

1 AN ACT concerning agriculture.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 3. Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

5 (1) Beginning in Fiscal Year 2021, the State of
6 Illinois appropriated funds to support socially
7 disadvantaged farmers, recognizing persistent barriers to
8 land access, capital, infrastructure, and market
9 participation.

10 (2) A portion of those appropriations has remained
11 unexpended across multiple fiscal years, limiting the
12 intended impact of those funds.

13 (3) Emerging and socially disadvantaged farmers
14 continue to face systemic and structural barriers that
15 constrain agricultural production, business viability, and
16 participation in local and regional food systems.

17 (4) Deploying these unexpended funds through a
18 flexible, accessible grant program administered by the
19 Illinois Department of Agriculture will strengthen
20 Illinois' agricultural economy, advance equity, and
21 improve food security across urban, suburban, and rural
22 communities.

23 Section 5. The Department of Agriculture Law of the Civil

1 Administrative Code of Illinois is amended by adding Section
2 205-455 as follows:

3 (20 ILCS 205/205-455 new)

4 Sec. 205-455. Emerging and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
5 Infrastructure and Market Access Grant Program.

6 (a) In this Section:

7 "Eligible applicant" means an emerging farmer, a socially
8 disadvantaged farmer, or a farm entity primarily owned,
9 controlled, or governed by one or more emerging or socially
10 disadvantaged farmers and operating or proposing to operate
11 within Illinois.

12 "Emerging farmer" means a farmer or aspiring farmer who is
13 a member of or represents one or more of the following groups:

14 (1) women;

15 (2) veterans;

16 (3) persons with disabilities;

17 (4) American Indian or Alaska Native persons;

18 (5) members of communities of color;

19 (6) young persons;

20 (7) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer,
21 intersex, or asexual (LGBTQIA+) persons;

22 (8) urban farmers; or

23 (9) any other emerging farmers as determined by the
24 Director to further the purposes of this Section.

25 "Infrastructure" means facilities, improvements, and

1 systems necessary for agricultural production and market
2 access, including land preparation, on-farm utilities,
3 post-harvest handling, processing, storage, aggregation, and
4 distribution.

5 "Social disadvantage" means diminished opportunity and
6 disproportionate barriers to entering, operating, sustaining,
7 or expanding a farm business that are reasonably linked to
8 such discrimination and not solely attributable to individual
9 business decisions.

10 "Socially disadvantaged farmer" means an individual farmer
11 or aspiring farmer who has experienced, or whose farming
12 operation has experienced, social disadvantage as a result of
13 systemic or chronic discrimination or bias in access to land,
14 credit, capital, insurance, technical assistance, education,
15 training, markets, or participation in public or private
16 agricultural programs, on the basis of one or more of the
17 following actual or perceived characteristics: race, color,
18 ethnicity, national origin, ancestry, sex, pregnancy or
19 childbirth-related status, sexual orientation, gender identity
20 or expression, religion, age, disability, marital or familial
21 status, or immigration or citizenship status.

22 (b) The Department shall establish and administer the
23 Emerging and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Infrastructure and
24 Market Access Grant Program to provide grants to eligible
25 applicants for the purpose of increasing agricultural
26 production, strengthening farm viability, and expanding access

1 to markets within the State.

2 (c) This Program is subject to appropriation, which may
3 include appropriations equivalent to the amounts that were
4 appropriated but not expended in Fiscal Years 2021, 2022,
5 2023, 2024, and 2025 for emerging or socially disadvantaged
6 farmers.

7 (d) Grant funds may be used for, but are not limited to:

8 (1) capital and infrastructure improvements;

9 (2) equipment and supply purchases;

10 (3) operational and working capital expenses; and

11 (4) market access, aggregation, transportation, and
12 distribution expenses.

13 (e) The Department shall establish grant award tiers and
14 shall not require matching funds. Priority shall be given to
15 applicants who:

16 (1) have not previously received State agricultural
17 grants;

18 (2) operate small-scale or limited-resource farm
19 operations;

20 (3) demonstrate barriers consistent with the
21 definition of socially disadvantaged farmer; and

22 (4) propose projects that increase food production,
23 create jobs, or expand access to Illinois-grown products.

24 (f) The Department shall adopt rules to implement and
25 administer this Section. These rules may allow eligibility
26 verification through self-attestation or other reasonable

1 methods.

2 (g) The Department shall submit an annual report to the
3 General Assembly detailing grant awards, expenditures, and
4 program outcomes.

5 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect July 1,
6 2026.