

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila
TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session
House Bill No. 10781



INTRODUCED BY REP. PATRICK MICHAEL “PM” D. VARGAS

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE MAGNA CARTA OF YOUNG FARMERS AND
FISHERFOLK

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines faces a pressing generational challenge in agriculture: the people responsible for producing the country's food are increasingly older, while relatively few young Filipinos are entering or remaining in farming. The 2022 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries recorded 7.72 million agricultural operators, with a median age of 49.7 years; only 8.9 percent were between 15 and 29 years old, while 49.3 percent were aged 50 years and above.¹ The same demographic concern is evident in fisheries, where the 2022 Census recorded 921,096 fishing operators with a median age of about 43.7 years, while the number of younger fishing operators has declined in several regions.² These figures demonstrate the need for a deliberate national policy that makes farming and fishing viable, dignified, and sustainable livelihoods for the next generation.

The challenge is not merely one of succession but also one of poverty and unequal access to economic opportunities. In 2023, farmers had a poverty incidence of 27.0 percent while fisherfolk had a poverty incidence of 27.4 percent, among the highest recorded poverty incidences across the basic sectors monitored by the Philippine Statistics Authority.³ At the same time, agriculture,

¹ Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries (Final Results): Agricultural Households and Operators, April 8, 2026.

² Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries: Capture Fishing Operation (Revised), May 19, 2026.

³ PSA, Poverty Incidence Declined from 2021 to 2023 in Ten Basic Sectors, March 31, 2025.

forestry, and fishing remained a major source of employment, accounting for 19.9 percent of total employment in May 2026, while agriculture, forestry, and fishing contributed 7.9 percent of the country's GDP in 2025.⁴ These figures underscore the contradiction confronting the sector: agriculture and fisheries remain indispensable to the Philippine economy and food supply, yet many of the people who depend on them continue to experience poverty and limited access to productive opportunities.

This proposed measure therefore seeks to establish a comprehensive Magna Carta for young farmers and fisherfolk that addresses the structural barriers preventing young Filipinos from pursuing and sustaining livelihoods in agriculture and fisheries. It provides for their rights to education and training, productive resources, technology, credit and capital, farmland, market development services, environmental protection, cultural identity, legal protection, and meaningful representation in policymaking, while creating a National Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Council and a national roadmap to coordinate government interventions. By investing in the capabilities and security of the next generation of farmers and fisherfolk, the State can strengthen the continuity of food production, promote rural development, encourage sustainable and climate-resilient practices, and help ensure that agriculture and fisheries remain viable sources of livelihood for future generations. In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

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Fifth District of Quezon City

⁴ PSA, Underemployment Rate Declined to 12.2 Percent in May 2026, July 8, 2026.

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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 “*The Magna Carta of Young Farmers and Fisherfolk.*”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to recognize young farmers and fisherfolk as essential partners in ensuring food security, sustainable agricultural and fisheries development, rural employment, and inclusive economic growth. The State shall promote and protect their rights and welfare by ensuring equitable access to education and training, land and productive resources, technology and mechanization, credit and capital, markets, social protection, health services, environmental resources, and meaningful participation in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs affecting their livelihood and communities.

The State shall likewise create an enabling environment that encourages young people to enter, remain, and build sustainable livelihoods in agriculture and fisheries by addressing discrimination, poverty, insecurity of tenure, inadequate access to financing and markets, climate and environmental risks, and other structural barriers that discourage youth participation in these sectors. Toward this end, the State shall pursue coordinated and inclusive programs that strengthen the capacity, productivity, dignity, and competitiveness of young farmers and fisherfolk while recognizing their role as stewards of the country's natural resources, contributors to rural development, and a vital generation in

securing the Philippines' long-term food security and agricultural and fisheries sustainability.

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

1. *Agriculture* refers to the prudent endeavor of cultivating plants and animals which includes the tillage of the soil, dairy, production, cultivation, growing, and harvesting of any agricultural, aquacultural, floricultural or horticultural commodities, the growing and harvesting of forest products upon forest lands, the raising of livestock including horses, the keeping of horses as a commercial enterprise, the keeping and raising of poultry, swine, cattle and other domesticated animals used for food purposes and any forestry or lumbering operations, performed by a farmer;
2. *Discrimination* refers to any distinction, exclusion, or restriction which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by young farmers and fisherfolk, irrespective of their age, status, or income, on a basis of equality, human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field. It includes any act or omission, including by law, policy, administrative measure, or practice, that directly or indirectly excludes or restricts young farmers and fisherfolk in the recognition and promotion of their rights and their access to and enjoyment of opportunities, benefits, or privileges.

A measure or practice of general application is discrimination against young farmers and fisherfolk if it fails to provide for a mechanism to offset or address the disadvantages or limitations of young farmers and fisherfolk, as a result of which they are denied or restricted in the recognition and protection of their rights and in their access to and enjoyment of opportunities, benefits, or privileges: Provided, That discrimination compounded by or intersecting with other grounds, status, or condition, such as ethnicity, age, poverty, or religion shall be considered discrimination against young farmers and fisherfolk under this Act;

3. *Eco-warrior* refers to the staunch advocates of environmental protection and practitioners of sustainable farming;
4. *Family Farming* is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral, and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labor, including both women and men;

5. *Farm work* refers to the land cultivation and tillage, dairying, production, growing, harvesting, plowing, planting, application of fertilizers, and farm supervision performed by an individual or a group of people;
6. *Food Security* refers to the condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (as defined by the United Nations Committee on World Food Security);
7. *Lessee* refers to a person who, by themselves, or with the aid available from within their immediate farm household, cultivates the land, belonging to or lawfully possessed by another, with the latter's consent, for purposes of agricultural production, for a price certain in money or in produce or both. The term is distinguished from a civil lessee as understood in the Civil Code of the Philippines;
8. *Organic* refers to the particular farming and processing system, described in the standards and not in the classical chemical sense. The term "organic" is synonymous in other languages with "biological" or "ecological". It is also a labeling term that denotes products considered organic based on the Philippine National Standards for organic agriculture;
9. *Organic Agriculture* refers to all agricultural systems that promote the ecologically sound, socially acceptable, economically viable, and technically feasible production of food and fibers. Organic agriculture dramatically reduces external inputs by refraining from the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and pharmaceuticals.

It also covers areas such as, but is not limited to, soil fertility management, varietal breeding and selection under chemical and pesticide-free conditions, the use of biotechnology and other cultural practices that are consistent with the principles and policies of this Act, and enhance productivity without destroying the soil and harming farmers, consumers and the environment as defined by the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movement (IFOAM): Provided, That the biotechnology herein referred to shall not include genetically modified organisms or GMOs;

10. *Red-tagging* refers to the practice of the State of branding or malicious blacklisting of regular individuals or organizations critical or not fully in support of the government— they could be branded as anti-government, insurgents, and members of the leftist groups.

11. *Sustainability* refers to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs as defined by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development;
12. *Tenant* refers to a person who, themselves, or with the aid available from within their immediate farm household, cultivates the land belonging to, or possessed by another, with the latter's consent for purposes of production, sharing the produce with the landholder under the share tenancy system, or paying the landholder a price certain or ascertainable in produce or in money or both, under the leasehold tenancy system;
13. *Young Farmer* refers to an individual whose primary source of income comes from agriculture, with an age range of 15-35 years old, who is the owner, tenant, lessee, or worker of the land in which they personally cultivate and till.

SECTION 4. State as Primary Duty-Bearer – The State, as the primary duty-bearer, shall:

1. Recognize, promote, and protect the rights of young farmers and fisherfolk defined and guaranteed under this Act;
2. Lead against discrimination and coercion or violence, be physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, psychological, spiritual, or cultural in nature, against young farmers and fisherfolk;
3. Endorse farm products produced by young farmers and fisherfolk for economic development nationwide;
4. Promote, protect, and fulfill the rights of young farmers and fisherfolk in all aspects including but not limited to their rights to food security, education and training, access to land, social justice, employment, health services, and participation.

The State shall take measures and establish mechanisms to promote the coherent and integrated implementation and enforcement of this Act and related laws, policies, or other measures to effectively recognize young farmers and fisherfolk as a distinct basic sector, stop discrimination against young farmers, fisherfolk, and agricultural workers in general, and advance their rights and responsibilities.

SECTION 5. Duties of State Agencies and Instrumentalities. – The abovementioned duties of the State shall extend to all agencies, offices, and instrumentalities at all levels, as well as government-owned and controlled

corporations, subject to the Constitution and pertinent laws, policies, or administrative guidelines that define the specific duties of the concerned state agencies and entities.

SECTION 6. *Duties of Private Sector.* – It is the duty of the private sector to support young farmers and fisherfolk's agenda through social partnerships between people's organizations and industries. The private sector is encouraged to assist in reform mechanisms and rural development initiatives which include livelihood strategies sensitive to the plight of young farmers and fisherfolk, as part of their corporate social responsibility duties.

SECTION 7. *Non-Diminution of the Rights of the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk.* – All other young farmers and fisherfolk's rights and programs provided under existing laws shall remain in full force and effect: Provided, That it follows the definition of a young farmer as stated in this Act.

SECTION 8. *Education and Training.* – The State shall ensure equal access to quality education and training of young farmers and fisherfolk and encourage partnership and linkage with state universities and colleges (SUCs) on information and technology transfer to young farmer individuals and organizations.

1. *Curriculum.* - To ensure better quality education and training for young farmers and fisherfolk, and aspiring farmers and fisherfolk, the following shall be incorporated in curricula:
 - a. K to 12 High Schools offering Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) Track with specialization in Agriculture-Fisheries Arts shall be required to create laboratories for agricultural science and technology research.
 - b. Climate-Smart and Resilient Agriculture and Agricultural Laws and Farmers' Rights shall be incorporated in both K to 12 and Tertiary Education Curriculum.
2. *Scholarship.* - K to 12 students under TLE Track with specialization in Agriculture-Fisheries Arts shall be entitled to scholarship grants and incentives through the Department of Agriculture (DA) upon compliance with the conditions set by the department.
3. *Agricultural Training Service Extension.* - Agricultural SUCs shall serve as an extension service provider for practical application, learning seminars, hands-on training, and knowledge on technological advancements of young farmers and fisherfolk's organizations and individuals through the proper facilitation of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

SECTION 9. *Right to Resources for Food Production.* – The State shall guarantee young farmers and fisherfolk's vital role in food production and food security by prioritizing their rights to access technology, credit, and capital. It shall ensure that young farmers and fisherfolk are provided with the following:

1. Equal access to support for farm inputs and agricultural tools;
2. Equal access to farm technologies and mechanization;
3. Ensure innovation, development, and proliferation of young farmer-friendly technologies and mechanization of agricultural production and processing;
4. Equal access to formal sources of credit and capital, including forms of clean loans and Mortgage, Redemption and Insurance (MRI); and
5. Equitable share of the produce of farms and aquatic resources.

SECTION 10. *Right to Information Access.* – The access of young farmers and fisherfolk to information regarding policies, programs, projects, subsidies, and funding outlays that affect them shall be ensured. The DA-Regional Field Offices (RFOs), Provincial Agricultural Offices (PAOs), and Municipal Agricultural Offices (MAOs) shall endeavor to strengthen information dissemination of agricultural projects benefiting young farmers and fisherfolk. Moreover, these offices shall offer assistance to farmers to access agricultural services offered, whether offline or online.

SECTION 11. *Right to Farmland.* – The land rights of young farmers and fisherfolk shall be prioritized. In doing so, the State shall guarantee the following:

1. *Improve Access to Low-cost Farmland.* – Create more flexibility within CARP/CARPER to allow land trusts to protect farmland quickly and facilitate new farmers. The DAR shall also ensure the affordability of conserved lands and ensure that it remains in farming.
2. *Land Transfer Tax Exemptions.* – Transactions including, but not limited to, purchase, inheritance, and donation of land, which is one (1) hectare and below, to young farmers and fisherfolk, as defined under this Act, are hereby exempt from all taxes of whatever kind: Provided, however, That the beneficiary guarantees that the land will be kept and maintained by him or her for at least five (5) years.
3. *Land and Farm Planning Management.* – The Department of Agriculture (DA), together with the LGUs and other related agencies, shall provide full assistance to young farmers and fisherfolk, from the national scale down to community levels as regards in farm planning and management to ensure maximum utilization, production, profitability, and sustainability of their farms. The department shall utilize the existence of Farmer Field

Schools and Agricultural Extension Training Centers as learning sites to ensure full-scale assistance to young farmers and fisherfolk.

SECTION 12. *Right to Access to Market Development Services.* – The State shall guarantee the young farmers and fisherfolk's right to market spaces, farm-to-market roads, and other mechanisms that will ensure that farm produce will reach the family table. In doing so, the State shall provide the following:

1. Establishment of Farm-to-Market Roads (FMR).
2. Creation of a Provincial Market for each Province.
3. Establishment of Municipal Cold Storage and Post-Harvest Facility for each Municipality.

SECTION 13. *Right to Environmental Protection.* – DA, in partnership with DENR and DOST shall establish model farms that feature sustainable farming practices such as integrated and diverse organic farming systems, climate-smart and resilient agriculture, organic urban farming systems, and the like to serve as knowledge transfer and training institutions for young farmers, fisherfolk, and agricultural workers in general and provide an avenue for their active participation in environmental protection and practice of sustainable farming.

SECTION 14. *Right to Recognition and Preservation of Cultural Identity and Indigenous Farming Traditions.* – The State shall respect, preserve, and maintain knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous and local communities of young farmers and fisherfolk embodying traditional lifestyles relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. These shall be considered in the formulation and implementation of national policies and programs.

SECTION 15. *Right to Protection from Discrimination, Red-tagging, and Violence.* – The State shall ensure that all young farmers and fisherfolk shall be protected from all forms of discrimination, red-tagging, and violence as provided for in existing laws. They shall be ensured access to free legal services from the Public Attorney's Office (PAO).

SECTION 16. *Right to Representation and Participation.* – The State shall ensure young farmers and fisherfolk's involvement in the planning and design stages of agri-food development projects from conceptualization to implementation. It shall also ensure the participation of young farmers and fisherfolk in the decision-making and policy-making processes at regional, national, and international levels initiated by the government and private entities, including but not limited to the National and Local Agrarian Reform Councils, National Organic Agricultural Board, National Youth Commission, and

the National Anti-Poverty Commission to fully realize their roles as agents and partners for development.

SECTION 17. *National Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Council.* – There is hereby created the National Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Council which shall be attached to the DA. The Council shall have the following powers and functions:

1. Formulate, recommend, and implement national policies, plans, programs, and guidelines to ensure young farmers and fisherfolk's empowerment, productivity, and competitiveness in local and international trade.
2. Support and assist the DA and relevant government agencies in building strong and harmonious partnerships with foreign counterparts and relevant agencies, non-government organizations, and civic groups in order to facilitate the implementation of strategies and programs for the protection and promotion of the rights and well-being of young farmers and fisherfolk.
3. Develop an online self-service portal for young farmers and fisherfolk to access, apply for, and implement the different DA programs and services.
4. Establish Young Farmer and Fisherfolk Coordinators in each municipality to direct outreach and help young farmers and fisherfolk access information on agricultural and fisheries programs and services.
5. Spearhead the drafting and finalization of the National Young Farmers' Roadmap.

SECTION 18. *National Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Roadmap.* – The DA through the National Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Council, including its attached agencies and corporations, in coordination with the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Education (DepEd), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), National Youth Commission (NYC), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) and all agricultural-related agencies attached under the Office of the President (OP) shall formulate and implement a National young farmers and fisherfolk Plan within one hundred and twenty (120) days from the creation of the National young farmers and fisherfolk Council.

The roadmap shall serve as the convergence program of government line agencies to ensure the maximum role of young farmers and fisherfolk in food security. It

shall also present measures that will allocate a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice.

SECTION 19. *Farm Insurance.* – Young Farmers and Fisherfolk shall automatically become members of the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC) as protection from losses of non-crop agricultural assets from force majeure.

SECTION 20. *Legal Protection on Negotiations and Trade Partnership Agreements.* – The State shall ensure the provision of safeguard clauses for vulnerable, sensitive, and volatile sectors to preserve the family farming model of the Philippines.

SECTION 21. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within one-hundred twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DA shall, in coordination with Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), DAR, DENR, DTI, DOST, DepEd, CHED, NYC, and NAPC and with the participation of representatives from non-government organizations (NGO) and civil society groups with a proven track record of involvement and promotion of the rights and welfare of young farmers and fisherfolk, issue the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act.

SECTION 22. *Appropriation of Funds.* – The amount necessary for implementing this Act shall be charged from the budget allocation of the DA, including its attached agencies and corporations, DAR, DENR, DTI, DOST, DepEd, CHED, and NAPC. Such amounts necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 23. *Separability Clause.* – If any part, section, or provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected by such declaration shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 24. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations, or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 25. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,