

A Bill for an Act relating to Sustainable Agriculture Incentives.

To be enacted by the YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament;

Sustainable Agriculture Incentives Bill 2021

A Bill for an Act to establish the Committee for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA). This entity has the intent of reducing the environmental harm caused by Victorian agricultural businesses. CSA works to achieve this through the implementation of a grant and rebate program, alongside campaigns to increase awareness and education on sustainable agricultural practices.

This Bill was created to incentivise Victorian agricultural businesses to adopt and integrate sustainable farming practices. In addition, the Bill ensures that agricultural businesses have access to education and funding which will allow them to implement these practices. These support structures will lead to a more sustainable future for Victorian agriculture.

PART I—Preliminary

Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this Act are—

- (a) to reduce land wastage within the agricultural community—
 - (i) this will be achieved through the development of a committee to oversee the implementation of sustainable agriculture;
- (b) to encourage the use of sustainable farming practices;
- (c) to incentivise agricultural businesses to participate in sustainable agricultural practices;
- (d) to educate and increase awareness around sustainable farming and gardening practices.

Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill, we define following to mean—

- (a) **community garden** means a shared, public space for the cultivation and harvest of vegetables, fruit and other plants either on crown land or the private land of charities and not-for-profit organisations;
- (b) **land** means an area of public or private property as measured in hectares;
- (c) **farm** means an area of land utilised for agricultural production of crops or livestock under the management of one or more individuals;
- (d) **sustainable agriculture** means the practice of farming that can be sustained into the future without compromising the environment whilst still meeting society's needs.

Part II—Establishment

Clause 4 Establishing the Committee for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA)

- 4.1 The CSA shall be created to oversee the following—
- (a) an education and awareness campaign about sustainable agriculture;
 - (b) selective funding to agricultural sustainability initiatives;
 - (c) provide rebates to agricultural businesses applicable—
 - (i) those who wish to claim the rebates shall have to meet the eligibility requirements;
 - (d) monitoring the progress and realisation of grants, and when appropriate, issuing penalties.
- 4.2 The CSA shall employ—
- (a) key stakeholders from a range of different areas of sustainability;
 - (b) finance officers;
 - (c) educational and awareness campaign strategists;
 - (d) members of rural and regional Victorian communities—
 - (i) shall make up 25 per cent of the CSA;
 - (ii) shall oversee the implementation of the initiative in regional and rural Victoria;
 - (e) members of metropolitan Victorian communities—
 - (i) shall make up 25 per cent of the CSA;
 - (ii) shall oversee the implementation of the initiative in metropolitan Victoria.
- 4.3 Members of the CSA shall not operate within an area that may benefit them financially.
- (a) this may include owning or holding investments within a commercial or private farm;
 - (b) this may include owning stakes in an agricultural business in Victoria;
 - (c) this shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the CSA.

Clause 5 Rebates

- 5.1 The CSA shall provide a rebate to large companies—
- (a) rebates shall be given at the discretion of the CSA.
 - (b) companies with any previous violations against the law shall be immediately ineligible for a rebate.
- 5.2 Once companies list the sustainable outcomes achieved, the CSA shall decide upon a rebate—
- (a) rebates shall come in the form of lowered rates within the local government system.
- 5.3 Eligibility shall be determined based on the following criteria—

- (a) eligible companies shall only be based in Victoria,
- (b) eligible companies and their shares shall only be owned by an Australian citizen for tax purposes;
- (c) small farms and community organisations are ineligible for rebates in tandem with funding.

Clause 6 Funding

- 6.1 The CSA shall provide funding for the promotion of sustainable outcomes to small farms, which are determined by case-by-case analysis of—
- (a) hectares of farmable land, where eligible—
 - (i) assessments of this shall be made on a case-by-case basis utilising natural capital accounting;
 - (b) income in terms of tax bracket;
 - (c) general development costs.
- 6.2 Funding shall be provided through a lump sum grant, calculated based on proposals submitted by farms to achieve sustainable outcomes, which depends on factors including—
- (a) equipment costs;
 - (b) the applicant(s) being an Australian resident for tax purposes;
 - (c) time required for implementation.
- 6.3 Further funding shall be based on the needs of the applicant(s).

Clause 7 Community Gardens

- 7.1 Community and not-for-profit organisations shall be able to lodge applications for community garden grants to the CSA—
- (a) this shall occur through local councils via online and telephone inquiries.
- 7.2 Negotiations shall occur through local councils via online and telephone inquiries
- 7.3 Should the desired location for the community garden fall upon Crown land, the appropriate application and approval process shall be required to be adhered to.
- 7.4 To be considered by the CSA, community garden applications shall be required to outline a timeline and implementation plan for community gardens.
- 7.5 Once funding has been granted and allocated into the community garden plans, it becomes the responsibility of the organisation to maintain and service the gardens after their implementation.

Clause 8 Education and Awareness

- 8.1 The CSA shall increase public awareness of sustainable agricultural procedures and practices through—

- (a) education campaigns;
 - (b) public awareness campaigns.
- 8.2 Campaigns shall consist of—
- (a) workshops;
 - (b) information days;
 - (c) education programs.

Clause 9 Penalties

- 9.1 If agricultural businesses fail to comply with agreed funding conditions, the CSA shall reserve the right—
- (a) to revoke funding;
 - (b) to distribute penalties.
- 9.2 Failure to comply shall be assessed by the CSA board on a case-by-case basis, and shall include but not be limited to—
- (a) agricultural businesses that fail to implement their agreed sustainable practices within the timeline and structure agreed upon by the business and the CSA;
 - (b) agricultural businesses who misappropriate the funds awarded by the CSA to the business to implement sustainable practices;
 - (c) agricultural businesses which cause unjustifiable environmental detriment in the process of implementing their funded sustainable practices.
- 9.3 Penalties shall be distributed in the following amounts—
- (a) in the case of a natural person, 20 penalty units;
 - (b) in the case of a corporate body, 100 penalty units.