

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 525

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Introduced by HON. RODEL M. BATOCABE, HON. ALFREDO A. GARBIN, Jr. and
HON. CHRISTOPHER S. CO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks the passage of the Magna Carta for Agriculture and Fishery Development workers which will serve to improve their economic and social well-being.

The agriculture industry remains one of the main contributors to the country's GDP, with an average contribution of about 16% each year. However, recent statistics showed that there is a decline from about 35% GDP contribution in 1986 to only about 11% in 2014. The development and improvement of the agriculture industry in the Philippines should be a primary focus of the State.

While agriculture remains a crucial sector in the Philippines for reducing poverty, workers in the agriculture and fisheries sector continue to be among the lowest paid in country. Consequently, only around 300,000 or less than one percent of the estimated 38 million total labor force in the country work in the agriculture and fisheries sector, according to the 2015 Labor Force Survey Estimate of the PSA.

In the interest of promoting sustainable development of the Philippines through an improved agriculture and fisheries industry, workers in these sectors must be given the corresponding assistance by the State. Once enacted into law, this bill will provide agriculture and fisheries development workers with the adequate benefits and services to improve their economic and social standing.

Accordingly, the swift passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


RODEL M. BATOCABE


ALFREDO A. GARBIN, Jr.


CHRISTOPHER S. CO

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**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MAGNA CARTA OF AGRICULTURE AND
FISHERY DEVELOPMENT WORKERS**

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

SECTION 1. *Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "*Magna Carta of Agriculture and Fishery Development Workers*".

Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to accelerate the development and modernization of Philippine agriculture and improve the economic and social well-being of agriculture and fishery development workers as well as their working condition and employment status. The State shall likewise develop their skills, knowledge, orientation and capabilities so that they will become more responsive and effective in providing the necessary services for countryside development.

Section 3. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act, the following terms shall be construed to mean as follows:

(a) *Agricultural engineer* shall refer to a person registered with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) performing engineering activities in agriculture, particularly on areas of farm power and machinery, irrigation and drainage, soil and water conservation, agricultural buildings and infrastructure, agricultural processing and post-harvest facilities.

(b) *Agricultural extension worker* shall refer to an agriculturist, veterinarian, agricultural engineer, aquaculturist, nutritionist or home extensionist who helps farmers and fishermen in the promotion of agricultural and fishery development plans, programs and projects through the use of extension methodologies, concepts and principles.

(c) *Agricultural technician* shall refer to a trained or skilled agricultural worker but not necessarily a college graduate, performing activities such as plant nursery propagator, plant breeder and farm mechanic.

(d) *Agriculture and fishery development workers* shall refer to all persons who are engaged in agriculture and fishery development activities and all persons employed in the Department of Agriculture (DA) including its bureaus and attached agencies, local government units (LGUs) and concerned government institutions, and shall include aquaculturists, veterinarians, agricultural engineers, agricultural extension workers, agricultural technicians and operators, and allied agricultural professionals employed regardless of their employment status. They are graduates of either agriculture, fisheries, animal science, animal husbandry or any other related course from a recognized college or university and are holders of appropriate civil service eligibility or its equivalent.

(e) *Agriculturist* shall refer to a person who is a graduate of a four (4)-year course in agriculture or any related course performing any of the specialized activities such as agronomy, horticulture, animal husbandry, entomology, plant pathology, plant breeding, agricultural economics, agricultural extension and marketing.

(f) *Aquaculturist* shall refer to a person who is a graduate of a four (4)-year course, either in fisheries and aquaculture, or fishery product ion and processing.

1 (g) *Nutritionist* shall refer to a person registered with the PRC performing
2 activities related to dietary and proper nutrition.

3 (h) *Veterinarian* shall refer to a person registered with the PRC performing
4 professional activities in line with the practice of veterinary medicine such as animal
5 health, disease prevention and control.

6 SECTION 4. *Coverage*. - This Act shall cover all eligible agriculture and fishery
7 development workers, agricultural practitioners in government and all those
8 promoted/appointed as provincial/municipal/city agriculturist and as department heads of
9 the LGUs under Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government
10 Code of 1991: *Provided*. That the Civil Service Commission (CSC), as the case may be,
11 develops and administers specialized examination for purposes of providing appropriate
12 eligibilities to positions.

13 Section 5. *Recruitment and Qualifications*. - The position of municipal or city
14 agriculturist shall be mandatory in LGUs which are predominantly adaptable or engaged
15 in agriculture as determined by the LGU concerned. In areas more adaptable to
16 commercial/industrial purposes, the creation of said positions shall be subject to the
17 approval of the sanggunian concerned. The selection and appointment of agricultural
18 officers/employees shall be in accordance with the merit and fitness principle: *Provided*,
19 That he/she is an eligible agriculture/fishery officer and/or employee.

20 Section 6. *Transfer or Geographical Reassignment of Agriculture and Fishery*
21 *Development Workers*. - Except in the interest of public service, no transfer or
22 geographical reassignment shall be made or effected without a written notice to the
23 agriculture and fishery development workers concerned stating therein the reasons for
24 such: *Provided*. That said written notice shall be made thirty (30) days prior to the date of
25 transfer or reassignment: *Provided, further*, That if the agriculture and fishery
26 development worker concerned believes that there is no justification for the transfer
27 and/or reassignment, one may appeal one's case to the CSC, which shall cause one's
28 reassignment to be automatically held in abeyance until it rules on the matter: *Provided*,
29 *furthermore*, That transfer or reassignment coinciding with any local or national election
30 shall be made in compliance with the Election Code and other existing laws and rules:
31 *Provided, finally*, That the necessary expenses for the relocation and/or reassignment of
32 the agriculture and fishery development worker or employee and one's immediate family
33 shall be paid for by the government.

34 Section 7. *Safeguards in Administrative Proceedings*. - In every administrative
35 proceeding, an agriculture and fishery development worker shall have:

36 (a) The right to be informed of the charges in writing;

37 (b) The right to full access to the evidence in the case;

38 (c) The right to defend himself/herself or to be defended by a counsel of his/her
39 choice;

40 (d) The right to be given adequate time to prepare his/her defense, which shall in
41 no case exceed twenty (20) days;

42 (e) The right to appeal to designated authorities;

43 (f) The right to confront witnesses presented against him/her and summon
44 witnesses in his/her behalf;

45 (g) The right to reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred in his/her
46 defense in case of exoneration or dismissal of the charges; and

47 (h) Such other rights provided by other national agencies and LGUs to its
48 respective officers and employees so as to ensure fairness and impartiality in the
49 proceedings.

50 Section 8. *Code of Conduct*. - All agriculture and fishery development workers
51 must be guided by a code of ethics not contrary to law, moral standards, safety, health,
52 public policy and public order. The code of conduct of agriculture and fishery
53 development workers shall be prepared by the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation
54 with the league of cities/municipalities and the CSC, and shall be issued ninety (90) days
55 after the effectivity of this Act.

