

# Environment Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-243  
**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES.  
**Vote Date:** 3/18/2022  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute  
**PH Date:** 3/7/2022  
**File No.:**

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### **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Rep. Kevin Ryan, 139<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
Rep. David Michel, 146<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
Rep. Christine Palm, 36<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
Rep. Josh Elliott, 88<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. Maria P. Horn, 64<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
Rep. Corey P. Paris, 145<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
Rep. John-Michael Parker, 101<sup>st</sup> Dist.

### **REASON FOR THE BILL:**

To provide for reimbursement or payment of agricultural restoration plans that include climate-smart practices, as defined by the United State Department of Agriculture.

### **JOINT FAVORABLE SUBSTATUTE:**

Limited payment in advance to fifty percent, removed preference language for certain applicants and retained the use of certain terms defined in section 2 of the bill.

### **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

#### **Bryan Hulburt, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Agriculture**

This legislation acknowledges the difficulty that farmers many face in transitioning to climate smart agricultural practices. The upfront expenses for specialized machinery may be costly and implementing new practices could result in an initial decline in crop yield.

### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

#### **Kip Bergstrom, Chief Strategy Officer, Northeast Wool**

The promotion of regenerative agriculture is the single most important step Connecticut can take to address climate change. There are 400 sheep farms in Connecticut and we need to pay and reimburse farmers for implementing climate smart agriculture and forestry practices. We also need to elevate and amplify these efforts by using state tourism marketing to encourage our residents to buy from their local farms.

**Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council**

Recognizes the importance of working and natural lands to Connecticut's climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Consistent with recommendations from the Governor's Council on Climate Change Phase 1 Report as well as Governor's Executive Order No. 21-3. It enhances the CT Department of Agriculture's Farmland Restoration Grant Program by supporting farmers who implement climate smart agricultural and forestry practices.

**Dina Brewster, Executive Director of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of CT**

We support SB 243 because farmers need to know they have support as they tackle the challenges of innovating, rethinking the status quo, and adopting the kinds of Climate Smart agricultural practices that will build the vital natural resources upon which we all depend.

**Lori Brown, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters**

CTLCV fully supports this legislation which highlights the intersection of climate change mitigation and agriculture. Agriculture practices are increasingly recognized as having a huge impact on our ability to reduce and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

**Dr. Indrajeet, Dean, UConn College of Agriculture**

We support creating a funding mechanism to increase climate-smart agriculture. Our work extends across Connecticut's urban-rural interface to help farmers and growers utilize the most current best practices to grow food and plants that help reduce the carbon footprint of their agricultural endeavors.

**Dr. Emily Cole, New England Regional Deputy Director of American Farmland Trust**

I am an advocate for sound farming practice, soil scientist specializing in carbon sequestration on farmland. This bill provides mechanisms for financial and technical support that can help farmers harness the potential that farmland has in the fight against climate change.

**Connecticut Green Bank**

The Green Bank Supports SB 243 because of the payment and reimbursement allowances with also include a farmland restoration and climate resiliency plan and climate-smart practices.

**Kathleen Doherty, Conservation Manager, Connecticut Farmland Trust**

We support SB 243 because it is an important factor to the success of the Farmland Restoration and climate Resiliency Grant Program is the availability of funding. Farming is financially risky in the best of times, and farmers need monetary incentives in order to implement new practices such as climate-smart ag practices.

**Nathan Frohling, Director of External Affairs, The Nature Conservancy**

We support SB 243 because to address both climate mitigation and resiliency we must work across all sectors and employ many diverse solutions. This bill will help address both climate mitigation and resilience by providing reimbursement or payment of agricultural restoration plans that include climate-smart practices, as defined by the United State Department of Agriculture.

**Ann Gadwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer, Sierra Club, CT Chapter**

Agriculture contributes over 5 billion dollars in economic input and supports 29,000 jobs in Connecticut. This bill would make this industry climate smart, more equitable, and more accessible to more people here in the state so we urge your support for this bill.

**Chelsea Gazillo, Director, Working Lands Alliance Director**

We are confident that this bill will support the economic recovery and viability of our agricultural community while continuing to promote climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices statewide.

**John Guskowski, Board President, CT Resource Conservation & Development**

CT REC&D staff participated in the Agriculture/Soils Working group of the Governor's Council on Climate Change and sits on the Working Lands Alliance. We support the language in this bill that includes benefits of compensating farmers to implement climate-smart agricultural practices, including and not limited to implementing healthy soil practices.

**John Halfinger, Chairman of RAC**

The RAC applied for a grant and received it, from the Department of Agriculture. The grants goals are to increase acreage farmed in the RiverCOG region and to restore land health. This new program through RAC, can possibly be just a start of possible programs for CT farmers. Bill 243 would be the next step to help farmers and to continue to implement smart agriculture practices.

**Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association**

This bill would enable the Department of Agriculture's Farmland Restoration Grant Program to respond directly to the challenge of climate change by supporting farmers who implement "climate-smart agricultural and forestry practices."

**Meg Hourigan, Coordinator, CT Food System Alliance**

SB 243 would strengthen our local food system, reduce the impacts of climate change, and support Connecticut farmers, who increasingly struggle to make ends meet.

**Susan M. Mitchell, Cloverleigh Farms**

This bill will provide a source of funding for farmers to respond to these climate-related changes.

**Joan Nichols, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association**

We support SB 243 Productive farmland, healthy soils, and climate smart farming practices area important contributor to the state's overall goal of building resiliency against climate change.

**Will O'Mears, Hungry Reaper Farm**

SB 243 would provide a significant opportunity to add resilience to our industry and proved climate mitigation benefits to our whole state.

**Jane Philbrick, CEO Northeast Wool**

I support SB 243 because I believe that regenerative agriculture is the single most important step Connecticut can take to address climate change.

**Susan G Pronovost, Executive Director, Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association**

The implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices is a necessity due to our changing climate and the volatility of global energy supplies and challenges which drastically impact energy markets.

**Cynthia Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Northwest Conservation District**

SB 243 is designed to support farmers in their efforts to embrace practices which conserve energy, keep carbon locked in the soil, recharge groundwater-which reduces flooding problems-and other conservation practices that protect the environment and mitigate climate change.

**Joanna Shapiro, Executive Director, North Central Conservation District**

SB 243 expands the popular and useful program in a very important way by formalizing the role of Conservation Districts and other agencies to provide technical assistance for this program, adding a focus on climate resiliency, incorporating forest management and providing a more impactful level of funding to individual farmers.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed

**Reported by: Judith Ganswindt**

**Date: March 30, 2022**