

Bill Summary

File Number: H.F. 895

Date: March 30, 2017

Version: Second engrossment

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Subject: Agriculture finance

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Overview

This is the 2017 omnibus agriculture finance bill. The bill appropriates money for the upcoming fiscal year 2018-2019 biennium and includes several statutory provisions.

Article 1: Agriculture Appropriations

Overview

This article appropriates money to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Board of Animal Health, and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute. It also requires MDA to transfer money to the University of Minnesota for specified purposes.

- 1 **Agriculture appropriations.** Provides boilerplate appropriation language.
- 2 **Department of Agriculture.** Appropriates general fund and remediation fund dollars to MDA for specified purposes.

Subd. 1. Total appropriation. Denotes the total amount of money directly appropriated to MDA in this bill.

Subd. 2. Protection Services. Appropriates general fund and remediation fund dollars for MDA's regulatory programs. This subdivision provides funding for the following MDA divisions: Pesticide and Fertilizer Management, Laboratory Services, Plant Protection, Dairy and Meat Inspection, and Food and Feed Safety.

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Subd. 3. Agricultural Marketing and Development. Appropriates general fund dollars for MDA's Agricultural Marketing and Development Division.

Subd. 4. Agriculture, Bioenergy, and Bioproduct Advancement. Appropriates general fund dollars for specific programs and purposes within this category.

Subd. 5. Administration and Financial Assistance. Appropriates general fund dollars for pass-through grants and agency administration.

- 3 **Board of Animal Health.** Appropriates general fund dollars to the Board of Animal Health.
- 4 **Agricultural Utilization Research Institute.** Appropriates general fund dollars to the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute.
- 5 **Agriculture, bioenergy, and bioproduct advancement.** Reduces an existing fiscal year 2017 appropriation for the agricultural growth, research, and innovation (AGRI) program that was designated for bioeconomy incentive grants. Authorizes MDA to use other AGRI dollars for this purpose.
- 6 **Base budget report required.** Requires MDA to report to the legislature by October 15, 2018, regarding the agency's base budget, including any prior appropriation riders. A similar requirement was included in Laws 2015 First Special Session, chapter 4.
- 7 **Transfer required.** Requires a onetime transfer of \$450,000 from the agricultural emergency account in the agricultural fund to the general fund.
- 8 **Appropriation cancellation.** Cancels to the general fund all unspent money from a prior AGRI appropriation that was designated by law for bioeconomy incentive payments (see section 5).

Effective date: Section 8 is effective following final enactment.

Article 2: Agricultural Policy

Overview

This article contains statutory provisions pertaining to compensation for crops or fencing damaged by elk; tractor rollover protection grants; noxious weeds; pollinators; export certificates; and the agricultural growth, research, and innovation (AGRI) Program.

- 1 **Compensation for crop or fence damage caused by elk.** Modifies an existing program that compensates persons for crops and/or fencing damaged by elk. Provides that MDA or MDA's agent—rather than a University of Minnesota Extension agent—will provide claim forms and evaluate whether an applicant's damages are attributable to elk. Provides that the minimum compensation payment for fence damage or destruction is \$100.
- 2 **Farm Safety Working Group.** Establishes a Farm Safety Working Group to advise the legislature and MDA regarding farm safety issues. This group would also coordinate the

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work of member organizations and entities in order to collectively improve farm safety in the state. The working group would expire on June 30, 2021.

- 3 **Grants; eligibility.** Retroactively provides that schools are eligible for 100 percent reimbursement for eligible tractor rollover protection structures (ROPS). Retroactively modifies the description of reimbursement-eligible ROPS.
- 4 **Promotion; administration.** Decreases MDA's administration and promotion allowance for the tractor rollover protection pilot grant program from 20 to six percent of total program dollars.
- 5 **Noxious weed education and notification.** Requires MDA to post notice on the agency's website and alert appropriate media outlets when a weed on the state's eradicate list is confirmed for the first time in a county. Under current law, weeds on the eradicate list are those that are not yet widely established and must be eradicated to prevent their maturation and spread (Minn. Stat. § 18.771, para. (b)). Examples include Palmer amaranth, Oriental bittersweet, and Grecian foxglove.
- 6 **Pollinator habitat and research account.** Establishes a new account in the agricultural fund. Transfers all money in the account to the University of Minnesota for pollinator research and outreach.
- 7 **Certificate fees.** Increases from \$75 to \$125 the fee MDA charges for certificates that facilitate the export of food processed and manufactured in Minnesota. Creates a new dedicated account in the agricultural fund to hold this fee revenue and appropriates account dollars back to MDA to certify Minnesota processed and manufactured foods under multiple food-related chapters of law. (Currently MDA is required by Minn. Stat. § 16A.72 to deposit certificate fees in the general fund.)
- 8 **Oversight.** Eliminates MDA's statutory authority to allocate AGRI appropriations among eligible uses. Provides that instead, MDA must allocate AGRI money as provided by law.