
Wisconsin Legislative Council

AMENDMENT MEMO



Memo published: December 8, 2023

Contact: Anna Henning, Principal Attorney

2023 Assembly Bill 655

Assembly Amendment 1

2023 ASSEMBLY BILL 655

2023 Assembly Bill 655 authorizes and funds a “transition to grass pilot program.” The bill directs the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to create and administer the program, through which DATCP must award grants to farmers who are implementing a new grass-based managed grazing¹ system, or a new managed grazing practice that improves the conservation and financial performance of existing grazing systems. The bill limits any one grant to no more than \$40,000, and it specifies certain purposes for which grant funds may be used. It directs DATCP to award 75 percent of a grant in the year following a grant award and 12.5 percent of the grant in each of the subsequent two years.

The bill also requires the program to provide certain assistance and guidance for farms and persons in agribusiness, and requires the Division of Agricultural Development within DATCP to support the state’s grass-fed livestock supply chain.

The bill appropriates \$500,000 in each year of the current fiscal biennium, transferred from the Environmental Fund, for the program. The bill also increases DATCP’s full-time equivalent (FTE) position authority by .5 FTE for a position in the Division of Agricultural Development to support the performance of the new pilot program.

ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT 1

Assembly Amendment 1 makes the following two changes to the bill:

- Removes a requirement that DATCP’s Division of Agricultural Development, in particular, shall support the state’s grass-fed livestock supply chain, and instead directs DATCP as a whole to do so.
- For a new .5 full-time-equivalent position authorized by the bill, removes a requirement that the person hired must be within the Division of Agricultural Development.

BILL HISTORY

Representative Novak offered Assembly Amendment 1 on November 14, 2023. On December 7, 2023, the Assembly Committee on Agriculture voted to recommend adoption of the amendment on a vote of Ayes, 13; Noes, 0. The committee then recommended passage of the bill, as amended, on a vote of Ayes, 14; Noes, 0.

For a full history of the bill, visit the Legislature’s [bill history page](#).

AH:jal

¹ The bill defines “managed grazing” to mean a grazing system alternative to continuous grazing, in which pastured fields are subdivided into smaller paddocks, livestock density is controlled, and animals are rotated through paddocks at a frequency that maintains perennial grass-based vegetable cover, ensures regular access to fresh higher-quality forage, and reduces soil compaction and erosion.