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AB-937 The Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995: Organic Transition Program. (2025-2026)

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 937

Introduced by Assembly Member Connolly
(Coauthor: [Assembly Member Aguiar-Curry](#))

February 19, 2025

An act to add Section 571 to the Food and Agricultural Code, relating to agriculture.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 937, as introduced, Connolly. The Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995: Organic Transition Program.

The Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995 requires the Department of Food and Agriculture to establish and oversee an environmental farming program to provide incentives to farmers whose practices promote the well-being of ecosystems, air quality, and wildlife and their habitat. The act also requires the department to establish the Healthy Soils Program and a technical assistance grant program, as specified.

This bill would require the department, as part of the Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995, to establish and oversee the Organic Transition Program on or before July 1, 2026. The bill would require the department, under the program, to award grants to eligible organizations to provide incentives to farmers and ranchers to transition land to certified organic production, as specified, and to make available 25% of moneys appropriated to the department for the program to support certain activities at organic technical assistance provider organizations. The bill would also authorize the department to provide funding for the preparation and implementation of conservation management plans for organic transition

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 571 is added to the Food and Agricultural Code, to read:

571. (a) For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Eligible organization" means an organization that is eligible to participate in the Organic Transition Pilot Program established by the department.

(2) "Program" means the Organic Transition Program established pursuant to subdivision (b).

(3) "Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher" has the same meaning as defined in Section 512.

(b) On or before July 1, 2026, the department shall establish and oversee the Organic Transition Program.

(c) Under the program, the department shall do both of the following:

(1) Award grants to eligible organizations to provide incentives, including, but not limited to, grants, technical assistance, and educational materials and outreach, to farmers and ranchers, with at least a 50-percent priority for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, to transition land to certified organic production in accordance with the federal Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. Sec. 6501 et seq.). The University of California and California State University may claim the indirect cost rate established with the department under the Organic Transition Pilot Program for any grant awarded pursuant to this paragraph. All other eligible organizations may claim an indirect cost rate of up to 35 percent of total direct costs for a grant awarded pursuant to this paragraph. An eligible organization shall not use more than 25 percent of a grant awarded pursuant to this paragraph on administrative costs.

(2) Make available 25 percent of moneys appropriated to the department for the program to support training, capacity building, and ongoing organic transition services at organic technical assistance provider organizations. These activities shall include, but are not limited to, staff professional training, administration of organic transition services, continuing education in organic farming, and coordination between organizations that provide organic technical assistance. The moneys made available under this paragraph are not limited to organizations that apply for funding under the program.

(d) Under the program, the department may provide funding for the preparation and implementation of conservation management plans for organic transition.

REVISIONS:

Heading—Line 2.