

HB 882 -- AGRI-READY COUNTY DESIGNATION

SPONSOR: McGaugh

This bill creates the "Agri-Ready County Designation Program" within the Department of Agriculture. The program is a voluntary program by which a county or the City of St. Louis may apply to become designated as an Agri-Ready county.

To qualify as an agri-ready county, the county must meet certain requirements that show the county encourages agricultural operations to locate in the county. By March 31, 2016, the department must establish application requirements and review procedures for the program. Any county that receives an agri-ready designation must submit a report annually to the department. The report may not be longer than one page and the department must allow on-line submission of the report. If the department determines a county no longer meets the requirements of the program, it may withdraw the designation.

The department must develop an Agri-Ready County logo and any county designated as an agri-ready county may use the logo on any sign, brochure, website, or other marketing material. Any agri-ready county may request the Department of Transportation erect and maintain signs designating it as agri-ready, with the cost to be paid for by the county. The department must publish and maintain a list of agri-ready counties on its website.

In evaluating any grant proposal based on a point system, the departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Economic Development must increase the total number of points awarded by 5% to any agri-ready county, any political subdivision within an agri-ready county, or any agricultural operation located within or proposing to locate within an agri-ready county. If an agri-ready county loses its designation at any point during the grant period, the county is responsible for repaying any grant funding received.