

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3860

To amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to establish an Office of Small Farms, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 12, 2026

Mr. BOOKER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to establish an Office of Small Farms, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Office of Small Farms
5 Establishment Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. OFFICE OF SMALL FARMS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle B of the Department of
8 Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6931
9 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

1 **“SEC. 229. OFFICE OF SMALL FARMS.**

2 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

3 “(1) SMALL FARM, RANCH, OR FOREST OPER-
4 ATION.—The term ‘small farm, ranch, or forest op-
5 eration’ means a farm, ranch, or forest operation
6 that—

7 “(A)(i) is less than 180 acres; or

8 “(ii) meets another acreage-based defini-
9 tion of ‘small’, as determined by the Secretary,
10 that takes into consideration—

11 “(I) the State or region in which the
12 farm, ranch, or forest operation is located;

13 “(II) the production system of the
14 farm, ranch, or forest operation; or

15 “(III) both; and

16 “(B) has an annual gross cash farm in-
17 come of less than \$350,000.

18 “(2) STATE OFFICE.—The term ‘State office’
19 means—

20 “(A) a State office of—

21 “(i) the Farm Service Agency;

22 “(ii) the Natural Resources Conserva-
23 tion Service; or

24 “(iii) the rural development mission
25 area; or

1 “(B) a regional office of the Risk Manage-
2 ment Agency.

3 “(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall estab-
5 lish within the farm production and conservation
6 mission area the Office of Small Farms.

7 “(2) DIRECTOR.—

8 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall
9 appoint a Director of the Office of Small Farms
10 (referred to in this section as the ‘Director’).

11 “(B) FPAC.—A senior official within the
12 farm production and conservation mission area
13 may be appointed to serve as the Director.

14 “(c) DUTIES.—The Director shall—

15 “(1) coordinate efforts to improve support for
16 small farms, ranches, and forest operations across
17 all Department agencies and offices;

18 “(2) review Department programs and policies
19 and identify statutory, regulatory, and administra-
20 tive provisions, policies, and guidance that disadvan-
21 tage small farm, ranch, or forest operation participa-
22 tion, and recommend changes to ensure that those
23 programs and policies adequately serve small farms,
24 ranches, and forest operations;

1 “(3) develop recommendations for new initia-
2 tives, including financing mechanisms and technical
3 assistance opportunities, to specifically serve small
4 farms, ranches, and forest operations relating to
5 production, conservation, business planning, land ac-
6 cess, and other issues, as determined by the Sec-
7 retary;

8 “(4) make recommendations to Department
9 agencies and offices and other Federal agencies on
10 tracking small farm, ranch, or forest operation data,
11 including demographics and program participation
12 rates;

13 “(5) propose research agendas on topics that
14 are of special interest to small farms, ranches, and
15 forest operations;

16 “(6) provide or coordinate technical assistance
17 through the Department or through cooperative
18 agreements with other entities to operators of small
19 farms, ranches, and forest operations to assist those
20 operators—

21 “(A) to access the full complement of
22 available Department grant, cost-share, and
23 loan programs;

24 “(B) to implement activities using assist-
25 ance received under those programs; and

1 “(C) with farmland preservation, including
2 through succession planning;

3 “(7) implement a program directly or through
4 cooperative agreements with other entities to provide
5 grants of not more than \$25,000 to operators of
6 small farms, ranches, and forest operations for—

7 “(A) equipment and infrastructure repairs
8 and upgrades;

9 “(B) uninsured losses;

10 “(C) business planning and market devel-
11 opment assistance;

12 “(D) conservation practice adoption;

13 “(E) down payments for land acquisition;
14 and

15 “(F) such other purposes as the Secretary
16 determines to be appropriate;

17 “(8) operate a hotline through which operators
18 of small farms, ranches, and forest operations can
19 anonymously report problems that the operators en-
20 counter in attempts to access Department programs;

21 “(9) collaborate with other Federal agencies
22 and State agencies on how to effectively reach and
23 serve small farms, ranches, and forest operations;
24 and

1 “(10) determine whether to approve a plan sub-
 2 mitted by a State small farms coordinator under
 3 subsection (e)(3)(A)(ii).

4 “(d) LIAISONS.—

5 “(1) APPOINTMENT.—The following officials
 6 shall appoint, from among the officers and employ-
 7 ees under the respective official, a liaison to the Of-
 8 fice of Small Farms:

9 “(A) The Chief of the Natural Resources
 10 Conservation Service.

11 “(B) The Administrator of the Farm Serv-
 12 ice Agency.

13 “(C) The Administrator of the Risk Man-
 14 agement Agency.

15 “(D) The Under Secretary of Agriculture
 16 for Rural Development.

17 “(E) The Director of the National Insti-
 18 tute of Food and Agriculture.

19 “(F) The Administrator of the Agricultural
 20 Marketing Service.

21 “(G) The Administrator of the Economic
 22 Research Service.

23 “(H) The Administrator of the National
 24 Agricultural Statistics Service.

1 “(I) The Director of the Office of Partner-
2 ships and Public Engagement.

3 “(J) The heads of such other agencies, of-
4 fices, and advisory groups as the Secretary de-
5 termines to be appropriate, including—

6 “(i) the Office of Urban Agriculture
7 and Innovative Production; and

8 “(ii) the Office of Tribal Relations.

9 “(2) DUTIES.—Each liaison appointed under
10 paragraph (1) shall—

11 “(A) coordinate with the Office of Small
12 Farms and the other liaisons appointed under
13 that paragraph to develop and implement new
14 strategies for outreach to and education for
15 small farms, ranches, and forest operations;
16 and

17 “(B) coordinate within the agency, office,
18 mission area, or advisory group of the liaison
19 on issues and outreach relating to small farms,
20 ranches, and forest operations.

21 “(e) STATE SMALL FARMS COORDINATORS.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—

23 “(A) DESIGNATION.—

24 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The Director, in
25 consultation with State food and agri-

1 culture councils and directors of State of-
 2 fices, shall designate in each State a State
 3 small farms coordinator from among the
 4 employees of State offices.

5 “(ii) EMPLOYEES.—The employee of a
 6 State office designated to be a State small
 7 farms coordinator may be the same em-
 8 ployee designated to be the State beginning
 9 farmer and rancher coordinator under sec-
 10 tion 7404(c) of the Farm Security and
 11 Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C.
 12 6934a(c)).

13 “(B) REQUIREMENTS.—To be designated
 14 as a State small farms coordinator, an employee
 15 shall—

16 “(i) be familiar with issues relating to
 17 small farms, ranches, and forest oper-
 18 ations; and

19 “(ii) have the ability to coordinate
 20 with other Federal departments and agen-
 21 cies.

22 “(2) TRAINING.—The Secretary shall develop a
 23 training plan to provide to each State small farms
 24 coordinator knowledge of programs and services
 25 available from the Department for small farms,

1 ranches, and forest operations, taking into consider-
2 ation the needs of all types of production methods.

3 “(3) DUTIES.—

4 “(A) IN GENERAL.—A State small farms
5 coordinator—

6 “(i) shall coordinate technical assist-
7 ance at the State level to assist small
8 farms, ranches, and forest operations in
9 accessing programs of the Department;

10 “(ii) shall develop and submit to the
11 Director for approval a State plan to im-
12 prove the coordination, delivery, and effi-
13 cacy of programs of the Department to
14 small farms, ranches, and forest oper-
15 ations, taking into consideration the needs
16 of all types of production methods, at each
17 county and area office in the State;

18 “(iii) shall oversee implementation of
19 an approved State plan described in clause
20 (ii);

21 “(iv) may facilitate interagency and
22 interdepartmental collaboration on issues
23 relating to small farms, ranches, and forest
24 operations at the State or regional level;

1 “(v) shall work with outreach coordi-
2 nators in the State offices to ensure appro-
3 priate information about technical assist-
4 ance is available at outreach events and ac-
5 tivities;

6 “(vi) shall coordinate partnerships
7 and joint outreach efforts with other orga-
8 nizations and government agencies serving
9 small farms, ranches, and forest oper-
10 ations; and

11 “(vii) may provide grants under sub-
12 section (c)(7), in accordance with criteria
13 established by the Director.

14 “(B) INDIVIDUAL DUTIES.—Not less than
15 50 percent of the duties of an employee des-
16 ignated to be a State small farms coordinator
17 shall be the duties described in subparagraph
18 (A) or other duties relating to small farms,
19 ranches, and forest operations.

20 “(f) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Annually, the Sec-
21 retary shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture of
22 the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agri-
23 culture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate a report
24 describing—

1 “(1) the efforts of the Secretary to enhance
2 participation by small farms, ranches, and forest op-
3 erations in agricultural programs; and

4 “(2) the results achieved to enhance such par-
5 ticipation for each such agricultural program.

6 “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
7 are authorized to be appropriated for each of fiscal years
8 2027 through 2031—

9 “(1) \$15,000,000 for the administration of the
10 Office of Small Farms; and

11 “(2) \$10,000,000 to provide technical assist-
12 ance and grants authorized by this section.”.

13 (b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—The Department of
14 Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 is amended by re-
15 designating the first section 225 (7 U.S.C. 6925) (relating
16 to the Food Access Liaison) as section 224A.

17 (c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 296(b) of
18 the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of
19 1994 (7 U.S.C. 7014(b)) is amended by adding at the end
20 the following:

21 “(11) The authority of the Secretary to carry
22 out section 229.”.

○