not limited to, the Free Tuition and Other School Fees benefits under Republic Act No. 10931 - *Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act*, the specialized assistance under House Bill No. 2365 - *Educational Assistance to the Children and Dependents of Farmers and Fisherfolk*, which is the scholarship program of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) of the DA, designed for the children of smallholder farmers and fisherfolk to pursue agriculture-related degrees.

The program shall provide:

- a. Monthly Living Stipend - a guaranteed monthly stipend to cover necessary living expenses, including board, lodging, and transportation;
- b. Book, Equipment, and Learning Allowance - an annual allowance for the purchase of books, educational materials, and necessary equipment specific to their agricultural field of study;
- c. Thesis, Research, and Practicum Grants - financial support for students undertaking mandatory research projects, theses, and practicum activities directly related to agricultural innovation and modernization; and
- d. Internship Grants - stipend for students completing mandatory internships with government agencies (DA, Philippine Coconut National Irrigation Administration etc.) or private agribusinesses.

SECTION 5. *Incentives for Higher Education and TVET Institutions.* The CHED and TESDA shall establish a system of grants, subsidies, and other incentives for State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), and Technical-Vocational Institutions (TVIs) that demonstrate a

significant and sustained increase in the enrollment and graduation rates of students in agricultural courses. This support shall prioritize funding for the modernization of agricultural facilities, laboratories, and farm-schools, in compliance with the relevant CHED and TESDA standards and in support of existing programs like EAsY Agri.

SECTION 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Agriculture (DA), as the lead agency, in consultation with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST), and representatives from relevant State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and recognized farmers' and fisherfolk's organizations, shall jointly promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

The IRR shall include a phased implementation plan to ensure that the scholarship and incentive programs provided herein are synchronized with the establishment of degree programs under the "*Mandatory Agriculture Programs in SUCs Act*" to create a unified national framework for agricultural education.

SECTION 7. *Appropriations.* The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) under the respective budgets of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The budgetary allocation shall be determined based on the actual requirements for the successful and sustained implementation of the integrated agricultural education framework established by this representation.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,