

ASSEMBLY COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2320

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 22, 2024

The Assembly Commerce, Economic Development and Agriculture Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2320.

This bill would require the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to take certain actions to publicize and promote community supported agriculture in the State. “Community supported agriculture” is a method of on-the-farm direct sales and marketing in which the retail sale, to a consumer, of a share of the agricultural output of a commercial farm is effectuated through a paid subscription service. “Community supported agriculture program” or “CSA program” is defined by the bill to mean a farm product retail sales and marketing program in which participating consumers agree to pay a seasonal or annual subscription fee to a farm in exchange for the consumers’ regular and ongoing receipt of weekly shares of the farm’s seasonal agricultural output.

The bill would provide, in particular, that within 180 days after the bill’s effective date, the Secretary of Agriculture is to develop and implement a publicity and marketing program to promote community supported agriculture in the State. As part of the program, the department would be required to:

(1) establish and regularly update, on its Internet website, a webpage that is dedicated to community supported agriculture;

(2) use all available means to advertise and publicize: the availability of, and the benefits of participating in, community supported agriculture in the State; the names and locations of farms that participate in CSA programs; and the availability of the community supported agriculture webpage, established pursuant to the bill; and

(3) develop, print, and distribute distinct promotional and marketing labels that may be used by farmers to identify agricultural products that are being marketed and sold through community supported agriculture.

Nothing in the bill would prohibit the operator of a farm, after first consulting with the DOA, from creating the farm’s own promotional labels and using those labels to identify agricultural products that are being marketed and sold by the farm through community supported agriculture.

The bill would also require the DOA to establish and annually observe a week of promotional events to be known as “Community Supported Agriculture Week.”

“Community Supported Agriculture Week” would be intended to highlight and promote the value and importance of community supported agriculture, both as a means by which farming operations can better ensure their ongoing productivity, success, and financial stability, and as a means by which individuals, families, and businesses in the State can obtain fresh, seasonal, and easily accessible farm-to-table foods, throughout the year. The week would be celebrated on an annual basis, throughout the State, during the last full week in February, and would be observed through the holding of relevant promotional events.

The bill would further require the DOA, through the State’s existing “Farm to School Program,” to encourage schools in the State to obtain fresh, locally grown or produced agricultural products for school meals by subscribing to, and becoming participants in, a community supported agriculture program, and to work in cooperation with the Department of Education to ensure that school curriculum addresses the value and importance of community supported agriculture. In addition, the bill would require the State’s existing “Farm to School” website to: (1) provide opportunities for the execution of community supported agriculture subscription agreements between and among farmers, distributors, and schools or school districts; (2) facilitate the development and refinement of promotional events in association with “Community Supported Agriculture Week”; and (3) include a copy of any community supported agriculture subscription agreement that has been entered into and successfully implemented by any school or school district in the State.

The bill would also require the existing State website that serves as a clearinghouse for farmers, and that currently provides a list of schools, school districts, and food banks that have a need for produce or dairy products, to additionally provide a list of schools, school districts, and food banks that are interested in participating as subscribers in a community supported agriculture program.

The bill authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to solicit and receive funds, either as direct contributions, or from the sale of labels or the right to use labels authorized by the DOA, or from any other source, for the purposes of advertising and promoting the value and importance of community supported agriculture in the State, as provided by the bill. Any monies received for the purposes of the bill are to be deposited in the State’s existing “New Jersey Farm Products Publicity Fund.” The bill would clarify that, in addition to the existing purposes for which monies in the “New Jersey Farm Products Publicity Fund” may be used, such monies may be used to publicize the value and importance of community supported agriculture; to cover the expenses of printing and distributing labels used in

identifying products being marketed and sold through community supported agriculture; and to cover any other expenses that are incident to the implementation of this bill.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2024-2025 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.