



House Bill No. 5383

Public Act No. 16-107

AN ACT CONCERNING THE FARM VIABILITY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM AND THE CONNECTICUT FARM LINK PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 22-26j of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

The Department of Agriculture shall establish and administer a farm viability matching grant program to any agricultural not-for-profit organization, municipality, group of municipalities, regional council of governments organized under the provisions of sections 4-124i to 4-124p, inclusive, or group of municipalities that have established a regional interlocal agreement pursuant to sections 7-339a to 7-339l, inclusive, to further agricultural viability. Such grants may be used for the following purposes: (1) Local capital projects that foster agricultural viability, including, but not limited to, processing facilities and farmers' markets; (2) the development and implementation of agriculturally-friendly land use regulations and local farmland protection strategies that sustain and promote local agriculture; [and] (3) the development of new marketing programs and venues through or in which a majority of products sold are grown in the state; and (4) the development and implementation of programs and services that promote farm and farmland access and transfer of such farms.

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Sec. 2. Section 22-26l of the 2016 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) The Department of Agriculture shall establish and administer a Connecticut Farm Link program to establish a database of farmers and agricultural land owners who intend to sell, lease or otherwise transfer their farm operations or agricultural land. The database shall be maintained by the Department of Agriculture and shall be made available to the public on the department's web site. Persons interested in starting an agricultural business or persons interested in expanding a current agricultural business may notify the department and have their names, contact information and intentions regarding such businesses [placed on the web site] entered in such database. The department shall make reasonable efforts to facilitate contact between parties with [similar] compatible interests, including, but not limited to, growing and processing crops as feedstock for biodiesel heating and transportation fuels. The Department of Agriculture may collaborate with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service and the Labor Department to encourage and assist veterans in starting or expanding an agricultural business and to provide education and training opportunities to veterans concerning farming or agricultural operations.

(b) The Department of Agriculture shall post [educational] materials regarding the Connecticut Farm Link program [on the department's web site] and farmland access, restoration and transfer on the department's Internet web site, conduct outreach to landowners and farmers, perform on-site investigations for lands enrolled in the Farm Link program, facilitate contact between parties with compatible interests and provide related educational programming, including, but not limited to, [information] programs regarding farm transfer and

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farm succession planning, family farm estate planning, farm transfer strategies, farm leasing, formation of farm partnerships, growing and processing crops as feedstock for biodiesel heating and transportation fuels and information regarding starting a farm business.

(c) The department may create partnerships or utilize third-party entities to implement the provisions of this section.

Approved June 2, 2016