

No. 23. An act relating to the Farm-to-Plate Investment Program.

(H.275)

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

Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. § 330 is amended to read:

§ 330. THE FARM-TO-PLATE INVESTMENT PROGRAM; CREATION;

~~GOALS~~ OUTCOMES; TASKS; METHODS

(a) Creation.

(1) The Sustainable Jobs Fund Program ~~in consultation with the Vermont Sustainable Agriculture Council~~ shall establish the Vermont Farm-to-Plate Investment Program to fulfill the goals and carry out the tasks described in this section.

(2) If at least \$100,000.00 in funding is not made available for the purpose of this section, the Sustainable Jobs Fund Program is encouraged but no longer required to fulfill the provisions of this section.

(b) ~~Goals~~ Intended outcomes. The ~~goals~~ intended outcomes of the Farm-to-Plate Investment Program are to:

(1) Increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector.

(2) ~~Create jobs in the food and farm economy~~ Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change.

(3) Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters.

(c) Tasks.

(1) ~~By June 30, 2010, the~~ The Vermont Farm-to-Plate Investment Program shall create a strategic plan for agricultural ~~economic~~ and food system development, which may be periodically reviewed and updated, based upon the following:

(A) Inventory Vermont's food system infrastructure by gathering existing data, studies, and analysis about the components of Vermont's food system, including:

(i) ~~The~~ the types of foods produced in Vermont, the number of producers of each type of food, the amount of each type of food produced, and the financial viability of each food-producing sector;

(ii) ~~The~~ the types of food processors in Vermont, how much food produced in Vermont is purchased by Vermont processors, and the financial viability of the food processing sector in Vermont;

(iii) ~~The~~ the current and potential markets in which Vermont food producers and processors can sell their products;

(iv) ~~The~~ the extent of existing agricultural lands that could be expanded and the resources available to expand Vermont's food production;

(v) ~~The~~ the potential for new farmers and food processors to enter the local food economy, the methods for new farmers to acquire land and other farm infrastructure, and the availability and barriers to farm and processing labor; and

(vi) ~~The~~ the potential for entirely new local products and the barriers to farmers and processors entering new markets.

(B) Identify gaps in the infrastructure and distribution systems and identify ways to address these gaps.

(2) The Vermont Farm-to-Plate Investment Program shall ~~seek grant funding to support farm-to-table direct marketing, including farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture operations and to support regional community food hubs~~ provide support for farm and food businesses, including regional food hubs, selling in all types of markets, direct and wholesale, in the State and outside the State.

(3) As an ongoing task, the Farm-to-Plate Investment Program shall use the information gathered for the strategic plan and updates to the plan to identify methods and the funding necessary to strengthen the links among producers, processors, and markets, including:

(A) ~~Support~~ supporting of the work of existing farm-to-school programs to increase the purchase of local foods by Vermont schools, with a particular emphasis on procurement of nutrient-dense animal foods.;

(B) supporting the work of the Working Lands Enterprise Board to strategically invest in farm and food businesses;

(C) ~~Collaborating~~ collaborating with the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Department of Buildings and General Services to increase procurement of local foods in accordance with 6 V.S.A. § 4601.;

~~(C)~~(D) ~~Collaborating~~ collaborating with the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Sustainable Agriculture Council to increase procurement of local foods by businesses and institutions;:

~~(D)~~(E) ~~Supporting~~ supporting initiatives that improve ~~direct~~ the marketing of foods from ~~the farm~~ Vermont producers to ~~the consumer~~. consumers inside the State and outside of the State;

(F) supporting education and workforce development initiatives that address skill and labor needs of farm and food businesses; and

~~(E)~~(G) ~~Informing~~ informing agricultural lenders of the information collected under subdivision (1) of this subsection (c) in order to facilitate availability of ~~agricultural~~ farm and food sector financing.

(4) The Farm-to-Plate Investment Program ~~strategic plan~~ Strategic Plan shall also ~~include recommendations regarding~~ establish measurable goals that shall be tracked over the ~~ten-year~~ life of the Plan; methods for the ongoing collection of data necessary to track those goals; plans for updating the Plan as needed; and appropriate methods to track the ongoing economic contribution of the farm and food sector to the Vermont economy.

(d) Methods. To accomplish the goals and carry out the ongoing tasks stated in this section, the Vermont Farm-to-Plate Investment Program may:

(1) ~~Create~~ create an advisory panel with representatives from the agricultural and business communities;:

(2) ~~Hire~~ hire or assign staff;:

(3) ~~Seek~~ seek and accept funds from private and public entities;

(4) serve as the administrative support for the Farm-to-Plate Network;

and

(5) ~~Utilize~~ utilize technical assistance, loans, grants, or other means approved by the Board.

(e) [Repealed.]

Sec. 2. FARM-TO-PLATE INVESTMENT PROGRAM; REPORT

On or before January 1, 2031, the Sustainable Jobs Fund shall report to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry a recommendation of whether the Farm-to-Plate Investment Program should continue to operate as authorized under 10 V.S.A. § 330 or whether the Program should be repealed. The Sustainable Jobs Fund shall provide a rationale for its recommendation and any proposed legislative action to implement the recommendation.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.

Date Governor signed bill: May 16, 2019