

House Research Act Summary

CHAPTER: 184

SESSION: 2016 Regular Session

TOPIC: Agriculture policy

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Overview

This is the 2016 omnibus agriculture policy act. Governor Dayton signed this act into law on May 31, 2016.

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- 1** **Report.** Requires the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to submit an annual report to the legislature that details the agency's compensation payments to farmers for crop and fence damages caused by elk. MDA must present this data separately for each elk herd.
- 2** **Qualified voter.** Provides that "qualified voter" means an agricultural producer who produces a commodity subject to a check-off fee, regardless of the producer's filing status with the United States Internal Revenue Service.
- 3** **Pesticide application on golf courses.** Eliminates language requiring a licensed commercial or noncommercial applicator to have the appropriate use certification before applying pesticide to a golf course.
- 4** **Violations; prohibited acts.** Eliminates MDA's ability to assess a fee when reinspecting a licensed food handler who violated certain food laws and the reinspection is required after an administrative meeting between MDA and the food handler.
- 5** **Food; tolerances for added poisonous ingredients.** Corrects cross-references to food laws that were consolidated and modified in the 2012 omnibus agriculture policy law.
- 6** **Organic agriculture; commissioner duties.** Extends the existence of the Minnesota Organic Advisory Task Force by three years, to June 30, 2019. Directs MDA to demonstrate on-farm organic agriculture practices with other research and education institutions in addition to the University of Minnesota. Requires MDA to work closely with agricultural producer organizations and appropriate agencies to identify organic opportunities and needs

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and avoid duplication of state agency efforts. Eliminates a requirement that MDA work with the Minnesota Trade Office in the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

- 7** **Agriculture research, education, extension, and technology transfer grant program.** Provides that MDA is to award any AGREET dollars allocated for agriculture research, extension, and technology transfer to the University of Minnesota for use by any of the listed university units. Requires MDA and a representative of the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) to consult the advisory panel when awarding grants and removes the CFANS representative from the panel. Provides that advisory panel members representing specific named organizations are to be appointed by their organization, not MDA. Eliminates the Minnesota Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council from the list of eligible research grant recipients. Makes various technical changes.

Effective date: This section took effect the day following final enactment, or June 1, 2016.

- 8** **Elk management plan.** Prohibits the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from managing an elk herd in a manner that would increase the herd's size unless MDA first verifies that the compensation payments that MDA awards to farmers for crop and fence damages caused by the herd have not increased for at least two years. Before DNR may implement a plan to increase an elk herd's size, MDA and DNR must hold a public meeting in the affected county and must present evidence that the compensation payments have not increased in the prior two years. At the same public meeting, the agencies must detail practices that will be used to reduce conflicts between elk and area landowners.
- 9** **Solar site management.** Allows the owner of a ground-mounted solar energy generating site with the capacity to generate more than 40 kilowatts to claim that the site benefits gamebirds, songbirds, and pollinators only if the site adheres to applicable guidance or standards established by the Board of Water and Soil Resources. Requires an owner claiming beneficial habitat to make the site's vegetation management plan available to the public and to provide a copy of the plan to a nonprofit solar trade association in Minnesota. This language was also enacted separately in Laws of Minnesota 2016, ch. 181.

- 10** **Expiration.** Extends the Farmer-Lender Mediation Act for two years, to June 30, 2018.

Effective date: This section took effect the day following final enactment, or June 1, 2016.

- 11** **Agriculture, bioenergy, and bioproduct advancement.** Requires MDA to transfer dollars appropriated last session for agriculture rapid response under the AGREET program to the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Experiment Station. Requires MDA to transfer all non-designated AGREET appropriations to the University of Minnesota for agricultural research, extension, and technology transfer. Extends into fiscal year 2017 the availability of dollars appropriated for AGREET in fiscal year 2016.

Authorizes a comparable extension of an appropriation for grants to food hubs and other alternative community-based food distribution systems.

Effective date: This section took effect the day following final enactment, or June 1, 2016.

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- 12** **Farmer-lender mediation task force.** Requires MDA to convene a task force that will provide recommendations to the legislature by February 1, 2017. Task force membership is provided.
- 13** **Farm safety initiative.** Requires MDA to report to the legislature by February 1, 2017, regarding specified farm safety topics. Requires MDA to compile an inventory of existing farm safety programs and resources by October 1, 2016. Requires MDA to promote this inventory to farm operators.
- 14** **Repealer.** Repeals a 2015 law that would have extended the Farmer-Lender Mediation Act by one year if the legislature did not meet in regular session during calendar year 2016.
Effective date: This section took effect the day following final enactment, or June 1, 2016.