**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 46‑1‑170 SO AS TO CREATE THE “SOUTH CAROLINA FARMING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND” TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS AFTER CERTAIN ACTS OF GOD AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MAKE CERTAIN APPROPRIATIONS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 1, Title 46 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 46‑1‑170. (A) There is created the ‘South Carolina Farming Infrastructure Fund’. This fund is separate and distinct from the general fund of the State and all other funds. Earnings on this fund must be credited to it and any balance in this fund at the end of a fiscal year carries forward in the fund in the succeeding fiscal year.

(B) In the annual general appropriations act for Fiscal Year 2019‑2020, the General Assembly shall appropriate twelve million dollars to the South Carolina Farming Infrastructure Fund. Each year after, the General Assembly shall appropriate an amount necessary into the fund so that the fund has a balance of twelve million dollars. The fund also may receive donations and grants from public and private sources.

(C) Revenues credited to this fund must be used only by the Commissioner of Agriculture to operate a grant program that provides financial assistance to farmers after acts of God including, but not limited to, floods and droughts. The commissioner may provide financial aid to farmers who gross under ten million dollars each year through a grant with no repayment, a loan with a low interest rate and long repayment term, or a grant to be used for purchasing crop insurance for the season following an act of God. The Department of Agriculture may choose to require farmers to pay into the fund to be eligible for a subsequent grant or loan.

(D) The department shall promulgate regulations specifying the manner in which an individual becomes eligible for a grant, and the commissioner shall administer the policies defined by the department.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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