

119TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

S. _____

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture to submit to Congress a report on barriers to participation in Department of Agriculture programs faced by certified organic farms and farms that may be interested in transitioning to organic production, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. SCHIFF (for himself and Mr. McCORMICK) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture to submit to Congress a report on barriers to participation in Department of Agriculture programs faced by certified organic farms and farms that may be interested in transitioning to organic production, 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 “Opening Programs to
5 Organic Farms Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. STUDY ON BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN DE-**
2 **PARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS**
3 **FACED BY CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARMS AND**
4 **FARMS INTERESTED IN TRANSITIONING TO**
5 **ORGANIC PRODUCTION.**

6 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 (1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CON-
8 GRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Con-
9 gress” means—

10 (A) Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
11 and Forestry of the Senate; and

12 (B) Committee on Agriculture of the
13 House of Representatives.

14 (2) CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARM.—The term
15 “certified organic farm” has the meaning given the
16 term in section 2103 of the Organic Foods Produc-
17 tion Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6502).

18 (3) DEPARTMENT.—The term “Department”
19 means the Department of Agriculture.

20 (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
21 the Secretary of Agriculture.

22 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date
23 of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to
24 the appropriate committees of Congress, and make pub-
25 licly available on the website of the Department, a report
26 on barriers to participation in Department programs faced

1 by certified organic farms and farms that may be inter-
2 ested in transitioning to organic production.

3 (c) CONTENTS.—The report required under sub-
4 section (b) shall include the following:

5 (1) PROGRAM REVIEW.—An assessment of bar-
6 riers to participation in Department programs faced
7 by certified organic farms and farms that may be in-
8 terested in transitioning to organic production, in-
9 cluding barriers in programs relating to conserva-
10 tion, credit, disaster assistance, risk management,
11 export promotion, market development, technical as-
12 sistance, rural development, data collection, procure-
13 ment, and organic certification cost-share.

14 (2) PARTICIPATION DATA.—To the extent prac-
15 ticable, data on application rates, approval rates, de-
16 nial rates, funding levels, geographic distribution,
17 farm size, production type, and reasons for denial or
18 nonparticipation by certified organic farms and
19 farms that may be interested in transitioning to or-
20 ganic production.

21 (3) SPECIFIC BARRIERS.—An assessment of
22 barriers relating to program eligibility, payment
23 rates, ranking criteria, application forms, record-
24 keeping requirements, crop insurance price elections,
25 disaster assistance valuation, conservation practice

1 standards, certification documentation, supply-chain
2 infrastructure, organic literacy among Department
3 staff, and the availability of organic-specific data.

4 (4) STAFF TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSIST-
5 ANCE.—An assessment of the need for organic-spe-
6 cific training, guidance, and technical assistance for
7 Department field staff, including staff of the Farm
8 Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation
9 Service, the Risk Management Agency, Rural Devel-
10 opment, the Foreign Agricultural Service, and other
11 relevant agencies and offices.

12 (5) ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS.—A description
13 of administrative actions that the Secretary intends
14 to take to remove barriers identified in the report.

15 (6) STATUTORY RECOMMENDATIONS.—Any rec-
16 ommendations for statutory changes needed to re-
17 move barriers identified in the report.

18 (d) ANNUAL UPDATES.—For each of the first 3 years
19 following submission of the report required under sub-
20 section (b), the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate
21 committees of Congress, and make publicly available on
22 the website of the Department, an annual update to that
23 report that describes—

24 (1) any progress made to remove barriers iden-
25 tified in that report;

1 (2) any administrative actions completed or un-
2 derway;

3 (3) any remaining barriers to participation in
4 Department programs faced by certified organic
5 farms and farms that may be interested in
6 transitioning to organic production; and

7 (4) any additional recommendations for statu-
8 tory changes.