

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to young farmers and ranchers;
3 creating s. 570.842, F.S.; creating the Florida Young
4 Farmer and Rancher Matching Grant Program within the
5 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services;
6 specifying the purpose of the grants; requiring the
7 department to select grant recipients based on certain
8 criteria; requiring the department to adopt rules;
9 specifying minimum grant selection criteria;
10 specifying a grant award minimum and maximum;
11 requiring that no more than one award per year may go
12 to an individual recipient; specifying that grant
13 funding is contingent upon specific appropriation from
14 the Legislature; creating s. 570.843, F.S.; creating
15 the Young Farmer and Rancher Advisory Council within
16 the department; specifying membership of the council;
17 providing for staggered terms; specifying the
18 meetings, powers, duties, procedures, and
19 recordkeeping of the council; specifying that the
20 council may submit findings and recommendations to the
21 Commissioner of Agriculture; specifying the issues the
22 council may examine; creating s. 570.844, F.S.;
23 requiring the department to establish a clearinghouse
24 on its website for resources to assist young and
25 beginning farmers and ranchers; providing an effective

26 | date.

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28 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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30 | Section 1. Section 570.842, Florida Statutes, is created
31 | to read:

32 | 570.842 Florida Young Farmer and Rancher Matching Grant
33 | Program.—

34 | (1) To support the start-up functions associated with new
35 | farming and ranching operations, there is created within the
36 | department the Florida Young Farmer and Rancher Matching Grant
37 | Program.

38 | (a) Grants administered by the department through this
39 | program must be for the purpose of fostering the creation and
40 | expansion of agricultural businesses by young farmers and
41 | ranchers in the state.

42 | (b) The department shall select grant recipients based on
43 | selection criteria developed pursuant to subsection (2).

44 | (2) The department shall adopt rules governing the
45 | operation of the program, an application process, and selection
46 | criteria for grant recipients. At a minimum, in order to be
47 | eligible to receive a grant, a person must:

48 | (a) Be an agricultural producer who is at least 18 years
49 | of age but younger than 35 years of age or be an agricultural
50 | producer who is a veteran as defined by s. 1.01;

51 (b) Have operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10
52 years;

53 (c) Demonstrate, at minimum, a dollar-for-dollar matching
54 investment for grant money requested; and

55 (d) Submit, on a form prescribed by the department, a
56 grant application during the application period established by
57 the department. The department may only designate one period
58 each year for accepting applications.

59 (3) Each grant award under the program must be between
60 \$5,000 and \$20,000, with no more than one award being made to an
61 individual grant recipient per grant period.

62 (4) Annual grant funding for this program is contingent
63 upon specific annual appropriation by the Legislature.

64 Section 2. Section 570.843, Florida Statutes, is created
65 to read:

66 570.843 Florida Young Farmer and Rancher Advisory
67 Council.—

68 (1) There is created within the department the Florida
69 Young Farmer and Rancher Advisory Council, to consist of 12
70 members to be appointed by the commissioner. Initially, 6
71 members shall be appointed by the commissioner for a 1-year term
72 and 6 members for a 2-year term. Thereafter, members shall be
73 appointed for 2-year terms.

74 (2) The meetings, powers, duties, procedures, and
75 recordkeeping of the Florida Young Farmers and Ranchers Advisory

76 Council shall be pursuant to s. 570.232.

77 (3) The council may submit to the commissioner, annually,
78 findings and recommendations for mitigating challenges facing
79 aspiring farmers and ranchers in the early stages of their
80 careers. The council may examine issues that include, but are
81 not limited to, access to land, availability of credit and
82 capital, and access to business skills training.

83 Section 3. Section 570.844, Florida Statutes, is created
84 to read:

85 570.844 Florida Young Farmer and Rancher Resource
86 Clearinghouse.—The department shall establish on its website a
87 clearinghouse for resources available to young and beginning
88 farmers and ranchers, including, but not limited to, local,
89 state, federal, and private sources of grants, loans, and
90 scholarships, as well as general resources on finance and
91 business planning. This must include resources available to
92 beginning agricultural producers who are defined as veterans
93 under s. 1.01.

94 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.