

1 S.132

2 Introduced by Committee on Agriculture

3 Date:

4 Subject: Agriculture; stimulus funds; agency education and outreach

5 Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to direct the agency of agriculture,
6 food and markets to work with other interested organizations for the purpose of
7 identifying stimulus money that is available to the Vermont agricultural
8 community. This bill also proposes to direct the agency to provide technical
9 assistance and education to individuals intending to apply for stimulus funding.
10 Finally, this bill proposes to encourage agricultural lenders to offer
11 preforeclosure mediation programs and authorizes the secretary to enter into
12 memorandums of understanding with agricultural lenders regarding mediation
13 services.

14 An act relating to agricultural funding education and outreach

15 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

16 Sec. 1. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

17 (a) Purpose and intent. The federal stimulus package has provided federal
18 agencies with generous funding for economic development, including
19 agricultural development, but much of that money is available only through
20 grants and loans administered by existing federal programs such as the Farm

1 Service Agency and the USDA Rural Development program. In order to
2 facilitate farmer access to available funds, it is crucial that the agency of
3 agriculture, food and markets, the farm viability program, the University of
4 Vermont Extension, and other related groups make a cooperative effort to
5 inform farmers about available funding, provide technical assistance in
6 applying for the funding, prioritize and support necessary and feasible projects,
7 and otherwise aid Vermont's agricultural sector in realizing the benefits that
8 this stimulus provides.

9 (b) The secretary of agriculture, food and markets, in consultation with the
10 Vermont economic development authority, the United States Farm Service
11 Agency, the USDA Rural Development program and other interested parties,
12 shall collaborate with interested authorities to identify federal agricultural
13 funding available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of
14 2009 (ARRA), Pub.L. 111-5. If such funds are identified, the agency shall
15 develop a common application for such funds.

16 (c) The secretary, in consultation with the University of Vermont
17 Extension, shall also coordinate an outreach and education program for the
18 purpose of helping farmers access grants and loans made available through the
19 ARRA.

1 Sec. 2. MEDIATION SERVICES

2 In order to protect farmers and working farmland within Vermont, all
3 agricultural lenders are encouraged to offer preforeclosure mediation programs
4 and to work with the Vermont Certified Agricultural Mediation Services. The
5 secretary is authorized to enter into memorandums of understanding with
6 agricultural lenders regarding mediation services.

7 Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

8 The amount of \$30,000.00 is appropriated from the general fund to the
9 agency of agriculture, food and markets for the purpose of carrying out
10 education, outreach, and technical assistance as described in Sec. 1 of this act.

11 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

12 This act shall take effect upon passage.