

SENATE BILL 360
By Cooper

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 43, relative to biobased products and alternative agricultural crops.

WHEREAS, Chapter 838 of the Public Acts of 2000, codified at Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 43, Chapter 37, Part 1, states the following: "The general assembly finds that the development of biobased products, agricultural biomass, bast fiber crops and industrial utilization is in the best interest of Tennessee's economy and agriculture."; now, therefore, BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 43, Chapter 37, is amended by adding Sections 2 through 5 inclusive of this act as a new Part 2.

SECTION 2.

(a) There is hereby established the "Tennessee Biobased Product Education Program," hereinafter referred to as "the program".

(b) The primary purpose of the program is to create new opportunities for Tennessee farmers and Tennessee's farm community through dissemination of accurate and timely information on the development of new commercial (non-food, non-feed) markets for agricultural products, the use of agricultural byproducts and the development of new crops.

SECTION 3.

(a) The program shall establish an information network relative to biobased products.

(b) The resources of the information network shall be made available to the farm community and other interested parties on a real-time basis and shall include biobased product information from sources around the world.

(c) To the maximum extent possible, the information network shall utilize the existing resources of the state's various research networks, including, but not limited to, the University of Tennessee's and Tennessee State University's extension services, the various University of Tennessee computer networks, and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

SECTION 4. The information network established by the program shall specifically include:

(1) The development of information seminars to be conducted across the state by professional trainers through the auspices of regional farm workshops, farm demonstrations, and biobased exhibits;

(2) The establishment of an internet system to disseminate information about biobased products to farmers and other rural stakeholders via an expanding database;

(3) The provision of a forum for dialogue about biobased products as a new agricultural opportunity for farmers in Tennessee. This forum may evolve into a matching service to assist in the creation of new generation cooperatives and to work with existing co-ops and other farm-based ventures to establish processing for new crops and develop new market opportunities;

(4) The establishment of an economic hotline relative to biobased products and a Tennessee-specific news service for the dissemination of timely alternative agricultural information. To the maximum extent possible, these services shall utilize existing state resources and shall be developed in cooperation with existing agricultural information services; and

(5) The documentation of existing agricultural industries and existing consumption of agricultural products in the state to accumulate data relative to emerging markets for farm-grown raw materials.

SECTION 5. In addition to the establishment of the information network, the program shall:

(1) Identify research projects relative to biobased products that are industry relevant and cooperate with the state's research constituencies to implement such projects; and

(2) Promulgate a comprehensive plan for the establishment of alternative processing/production businesses and related infrastructure as a means to attract new agribusinesses to the state.

SECTION 6. The provisions of this act shall not be construed to be an appropriation of funds and no funds shall be obligated or expended pursuant to this act unless such funds are specifically appropriated by the general appropriations act.

SECTION 7. The commissioner of agriculture is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of this act. All such rules and regulations shall be promulgated in accordance with the provisions of Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 5.

SECTION 8. For the purpose of promulgating rules and regulations, this act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it. For all other purposes, this act shall take effect July 1, 2001, the public welfare requiring it.