Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 7009

Introduced by Representative Sharon S. Garin

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In recent times, multiple statistics from studies conducted by multiple agencies reveal a problematic trend of hunger, wasting, and undernutrition in our young children, particularly our school children.

According to 2012-2013 figures of the Department of Education (DepEd), more than half a million or 534,054 Filipino schoolchildren are malnourished and severely wasted, meaning that they are too thin for their height. The most recent Global School-based Health Survey by the World Health Organization (WHO) from 2011 also reported that 11.8% of surveyed Filipino students aged 13-15 years old were underweight.

This is problematic as though a student’s life can be exciting and exhilarating, it can also be grueling and exhausting. Undernutrition and hunger adversely affects a child’s ability to learn and hinders them from achieving their full potential. It disrupts a child’s mental and physical development, which may ultimately lead to poor productivity in adulthood. Furthermore, it makes them more vulnerable to diseases, disabilities, and even death.

This bill seeks to battle undernutrition, as well as promote health and nutrition in school children and the community in general. This is done by establishing a National Farm to School Program, which is a school-based strategy that focuses on creating a healthy school food environment. This program has already been implemented in various states and locales in the United States resulting in great outcomes. Farm to School implementation differs by location but almost always include the following: (a) Procurement, where local foods are purchased, promoted, and served to school children; (b) Education, where students participate in educational activities related to agriculture, food, health and nutrition; and (c) School Gardens, where students engage in hands-on learning through in-school farming and gardening.
Farm to School Programs provide a variety of benefits to students, parents, schools, communities and food producers. Key outcomes in student health and achievement have included improvement in early childhood eating behaviors, including choosing healthier options in school canteens, consuming more fruits and vegetables through supplementary feeding programs, and willingness to try new foods and healthier options. There is also anecdotal evidence that children are more inclined to eat healthier when they or their friends grew their own food or they know the garden where it was grown.

Farm to school programs also provide benefits to education by promoting food and agriculture-based learning activities to enhance the quality of the educational experience. This leads to an increase in knowledge and awareness about gardening, agriculture, and instill in children the values of good health, proper nutrition, hard work, and responsibility. All this, ultimately leads to enhanced overall academic achievement for our school children.

Farm to school likewise provide economic development opportunities to local economies by mandating the procurement of food from local farms and producers to be used in its program components.

With this novel, integrated, and common sense approach to child nutrition, Farm to School will provide far more cross-sectoral benefits than other regular health and nutrition programs of the government. It is the hope of this Representation, that this bill be approved for the benefit of the school children and their communities.

SHARON S. GARIN
AAMBISS-Owa Party-list
AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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
“Farm to School Program Act.”

SEC. 2. **Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the
policy of the State to protect the right to health of the people and
take appropriate action to promote their health and proper nutrition.
The State also recognizes the importance of agricultural
productivity and the valuable contribution of local and farm
producers in economic development, thus, it shall implement
programs to support and strengthen local agricultural industries.
Towards this end, the government shall establish a
comprehensive and integrated program that connects schools,
children, farmers and food entrepreneurs to local communities to promote nutrition, facilitate agricultural productivity, stimulate local economy and provide cross-sectoral benefits in areas of public health, economy, education and the environment to achieve the following objectives:

a) Ensure that proper health and nutrition information are given to school children throughout their childhood years;

b) Improve child nutrition by focusing on creating a health food environment in schools and early care educational institutions;

c) Support and influence children’s development towards healthy eating habits through proper education on good food sources and teach them how to make informed food choices, such as preferences for fruits and vegetables;

d) Establish and maintain school gardens as accessible and readily-available sources of healthy and nutritious vegetables and food for school children;

e) Ensure access of students to healthy and nutritious food through supplementary school-based feeding programs to mitigate malnourishment among school children; and

f) Enhance the general well-being of the community by encouraging schools, their students and their families to purchase from local producers of healthy and nutritious foods at the same time
stimulating local economies and providing economic development
opportunities to local food producers and laborers, distributors,
processors and others who support the local food system.

SEC. 3. **Farm to School Program.** – To carry the out the
policy mentioned under Section 2 of this Act, there shall be
established a Farm to School Program through which primary and
secondary schools provide education to school children on food and
nutrition, health and agriculture and undertake activities to ensure
the availability of and accessibility to safe, healthy, nutritious and
locally produced agricultural food products in school. The Farm to
School Program shall have the following components:

a) In-School Farm Program;

b) National School Feeding Program; and

c) Farm Visits Program.

For the purpose of this Act, “farm to school program” refers to
an alternative approach of enriching the connection that school
communities have with fresh and healthy agricultural food and their
local producers by educating and undertaking experiential learning
activities with the goal of improving the nutrition and food purchasing
practices of children and at the same time strengthening the local
economy. It includes health and nutrition promotion through
integrated academic lesson on vegetable production, farming and
animal rearing as well as hands-on and practical application through
in-school projects and out-of-school excursions, provision for
supplementary nourishment for school children, sectoral
collaboration and partnership with community organizations.

SEC. 4. **In-School Farm Program.** – As one major
component of Farm to School Program, the Department of
Education (DepEd) shall establish and maintain an in-school farm
or garden in every primary and secondary school and implement an
In-School Farm Program to:

a) Establish and promote vegetable production in public
elementary and secondary schools;

b) Serve as a hands-on educational laboratory in teaching
agriculture and agricultural concepts; and

c) Raise the awareness of school children on the
nutritional and health value of agricultural food products and instill
the importance of good health, proper nutrition, and hard work.

The DepEd shall be the lead agency in the implementation of
the in-school farm program and shall formulate a guideline of
requirements in the implementation of the program. The DepEd
shall structure a timetable to ensure that primary and secondary
schools have their own garden for healthy fruits and vegetables.
In line with this, the DepEd shall closely coordinate with the Department of Agriculture, the National Nutrition Council, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and local government units (LGUs) for the construction and funding requirements necessary in the proper implementation of the program.

SEC. 5. **Role of the Department of Agriculture.** – The Department of Agriculture shall identify and accredit farmer organizations and cooperatives who may supply the provisions for gardening. It shall also provide technology and technical assistance and conduct trainings and seminars to teach students, teachers and parents about school gardening.

SEC. 6. **Role of the National Nutrition Council.** – The National Nutrition Council shall provide a list of preferred vegetables that help address malnutrition problems in schools that prioritize planting.

SEC. 7. **Role of the Department of the Interior and Local Government.** – The Department Interior and Local Government and the local government units shall assist the schools by providing idle government lands and land resources to be used in the in-school farm program.
SEC. 8. *Inclusion of Vegetable Production in Academic Curriculum.* – Subjects and lessons in vegetable production shall be included in the academic curriculum for primary and secondary level students of both public and private schools to develop the skills and knowledge in vegetable production and promote agricultural literacy.

SEC. 9. *Product Utilization.* – Products from in-school farm program shall be primarily used for the national school feeding program. Surplus vegetables may be sold to generate income for the purchase of other food supplies for the national school feeding program or additional resources for the improvement of the school gardens.

SEC. 10. *National School Feeding Program (NSFP).* – The National School Feeding Program is hereby established as an alternative approach of providing free supplementary meals to students. The DepEd shall design a program menu using the product from the in-school farm program and other healthy foods sold by local producers.

In coordination with the DepEd, the following national government agencies are tasked to make available such resources as may be necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the NSFP:
a) The DA and the National Food Authority shall tap farmers associations and cooperatives in the locality for possible sources of food supplies and shall share with the DepEd any available resources and facilities that may be used for the NSFP;

c) The National Nutrition Council, in coordination with the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), shall provide the menu consisting of a combination of foods that meet the recommended energy and nutrient intake of children and use locally produced food and food products as far as possible.

SEC. 11. **Priority LGUs.** – In case of shortage of funds, priority in the implementation of the NSFP shall be given to municipalities and cities which are determined by the National Nutrition Council or by any competent government agency to have high malnutrition rates.

SEC. 12. **Participation of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs).** – The DepEd shall promote the involvement of parents through the PTAs in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the school feeding program.
SEC. 13. **Procurement, Storage and Handling System.** –

The procurement, storage and handling of appropriate food supplies by the DepEd shall be upon the recommendation of the National Nutrition Council, the FNRI and other appropriate government agencies.

In the procurement process, priority shall be given to the utilization of locally produced food supplies, as well as the products of the in-school farm program and the products of community gardens as part of convergence efforts to increase food supplies at the local level.

The DepEd shall issue the guidelines necessary for the effective implementation of the procurement, storage and handling system.

SEC. 14. **Farm Visits Program.** – The DepEd shall require that at least 25% of educational tours and field trips to be conducted by public and private primary and secondary schools every academic year shall be devoted to local farms and factories of local food producers or in those places involved in the planting, growing, harvesting, processing, packaging or distribution of food products from agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries; this also includes those involved in the raising, rearing or of animals and livestock including pork, beef, poultry, and other farm animals.
This further includes Farm Tourism Camps, as defined in RA 10816, which refer to any farm area that allows visitors and tourists to visit, get involved in farm activities, and to enjoy and learn rural lifestyle.

SEC. 15. **Monitoring and Evaluation System.** – The DepEd shall establish a monitoring and evaluation system for the nationwide implementation of the Farm To School Program, which shall incorporate periodic reports from the schools division and regional offices. The report provides, among others, the needed information that may determine whether or not the program has achieved its objectives, including the identification of issues and constraints as well as the corresponding appropriate recommendations.

SEC. 16. **Appropriations.** – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriation of the DepEd. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 17. **Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Education shall, in coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture and consultation with the heads of government agencies, formulate the
necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 18. **Separability Clause.** – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 19. **Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 20. **Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,