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REPRESENTING OHIO'S 9TH DISTRICT



SECTION-BY-SECTION SUMMARY THE URBAN AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION ACT 2017

Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

The bill's name is the "Urban Agriculture Production Act of 2017".

Sec. 2. DEFINITION

This section defines urban agriculture as the production of food and non-food plants and animal husbandry in urban areas. This section also defines urban area as area within a Metropolitan Statistical Area, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget.

Sec. 3. FINDINGS

1. Dramatic economic, demographic, and land use changes have created pockets of arable land suitable for agricultural production in and around urban areas of the United States.
2. Advances in agricultural practices make production possible in and around urban areas that were previously cordoned off from agricultural production.
3. There is a disconnect between daily urban life and food production that urban agriculture can help address.
4. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, approximately 7 percent of all farms in the United States had direct sales of agricultural products totaling at least \$1,300,000,000, with the highest of such sales coming from farms in metropolitan counties or in adjacent rural counties.
5. It is imperative to ensure that urban agricultural production remains a viable option to help meet the food production needs of the future.

Sec. 4. URBAN AGRICULTURE OUTREACH PROGRAM

This section directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an Urban Agriculture Outreach Program, which would award grants for the following activities in and around urban areas:

- Infrastructure; land acquisition and land conversation;
- Education and training to enhance agricultural production;
- The aggregation of farmer products and supplies for purposes of transportation to market;
- Other activities that support urban agricultural production as determined by the Secretary.

In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall give a preference to eligible entities seeking a grant for outreach activities to be carried out in historically underserved communities.

\$50 million in discretionary appropriations is authorized for the Urban Agriculture Outreach Program for fiscal year 2018 and each fiscal year thereafter.

Sec. 5. URBAN AGRICULTURE LIAISON

This section requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an Urban Agricultural Liaison, similar to the Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison created by the 2014 Farm Bill.

The Urban Agricultural Liaison is authorized to administer the Urban Agriculture Outreach Program, created in Section 4 –thereby establishing a clearinghouse on agricultural activities in urban areas, in consultation with public and private groups on how to enhance urban agriculture production overall.

The Urban Agricultural Liaison will also use existing authorities to improve access to programs; improve viability and profitability; and recommend new initiatives to the Secretary for urban farmers and ranchers.

Sec. 6. URBAN AGRICULTURE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

This section directs the Secretary to award grants on a competitive basis for scientific and community-based participatory research on promoting and enhancing agricultural production in urban areas.

Projects would be required to focus on:

- Improving production efficiency
- Production
- Profitability
- Marketing new innovations and technologies
- Methods to protect crops and agricultural products from pests and diseases
- Other research areas the Secretary determines are appropriate

\$20 million in mandatory funding is provided for the research initiative for each of the fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

Sec. 7. AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

This section amends the following existing USDA programs:

1. Subsection (a) The Farmers' Market Loan and Loan Guarantees

- Authorizes the Farm Service Agency to carry out a program to make loans and loan guarantees to eligible entities for projects or activities that establish, expand, and promote direct producer-to-consumer marketing and assist in the development of local food business enterprises.
- Eligible entities include agricultural cooperatives, public agencies, non-profit organizations, farmers' market operators or such other entities as the Secretary may designate.
- Priority given to projects or activities that benefit underserved communities.
- The interest rate for loans made under the program shall be equivalent to the rate charged on Treasury securities. Also, the duration of the rate shall be for the term of the loan.
- \$10 Million is provided to carry out the program from fiscal years 2018 thru 2022.

2. **Subsection (a) The Farmers' Market Promotion Program**

- \$40 Million per year in mandatory funding is provided from fiscal years 2018 thru 2022.
- No more than 4 percent of the total amount made available to carry out this section for a fiscal year may be used for administrative or technical assistance expenses.

3. **Subsection (b) The Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program**

- Amends the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program to include low-income veterans.
- \$50 Million per year in mandatory funding is provided to carry out the program from fiscal years 2018 thru 2022.
- \$50 Million per year in discretionary funding is also authorized to carry out the program from fiscal years 2018 thru 2022.
- Of the funds made available to carry out this section for a fiscal year—
 - 70 percent of the funds shall be used for the benefit of program recipients who are low-income seniors; and
 - 30 percent of the funds shall be used for the benefit of program recipients who are low-income veterans.
- Subsection (b) also allows for the use of unexpended funds from a current fiscal year in a subsequent fiscal year.

4. **Subsection (c) The Community Food Projects**

- Removes the requirement that only projects with a 1-time contribution be eligible.
- Increases the funding for the Community Food Project to \$10 million per year.

5. **Subsection (d) The Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program**

- Amends the Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program to include urban farmers and ranchers as eligible group.

Sec. 8. IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL REPORTING

This section requires the Secretary to include certain information in the Census of Agriculture and submit several annual reports to Congress.

- (a) Requires Farmers' Markets be included in the Census of Agriculture and identifies specific items to be included.
- (b) Requires the Secretary to submit to Congress an annual report on Farmers' Markets and identifies specific items to be reported on including but not limited to number of markets, economic value of markets, products sold at markets, average income and form of payments accepted at markets.
- (c) Requires the Secretary to submit to Congress an annual report on agricultural production in and around urban areas.
- (d) Requires the Secretary incorporate promoting and enhancing agricultural production in urban areas into the USDA's performance goals.

Sec. 9. STUDY AND REPORT

This section requires the Secretary to conduct a joint study with the Department of Energy and the National Academy of Sciences on the technologies to advance urban agricultural production and submit a report to Congress summarizing the findings of such study.