

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

Amend the bill by striking out all of section 2 and inserting the following:

‘Sec. 2. 7 MRSA §318, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 1999, c. 763, §1, is amended to read:

1. Eligibility. An applicant must own at least 5 acres of land in agricultural use and a farm that has been producing agricultural products commercially in the State for at least 2 years at the time of application. The applicant must submit an application to the department to be eligible for participation in the program pursuant to procedures developed by the department.’

Amend the bill in section 3 in subsection 3 in paragraph B in the first line (page 2, line 3 in L.D.) by striking out the following: "Instruction" and inserting the following: 'InstructionDepartment-approved instruction'

Amend the bill in section 3 in subsection 3 in paragraph B by striking out all of the last sentence.

Amend the bill in section 4 in subsection 1 in the 4th line (page 2, line 18 in L.D.) by striking out the following: "or" and inserting the following: 'and'

Amend the bill in section 4 in subsection 2 in the 3rd line (page 2, line 23 in L.D.) by inserting after the following: "4" the following: 'and farms that are eligible to apply for a reduced-interest loan under section 435, subsection 3-A'

Amend the bill in section 4 by inserting after subsection 4 the following:

‘5. Review of business plan. The department shall arrange to review the business plan for a farm selected to receive a grant under subsection 2 within 2 years of the date the grant is awarded.’

Amend the bill in section 13 in subsection 3-A in the 3rd line (page 4, line 22 in L.D.) by inserting after the following: "318" the following: 'for a farm determined eligible under section 319'

SUMMARY

This amendment removes a cross-reference to a definition of "agricultural enterprise," allowing any additional definitions needed to implement the Maine Farms for the Future Program to be established in rule. It specifies that instruction or classroom training in economics or business planning required for participation in the program must be approved by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources. It allows a participant in the program who completes a business plan to apply for a reduced-interest loan, a grant or both. The amendment specifies that the review panel's responsibility to develop a competitive process applies to both applications for grants and eligibility to apply for reduced-interest loans. It also requires the department to review a business plan within 2 years of awarding a grant for implementation of the plan.