



## 2023 ASSEMBLY BILL 655

November 9, 2023 - Introduced by Representatives NOVAK, SHANKLAND, TRANEL, OLDENBURG, DITTRICH, C. ANDERSON, GOEBEN, GUNDRUM, HURD, JACOBSON, JOERS, KITCHENS, KRUG, KURTZ, MOSES, MURSAU and SCHMIDT, cosponsored by Senators JAMES, COWLES, PFAFF, SMITH, SPREITZER and TESTIN. Referred to Committee on Agriculture.

\*\*\*AUTHORS SUBJECT TO CHANGE\*\*\*

1     **AN ACT to create** 20.115 (4) (t) and 93.60 of the statutes; **relating to:** a transition  
2     to grass pilot program and making an appropriation.

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### *Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau*

This bill creates a “transition to grass pilot program” in the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to provide support and grants to farmers who are implementing livestock grass-based managed grazing systems and farmers and agribusinesses in the grass-fed livestock business. Under the bill the department may award up to \$40,000 to each grantee, and must disperse 75 percent of the grant in the first year following the department’s decision to grant the award and must disperse 12.5 percent of the award in each of the second and third years following the department’s decision to grant the award.

For further information see the state fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

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*The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:*

3           **SECTION 1.** 20.005 (3) (schedule) of the statutes: at the appropriate place, insert  
4     the following amounts for the purposes indicated:

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**SECTION 1**

**2023-24**

**2024-25**

1 **20.115 Agriculture, trade and consumer**

2 **protection, department of**

3 (4) AGRICULTURAL ASSISTANCE

4 (t) Transition to grass pilot program SEG A 500,000 500,000

5 **SECTION 2.** 20.115 (4) (t) of the statutes is created to read:

6 20.115 (4) (t) *Transition to grass pilot program.* From the environmental fund,  
7 the amounts in the schedule for the transition to grass pilot program under s. 93.60.

8 **SECTION 3.** 93.60 of the statutes is created to read:

9 **93.60 Transition to grass pilot program. (1) DEFINITIONS.** In this section:

10 (a) “Managed grazing” means a grazing system alternative to continuous  
11 grazing, in which pastured fields are subdivided into smaller paddocks, livestock  
12 density is controlled, and animals are rotated through paddocks at a frequency that  
13 maintains perennial grass-based vegetative cover, ensures regular access to fresh  
14 higher quality forage, and reduces soil compaction and erosion.

15 (b) “Marginal area” means land that is excluded from cultivation due to  
16 economic infeasibility or physical restriction for growing conventional crops, and  
17 includes riparian areas, low areas prone to flooding, and steep lands not conducive  
18 to conventional cultivation.

19 **(2) TRANSITION TO GRASS PILOT PROGRAM.** From the appropriation under s. 20.115

20 (3) (am), the department shall create and administer a transition to grass pilot  
21 program that awards grants to farmers for managed grazing technical assistance  
22 and implementation support.

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1           **(3) GRAZING GRANTS.** (a) Subject to par. (b), the transition to grass pilot program  
2 shall award grants to farmers for any of the following purposes:

3           1. Assist a farmer with establishing perennial forages for rotational grazing of  
4 livestock raised in a grass-based managed grazing system.

5           2. Provide assistance to a farmer in establishing harvestable continuous cover  
6 in marginal areas that can produce supplemental feed for livestock that is raised in  
7 a grass-based managed grazing system.

8           3. Provide a farmer with incentive payments during the first 3 years of the  
9 farmer's transition to grass-based managed grazing systems.

10          4. Assist a farmer with paying for grass-based managed grazing system  
11 infrastructure needs, including fencing, watering, and other livestock management  
12 infrastructure.

13          5. Technical assistance and support from a certified grazing specialist in  
14 developing grazing plans, including determining field layout, infrastructure setup,  
15 seed selection, and establishment of rotational grazing patterns.

16          (b) Grants awarded under par. (a) shall only be awarded to a farmer  
17 implementing a new grass-based managed grazing system or a new managed  
18 grazing practice that improves the conservation and financial performance of  
19 existing grazing systems; grants may not be awarded to a farmer for the support of  
20 the farmer's existing grazing practices.

21          (c) The department may not award more than \$40,000 in grants under par. (a)  
22 to any one grantee.

23          (d) In the year following the department's decision to grant an award under par.  
24 (a) the department shall provide 75 percent of the award to the grantee, and in each

**ASSEMBLY BILL 655****SECTION 3**

1 of the 2nd and 3rd years following the department's decision to grant an award under  
2 par. (a), the department shall provide 12.5 percent of the award to the grantee.

3 **(4) SUPPORT FOR FARMERS.** (a) The transition to grass pilot program shall  
4 provide the following for farmers and persons in agribusiness:

5 1. Assistance in navigating and analyzing the economics of grass-based  
6 managed grazing and providing grass-fed livestock research, market development  
7 initiatives, and other market opportunities.

8 2. Best practices for meeting consumer demand for grass-fed livestock  
9 products.

10 3. Assistance in fostering innovation in and expanding farm and agribusiness  
11 strategies in grass-based managed grazing systems and grass-fed livestock  
12 practices.

13 (b) The department's division of agricultural development shall support the  
14 state's grass-fed livestock supply chain, including regional processors, aggregators,  
15 distributors, and markets.

16 **SECTION 4. Nonstatutory provisions.**

17 (1) The authorized FTE positions for the department of agriculture, trade and  
18 consumer protection are increased by 0.5 GPR position, to be funded from the  
19 appropriation under s. 20.115 (4) (t), for a position in the division of agriculture  
20 development supporting the performance of the transition to grass pilot program  
21 functions required under s. 93.60 (4).

22 **(END)**