

SENATE, No. 2162

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

218th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 5, 2018

Sponsored by:

Senator BOB ANDRZEJCZAK

District 1 (Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland)

Senator JEFF VAN DREW

District 1 (Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland)

SYNOPSIS

Directs Dept. of Agriculture to develop and implement beginning farmer mentoring program in cooperation with certain agricultural and educational organizations and entities.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/29/2019)

1 AN ACT concerning beginning farmers and supplementing Title 4 of
2 the Revised Statutes.

3

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

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7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that agriculture is a
8 critically important industry in the State; that preserving a viable
9 agricultural base in the State will ensure that there is sufficient
10 fresh, locally grown produce and other agricultural and horticultural
11 products available for the public to consume and enjoy, which in
12 turn contributes to promoting the health and welfare of the people;
13 that the public also enjoys many aesthetic benefits from the
14 presence of farms in their communities; that the continuing
15 existence of farms and farming in the State is threatened by
16 numerous pressures and stresses, especially in such a densely
17 populated and developed state as New Jersey; that one of the major
18 issues confronting agriculture in both the State and the nation is the
19 increasing average age of farmers, thus demonstrating that there is
20 insufficient recruitment of new or beginning farmers; that
21 furthermore, the National Agricultural Statistics Service in the
22 United States Department of Agriculture reports in its census of
23 agriculture, which is taken every five years and is due again in
24 2017, that nationally the average age of the principal operator of a
25 farm has risen from 55.3 years in 2002, to 57.1 years in 2007, and
26 then to 58.3 years in 2012; that, similarly, in New Jersey the
27 average age of the principal operator of a farm has risen from 57
28 years in 2007 to 59 years in 2012; that farming cannot survive if
29 there are too few farmers in the State; and that, therefore, it is
30 appropriate and necessary to create a mentoring program whereby
31 experienced farmers can impart their knowledge to beginning
32 farmers so that they will have a greater chance to succeed, thus
33 ensuring that agriculture will continue to be a major industry in the
34 State, in both the near and distant future, and that the Garden State
35 will always prove itself worthy of that name.

36

37 2. a. The Department of Agriculture, in consultation and
38 cooperation with the State Agriculture Development Committee, the
39 New Jersey Farm Bureau, the county boards of agriculture, Rutgers
40 the State University, the New Jersey Agricultural Society, and any
41 other appropriate agricultural, horticultural, or educational entities
42 in the State, shall develop and implement a beginning farmer
43 mentoring program by which experienced farmers would provide
44 guidance, advice, and other appropriate assistance to beginning
45 farmers so that they and their farms may succeed and thrive. The
46 department shall develop the structure of the beginning farmer
47 mentoring program and the roles the agricultural, horticultural, and
48 educational organizations and entities shall serve within it.

1 b. The department:

2 (1) shall incorporate into the beginning farmer mentoring
3 program any online linking services and resources established by
4 the department, and shall develop further avenues and opportunities
5 for, experienced farmers to mentor beginning farmers, including
6 establishing criteria for mentoring and the eligibility of farmers to
7 mentor or be mentored under the program; and

8 (2) may partner with appropriate public or private organizations
9 or entities to accomplish the purposes of this act, including entering
10 into agreements or contracts with those organizations or entities to
11 operate the program, in whole or in part, under the general
12 supervision of the department.

13 c. The department shall adopt, pursuant to the “Administrative
14 Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), any rules and
15 regulations necessary to implement this act.

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17 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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22 This bill would require the Department of Agriculture, in
23 consultation and cooperation with the State Agriculture
24 Development Committee, the New Jersey Farm Bureau, the county
25 boards of agriculture, Rutgers the State University, the New Jersey
26 Agricultural Society, and any other appropriate agricultural,
27 horticultural, or educational entities in the State, to develop and
28 implement a beginning farmer mentoring program by which
29 experienced farmers would provide guidance, advice, and other
30 appropriate assistance to beginning farmers so that they and their
31 farms may succeed and thrive.

32 The bill also would authorize the department to partner with
33 appropriate public or private organizations or entities to accomplish
34 the purposes of the bill, including entering into agreements or
35 contracts with those organizations or entities to operate the
36 program, in whole or in part, under the general supervision of the
37 department.

38 This bill is necessary because, according to the latest available
39 data, in New Jersey the average age of the principal operator of a
40 farm has risen from 57 years in 2007 to 59 years in 2012. A similar
41 trend is occurring nationally. Farming is unlikely to survive in New
42 Jersey if this trend continues. Thus, it is necessary to create a
43 mentoring program whereby experienced farmers can impart their
44 knowledge to beginning farmers so that they will have a greater
45 chance to succeed, thus ensuring that agriculture will continue to be
46 a major industry in the State, in both the near and distant future.