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**HOUSE BILL 1631**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Shewmake, Ryu, Leavitt, Wicks, Bateman, Duerr, Boehnke, Walen, Paul, Rule, Santos, Sullivan, Slatter, Macri, and Harris-Talley

AN ACT Relating to supporting Washington's food production system by providing technical assistance in support of improved voluntary environmental stewardship; amending RCW 89.08.610 and 89.08.630; adding a new section to chapter 89.08 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that Washington's farmers and food processors are vital to the local and global food chain. In particular, Washington is home to innovative and conservation-minded food producers who lead the nation and the world in producing healthful food on a sustainable basis. The legislature also recognizes the seriousness of climate change and is committed to improving Washington's resilience to impacts to all business sectors, including agriculture. Moreover, the agricultural community can play a key role in combating climate change by increasing energy efficiency, utilizing more green energy resources, increasing carbon sequestration, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Washington has a tradition of voluntarily engaging farmers with technical assistance to achieve objectives of the state, including clean air and clean water.

Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to establish a program that provides additional technical assistance, including awareness of potential funding opportunities, to farmers and food processors to help increase energy efficiency, further reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase carbon sequestration, all while reducing long-term operating costs and creating new market opportunities.

**Sec.**  RCW 89.08.610 and 2020 c 351 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

The definitions in this section apply throughout this section and RCW 89.08.615 through 89.08.635 and section 3 of this act unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Advisor" means a sustainable farms and fields advisor.

(2) "Carbon dioxide equivalent emission" means a metric measure used to compare the emission impacts from various greenhouse gases based on their relative radiative forcing effect over a specified period of time compared to carbon dioxide emissions.

((~~(2)~~)) (3) "Carbon dioxide equivalent impact" means a metric measure of the cumulative radiative forcing impacts of both carbon dioxide equivalent emissions and the radiative forcing benefits of carbon storage.

((~~(3)~~)) (4) "Commission" means the Washington state conservation commission created in this chapter.

((~~(4)~~)) (5) "Conservation district" means one or a group of Washington state's conservation districts created in this chapter.

(6) "Pool" means a group of geographically adjacent conservation districts that will share the services of an advisor.

(7) "Sustainable farms and fields plan" means a site-specific suite of recommendations that can help a farm or food processing facility increase energy efficiency, utilize more green energy, sequester carbon, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 89.08 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The sustainable farms and fields advisors network is established at the commission to further assist agricultural producers and food processors in increasing energy efficiency and utilization of green energy, sequestering carbon, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, all of which can help reduce operating costs, improve soil health and crop yield, provide environmental cobenefits, and create new market opportunities in a green economy.

(2) The commission shall develop a network of sustainable farms and fields advisors whereby groups of conservation districts will hire, host, and share the services of sustainable farms and fields advisors.

(3) The services to be provided by sustainable farms and fields advisors include, but are not limited to:

(a) Consultations regarding, and development of, sustainable farms and fields plans for interested farmers and food processors to help them reduce their carbon footprint by increasing energy efficiency, increasing the utilization and production of green energy, sequestering carbon, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and

(b) Informing conservation districts, farmers, and food processors about local, state, and federal funding opportunities, such as the sustainable farms and fields grant program, to implement practices that help achieve these goals to reduce the carbon footprint of farmers and food processors.

(4) The commission shall establish within each district pool a sustainable farms and fields committee to develop a prioritized list of farmers and food processors interested in working with the advisor. The advisor's workload and priorities are set according to an interlocal agreement established between the districts in the pool for this purpose.

(5) The commission shall hire a sustainable farms and fields coordinator who is responsible for coordinating the advisors, disseminating current information about energy efficiency and climate-smart practices and funding opportunities, applying for grants, writing progress reports, and other duties as needed.

**Sec.**  RCW 89.08.630 and 2020 c 351 s 6 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) By October 15, 2021, and every two years thereafter, the commission shall report to the legislature and the governor on the performance of the sustainable farms and fields grant program and the sustainable farms and fields advisors, including, among other things, grants awarded, projects funded, greenhouse gas emissions reduced, and carbon sequestered.

(2) The commission shall update at least annually a public list of projects and pertinent information including a summary of state and federal funds, private funds spent, landowner and other private cost-share matching expenditures, the total number of projects, and an estimate of carbon sequestered or carbon emissions reduced.

(3) By July 1, 2024, the commission, in consultation with Washington State University and the University of Washington, must evaluate and update the most appropriate carbon equivalency metric to apply to the sustainable farms and fields grant program. Until this equivalency is updated by the commission, or unless the commission identifies a better metric, the commission must initially use a one hundred year storage equivalency that can be linearly annualized to recognize the storage of carbon on an annual basis based on the storage of 3.67 tons of biogenic carbon for one hundred years being assigned a value equal to avoiding one ton of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions.

(4) The grant recipient and other private cost-sharing participants may at their own discretion allow their business or other name to be listed on the public report produced by the commission. All grant recipients must allow anonymized information about the full funding of their project to be made available for public reporting purposes.

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