

SENATE, No. 4113

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED NOVEMBER 12, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator PATRICK J. DIEGNAN, JR.

District 18 (Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Food Innovation District Program.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ACT** establishing the “Food Innovation District Program” and
2 supplementing Title 4 of the Revised Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. With respect to the modern food system, which consists of
9 mass production, processing, transporting, and consumption, most
10 food moves from farm to plate through long and complex global
11 supply chains;

12 b. The standardization and large volumes these supply chains
13 demand do not accommodate the more diverse range of products and
14 companies within the State’s emerging local and regional food
15 sector;

16 c. This leaves the State’s small- and mid-size farms and food
17 businesses without appropriate-scale storage, packaging, processing,
18 and other facilities and services, known as “food system
19 infrastructure”; and

20 d. It is, therefore, in the interest of the residents of the State to
21 establish a program to bring together complementary community and
22 entrepreneurial activities for synergistic business and development in
23 the State’s food system infrastructure.

24
25 2. a. The "Food Innovation District Program" is established
26 within the Division of Marketing and Development in the Department
27 of Agriculture. The purpose of the program is to encourage the
28 development of food innovation districts within New Jersey. A food
29 innovation district is a geographic concentration of food-oriented
30 businesses, services, and community activities that are supported
31 through planning and economic development initiatives in order to
32 promote a positive business environment, spur regional food system
33 development, and increase access to local food.

34 b. The division, in consultation with the Department of Labor and
35 Workforce Development, the Department of Community Affairs, and
36 the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, shall establish
37 criteria for the designation of food innovation districts. Criteria for
38 the food innovation district designation shall include, but not be
39 limited to:

40 (1) accessibility to mass transportation facilities and services;

41 (2) zoning or a redevelopment plan that permits mixed-use
42 development; and

43 (3) a cluster of interconnected food businesses, suppliers, and
44 associated institutions.

45 c. The division shall establish an application form and procedure
46 for municipalities to apply for designation of an area as a food
47 innovation district. An application shall include, but not be limited
48 to:

- 1 (1) the boundaries of the proposed food innovation district;
- 2 (2) an inventory of existing and proposed food-oriented
- 3 businesses; regional food hubs; community kitchens; farmers
- 4 markets; warehousing, processing, distribution, and related facilities;
- 5 and other food system infrastructure;
- 6 (3) a plan for the development or redevelopment of the proposed
- 7 food innovation district, which shall include, but not be limited to,
- 8 plans for:
 - 9 (a) attracting food-oriented businesses to locate within the
 - 10 district;
 - 11 (b) regional food hubs;
 - 12 (c) community kitchens;
 - 13 (d) farmers markets;
 - 14 (e) warehousing, processing, distribution, and related facilities;
 - 15 (f) urban agriculture production;
 - 16 (g) healthy food assistance;
 - 17 (h) programming, events, and community building;
 - 18 (i) improvements or developments of public spaces;
 - 19 (j) marketing and outreach;
 - 20 (k) other food system infrastructure; and
 - 21 (4) any other information required by the division.
- 22 d. The division shall publicize the Food Innovation District
- 23 Program, and provide links to the application form and procedure on
- 24 the division's Internet website.
- 25 e. A municipality may apply to the division for designation of
- 26 all or part of the municipality as a food innovation district. Two or
- 27 more municipalities may jointly apply for designation of an area as a
- 28 food innovation district. An application shall not be submitted unless
- 29 authorized by adoption of a resolution of the governing body of the
- 30 municipality, or, in the event of a joint application, the adoption of
- 31 parallel resolutions by the governing bodies of the municipalities.
- 32 f. Within 60 calendar days of its receipt of a complete
- 33 application for designation of an area as a food innovation district,
- 34 the division shall approve, conditionally approve, or deny the
- 35 application.
- 36 g. In consultation with the Department of Community Affairs
- 37 and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the division
- 38 shall adopt guidance and standards for municipalities to promote
- 39 food innovation districts as places for businesses to locate. A
- 40 municipality may advertise or otherwise use the food innovation
- 41 district designation in accordance with the adopted guidance or
- 42 standards.
- 43 h. In accordance with the "Administrative Procedure Act,"
- 44 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the Commissioner of
- 45 Agriculture may adopt the rules and regulations necessary to
- 46 effectuate the purposes of this section.
- 47
- 48 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill would establish a three-year “Food Innovation District Pilot Program” within the Division of Marketing and Development in the Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the program is to encourage the development of food innovation districts within New Jersey. A food innovation district is a geographic concentration of food-oriented businesses, services, and community activities that are supported through planning and economic development initiatives in order to promote a positive business environment, spur regional food system development, increase access to local food, and support the transition to healthy and environmentally-friendly alternatives to single-use plastic packaging.

The division, in consultation with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Community Affairs, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, would identify criteria for the designation of food innovation districts. The bill specifies the criteria for a food innovation district designation to include, but not be limited to:

- accessibility to mass transportation facilities and services;
- zoning or a redevelopment plan that permits mixed-use development; and
- a cluster of interconnected food businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions.

The bill directs the division to establish an application form and procedure for municipalities to apply for designation of an area as a food innovation district. The bill would require an application to include, but would not be limited to:

- (1) the boundaries of the proposed food innovation district;
- (2) an inventory of existing and proposed food-oriented businesses; regional food hubs; community kitchens and ghost kitchens; farmers markets; warehousing, processing, distribution, and related facilities; and other food system infrastructure; and
- (3) a plan for the development or redevelopment of the proposed food innovation district, which would be limited to plans for community kitchens and ghost kitchens; warehousing, processing, distribution, and related facilities; and supporting the food industry in its transition to the use of healthy and environmentally-friendly alternatives to single-use plastic packaging.

The bill directs the division to publicize the Food Innovation District Program, and provide links to the application form and procedure on its Internet website.

Under the bill, a municipality may apply to the division for designation of all or part of the municipality as a food innovation district. Two or more municipalities may jointly apply for designation of an area as a food innovation district. Within 60 calendar days of its receipt of a complete application for designation

1 of an area as a food innovation district, the bill directs the division to
2 approve, conditionally approve, or deny the application.

3 The bill directs the division, in consultation with the Department
4 of Community Affairs and the New Jersey Economic Development
5 Authority, to adopt guidance and standards for municipalities to
6 promote food innovation districts as places for businesses to locate.
7 A municipality may advertise or otherwise use the food innovation
8 district designation in accordance with the adopted guidance or
9 standards.

10 The division, in conjunction with the Rutgers Agricultural
11 Research and Extension Center, would provide resources and
12 technical assistance to at least one food innovation district in the
13 central region of the State and to at least one food innovation district
14 in the southern region of the State to enhance the efficacy of the
15 program. When measuring the efficacy of the program, the report
16 would include, but is not limited to, the following metrics for each
17 food innovation district:

- 18 (1) the rate of change in the number of businesses;
- 19 (2) the rate of change in the number of businesses developing new
20 products or services;
- 21 (3) the rate of change in the number of new partnerships with
22 industry specific businesses, companies, or institutions;
- 23 (4) the rate of change in entrepreneurship;
- 24 (5) the amount of venture capital or generalized funding received
25 from private investors;
- 26 (6) the amount of access to qualified personnel and the number of
27 job candidates with relevant skills, education, and training; and
- 28 (7) the amount of local sourcing of personnel.

29 Within six months prior to the expiration of the three-year pilot
30 program, the division would be required to submit a report to the
31 Governor, and to the Legislature on the effectiveness of the program,
32 including an assessment concerning the continuation of the program.