

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 158

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
222nd LEGISLATURE

DATED: SEPTEMBER 2, 2026

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:**

Directs Dept. of Agriculture to develop and implement beginning farmer mentoring program in cooperation with certain agricultural and educational organizations and entities; appropriates \$5,000,000.
- Type of Impact:**

State expenditure increase during life of program.
- Agencies Affected:**

Department of Agriculture, Rutgers University, counties.

Fiscal Impact	Duration of the Program
State Expenditure Increase	Up to \$5 million

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) determines that this bill would result in a State expenditure increase of up to \$5 million during the life of the program. If the full amount is not expended in the first year, the remaining amount will be spent in subsequent fiscal years until the full \$5 million is exhausted.
- The OLS notes that there may also be indirect financial effects of the bill, including the economic impacts of additional State-grown agricultural products entering the market and beginning farmer involvement in other State agricultural programs.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill would require the Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the State Agriculture Development Committee, the New Jersey Farm Bureau, county boards of agriculture, Rutgers University, the New Jersey Agricultural Society, and other agricultural, horticultural, or educational entities in the State, to develop and implement a beginning farmer mentoring program. Under the program, experienced farmers would provide guidance, advice, and other appropriate assistance to beginning farmers. The bill includes a \$5 million appropriation for this initiative.

The department is required to incorporate into the program online farmer-mentor services and resources, thereby developing avenues and opportunities for experienced farmers to connect with

and mentor beginning farmers. The department would also be authorized to establish eligibility criteria for mentors and farmers who apply for involvement in the program.

The bill would allow the department to partner with public or private organizations or entities, including entering into agreements or contracts with those organizations or entities to operate the program under the general supervision of the department.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS determines that this bill would result in a State expenditure increase of up to \$5 million during the life of the program. If the full amount is not expended in the first year, the remaining amount will be spent in subsequent fiscal years until the full \$5 million is exhausted.

There also may be indirect external financial effects of the bill, including beginning farmer involvement in other programs. Mentored farmers may engage with other educational and training programs or the Jersey Fresh program, and the State may notice economic impacts from additional State-grown agricultural products entering the market.

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).