

HOUSE BILL 214

By Halford

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4;  
Title 11, Chapter 4; Title 43; Title 44; Title 49 and  
Title 67, relative to agriculture.

WHEREAS, agriculture is Tennessee's largest industry, contributing approximately \$74.8 billion to Tennessee's economy each year, employing 349,000 Tennesseans, and having diverse production ranging from row crops and livestock to local food and viniculture; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee is home to over 1,600 registered food and beverage companies creating a myriad of products that can be sourced locally; and

WHEREAS, there are 67,300 Tennessee farmers, across 9 million acres of land and \$4.28 billion in cash receipts, and agriculture has an impact on every county in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee farmers are innovative and have traditionally been leaders in a range of new production approaches, such as no-till; technologies, such as robotic milkers; and market opportunities, such as malt barley; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has the opportunity to be the leading state in bringing together farmer-led innovation and entrepreneurship to create a diverse foundation of rural and urban agricultural enterprises and wealth creation; and

WHEREAS, AgTech includes innovations related to software, hardware, robotics, sensors, precision agriculture, predictive agriculture, big data, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and veterinary technology, state-of-the-art equipment, and related technologies that support the farms of the future; and

WHEREAS, the AgLaunch Initiative was created as an independent nonprofit organization through a joint initiative with the Tennessee department of agriculture to develop new agriculture enterprises, stimulate private investment, and position farmers in leadership positions to shape the future of agriculture; and

WHEREAS, the Center for Profitable Agriculture provides educational programming and technical assistance to Tennessee farmers interested in a value-added enterprise to improve farm income; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1.

(a) There is created the farm and forestry task force, hereafter referred to as the "task force," composed of farmers and foresters to develop and implement a strategic plan to position this state as a leading hub for agtech and value-added agriculture.

(b)

(1) The task force consists of nine (9) members, including at least six (6) full-time farmers or foresters who derive their primary income from crop, forestry, or livestock production, or directly related farming activities such as agritourism, on-farm education, or farmer-owned value-added activities. The task force must also include three (3) residents of this state with controlling interest in agricultural businesses that are engaged in local processing or agricultural-related innovation.

(2) The members of the task force must represent diverse segments of the agriculture industry, including crops, livestock, local food, and urban agriculture.

(3) The members of the task force are appointed as follows:

(A) The speaker of the senate shall appoint one (1) member from the eastern grand division with controlling interest in an agricultural business;

(B) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint one (1) member from the middle grand division with controlling interest in an agricultural business; and

(C) The commissioner of agriculture shall appoint seven (7) members, one (1) of whom is from the western grand division and has controlling interest in an agricultural business. The commissioner shall consult with the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, the Center for Profitable Agriculture, and AgLaunch Initiative in making the appointments.

(c) Members of the task force shall elect a chair from their membership.

(d) Members of the task force:

(1) Shall create a scope of work and issue a request for proposals for a third-party consulting firm to develop a statewide strategy for agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship, led by the farming community, with input from the state's universities, commodity organizations, companies, and other stakeholders; and provide oversight to the strategy process, roadmap, investment, and implementation plan to ensure that the resulting plan includes:

(A) A comprehensive analysis of major issues facing farmers and the identification of technology platforms to address these issues;

(B) The identification of industry linkages and gaps in the value chain to connect farmers to new opportunities;

(C) An analysis of new opportunities, including farmer data, ecosystem markets, and traceability and their potential effect on farm operation profits;

(D) The identification of new opportunities to stimulate the growth and the investment of more private capital into Tennessee agricultural and farmer-owned enterprises;

(E) The establishment of further statewide farmer network and entrepreneurship programming to grow more agtech and value-added businesses;

(F) A quantitative analysis of the statewide research enterprise that may have applications for agriculture industry; and

(G) Recommendations and action plans from the strategic planning process that have clear synergies to education, workforce, and talent development initiatives and specific recommendations to ensure alignment and actionable connectivity to the agricultural and forestry organizations and universities that serve this state's agriculture and forestry industry.

(e) The task force is managed through the department of agriculture, in collaboration with the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, the Center for Profitable Agriculture, and AgLaunch Initiative.

(f) In making appointments, the appointing authorities shall strive to ensure that the task force is composed of members who represent the geographic, urban, rural, and economic diversity of this state and who are diverse in race, sex, perspective, and experience.

(g) The commissioner of agriculture shall call the first meeting of the task force, which shall conduct at least three (3) regular scheduled meetings to hear testimony from members of the public and to solicit input from persons with expertise in:

(1) Current agricultural practices;

(2) Forecasting trends related to consumer purchasing patterns, product development, crop diversity, and agricultural technologies; and

(3) The economic impact of agriculture on rural areas of this state.

(h) The chair of the task force may call on appropriate state agencies for reasonable assistance in the work of the task force.

(i) The members of the task force serve without compensation.

(j) The task force shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, to the general assembly no later than August 31, 2022, including an implementation plan and recommended legislative action.

(k) This section is repealed September 1, 2022, or upon the submission of the report under subsection (j), whichever comes first.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.