

SENATE ECONOMIC GROWTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 772

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 10, 2022

The Senate Economic Growth Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 772.

As amended and reported, this bill directs the Department of Agriculture to establish a New Jersey Minority, Women, and Underserved Farmer Registry (State registry). Through the Farm Liaison designated by the Secretary of Agriculture, the bill directs the department to:

1) coordinate outreach to minority, women, disabled, LGBTQIA+, and socially disadvantaged farmers in the State who have been historically underserved (historically underserved farmers) by farm loan assistance programs, including programs for beginning farmer loans, emergency farm loans, farm loan servicing, farm operating loans, guaranteed farm loans, direct operating loans, direct farm ownership down payment loans, microloans, and other business assistance available to farmers in the State;

2) register historically underserved farmers to receive notification of opportunities to apply for and participate in farm loan assistance and business assistance programs;

3) assist in the prioritization of applications of historically underserved farmers, who are State registrants, for farm loan assistance and business assistance programs in accordance with the provisions of the bill;

4) provide each historically underserved farmer who is a State registrant with information concerning the United States Department of Agriculture Minority Farm Register (USDA minority farm register); and

5) provide each historically underserved farmer who is a State registrant the opportunity to register with the USDA minority farm register.

The bill also provides that 180 days after the establishment of the State registry, and every 180 days thereafter, the department is required to:

1) review and compare the historically underserved farmer, who are State registrants, with the farmers who have registered with the USDA minority farm register;

2) notify any historically underserved farmer, who is a State registrant, and who is not registered with the USDA minority farm register of the benefits of registering with the USDA minority farm register; and

3) encourage historically underserved farmers, who are State registrants, to register with the USDA minority farm register.

The bill provides that, to the greatest extent possible, the department is to ensure that the criteria for inclusion in the State registry is the same as the criteria for inclusion in the USDA minority farm register so that any State registrant may be included in both registries. The bill also provides that, whenever the criteria for inclusion in the USDA minority farm register is updated to include any additional individuals or groups of farmers, the department is to update accordingly the criteria for inclusion in the State registry and coordinate outreach to the additional individuals or groups of farmers.

The committee amended the bill to:

- Clarify that programs for beginning farmer loans, emergency farm loans, farm loan servicing, farm operating loans, guaranteed farm loans, direct operating loans, direct farm ownership down payment loans are included with the types of farm loan assistance programs that the department is supposed to coordinate outreach and notify historically underserved farmers of the opportunities for which they may apply;
- Clarify that the department is to assist in the prioritization of applications of State registrants, for farm loan assistance programs and other business assistance programs, in accordance with the provisions of the bill; and
- Make additional grammatical corrections.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2022-2023 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.