

1 H.813

2 Introduced by Representatives Arrison of Weathersfield, Mrowicki of Putney,
3 Anthony of Barre City, Burke of Brattleboro, Chase of Chester,
4 Hooper of Burlington, Ode of Burlington, Patt of Worcester,
5 Rice of Dorset, Sibilina of Dover, and Surprenant of Barnard

6 Referred to Committee on

7 Date:

8 Subject: Agriculture; tree fruit farming; financial assistance

9 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish the
10 Tree Fruit Farmer Assistance Program to provide grants to tree fruit farmers
11 who suffered production losses in calendar year 2023 due to freezing or frost
12 conditions.

13 An act relating to establishing the Tree Fruit Farmer Assistance Program

14 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

15 Sec. 1. TREE FRUIT FARMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

16 (a) The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall establish the Tree
17 Fruit Farmer Assistance Program consistent with the requirements of this
18 section.

19 (b) A farm in the State that grows tree fruit is eligible for assistance under
20 this section if:

1 (1) the farm is currently operating and producing tree fruit;

2 (2) the farm suffered production losses in calendar year 2023 due to
3 freezing or frost conditions;

4 (3) the farm is in good standing with the Agency of Agriculture, Food
5 and Markets; and

6 (4) the farm submits an application for assistance to the Agency of
7 Agriculture, Food and Markets by a date specified by the Secretary of
8 Agriculture, Food and Markets.

9 (c)(1) The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall award eligible
10 farms producing tree fruit in the State financial assistance in the form of a
11 grant to provide relief for losses in calendar year 2023 due to freezing or frost
12 conditions.

13 (2) The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall develop a
14 formula for calculation of a grant under this section. The formula shall
15 incorporate:

16 (A) the amount of acreage on a farm currently cultivated for tree fruit
17 production;

18 (B) a crop loss multiplier based on the difference between the
19 revenue in calendar year 2022 and the revenue in calendar year 2023 from the
20 gross sale of tree fruit from the farm; and

1 (C) a reduction or offset in award for any crop insurance or other
2 payment the farm may have received for losses in calendar year 2023 due to
3 freezing or frost conditions.

4 (d) The Agency shall process applications for a grant in the order
5 applications are received. If all funds appropriated for implementation of this
6 section are awarded by the Agency, no further grants shall be made. If any
7 funds appropriated for implementation of this section remain after all timely
8 applications are processed, the remaining funds shall be transferred to the
9 Working Lands Enterprise Fund not later than December 31, 2024 for
10 distribution by the Working Lands Enterprise Board.

11 Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION; TREE FRUIT FARMER ASSISTANCE
12 PROGRAM

13 In addition to other funds appropriated in fiscal year 2025, \$10,000,000.00
14 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and
15 Markets to implement the Tree Fruit Farmer Assistance Program established
16 pursuant to Sec. 1 of this act.

17 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 This act shall take effect on passage.