

The Seeds for the Future Act

H.R. 5208

Sponsored by Representatives Mark Pocan (D-WI) and Darren Soto (D-FL)

Summary

The Seeds for the Future Act will help to secure our diverse seed stocks for years to come by increasing investment in the development of publicly available, farmer-ready cultivars. In recent decades, public seed breeding programs and the number of classical seed breeders at universities has steadily declined. As a result, innovation and growth have slowed, and many of our nation's farmers have struggled to access seeds that work best for their particular climate, geography, and operation type. The Seeds for the Future Act will increase funding for farmer-ready public cultivar development in federal grant programs, encourage seed diversification and regional adaptation, and increase efficiency and coordination across federal agencies.

The bill works to accomplish the following overarching goals:

Empower and address the needs of farmers and stakeholders:

- Require that at least \$50 million annually go to farmer-ready public cultivar development
- Prioritize projects based on regional and national listening sessions and by identifying and addressing problems across stakeholder areas
- Address farmer needs for more regionally-adapted cropping systems choices

Ensure that funding is going to projects that focus on farmer-ready cultivars:

- Secure funding for seed breeding programs across all competitive grants under the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) within the USDA
- Ensure that funding reaches intended projects by clarifying the definitions of “cultivar”, “public cultivar”, and “conventional breeding” in statute

Make existing programs more efficient:

- Assign designated personnel, who report to the Secretary, to coordinate breeding efforts within USDA's Office of the Chief Scientist
- Require that reporting on competitive grant programs outline progress in meeting targets, lists of cultivars developed, gaps in breeding, and future public cultivar research needs

Encourage commitment to seed diversification and regional adaptation:

- Reauthorize the National Genetics Resources Program with the specific charge of establishing a national strategic germplasm collection assessment and utilization plan; ensure that the plan includes specific recommendations on USDA funding levels for revitalization of national germplasm collections and public cultivar development

All Members are encouraged to co-sponsor the Seeds for the Future Act.

For more information or to co-sponsor, please contact: Syd Terry at (202) 225-2906 or Sydney.Terry@mail.house.gov or Kanika Gandhi at KGandhi@sustainableagriculture.net