

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To amend the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 to reauthorize the specialty crop research initiative and establish a specialty crop mechanization and automation research and development program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. SCHIFF introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 to reauthorize the specialty crop research initiative and establish a specialty crop mechanization and automation research and development program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Advancing Automation
5 Research and Development in Agriculture Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. SPECIALTY CROP RESEARCH INITIATIVE.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 412 of the Agricultural
3 Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998
4 (7 U.S.C. 7632) is amended—

5 (1) in subsection (f)(3), by striking “subsection
6 (d) and (j),” and inserting “subsections (d), (j), and
7 (k),”;

8 (2) in subsection (g)—

9 (A) in paragraph (3), by adding at the end
10 the following:

11 “(C) WAIVER.—The Secretary may waive
12 the matching funds requirement under subpara-
13 graph (A).”; and

14 (B) in paragraph (4), by striking “the Ini-
15 tiative” and inserting “this section”;

16 (3) by redesignating subsections (j) and (k) as
17 subsections (k) and (l), respectively;

18 (4) by inserting after subsection (i) the fol-
19 lowing:

20 “(j) SPECIALTY CROP MECHANIZATION AND AUTO-
21 MATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.—

22 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE.—The
23 Secretary shall establish a competitive research and
24 extension grant program to increase the competitive-
25 ness of specialty crops in the United States through
26 the advancement and acceleration of mechanization

1 and automation, under which the Secretary awards
2 competitive grants to eligible entities—

3 “(A) to create or improve cost-effective
4 mechanization, automation, and other innova-
5 tions and technologies—

6 “(i) to reduce the manual labor re-
7 quirements of a specialty crop grower;

8 “(ii) to improve specialty crop farm-
9 worker safety and health or working condi-
10 tions; and

11 “(iii) to increase the efficiency of spe-
12 cialty crop—

13 “(I) production;

14 “(II) resource management;

15 “(III) harvesting;

16 “(IV) processing;

17 “(V) postharvest technologies; or

18 “(VI) packaging;

19 “(B) to increase the adoption of specialty
20 crop mechanization, automation, and other in-
21 novations and technologies by—

22 “(i) emphasizing adoption drivers,
23 which may include connectivity, autonomy,
24 reliability, durability, in-field validation,
25 and cost-effectiveness; or

1 “(ii) investing in and developing
2 human capital to increase the capacity of
3 the specialty crop sector to work with new
4 technologies; or

5 “(C) to accelerate specialty crop mecha-
6 nization and automation through—

7 “(i) prototype development;

8 “(ii) in-field trial testing;

9 “(iii) ongoing industry engagement; or

10 “(iv) rapid commercialization.

11 “(2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this
12 subsection, the Secretary shall give priority to pro-
13 posals for projects that—

14 “(A) address the training or retraining of
15 farmworkers (including to maintain adequate
16 worker safety) to operate, repair, program, or
17 otherwise maintain mechanization and automa-
18 tion solutions involved in the project; and

19 “(B) include explicit mechanisms to com-
20 municate the results of the project to producers
21 and the public.

22 “(3) APPLICABILITY.—Subsections (a), (c)
23 through (g), (i), and (l) shall apply to the program
24 established under this subsection.”;

1 (5) in subsection (k) (as so redesignated), in
2 paragraph (5), by striking “In addition to the
3 amounts reserved under subsection (k)(1)(C), there”
4 and inserting “There”; and

5 (6) in subsection (l) (as so redesignated)—

6 (A) in paragraph (1), by striking subpara-
7 graphs (C) and (D) and inserting the following:

8 “(C) RESERVATION.—For each of fiscal
9 years 2026 through 2031, the Secretary shall
10 reserve not less than \$30,000,000 of the funds
11 made available under subparagraph (B) to
12 carry out the program established under sub-
13 section (j).

14 “(D) REALLOCATION.—Notwithstanding
15 paragraph (4), any funds reserved under sub-
16 paragraph (C) that remain unobligated at the
17 end of the fiscal year following the fiscal year
18 in which such funds are first made available
19 shall be reallocated to carry out the Initiative.”;
20 and

21 (B) in paragraph (2)—

22 (i) in the paragraph heading, by strik-
23 ing “FOR FISCAL YEARS 2014 THROUGH
24 2023”;

1 (ii) by striking “In addition” and in-
2 serting the following:

3 “(A) IN GENERAL.—In addition”; and

4 (iii) in subparagraph (A) (as so des-
5 ignated), by striking “2023” and inserting
6 “2031”;

7 (C) by redesignating paragraph (3) as sub-
8 paragraph (B) of paragraph (2) and indenting
9 appropriately; and

10 (D) by redesignating paragraphs (4) and
11 (5) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively.

12 (b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

13 (1) Section 1408A of the National Agricultural
14 Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of
15 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3123a) is amended—

16 (A) in subsection (a)(2)(A), by striking
17 “(j)(3)” and inserting “(k)(3)”;

18 (B) in subsection (c)(5), by striking “spe-
19 cialty crop research initiative” and inserting
20 “programs”; and

21 (C) in subsection (g), in the matter pre-
22 ceding paragraph (1), by striking “(j)” and in-
23 serting “(k)”.

24 (2) Section 251(f)(1)(D)(x) of the Department
25 of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C.

1 6971(f)(1)(D)(x)) is amended by striking “specialty
2 crop research initiative under section 412 of the Ag-
3 ricultural Research, Extension, and Education Re-
4 form Act of 1998” and inserting “programs under
5 section 412 of the Agricultural Research, Extension,
6 and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C.
7 7632)”.

8 (3) Section 12605(c) of the Agriculture Im-
9 provement Act of 2018 (7 U.S.C. 7632 note; Public
10 Law 115–334) is amended—

11 (A) by striking “412(j)” and inserting
12 “412(k)”; and

13 (B) by striking “7632(j))” and inserting
14 “7632(k))”.