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**AB-947 Agriculture: Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995.** (2025-2026)

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**Assembly Bill No. 947**

**CHAPTER 283**

An act to amend Sections 564, 566, 568, 569, and 570 of the Food and Agricultural Code, relating to agriculture, and making an appropriation therefor.

[ Approved by Governor October 03, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 03, 2025. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 947, Connolly. Agriculture: Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995.

Existing law, 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. Existing law establishes the Climate Smart Agriculture Account, the moneys in which are continuously appropriated for purposes of the act.

This bill would instead require the department to establish and oversee a sustainable agriculture program to provide research, technical assistance, and incentive grants to promote agricultural practices that support climate resilience for farms and ranches and the well-being of ecosystems, air quality, and biodiversity. By expanding the purposes for which moneys in a continuously appropriated fund may be used, the bill would make an appropriation.

The act requires the Secretary of Food and Agriculture to convene a 9-member Scientific Advisory Panel on Environmental Farming, as prescribed, for the purpose of providing advice to the secretary on the implementation of the Healthy Soils Program and the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program and assistance to federal, state, and local government agencies on issues relating to the impact of agricultural practices on air, water, and wildlife habitat, as specified. Existing law requires members of the panel to be highly qualified and professionally active or engaged in the conduct of scientific research and provides for their appointment for terms of 3 years.

This bill would rename the Scientific Advisory Panel on Environmental Farming the Scientific Advisory Panel on Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture for the purpose of providing advice to the secretary on the implementation of research, incentive, and technical assistance grant programs for sustainable agriculture. The bill would expand the panel from 9 members to 11 members, would require the panel to consist of members of the public that represent scientific expertise in sustainable agriculture and members of state agencies that represent expertise in programs and policies related to agriculture, and would limit the members of the panel to 2 terms.

The act establishes the Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance Grant Program to provide funds to technical assistance providers to provide technical assistance, as defined, to applicants of the Healthy Soils Program, the Alternative Manure Management Program, and the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program. Existing law requires the secretary to make available not less than 5% of the funds appropriated to the department for those programs, but not more than 20%, for providing

technical assistance, as specified, and for supporting annual information sharing among technical assistance providers, the department, and other relevant stakeholders, as specified.

This bill would expand the definition of “technical assistance” to include, among other things, training, conservation, agricultural planning, and grant writing. The bill would delete the provision establishing the Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance Grant Program and would instead require the secretary to make available not less than 5%, but not more than 20%, of the funds appropriated to the department for the above-described programs, for providing technical assistance directly through a technical assistance grant program, or indirectly through a block grant program that includes funding for technical assistance. The bill would require the department to provide funds to technical assistance providers to: (1) support farmers and ranchers in the application process for grants from those programs and the implementation of funded projects; (2) provide general planning and training for climate-smart and sustainable agriculture; and (3) lease, purchase, or repair farming, ranching, and food processing equipment that can be centrally housed with the technical assistance provider and shared regionally with producers.

This bill would require the department to authorize a percentage of funding to support training and capacity building within technical assistance provider organizations and coordination between organizations to improve assistance, as provided, and would require the department to support information sharing among technical assistance providers, the department, and other relevant stakeholders, as specified. The bill would require the department to allow equipment sharing costs funded as part of the grant awards to include developing and expanding equipment sharing programs, as specified.

Vote: 2/3 Appropriation: yes Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

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

**SECTION 1.** Section 564 of the Food and Agricultural Code is amended to read:

**564.** Unless the context otherwise requires, the following definitions govern the construction of this article:

(a) “Agricultural activities” means those activities that generate products as specified in Section 54004.

(b) “Department” means the Department of Food and Agriculture.

(c) “Panel” means the Scientific Advisory Panel on Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture.

(d) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Food and Agriculture.

**SEC. 2.** Section 566 of the Food and Agricultural Code is amended to read:

**566.** (a) The department shall establish and oversee a sustainable agriculture program. The program shall provide research, technical assistance, and incentive grants to promote agricultural practices that support climate resilience for farms and ranches and the well-being of ecosystems, air quality, and biodiversity.

(b) The department may assist in the compilation and synthesis of scientific evidence from public and private sources, including the scientific community, industry, conservation organizations, and federal, state, and local agencies identifying the net environmental impacts and opportunities that agriculture creates for achieving sustainability goals. The department shall serve as the repository of this information and provide it to federal, state, and local governments, as needed.

(c) The department shall conduct the activities specified in this article with existing resources, including recurring funding and one-time administrative funds, to the extent they are available.

**SEC. 3.** Section 568 of the Food and Agricultural Code is amended to read:

**568.** (a) The secretary shall convene an 11-member Scientific Advisory Panel on Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture to advise the secretary on the implementation of research, incentive, and technical assistance grant programs for sustainable agriculture, and to assist federal, state, and local government agencies, as appropriate or necessary, on issues relating to the impact of agricultural practices on the climate, air, water, and biodiversity to do the following:

(1) Review data and compile the best available science on the impact that agriculture has on the environment and local communities and recommend to the secretary and appropriate state agencies the best available science on environmental impacts of agriculture, and practices and policies based on that information to advance the goals of this article, including Section 569.

(2) Research, review, and comment on data upon which proposed environmental policies and regulatory programs are based to ensure that the environmental impacts of agricultural activities are accurately portrayed and to identify incentives that may be

provided to encourage agricultural practices with environmental benefits.

(3) Assist government agencies to incorporate policies and practices identified pursuant to paragraph (1) into environmental regulatory programs.

(b) (1) The panel shall consist of members of the public that represent scientific expertise in sustainable agriculture and members of state agencies that represent expertise in programs and policies related to agriculture. Of the members first appointed to the panel, two shall serve for a term of two years and three shall serve for a term of three years, as determined by lot. Thereafter, members shall be appointed for a term of three years, limited to two terms. The members shall be appointed as follows:

(A) Seven members shall be appointed by the secretary as follows:

(i) Four members shall have a minimum of five years of scientific training and experience in the field of agriculture, of which at least one member shall have training and field experience in on-farm management practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon, or both.

(ii) Two members shall be producers, of which at least one member shall be certified as a producer pursuant to federal Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. Sec. 6501 et seq.).

(iii) At least one member shall have technical expertise in agricultural conservation planning and management.

(B) Two members shall be appointed by the Secretary for Environmental Protection. One shall have a minimum of five years of training and experience in the field of human health or environmental science, and one shall have expertise in greenhouse gas emissions reductions practices related to agriculture.

(C) Two members who have a minimum of five years of training and experience in the field of resource management shall be appointed by the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency. One member shall additionally have expertise in climate change adaptation and climate change impacts in the agricultural sector.

(2) The secretary may also appoint, in consultation with the panel, ex officio nonvoting members to the panel.

(c) The panel may establish ad hoc committees, which may include professionals, scientists, or representatives of nongovernmental entities, to assist it in performing its functions.

(d) The State Air Resources Board shall consult with the secretary and the panel, as appropriate, in developing the quantification methods described in subdivision (b) of Section 16428.9 of the Government Code as it relates to the demonstration and quantification of on-farm greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

**SEC. 4.** Section 569 of the Food and Agricultural Code is amended to read:

**569.** (a) (1) The department, in consultation with the panel, shall establish and oversee a Healthy Soils Program. The program shall seek to optimize climate benefits while supporting the economic viability of California agriculture by providing incentives, including, but not limited to, loans, grants, research, and technical assistance, and educational materials and outreach, to farmers whose management practices contribute to healthy soils and result in net long-term on-farm greenhouse gas benefits. The program may also include the funding of on-farm demonstration projects that further the goals of the program.

(2) The department, in consultation with the panel, may determine priorities for the program and give priority to projects that occur in and benefit disadvantaged communities identified pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code, show promise of being replicable in other parts of the state, or provide environmental and agronomic cobenefits, such as improved air and water quality, improved crop yield, and reduced soil erosion.

(3) The panel shall also advise the department on scientific findings, program framework, guidelines, grower incentives, and providing technical assistance.

(4) If the department elects to fund on-farm demonstration projects described in paragraph (1), the department, in consultation with the panel, shall establish a technical advisory committee to review on-farm demonstration project applications for scientific validity and the proposed project's potential to achieve greenhouse gas benefits.

(b) The department shall implement the program and quantify greenhouse gas emissions reductions in accordance with the funding guidelines developed by the State Air Resources Board pursuant to Section 39715 of the Health and Safety Code and the quantification methods developed by the State Air Resources Board pursuant to Section 16428.9 of the Government Code.

(c) (1) The department may pursue public and private sources to support the Healthy Soils Program.

(2) To the extent funds are available, the department may provide support to the program, including, but not limited to, technical assistance, education, and outreach.

(d) For purposes of this section, "panel" means the Scientific Advisory Panel on Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture.

(e) For purposes of the Healthy Soils Program, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) "Greenhouse gas benefits" means greenhouse gas emissions source reduction or carbon sequestration.

(2) "Healthy soils" means soils that enhance their continuing capacity to function as a biological system, increase soil organic matter, improve soil structure and water- and nutrient-holding capacity, and result in net long-term greenhouse gas benefits.

(3) "On-farm demonstration projects" means projects that incorporate farm management practices that result in greenhouse gas benefits and have outreach goals, research goals, or both.

**SEC. 5.** Section 570 of the Food and Agricultural Code is amended to read:

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

(1) "Programs" means the Healthy Soils Program established pursuant to Section 569, the Alternative Manure Management Program, and the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program established by the department from moneys made available pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Statutes of 2014.

(2) "Technical assistance" means outreach, education, training, conservation, agricultural planning, project planning, project design, grant application assistance, grant writing, matching funds coordination, translation and interpretation, project implementation support, facilitating environmental compliance, grant management assistance, project completion verification, outcome monitoring, case study development, and project reporting assistance provided to a farmer or rancher to improve their successful participation in the programs.

(3) "Technical assistance providers" means nonprofit organizations, groundwater sustainability agencies, irrigation districts, resource conservation districts, the University of California Cooperative Extension, and California public colleges and universities with demonstrated technical expertise in designing and implementing agricultural management practices to achieve the purposes identified in subdivision (b).

(b) The secretary shall make available not less than 5 percent of the funds appropriated to the department for the programs, but not more than 20 percent, for technical assistance directly through a technical assistance grant program, or indirectly through a block grant program that includes funding for technical assistance. The department shall award funds to technical assistance providers for the following purposes:

(1) To support farmers and ranchers in the application process for grants from the programs and implementation of funded projects, prioritizing that technical assistance to farms and ranches that are 500 acres or fewer. Technical assistance funding may be used to provide assistance over multiple incentive funding cycles.

(2) To provide general planning and training for climate-smart and sustainable agriculture, defined as agricultural practices that support reducing greenhouse gas emissions, sequestering carbon, conserving water and other resources, managing nutrients and pests, and supporting biodiversity.

(3) To lease, purchase, or repair farming, ranching, and food processing equipment that can be centrally housed with the technical assistance provider and shared regionally with producers.

(c) The department may establish criteria and guidelines for technical assistance providers to qualify to receive funds pursuant to subdivision (b) to provide technical assistance. The department shall coordinate grant program outreach with the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. The department shall do all of the following:

(1) Establish a process for technical assistance providers to apply to the department to receive funds to provide technical assistance pursuant to subdivision (b). Funding applications shall include, at minimum, a work plan that identifies which of the purposes identified in subdivision (b) will be targeted by the technical assistance provider, specific activities that will be undertaken to maximize farmer and rancher participation and project success, an estimate of the number of farmers and ranchers to be served by the technical assistance provider, and evidence of qualifications of its relevant staff and project partners. Technical assistance providers must demonstrate expertise in working with California farmers and ranchers on projects relevant to one or more of the purposes identified in subdivision (b).

(2) Ensure at least 25 percent of the awarded funds are used to provide technical assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, as defined in Section 512.

(3) Review direct and block grant applications for technical assistance funds and recommend grant awardees to the secretary.

(4) Allow direct project costs and a percentage of overhead expenses, to be determined by the secretary, to be funded as part of the grant awards.

(5) Allow a percentage of funding, to be determined by the secretary, to support training and capacity building within technical assistance provider organizations and coordination between organizations to improve assistance. This shall include staff onboarding, training, and continuing education in climate-smart and conservation agricultural practices and planning.

(6) Support information sharing among technical assistance providers, the department, and other relevant stakeholders for the continuous improvement of programmatic guidelines, application processes, and relevant climate change and agricultural research.

(7) Allow equipment sharing costs funded as part of grant awards to include developing and expanding equipment sharing programs, including, but not limited to, the purchase and repair of tools, equipment, training, and outreach costs associated with the shared equipment within the grant term.

(8) Consult with the Scientific Advisory Panel on Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture on grant program design, guidelines, and outreach for the technical assistance to improve coordination and information sharing on technical assistance strategies and activities for the department's programs.

(d) The secretary shall award funds to technical assistance providers of up to two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) per solicitation, per program served. A block grant applicant or technical assistance provider that demonstrates on its application that the majority of the persons it provides technical assistance to are socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers shall receive priority consideration for funding to cover translation services, the production of outreach materials, and additional outreach-related expenses.

(e) In administering this section, the department may recover reasonable costs from the funds appropriated for purposes of this section for administrative activities, including, but not limited to, providing staff resources for outreach, development and administration of grant solicitations, grant management, project verification, staff training, program evaluation, and other activities as required.