

Supporting Urban and Innovative Farming Act of 2023

Cosponsored by: Representatives Alma Adams, Shontel Brown, Barbara Lee, Jonathan Jackson, Nikema Williams, Eleanor Norton, Jasmine Crockett, Danny Davis, Donald Payne Jr, Elissa Slotkin, Jamie Raskin, Josh Gottheimer, James McGovern, and Sheila Jackson Lee

The Supporting Urban Farming Act builds upon the initial success of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and expands opportunities to increase knowledge, understanding, and employment opportunities in urban and innovative farming. This bill makes programmatic reforms to improve the content and delivery of technical assistance to urban and innovative producers, enables cooperative agreements with community experts, increases access to grant funds among farmers and their networks, and scales composting and food waste initiatives.

For the first time, USDA Service Centers are opening in urban cities across the nation to position themselves near the growing number of urban and suburban farmers and provide farm production and conservation services. The bill will ensure that the services offered consistently across USDA service centers and offer:

- Conservation planning that considers stormwater runoff and other unique characteristics of urban and suburban environments;
- Technical assistance for navigating local zoning and accessing the suite of USDA services for the often smaller or unique structure of urban and suburban farms as well as controlled and indoor environments.

The bill will improve access to the impactful funding offered through grants and cooperative agreements by:

- Expanding eligibility to agricultural cooperatives, agricultural business entities or producer networks,
- Ensuring micro-grants can be offered under grant activities to supplement effective education and training with small but impactful financial investments,
- And enabling communities to scale composting and food waste initiatives to develop food waste-to-energy projects.

Urban, innovative, and controlled environment agriculture has seen significant growth in the past three decades. The provisions of the bill seek to understand the growth, its potential impact on community food security, and identify pathways to formalize training opportunities in the growing sector. The bill would support these goals by:

- Funding hydroponic, aquaponic, aeroponic, and other controlled-environment agriculture research under the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative;
- Utilizing National Institute of Food and Agriculture Funding to develop specialized curricula, workforce development programs, and professional credentialing;
- Directing the National Agricultural Statistics Service to complete an urban, indoor, and emerging agricultural production data census.

The bill ensures the program can sustain its accelerating growth by providing mandatory funding at \$15 million in FY2024 and increasing it gradually to reach \$50 million by FY2028.

Endorsed by:

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, CEA Alliance, RAFI-USA, Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association, Chicago Food Policy Action Council, PASA Sustainable Agriculture, Cultivate Kansas City, Fair Food Network, Ag Noire, Michigan Food & Farming Systems