

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to young farmers and ranchers;
 3 creating s. 570.842, F.S.; creating the Florida Young
 4 Farmer and Rancher Matching Grant Program within the
 5 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services;
 6 specifying the purpose of the grants; requiring the
 7 department to select grant recipients based on
 8 specified criteria; requiring the department to adopt
 9 rules; requiring that applicants meet specified
 10 eligibility requirements; specifying a range for grant
 11 amounts; providing that a recipient may not receive
 12 more than one award per year under the program;
 13 specifying that grant funding is contingent upon
 14 specific appropriation from the Legislature; providing
 15 an effective date.

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 17 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 19 Section 1. Section 570.842, Florida Statutes, is created
 20 to read:

21 570.842 Florida Young Farmer and Rancher Matching Grant
 22 Program.—

23 (1) The Florida Young Farmer and Rancher Matching Grant
 24 Program is created within the department to support the start-up
 25 functions associated with new farming and ranching operations.

26 (a) Grants administered by the department through this
27 program must be for the purpose of fostering the creation and
28 expansion of agricultural businesses by young farmers and
29 ranchers in this state.

30 (b) The department shall select grant recipients based on
31 selection criteria adopted pursuant to subsection (2).

32 (2) The department shall adopt rules governing the
33 operation of the program, including an application process and
34 selection criteria for grant recipients.

35 (a) At a minimum, in order to be eligible to receive a
36 grant, an individual must meet all of the following
37 requirements:

38 1. Be an agricultural producer, be an employee of a farm
39 or ranch, or have been actively involved in Future Farmers of
40 America for at least 1 year.

41 2. Be at least 18 years of age, but younger than 35 years
42 of age.

43 3. Have operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10
44 years.

45 4. Demonstrate, at minimum, a dollar-for-dollar matching
46 investment for the grant amount requested.

47 5. Submit, on a form prescribed by the department, a grant
48 application during the application period established by the
49 department. The department may designate only one period each
50 year for accepting applications.

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51 (b) In the application review process, the department
52 shall give a preference to an applicant who is a veteran, as
53 defined in s. 1.01(14).

54 (3) Each grant award under the program must be between
55 \$5,000 and \$20,000, with no more than one award being made to an
56 individual grant recipient per grant period.

57 (4) Annual grant funding for this program is contingent
58 upon specific annual appropriation by the Legislature.

59 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2019.