

HOUSE BILL NO. 708

INTRODUCED BY J. KASSMIER

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING FOR AN INTERIM STUDY OF FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURAL PROSPERITY; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A TERMINATION DATE."

WHEREAS, food security is vital to our state and nation; and

WHEREAS, agriculture is Montana's top production industry and comprises a central and vital component of this state's economy; and

WHEREAS, the prosperity of Montana's agricultural commodities fuels the prosperity of the state; and

WHEREAS, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations states that "food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life"; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely stressed underlying issues of food access and food distribution in the state; and

WHEREAS, Montana's agricultural economy has grown in response to demand for more diverse crops, such as pulse crops and other specialty crops; and

WHEREAS, the upscaling of Montana-grown food and crops is essential to expanding the state's economy and increasing the wealth of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes the importance of maintaining markets for the state's agricultural commodities while also providing food security for its citizens; and

WHEREAS, spending on agriculture and food systems directly supports public health, local economies, and independent and historically marginalized farmers and ranchers.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Committee on food security and agricultural prosperity.** (1) There is



1 a committee on food security and agricultural commodities.

2 (2) The president of the senate, the minority leader of the senate, the speaker of the house, and the  
3 minority leader of the house shall each appoint one legislative member from their respective parties to the  
4 stakeholder panel.

5 (3) The president of the senate and the minority leader of the senate shall jointly appoint five  
6 members to the committee, including one representative from each of the following groups or areas:

7 (a) an agricultural production organization;

8 (b) a livestock production organization;

9 (c) a community food bank;

10 (d) a nutritional expert; and

11 (e) an anti-poverty organization.

12 (4) The legislative services division shall provide staff assistance to the committee.

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14 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Duties of committee on food security and agricultural prosperity.** (1)

15 The committee on food security and agricultural prosperity shall study issues related to the production of food  
16 and the consumption of food in the state.

17 (2) The committee shall examine:

18 (a) the availability of food in the state;

19 (b) the production of food;

20 (c) the access to food by individuals or households;

21 (d) the use of food;

22 (e) issues of poverty and malnutrition;

23 (f) issues related to locally grown, accessed, processed, and distributed food; and

24 (g) the made-in-Montana and grown-in-Montana products programs.

25 (3) The committee shall consider how markets for the state's commodities may affect the availability,  
26 production, access, and use of food by the state's citizens.

27 (4) All aspects of the study must be concluded prior to September 15, 2022. The final results of the  
28 study, including any findings, conclusions, recommendations, proposed legislation of the stakeholder panel,

1 internet links to public comments, relevant documents, and meeting records must be reported to the 68th  
2 legislature, in accordance with 5-11-210.

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4 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Appropriation. There is appropriated \$10,000 from the general fund to  
5 the legislative services division for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, to support the activities of the  
6 committee on food security and agricultural prosperity established in [section 1].

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8 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Effective date. [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

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10 NEW SECTION. Section 5. Termination. [This act] terminates December 31, 2022.

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