

By Senator Montford

3-01517-20

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the environmental value of
3 agricultural lands and timberlands; creating s.
4 570.233, F.S.; requiring the Department of Agriculture
5 and Consumer Services, in collaboration with specified
6 entities, to determine the environmental value that
7 agricultural lands and timberlands provide to this
8 state based on certain factors; requiring the
9 department to develop a cost-share reimbursement
10 program to provide funding to agricultural landowners
11 and timberland owners for the implementation of best
12 management practices; providing an effective date.

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14 WHEREAS, maintaining healthy and sustainable agricultural
15 and timber industries is vital to this state's environmental
16 resources, natural resources, and economy, and

17 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes the significant
18 environmental contributions the agricultural and timber
19 industries provide to water quality and quantity, air
20 purification, and habitat for wildlife, including threatened and
21 endangered species, and

22 WHEREAS, the Legislature also recognizes that urban and
23 coastal areas continue to expand increasing pressures on
24 agricultural lands and timberlands, causing a significant
25 decrease in acreage, NOW, THEREFORE,

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27 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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29 Section 1. Section 570.233, Florida Statutes, is created to

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30 read:

31 570.233 Environmental value of agricultural lands and
32 timberlands.—The Department of Agriculture and Consumer
33 Services, in consultation with the Department of Environmental
34 Protection, the University of Florida Institute of Food and
35 Agriculture Sciences, and the agricultural and timber
36 industries, shall:

37 (1) Develop a formula to determine the value that
38 agricultural lands and timberlands in this state provide for
39 water recharge, stormwater filtration, wildlife habitat, and
40 water quality benefits.

41 (2) Develop a cost-share reimbursement program to provide
42 funding incentives to agricultural landowners and timberland
43 owners for the implementation of best management practices. The
44 department may provide up to 75 percent cost share to the
45 landowners based on the values calculated pursuant to subsection
46 (1) for their lands.

47 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.