

HB 458 -- Missouri Farmland Trust Act

Sponsor: Loehner

This bill establishes the Missouri Farmland Trust Act to allow individuals and entities to donate or otherwise convey farmland to the Department of Agriculture to preserve it as farmland and to assist beginning farmers by allowing long-term low and variable cost leases on the land making it affordable for the next generation of farmers to produce food, fiber, and fuel.

The Missouri Farmland Trust is implemented to accomplish the following objectives:

- (1) Protecting and preserving Missouri's farmland;
- (2) Linking new generations of prospective farmers with present farmers; and
- (3) Promoting best practices in environmental, livestock, and land stewardship.

The Missouri Farmland Trust Advisory Board is established within the department to make recommendations to the department director regarding the appropriate uses of farmland in the trust and the criteria for the selection of program participants and to review and make recommendations regarding applications to lease farmland in the trust.

The bill specifies the membership of the board and the terms of its members. The department is authorized to accept or acquire by purchase, lease, donation, or agreement any agricultural lands, easements, or real and personal property including, but not limited to, buildings, structures, improvements, equipment, or facilities subject to preservation and improvement which will be the property of the trust.

The Missouri Farmland Trust Fund is created consisting of gifts, donations, and appropriations by the General Assembly. Moneys in the fund must be used for the administration of the trust and the maintenance, operation, regulation, and improvement of the trust's assets to promote agriculture and its general welfare. Property acquired by the department must be used exclusively for agricultural purposes and must be farmed and maintained using the best environmental, conservation, and stewardship practices as specified by the department. No beginning farmer can lease farmland in the trust for more than 20 years. Any person or entity donating to or leasing land from the department must release the state from any and all claims, actions, or demands that he or she has now or may have in the future for any injury,

death, or property damage related to participation in an activity, any acts connected to the activity, and the condition of the property where the activity occurred.