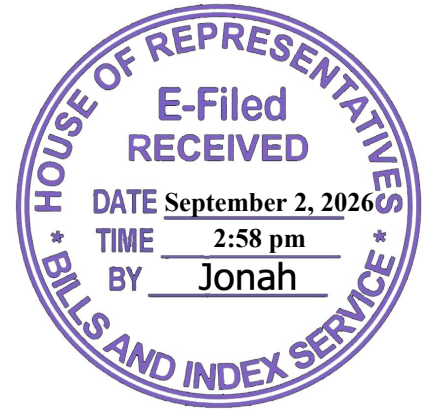




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 11086



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez, and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE MAGNA CARTA OF AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT WORKERS, STRENGTHENING THEIR WELFARE,
LABOR PROTECTION, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 18, Article II of the 1987 Constitution recognizes labor as a primary social economic force and mandates the State to protect the rights of workers and promote their welfare. Section 3, Article XIII further guarantees the rights of all workers to just and humane conditions of work, security of tenure, and a living wage, and promotes full employment and equality of employment opportunities. Complementarily, Section 5, Article XIII directs the State to provide support to agriculture through appropriate technology and research, and adequate financial, production, marketing, and other support services. These provisions underscore the State's duty not only to strengthen the agricultural sector but also to protect and develop the workforce that sustains it.

Agricultural development workers, who include agriculturists, engineers, technicians, extension workers, and support personnel, serve as the backbone of agricultural productivity, extension services, and rural transformation. While farmers and fisherfolk remain at the forefront of food production, agricultural development workers play an equally critical role in sustaining and strengthening the sector by providing the technical expertise, research support, extension services, and institutional capacity necessary for modern, efficient, and climate-

resilient agriculture. They are indispensable in translating policies into practice, supporting communities on the ground, and ensuring that agricultural programs are effectively implemented across the country.

Despite their indispensable role, agricultural development workers continue to face structural challenges, including inadequate compensation, limited career advancement opportunities, unsafe working conditions, and inconsistent labor protection across institutions and local government units.

The devolution of agricultural services under Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the “*Local Government Code of 1991*,” has resulted in uneven capacity and disparities in the delivery of agricultural services across local government units. This situation has been further shaped by the landmark ruling in *Mandanas v. Ochoa*,¹ which expanded the fiscal resources of local governments by increasing their share in national taxes. While this development enhances the capacity of LGUs to deliver devolved services, it likewise underscores the need to strengthen institutional systems, standardize staffing, and ensure adequate protection and professionalization of agricultural development workers at the local level.

While Republic Act No. 12215, otherwise known as the “*Philippine Agriculturists Act*,” and other professional laws regulate licensure and professional standards, there remains a significant policy gap in addressing the employment conditions, welfare, labor rights, and occupational safety of agricultural development workers across the public and private sectors.

This proposed Magna Carta seeks to address these gaps by institutionalizing a comprehensive framework that ensures just compensation, wage protection, security of tenure, safe and humane working conditions, and occupational safety and health protection, while strengthening the professionalization of agricultural services, particularly at the local government level.

The measure further integrates labor standards, human resource development mechanisms, and inter-agency coordination, recognizing that the effectiveness of agricultural programs depends not only on policy and funding but also on the competence, protection, and motivation of the workforce.

Ultimately, this bill aims to strengthen the foundation of agricultural development by investing in the people who drive it. By protecting and

¹ *Mandanas v. Executive Secretary* (G.R. No. 199802, July 3, 2018; affirmed April 10, 2019)

empowering agricultural development workers, the State advances food security, improves rural livelihoods, and supports long-term agricultural modernization.

Similar bills have been filed since the 10th Congress, but have remained pending with the Committee on Agriculture and Food.

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



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



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

ARTICLE I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Magna Carta of Agricultural Development Workers.*”

Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to recognize agricultural development workers as vital partners in food security, countryside development, agricultural modernization, and rural transformation.

The State shall promote their welfare by ensuring just compensation, wage protection, security of tenure, safe and humane working conditions, occupational

safety and health protection, professional development, and appropriate career advancement.

Section 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

- a. *Agricultural Development Workers* refer to persons engaged in agricultural development, extension, technical, research, regulatory, administrative, support, and related services in the Department of Agriculture (DA), its bureaus and attached agencies, local government units, state universities and colleges, government-owned and controlled corporations, non-government organizations, cooperatives, and private institutions.

This shall include agriculturists, agricultural and biosystems engineers, fishery technologists, veterinarians, agricultural technicians, agricultural extension workers, agricultural employees, administrative and support personnel, and contractual, casual, job order, seasonal, or project-based personnel engaged in agricultural development services.

- b. *Agriculturist* refers to a person qualified and authorized to practice the agriculture profession in accordance with Republic Act No. 12215, otherwise known as the “*Philippine Agriculturists Act*,” and other applicable laws.
- c. *Agricultural and Biosystems Engineer, Fishery Technologist, and Veterinarian* refer to persons authorized to practice their respective professions under existing laws.
- d. *Agricultural Technician* refers to a trained or skilled worker certified by Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) or other competent authority who performs technical work related to agricultural production, processing, machinery operation, post-harvest handling, marketing, or related services.
- e. *Agricultural Extension Worker* refers to an agricultural development worker who provides technical assistance, training, field support, or extension services to farmers, fisherfolk, cooperatives, and agricultural communities.
- f. *Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)* refers to policies, standards, and programs intended to prevent occupational injury, illness, and hazards in agricultural development work.

Section 4. *Coverage.* – This Act shall cover all agricultural development workers in the public and private sectors, regardless of employment status, including permanent, temporary, casual, contractual, job order, seasonal, and project-based workers engaged in agricultural development services.

ARTICLE II EMPLOYMENT, PROFESSIONALIZATION, AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Section 5. *Recruitment and Qualifications.* – The selection and appointment of agricultural development workers shall be based on merit, fitness, competence, integrity, and applicable civil service, labor, professional, and technical qualifications.

Positions requiring professional licensure shall be filled in accordance with the applicable professional regulatory laws, including Republic Act No. 12215 for agriculturists.

Section 6. *Employment Assistance.* – The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), in coordination with the DA, Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), TESDA, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and academic institutions, shall promote employment opportunities for agricultural development workers in the domestic and foreign labor markets.

For this purpose, a National Employment Program for Agricultural Development Workers shall be formulated to improve job matching, career placement, skills upgrading, and employment facilitation.

Section 7. *Professionalization of Government Agricultural Services.* – The DA, in coordination with the Civil Service Commission (CSC), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and recognized national associations of agricultural development workers, shall review the existing functions, responsibilities, position titles, qualifications, staffing patterns, and compensation of agricultural development workers in government service.

The review shall recommend appropriate reclassification, upgrading, or standardization of positions to ensure just compensation, proper career progression, and professionalized agricultural services.

Section 8. *Mandatory Positions of Agricultural Development Workers in Local Government Units.* – In addition to positions provided under existing laws, local government units shall, subject to their needs, income classification, and applicable civil service and budget rules, create and maintain appropriate agricultural development positions, including:

- a. Provincial Agriculturist;
- b. Provincial Agricultural and Biosystems Engineer;
- c. Provincial Fishery Officer;
- d. Provincial Veterinarian, where applicable;
- e. City Agriculturist;
- f. City Agricultural and Biosystems Engineer;
- g. City Veterinarian, where applicable;
- h. Municipal Agriculturist; and,
- i. Other technical, extension, and support positions necessary for effective agricultural services.

The DA, CSC, DBM, and DILG shall issue staffing standards for agricultural development services in local government units.

Section 9. *Performance Evaluation and Merit Promotion.* – The DA, in consultation with the CSC, DOLE, local government units, and recognized national associations of agricultural development workers, shall prepare a uniform career and personnel development framework for agricultural development workers.

Such framework shall include merit promotion, performance evaluation, training, scholarships, incentives, and awards systems.

Section 10. *Transfer or Geographic Reassignment.* – No transfer or geographic reassignment of an agricultural development worker shall be made without prior written notice stating the reason therefor.

Such transfer or reassignment shall be subject to existing civil service and labor laws, rules on security of tenure, and the right of the worker to appeal before the proper authority.

Section 11. *Security of Tenure.* – Agricultural development workers shall enjoy security of tenure in accordance with the Constitution, civil service laws, labor laws, and applicable rules and regulations.

No agricultural development worker shall be dismissed, suspended, or separated from service except for just or authorized cause and after observance of due process.

Section 12. *Assignment of Married Agricultural Development Workers.*

– Whenever practicable, proper authorities shall take steps to allow married agricultural development workers, both of whom are in government service, to be employed or assigned in the same or adjacent city or municipality, subject to existing laws and regulations.

Section 13. *Code of Conduct.* – Agricultural development workers shall be guided by a Code of Conduct to be formulated by the DA, in consultation with the CSC, DOLE, PRC, and concerned stakeholders.

For registered professionals, such Code shall be consistent with existing professional codes of ethics and regulatory standards issued by the appropriate professional regulatory boards.

ARTICLE III

WAGE PROTECTION, HOURS OF WORK, AND LABOR RIGHTS

Section 14. *Wage Protection.* – Agricultural development workers shall be entitled to fair and just compensation.

No agricultural development worker shall receive wages below the applicable minimum wage or compensation lower than that prescribed under existing salary standardization, civil service, labor, and wage laws.

The DOLE, in coordination with the DA and DBM, shall periodically review wage levels and compensation conditions of agricultural development workers and recommend measures to address wage gaps, underpayment, and inequities.

Section 15. *Normal Hours of Work.* – The normal hours of work of agricultural development workers shall not exceed eight (8) hours a day or forty (40) hours a week, subject to existing civil service and labor laws.

Hours of work shall include time during which the worker is required to be on duty, at a prescribed workplace, in the field, or in another place required by the employer or office.

Section 16. *Overtime Work.* – When exigencies of service require work beyond normal working hours, agricultural development workers shall be entitled to overtime pay, compensatory time-off, service credits, or other applicable compensation in accordance with existing laws and rules.

Section 17. *Protection against Labor Exploitation.* – Agricultural development workers shall be protected against underpayment, delayed payment of wages, excessive workload, unsafe working conditions, arbitrary reassignment, unjust dismissal, and other unfair labor practices.

The DOLE shall enforce labor standards for private sector workers, while the CSC shall enforce applicable standards for government workers.

Section 18. *Personnel Required and Staffing Standards.* – Government offices, local government units, firms, cooperatives, organizations, and establishments engaged in agricultural and fisheries development shall employ or engage the necessary number of qualified agricultural development workers appropriate to the nature and scope of their operations.

Staff-to-clientele ratios and staffing standards shall be determined by the DA, CSC, DBM, DOLE, and DILG.

ARTICLE IV OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Section 19. *Occupational Safety and Health Standards.* – Agricultural development workers shall be entitled to safe and healthful working conditions.

The DOLE, in coordination with the DA and concerned agencies, shall formulate or update occupational safety and health standards specific to agricultural development work, including field deployment, laboratory work, exposure to pesticides and chemicals, handling of animals and biological materials, operation of machinery, disaster response, and work in remote, isolated, or conflict-affected areas.

Section 20. *Personal Protective Equipment and Safety Measures.* – Employers, offices, and institutions shall provide agricultural development workers with appropriate personal protective equipment, safety devices, training, and information necessary for the safe performance of their duties.

No agricultural development worker shall be required to perform hazardous work without appropriate protective equipment and safety protocols.

Section 21. *Hazard Allowance.* – Agricultural development workers assigned to hazardous, difficult, isolated, distressed, strife-torn, calamity-affected, or high-risk areas, or those exposed to chemicals, biological agents, dangerous machinery, animal diseases, field hazards, laboratory risks, or other occupational risks, shall be entitled to hazard allowance in accordance with existing laws, rules, and regulations.

Section 22. *Medical Examination, Insurance, and Work-Related Injury Protection.* – Agricultural development workers shall be entitled to annual medical examinations, appropriate immunization when warranted, and insurance or compensation for work-related injury, illness, disability, or death in accordance with existing laws.

ARTICLE V RIGHTS, BENEFITS, AND INCENTIVES

Section 23. *Freedom from Interference or Coercion.* – It shall be unlawful for any person to interfere with, restrain, coerce, intimidate, or discriminate against agricultural development workers in the exercise of their rights, including the right to organize.

Section 24. *Non-Discrimination.* – No agricultural development worker shall be discriminated against by reason of sex, gender, age, civil status, disability, religion, ethnicity, political belief, union affiliation, employment status, or other analogous grounds.

Section 25. *Right to Join Organizations.* – Agricultural development workers shall have the right to form, join, or assist organizations, associations, or unions for lawful purposes.

Recognized organizations of agricultural development workers shall be consulted in the formulation of policies, programs, standards, and reforms affecting agricultural services and workers' welfare.

Section 26. *Incentives and Rewards System.* – The DA, in coordination with the DBM, CSC, DOLE, local government units, and recognized workers’ organizations, shall establish an incentives and rewards system for agricultural development workers.

Such system may include honoraria, performance incentives, awards, recognition, productivity incentives, and other benefits consistent with existing laws and budget rules.

Section 27. *Other Compensation and Benefits.* – Agricultural development workers may be entitled, as applicable and subject to existing laws and regulations, to the following:

- a. Representation and transportation allowances;
- b. Subsistence or field allowances;
- c. Clothing allowance;
- d. Housing or quarters when assigned in remote or field stations, or reasonable housing support when quarters are unavailable;
- e. Compensation for work-related injury, illness, disability, or death;
- f. Annual medical examination;
- g. On-call pay or equivalent compensation for emergency duty;
- h. Transportation, motorcycle, or vehicle loan programs, subject to availability of funds;
- i. Longevity or retention incentives; and,
- j. Other benefits authorized by law.

ARTICLE VI HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Section 28. *Training and Continuing Professional Development.* – The DA, in coordination with the DOLE, PRC, Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, DILG, and local government units, shall formulate and implement comprehensive training and human resource development programs for agricultural development workers.

For registered professionals, such programs shall be aligned with the Continuing Professional Development requirements and regulatory framework under applicable professional laws, including Republic Act No. 12215 for agriculturists.

Training conducted by the Agricultural Training Institute and other accredited training providers may be considered for crediting under applicable CPD rules, subject to approval by the Professional Regulation Commission and the appropriate professional regulatory board.

Section 29. *Scholarship and Capacity-Building Program.* – Agricultural development workers and qualified students pursuing agriculture, agricultural and biosystems engineering, fisheries, veterinary medicine, and related programs shall have access to government scholarship, training, and capacity-building programs, subject to existing laws and regulations.

Section 30. *Capability Assessment and Human Resource Development Study.* – The Department of Agriculture, in coordination with concerned agencies, shall periodically conduct a capability assessment and human resource development study covering:

- a. Staffing needs and personnel-to-clientele ratios;
- b. Adequacy of facilities, equipment, and supplies;
- c. Working conditions and occupational safety risks;
- d. Training and professional development needs;
- e. Career advancement and compensation concerns;
- f. Regional and local consultations on workers' welfare;
- g. Standards for agricultural extension services; and
- h. Measures to retain and effectively utilize agricultural development workers for national development.

The results shall be submitted to Congress every five (5) years, together with policy and budget recommendations.

CHAPTER VII

ADMINISTRATION, CONSULTATION, AND ENFORCEMENT

Section 31. *Agricultural Development Workers Consultative Council.* – There is hereby created an Agricultural Development Workers Consultative Council to advise the Department of Agriculture on matters affecting the welfare, professionalization, labor protection, occupational safety, and career development of agricultural development workers.

The Council shall include representatives from the DA, DOLE, CSC, DBM, DILG, PRC, local government units, and recognized national organizations of agricultural development workers.

Section 32. *Monitoring and Compliance.* – The DA shall serve as the lead agency for the implementation of this Act.

The DOLE shall enforce labor standards and occupational safety and health requirements in the private sector. The CSC shall enforce applicable civil service rules for government personnel. Local government units shall ensure compliance within their respective jurisdictions.

Section 33. *Penalties.* – Any person who willfully interferes with, restrains, coerces, discriminates against, or violates the rights of agricultural development workers under this Act shall be penalized in accordance with applicable civil service, labor, administrative, and criminal laws.

Where the offender is a public officer, administrative liability may include suspension, dismissal, or disqualification from public office, as may be warranted under existing laws.

Section 34. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Local government units may also allocate funds from local revenues for the implementation of this Act, subject to existing budgeting and auditing rules.

Section 35. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DA, in coordination with the DOLE, CSC, DBM, DILG, PRC, TESDA, CHED, and recognized national organizations of agricultural development workers, shall promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to implement this Act.

Section 36. *Separability Clause.* – If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 37. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, issuances, decrees, rules, and regulations inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are deemed amended, modified or repealed accordingly.

Section 38. *Effectivity*. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,