116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S.

To amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to provide assistance to manage farmer and rancher stress and for the mental health of individuals in rural areas, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Tester (for himself and Mr. Grassley) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to provide assistance to manage farmer and rancher stress and for the mental health of individuals in rural areas, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Seeding Rural Resil-
ience Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITION OF SECRETARY.

In this Act, the term “Secretary” means the Sec-
retary of Agriculture.
SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the suicide rate is 45 percent greater in rural areas of the United States than the suicide rate in urban areas of the United States;

(2) farmers face social isolation, the potential for financial losses, barriers to seeking mental health services, and access to lethal means to commit suicide; and

(3) as commodity prices fall and farmers face uncertainty, reports of farmer suicides are increasing.

SEC. 4. PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT CAMPAIGN TO ADDRESS FARM AND RANCH MENTAL HEALTH.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall carry out a public service announcement campaign to address the mental health of farmers and ranchers.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—The public service announcement campaign under subsection (a) shall include television, radio, print, outdoor, and digital public service announcements.

(c) CONTRACTOR.—The Secretary may enter into a contract or other agreement with a third party to carry
out the public service announcement campaign under sub-
section (a).

(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry
out this section $3,000,000, to remain available until ex-
pended.

SEC. 5. EMPLOYEE TRAINING PROGRAM TO MANAGE FARM-
ER AND RANCHER STRESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle A of the Department of
Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6912
et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 224B. EMPLOYEE TRAINING PROGRAM TO MANAGE
FARMER AND RANCHER STRESS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a
voluntary program to train employees of the Farm Service
Agency, the Risk Management Agency, and the Natural
Resources Conservation Service in the management of
stress experienced by farmers and ranchers, including the
detection of stress and suicide prevention.

“(b) REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 180 days after
the date on which the Secretary submits a report on the
results of the pilot program being carried out by the Sec-
retary as of the date of enactment of this section to train
employees of the Department in the management of stress
experienced by farmers and ranchers, and based on the
recommendations contained in that report, the Secretary shall develop a training program to carry out subsection (a).

“(c) REPORT.—Not less frequently than once every 2 years, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate a report describing the implementation of this section.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) Subtitle A of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 is amended by redesignating section 225 (7 U.S.C. 6925) as section 224A.

(2) Section 296(b) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 7014(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(11) The authority of the Secretary to carry out section 224B.”.

SEC. 6. TASK FORCE FOR ASSESSMENT OF CAUSES OF MENTAL STRESS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR RESPONSE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall convene a task force of agricultural and rural stakeholders at the national, State, and local levels—
(1) to assess the causes of mental stress in farmers and ranchers; and

(2) to identify best practices for responding to that mental stress.

(b) SUBMISSION OF REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the task force convened under subsection (a) shall submit to the Secretary a report containing the assessment and best practices under paragraphs (1) and (2), respectively, of subsection (a).

(c) COLLABORATION.—In carrying out this section, the task force convened under subsection (a) shall collaborate with nongovernmental organizations and State and local agencies.