Assembly Bill No. 1891

CHAPTER 200

An act to add Article 8 (commencing with Section 550) to Chapter 3 of Part 1 of Division 1 of the Food and Agricultural Code, relating to agriculture.

[Approved by Governor August 27, 2010. Filed with
Secretary of State August 27, 2010.]

AB 1891, Committee on Higher Education. Sustainable agriculture research and education.

Until January 1, 2010, existing law requested the Regents of the University of California to establish the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program to support competitive grants to promote more research and education on sustainable agricultural practices, and to support the giving of instructions and practical demonstrations in agriculture.

This bill would reestablish this program, except it would not require the regents to biennially report to the Legislature on the program.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Article 8 (commencing with Section 550) is added to Chapter 3 of Part 1 of Division 1 of the Food and Agricultural Code, to read:

Article 8. Sustainable Agriculture

550. This article shall be known and may be cited as the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Act of 1986.

551. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) There is a growing movement in California and the nation to change farming techniques by adopting more resource-conserving, energy-efficient systems of agriculture. The objective of these changes is to produce agricultural products that may reduce the use of petrochemicals, improve means of biological pest management, improve soil productivity, improve erosion control, and improve irrigation, cultivation, and harvesting techniques.

(b) Over the long term, adoption of more efficient resource-conserving systems of agricultural production can benefit both the producing and consuming public.

(c) The resolution of many agricultural problems depends on immediate efforts to provide farmers with practices that are both resource conserving and economical for food producers, and to foster food production and distribution methods that reduce dependence on petroleum-based inputs.

552. The purpose of this article is to promote more research and education on sustainable agricultural practices, such as organic methods, biological control, and integrated pest managements, including the analysis of economic factors influencing the long-term sustainability of California agriculture. This article is intended to foster economically and ecologically beneficial means of soil improvement, pest management, irrigation, cultivation, harvesting, transportation, and marketing for California agriculture based on methods designed to accomplish all of the following:

(a) The control of pests and diseases of agricultural importance through alternatives that reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides and petrochemicals.

(b) The production, processing, and distribution of food and fiber in ways that consider the interactions among soil, plants, water, air, animals, tillage, machinery, labor, energy, and transportation to enhance agricultural efficiency, public health, and resource conservation.

553. (a) It is the intent of the Legislature that the Regents of the University of California establish the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program to support all of the following:

(1) Competitive grants for research on topics described in Section 552.

(2) The giving of instructions and practical demonstrations in agriculture and imparting information through demonstrations, publications, and otherwise, and for printing and distribution of information in connection with the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. Where feasible, these demonstrations shall include field research conducted on cooperating farms.

(3) Planning for and management of University of California farmlands committed to supporting long-term continuous research in sustainable agricultural practices and farming systems.

(b) Those eligible to apply for competitive grants under subdivision (a) shall include individuals affiliated with public and private institutions of higher education and with nonprofit tax-exempt organizations.

(c) All grant applications shall be subject to peer review for scientific merit.

(d) In awarding grants, preference shall be given to projects that include field evaluation and offer the greatest potential for measurable progress toward attaining the long-term goals pursuant to Section 552.

554. (a) If the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program is established by the regents, the President of the University of California shall establish and appoint a Program Advisory Committee and a Technical Advisory Committee.

(b) The duties of the Program Advisory Committee shall include recommending goals and priorities for this program, including, but not limited to, reviewing the priority of grant applications.

(c) The Program Advisory Committee shall be composed of a majority of individuals representing agriculture, as well as representatives from government, public organizations, and institutions of higher education, all of whom are knowledgeable regarding the issues and practices of sustainable agriculture.

(d) The duties of the Technical Advisory Committee shall include making recommendations about the scientific merit of grant applications submitted pursuant to Section 553.

(e) The Technical Advisory Committee shall be composed of faculty and staff of the University of California and other experts from outside the university.

(f) Members of the Program Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee who are not employed by the University of California shall be appointed for a period not exceeding three years and receive compensation for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties according to applicable university regulations and guidelines.

555. If the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program is established by the regents, it shall be established from existing resources.

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