

1 H.750

2 Introduced by Representative Young of Glover

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Agriculture; animal welfare; livestock production

6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish the

7 Animal-Welfare-Certified Producers Grant Program.

8 An act relating to providing financial assistance for animal-welfare-certified
9 producers in Vermont

10 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

11 Sec. 1. 6 V.S.A. chapter 207 is amended to read:

12 CHAPTER 207. PROMOTION AND MARKETING OF VERMONT

13 FOODS AND PRODUCTS

14 Subchapter 1. Agricultural Practices and Production

15 * * *

16 Subchapter 4. Animal-Welfare-Certified Producer Grant Program

17 § 4641. PURPOSE AND GOAL

18 (a) Purpose. It is the purpose of this chapter to establish the Animal-

19 Welfare-Certified Producer Grant Program in the Agency of Agriculture, Food

20 and Markets to:

1 (1) assist in the development of strategies to help Vermont farmers
2 capture and retain a greater share of consumers' food dollars; improve
3 economic opportunity; and foster robust, innovative, and competitive farm
4 operations through making an animal-welfare certification program available
5 for livestock and poultry producers;

6 (2) provide the public with transparent and rigorous animal-welfare
7 information regarding agricultural commodities produced in Vermont under
8 the auspices of an animal-welfare certification program; and

9 (3) assist producers, through matching grants, with meeting the costs
10 associated with obtaining and maintaining animal-welfare certifications by
11 independent animal-welfare certification programs.

12 (b) Programmatic goal. It is the goal of the Animal-Welfare-Certified
13 Producer Grant Program to:

14 (1) assist Vermont producers to increase farm income, create jobs, boost
15 the economy, and increase consumers' food choices by attaining animal-
16 welfare certifications; and

17 (2) increase the number of farm animals living under the welfare
18 standards of independent animal-welfare certification programs.

19 § 4642. DEFINITIONS

20 As used in this subchapter:

1 (1) “Farm” means a parcel or parcels of land owned, leased, or managed
2 by a person and devoted primarily to farming, as that term is defined in
3 10 V.S.A. § 6001.

4 (2) “Independent animal-welfare certification program” means a
5 program offered by a body approved by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and
6 Markets that uses qualified, third-party, on-farm auditors to assess routinely a
7 producer’s 100 percent compliance with specific farm-animal-welfare
8 standards exceeding industry standards based on industry guidelines,
9 provided that:

10 (A) The protocols of the standards are made public.

11 (B) The standards include, at a minimum, provisions for space
12 allowance, environmental enrichment and ability to engage in natural
13 behaviors, pain control and physical alternations, handling, and responsible
14 antibiotic use.

15 (C) Routine caging, crating, or tethering of animals is prohibited.

16 (D) The auditors have no vested or financial interest in audit
17 outcomes.

18 (E) The auditors possess a background in animal-welfare science or
19 have received equivalent training, and are able to recognize, review, and apply
20 established farm-animal-welfare standards and protocols.

21 (3) “Producer” means any person who raises livestock or poultry for
22 meat, eggs, or dairy products.

1 (4) “Transitioning producer” means any producer currently in the
2 process of making on-farm improvements, scheduling an initial audit, or
3 paying initial audit fees in order to participate in an independent animal-
4 welfare certification program.

5 (5) “Animal-welfare-certified producer” means any producer currently
6 participating in an independent animal-welfare certification program.

7 § 4643. ANIMAL-WELFARE-CERTIFIED PRODUCER GRANT
8 PROGRAM

9 (a) A producer, transitioning producer, or animal-welfare-certified producer
10 may apply to the Secretary of Agriculture, Food, and Markets for a matching
11 grant for costs associated with achieving or maintaining certification by an
12 independent animal-welfare certification program, including:

13 (1) any fees required by the independent animal-welfare certification
14 program; or

15 (2) on-farm improvements required to meet the standards of the
16 independent animal-welfare certification program, including:

17 (A) structures, equipment, or fencing; or

18 (B) perches, scratchers, or other enrichment materials.

19 (b) The Secretary shall provide matching grants from the funds designated
20 for the Animal-Welfare-Certified Producer Grant Program appropriated in the
21 Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets’ budget. The grants shall not
22 exceed 50 percent of the cost of a project for animal-welfare certification. The

1 Secretary shall set the standards for the selection process, including eligible
2 independent animal-welfare certification programs, costs eligible for funding,
3 project implementation, reporting requirements, and other provisions as the
4 Secretary deems necessary or beneficial in implementing the Program.

5 § 4644. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH REPORT

6 (a) The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall conduct outreach
7 and education for producers regarding the Animal-Welfare-Certified Producer
8 Grant Program.

9 (b) On or before January 15 of every year, the Secretary of Agriculture,
10 Food and Markets shall submit to the House Committee on Agriculture and
11 Forestry and the Senate Committee on Agriculture a report summarizing the
12 number of producers requesting financial assistance, the number of producers
13 receiving financial assistance, the amount of assistance provided to each
14 producer in dollars, the total amount of assistance provided in dollars, and the
15 project funded by each grant.

16 Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION

17 The sum of \$50,000.00 is appropriated to the Agency of Agriculture, Food
18 and Markets from the General Fund in fiscal year 2019 for the Animal-
19 Welfare-Certified Producer Grant Program under 6 V.S.A. § 4643.

20 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

21 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.