

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4652

To amend the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 to reauthorize the specialty crop research initiative and establish a specialty crop mechanization and automation research and development program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 2, 2026

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

A BILL

To amend the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 to reauthorize the specialty crop research initiative and establish a specialty crop mechanization and automation research and development program, 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 “Advancing Automation
5 Research and Development in Agriculture Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. SPECIALTY CROP RESEARCH INITIATIVE.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 412 of the Agricultural
3 Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998
4 (7 U.S.C. 7632) is amended—

5 (1) in subsection (f)(3), by striking “subsection
6 (d) and (j),” and inserting “subsections (d), (j), and
7 (k),”;

8 (2) in subsection (g)—

9 (A) in paragraph (3), by adding at the end
10 the following:

11 “(C) WAIVER.—The Secretary may waive
12 the matching funds requirement under subpara-
13 graph (A).”; and

14 (B) in paragraph (4), by striking “the Ini-
15 tiative” and inserting “this section”;

16 (3) by redesignating subsections (j) and (k) as
17 subsections (k) and (l), respectively;

18 (4) by inserting after subsection (i) the fol-
19 lowing:

20 “(j) SPECIALTY CROP MECHANIZATION AND AUTO-
21 MATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.—

22 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE.—The
23 Secretary shall establish a competitive research and
24 extension grant program to increase the competitive-
25 ness of specialty crops in the United States through
26 the advancement and acceleration of mechanization

1 and automation, under which the Secretary awards
 2 competitive grants to eligible entities—

3 “(A) to create or improve cost-effective
 4 mechanization, automation, and other innova-
 5 tions and technologies—

6 “(i) to reduce the manual labor re-
 7 quirements of a specialty crop grower;

8 “(ii) to improve specialty crop farm-
 9 worker safety and health or working condi-
 10 tions; and

11 “(iii) to increase the efficiency of spe-
 12 cialty crop—

13 “(I) production;

14 “(II) resource management;

15 “(III) harvesting;

16 “(IV) processing;

17 “(V) postharvest technologies; or

18 “(VI) packaging;

19 “(B) to increase the adoption of specialty
 20 crop mechanization, automation, and other in-
 21 novations and technologies by—

22 “(i) emphasizing adoption drivers,
 23 which may include connectivity, autonomy,
 24 reliability, durability, in-field validation,
 25 and cost-effectiveness; or

1 “(ii) investing in and developing
 2 human capital to increase the capacity of
 3 the specialty crop sector to work with new
 4 technologies; or

5 “(C) to accelerate specialty crop mecha-
 6 nization and automation through—

7 “(i) prototype development;

8 “(ii) in-field trial testing;

9 “(iii) ongoing industry engagement; or

10 “(iv) rapid commercialization.

11 “(2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this
 12 subsection, the Secretary shall give priority to pro-
 13 posals for projects that—

14 “(A) address the training or retraining of
 15 farmworkers (including to maintain adequate
 16 worker safety) to operate, repair, program, or
 17 otherwise maintain mechanization and automa-
 18 tion solutions involved in the project; and

19 “(B) include explicit mechanisms to com-
 20 municate the results of the project to producers
 21 and the public.

22 “(3) APPLICABILITY.—Subsections (a), (c)
 23 through (g), (i), and (l) shall apply to the program
 24 established under this subsection.”;

(5) in subsection (k) (as so redesignated), in paragraph (5), by striking “In addition to the amounts reserved under subsection (k)(1)(C), there” and inserting “There”; and

(6) in subsection (l) (as so redesignated)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking subparagraphs (C) and (D) and inserting the following:

“(C) RESERVATION.—For each of fiscal years 2026 through 2031, the Secretary shall reserve not less than \$30,000,000 of the funds made available under subparagraph (B) to carry out the program established under subsection (j).

“(D) REALLOCATION.—Notwithstanding paragraph (4), any funds reserved under subparagraph (C) that remain unobligated at the end of the fiscal year following the fiscal year in which such funds are first made available shall be reallocated to carry out the Initiative.”;

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in the paragraph heading, by striking “FOR FISCAL YEARS 2014 THROUGH 2023”;

(ii) by striking “In addition” and inserting the following:

1 “(A) IN GENERAL.—In addition”; and

2 (iii) in subparagraph (A) (as so des-
3 ignated), by striking “2023” and inserting
4 “2031”;

5 (C) by redesignating paragraph (3) as sub-
6 paragraph (B) of paragraph (2) and indenting
7 appropriately; and

8 (D) by redesignating paragraphs (4) and
9 (5) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively.

10 (b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

11 (1) Section 1408A of the National Agricultural
12 Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of
13 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3123a) is amended—

14 (A) in subsection (a)(2)(A), by striking
15 “(j)(3)” and inserting “(k)(3)”;

16 (B) in subsection (c)(5), by striking “spe-
17 cialty crop research initiative” and inserting
18 “programs”; and

19 (C) in subsection (g), in the matter pre-
20 ceding paragraph (1), by striking “(j)” and in-
21 serting “(k)”.

22 (2) Section 251(f)(1)(D)(x) of the Department
23 of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C.
24 6971(f)(1)(D)(x)) is amended by striking “specialty
25 crop research initiative under section 412 of the Ag-

1 ricultural Research, Extension, and Education Re-
2 form Act of 1998” and inserting “programs under
3 section 412 of the Agricultural Research, Extension,
4 and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C.
5 7632)”.
6

7 (3) Section 12605(c) of the Agriculture Im-
8 provement Act of 2018 (7 U.S.C. 7632 note; Public
9 Law 115–334) is amended—
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11 (A) by striking “412(j)” and inserting
12 “412(k)”; and

 (B) by striking “7632(j))” and inserting
 “7632(k))”.
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