

LEGISLATIVE BILL 986

Approved by the Governor April 12, 2010

Introduced by Conrad, 46; Mello, 5.

FOR AN ACT relating to the Agricultural Opportunities and Value-Added Partnerships Act; to amend sections 2-5414, 2-5416, and 2-5419, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska; to state intent; to authorize grants relating to electronic scanners and point-of-sale devices; and to repeal the original sections.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 2-5414, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

2-5414 (1) The Legislature finds that:

(a) There is a serious economic crisis in the agricultural and rural sectors of Nebraska's economy;

(b) There is a need in such sectors to develop strategies and programs to create genuine economic opportunities that enable people to improve their incomes, avoid poverty, build assets, and develop their capacity to contribute to the betterment of their communities;

(c) Strong communities enable local residents to be more self-sufficient, which contributes to the overall strength and well-being of Nebraska; and

(d) Adding value to agricultural products offers farmers and ranchers the potential to obtain a larger share of food dollars.

(2) The Legislature further finds that there is a need to:

(a) Support self-employment and small-scale entrepreneurship in both agricultural and nonagricultural activities;

(b) Enhance income and opportunities for farming and ranching operations to stem the decline in the number of such operations;

(c) Develop strategies and programs to increase the farming and ranching operations' share of the food-system profit;

(d) Build the capacity of farming and ranching operations and small rural businesses to benefit from the development of electronic commerce, including the implementation of electronic scanners or point-of-sale devices to expand the ability of Nebraskans to utilize federally subsidized food and nutrition program benefits at farmers markets; and

(e) Strengthen value-added enterprises by promoting strategic partnerships and networks through multigroup cooperation.

Sec. 2. Section 2-5416, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

2-5416 The purposes of the Agricultural Opportunities and Value-Added Partnerships Act are to:

(1) Support small enterprise formation in the agricultural sector of Nebraska's rural economy, including innovative cooperative efforts for value-added enterprises;

(2) Support the development of agricultural communities and economic opportunity through innovative partnerships among farming and ranching operations, rural communities, and businesses for the development of value-added agricultural products;

(3) Encourage collaboration between farming and ranching operations and between farming and ranching operations and communities, government, and businesses as well as between communities and regions;

(4) Strengthen the value-added production industry by promoting strategic partnerships and networks through multigroup cooperation for the creation of employment opportunities in the value-added agriculture industry;

(5) Enhance the income and opportunity for farming and ranching operations in Nebraska in order to stem the decline in their numbers;

(6) Increase the farming and ranching operations' share of the food-system profit;

(7) Enhance opportunities for farming and ranching operations to participate in electronic commerce and new and emerging markets that strengthen rural economic opportunities, including the implementation of electronic scanners or point-of-sale devices to expand the ability of Nebraskans to utilize federally subsidized food and nutrition program benefits at farmers markets; and

(8) Encourage the production and marketing of specialty crops in Nebraska and to support the creation and development of agricultural enterprises and businesses that produce and market specialty crops in Nebraska.

Sec. 3. Section 2-5419, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

2-5419 (1) Grants under the Agricultural Opportunities and Value-Added Partnerships Act shall be used to support projects in the following areas:

- (a) Research;
- (b) Education and training;
- (c) Market development;
- (d) Nonadministrative business planning assistance, feasibility and market studies, capitalization plans, and technical assistance;
- (e) Development of cooperatives;
- (f) Community and multicomunity initiatives;
- (g) Creation, retention, and transfer of value-added agricultural business initiatives in rural communities;
- (h) Efforts to obtain startup or working capital or other capital expenditures necessary for the development of the project;
- (i) Community-based, farmer-owned, or rancher-owned value-added initiatives; ~~and~~
- (j) The purchase of electronic scanners or point-of-sale devices to expand the ability of Nebraskans to utilize federally subsidized food and nutrition program benefits at farmers markets, and for the marketing, promotion, and outreach related to such federal programs; and
- ~~(j)~~ (k) Other activities that are deemed necessary to fulfill the purposes specified in section 2-5416.

(2) Such projects shall demonstrate the ability to provide private new enterprise formation or expanded incomes and economic opportunities for existing enterprises.

Sec. 4. Original sections 2-5414, 2-5416, and 2-5419, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, are repealed.