

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session
HOUSE BILL NO. **9363**



Introduced by HON. PHILIP CONRAD "DOK BONG" M. ACOP

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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The hands that feed the nation are aging, and the soil they till is growing weary. For decades, the Philippine countryside has been locked in a quiet, heartbreaking paradox: the very people who harvest the rice on our tables often cannot afford to put food on their own, let alone send their children to college. Agriculture, the literal bedrock of our civilization, has long been viewed not as a profession of pride, but as a cycle of generational poverty.

The proposed act is more than just a tuition waiver. It is a masterplan of economic justice and a strategic blueprint for survival. By offering the sons and daughters of our most vulnerable farmers a free pathway into higher agricultural education, this bill bridges the gap between traditional sweat equity and modern, climate-resilient science. It recognizes that to secure our food supply, we must first secure the future of the people who grow it.

We live in an era of unprecedented volatility. The modern Filipino farmer does not just battle unpredictable pests; they are on the front lines of a global climate crisis, navigating super-typhoons, prolonged droughts, and shifting weather patterns that render ancestral farming methods obsolete. At the same time, the average age of a Filipino farmer hovers around 53 years old.¹ If their children abandon the fields for urban centers—driven away by the specter of poverty—we face a looming existential threat: a nation with fertile land, but no one left to farm it.

¹ A Farmer's Legacy and the Future of Philippine Agriculture, (Sept. 1, 2025), <https://ispweb.pcaarrd.dost.gov.ph/a-farmers-legacy-and-the-future-of-philippine-agriculture/>.

Agriculture is no longer just about carabaos and plows; it is a sophisticated discipline involving biotechnology, precision drone monitoring, data-driven crop rotation, and agribusiness management. By educating the youth, we inject innovation into an aging sector. We transition agriculture from a desperate default into a dignified, high-tech career path, ensuring that the next generation can fight climate change with science and navigate global market competition with strategy.

Critics of state-funded education often ask if the country can afford another subsidy. The more accurate question is: Can we afford the alternative of food insecurity? Food insecurity is a national security risk. Relying heavily on food imports leaves our population vulnerable to global supply chain shocks and price spikes.

The passage of this bill is a necessary investment in national self-reliance. When we provide free tertiary agricultural education to the children of indigent farmers, we are not handing out charity; we are equipping an army of specialists to defend our food sovereignty.

This legislation aligns seamlessly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), serving as a direct vehicle for human and environmental upliftment, specifically SDG 1 (“No Poverty”), SDG 2 (“Zero Hunger”), SDG 4 (“Quality Education”), and SDG 10 (“Reduced Inequalities”).

By educating the children of those who feed this nation, we honor the sacrifices of our farmers, protect our environment, and ensure that the Filipino nation will always have a hand to nurture it and a mind to protect it. It is time to pass this bill, plant the seed, and watch a self-reliant nation grow.

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


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

SEC. 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

- 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.
- 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 Department of Agriculture (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 Commission on Higher Education (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,