

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6769



Introduced by Representative Ron P. Salo

EXPLANATORY NOTE

So much has been said about the ills and predicaments of agricultural development and environmental conservation efforts in the Philippines. Sadly, however, there is no significant initiative to tap and empower the Filipino youth sector to concretely contribute to address these long-standing challenges. The pandemic has emphasized the need to equip our youth with different practical knowledge and skills in order to contribute in agricultural food production and environmental protection.

Being primarily an agricultural country, the Philippines puts premium in the development of the agricultural sector as it directly affects the economy and the quality of life of its people. However, it is quite concerning that low food productivity has now become a national issue. To illustrate, in the 2020 report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), the Philippines recorded the highest number of food insecure people in Southeast Asia in 2017 to 2019, with 59 million Filipinos suffering from moderate to severe lack of consistent access to food. These findings were even recorded before the pandemic.

Further, the effects of unchecked degradation of natural resources due to massive deforestation and improper land use are now being felt through climate change and natural calamities. Indeed, what is at stake is the sustainability of the country at present and for the generations to come.

The 1987 Constitution recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and encourages their involvement in civic affairs. It mandates the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people and to instill health consciousness among them, and further promotes the protection and advancement of the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology, in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.

Inspired by the success of the boy and girl scouting movement in the Philippines since 1938 whose training program prepares the youth for responsible leadership and nation-building, this proposed measure aims to inspire and move young people to take leadership roles with strong emphasis on agriculture, fisheries, forest and marine conservation and management, and ecology-related training programs. It seeks to help in addressing these challenges by marshalling the untapped youth resource of the entire Philippine population.

This measure aims to empower the youth to learn the importance of agriculture, fisheries, forest and marine conservation and management, and ecology; take a proactive stance in environment conservation and climate change resiliency; discover the fundamental concepts of proper food nutrition; and be acquainted with modern farming, fisheries, and food production methods. It is our aspiration that the learning process would instill in their young minds a sense of wonder that leads to awareness and initiative and a desire to engage in agriculture, fisheries, forest and marine conservation and management, and ecology. It is hoped that this will contribute to our collective aspiration of achieving food self-sufficiency.

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



RON P. SALO
KABAYAN Party List

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AN ACT
CREATING THE AGRICULTURAL-SCOUTING PROGRAM FOR MANDATORY
INCLUSION IN ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL UNDER THE K-12
BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN
THE PHILIPPINES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Agri-Scouting Act”.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to recognize the vital role of the youth in nation-building and encourage their involvement in civic affairs, protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them, and protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.

For this purpose, the State hereby adopts the best practices of the boy and girl scouting movement for integration into a comprehensive and science-based agricultural and fisheries training program, including forest and marine conservation and management and ecology, for elementary and junior high school students under the K-12 curriculum, whether in public or private schools. They are to become agents of change in their respective communities by learning the importance and urgency of conserving nature, the best practices on sustainable agriculture to increase food production, and awareness over natural resources, thereby developing core competencies in basic subsistence and commercial farming as their concrete contribution towards nation-building.

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

- a) *Agri-Scouting* refers to any official indoor or outdoor activity which promotes agricultural, fisheries, forest conservation and management, and ecological training programs suitable or appropriate for elementary and junior high school students under the K-12 basic education curriculum with strong focus on environmental, agricultural, and fisheries theory building, tree planting and vegetable gardening, recycling and environment conservation, modern

farming and food production methods, subsistence and commercial farming, and environmental laws.

Agri-Scouting shall also include the participation of an Agri-Scout or any of its program leaders to any municipal, city, provincial, regional, and national Agri-Scouting event.

- b) *Agri-Scouts* refer to students from elementary and junior high school under the K-12 basic education curriculum undergoing the mandatory Agri-Scouting Program;
- c) *Agri-Scout Master* refers to a head coordinator of the Department of Education (DepEd) Agri-Scouting program in the Province or City who must be a licensed agriculturist;
- d) *Agri-Scout Facilitator* refers to a program facilitator-teacher designated by their respective school or educational institution and has undergone relevant training conducted by DepEd or by its accredited service providers or partners;
- e) *Agri-Scouting Spots* refers to any agriculture-related government or non-government organizations, establishments, agri-tourism spots, and farm schools where agri-scouts can partner with for exposure to various agricultural and fishery innovations and modernizations in the country;
- f) *Learning Institutions* refer to any school or educational institution within the Philippines, either public or private in nature, offering elementary and junior high school under the K-12 basic education curriculum of the Philippines;
- g) *Subsistence Farming* refers to farming where the bulk of the food produced are for the producers themselves and their families;
- h) *Commercial Farming* refers to farming where the growing of crops is for the purposes of selling them in the market;
- i) *Fisheries* refers to all activities relating to the act or business of fishing, culturing, preserving, processing, marketing, developing, conserving, and managing aquatic resources and the fishery areas, including the privilege to fish or take aquatic resource thereof; and
- j) *Nurseries* refer to a place where young plants and trees are grown for the purpose of planting elsewhere.

SEC. 4. Agri-Scouting Activities. – Agri-Scouting Activities shall include, but not limited to, the following:

- a) Indoor or outdoor instructional trainings concerning agriculture, fisheries, forest and marine conservation and management, or ecology;
- b) Tree planting and vegetable gardening activities;

- c) Waste recycling and composting activities;
- d) Environmental-Agricultural meetings or conferences;
- e) Dissemination of information, education, and communication (IEC) materials among school and municipal libraries on modern farming technologies, systems, practices, and opportunities for future farmers;
- f) Exposure or internship programs with relevant government agencies relating to agriculture, fisheries, environment, and natural resources;
- g) Exposure trips/educational trips to various Agri-Scout Spots;
- h) Exposure to or internship in food manufacturing or processing; and
- i) Community service related to the foregoing.

SEC. 5. Coverage. – This Act covers the instruction and training to all students enrolled in elementary and junior high school of the K-12 basic education curriculum of the Philippines on, but is not limited to, theory building on basic agriculture, fisheries, forest and marine conservation and management, and ecology; actual tree planting activities of fruit bearing trees or trees with high oxygen generation capacity or high carbon dioxide/monoxide absorption capacity; subsistence and commercial farming; healthier methods of food production; and global warming and climate change and their impacts.

SEC. 6. Agri-Scouting Program. – For the purpose of carrying out and effecting the declared policy of this Act, the Department of Education (DepEd) shall integrate Agri-Scouting as a program in the elementary and junior high school under the K-12 curriculum in all public and private schools in the Philippines and shall directly supervise and control the program implementation of this Act.

The DepEd shall also formulate guidelines and activities for advanced Agri-Scouting programs that schools and learning institutions may integrate in their curriculum.

The DepEd shall also establish Agri-Scout ranks similar to boy and girl scouting movements in order to differentiate the classes and levels of the program.

Further, the DepEd may enter into partnerships with private entities to provide incentives to schools and learning institutions, as well as to the students in order to fully realize the objectives of this Act.

SEC. 7. Agri-Scout Masters and Facilitators. – The DepEd shall maintain or employ in its School Divisions at least one (1) Agri-Scout Master who must be a Professional Regulation Commission-licensed Agriculturist with sufficient knowledge, training and experience in agriculture and environment professional practice. The Agri-Scout Master shall be the head coordinator of the Agri-Scouting program in the city or provincial school division.

All schools or learning institutions shall designate at least one (1) teacher to be the Agri-Scout Facilitator. They shall facilitate the Agri-Scouting program of their respective schools. They shall undergo adequate and continuous Agri-Scouting training at no cost to the teacher.

SEC. 8. Agri-Scouting Clubs. – Schools and learning institutions, under the guidelines and supervision of the DepEd, may establish Agri-Scouting Clubs within their respective schools and institutions in furtherance of the provisions of this Act.

The Agri-Scouting Club shall be headed by each school or institution's Agri-Scout Facilitator.

SEC. 9. Agri-Scouting Week. – The DepEd shall identify one (1) week in the academic calendar to be designated as the Agri-Scouting Week.

The Agri-Scouting Week shall be used for programs and activities that will encourage and inculcate among the students the passion, inclination, and consciousness for agriculture, fisheries, forest and marine conservation and management, and ecology.

The DepEd shall design programs and activities for the realization of the objectives of this Act. The programs and activities shall be made in accordance with, and appropriate to the age and grade-level of the students and the most suitable or appropriate to the area. The programs and activities shall include, but not limited to, skills training, interactive knowledge sharing, site visits, fairs, exhibits, tree planting, vegetable gardening, partnerships with farms and food manufacturing or processing establishments, and such other activities designed to encourage the students to have a passion, inclination, and consciousness for agriculture, fisheries, forest and marine conservation and management, and ecology.

SEC. 10. Reports. – The Agri-Scout Master and Agri-Scout Facilitators, with the concurrence of the School Principal or Director, shall prepare and submit to the Local Head of the DepEd within the local government unit (LGU) in which the school or learning institution belongs, an annual report on the implementation of the program which shall contain the list of accomplishments and recommendations for improvements.

SEC. 11. Nurseries and Dispensaries. – Schools and learning institutions shall be required to establish and maintain nurseries to grow vegetables, plants, and trees to be planted elsewhere and in furtherance of the purpose of this Act.

Schools and learning institutions shall also establish and maintain vegetable and seed dispensaries to be used for their respective Agri-Scout Programs.

SEC. 12. Local Government Units' (LGUs) Participation. – LGUs, including the Barangays, shall identify unused spaces and idle lands and farms or fishponds, within their jurisdiction and utilize them as community gardens, in coordination with the local DepEd office within their respective jurisdiction, as suitable for the purposes of this Act.

The LGUs shall also be proactive in providing inputs to the city or province school division's Agri-Scout program based on its culture, geography, climate, and other prevailing conditions peculiar to the LGU.

SEC. 13. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and the League of Cities and Provinces, shall issue the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of this Act.

SEC. 14. Appropriations. – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall initially be charged to the appropriations of the DepEd as may be appropriated under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such amount shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 15. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain valid.

SEC. 16. Repealing Clause. – All act, executive orders, administrative orders, decrees, proclamations, rules and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 17. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or any two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved.