

SS SCS SBs 627 & 925 -- AGRICULTURE

SPONSOR: Munzlinger

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Agriculture Policy by a vote of 11 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 9 to 1.

This bill modifies the laws relating to agriculture.

URBAN AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

The bill specifies that urban and community gardens, as defined in the bill, are to be classified as agricultural and horticultural property for the purposes of property taxation. Urban and community gardens are to be graded as grade #4 by the State Tax Commission for establishing land values for agricultural land. A taxpayer may apply to the county assessor, or, if not located within a county, then the assessor of such city, if the use or purpose of the taxpayer's real property has changed the subclass under which the real property is classified. If the assessor determines that the property should be reclassified, he or she will determine the assessment based on the percentage of the tax year that such property was classified in each subclassification (Sections 137.016, 137.021, and 137.115, RSMo).

LIVESTOCK

Currently, livestock is defined to include buffalo. The bill adds the word "bison" to this definition and also modifies the definition of "livestock" to include honey bees for the purposes of the state sales tax law (Sections 144.010, 262.900, 265.300, 267.565, 276.606, and 277.020).

YIELD TAX ON FOREST CROPLANDS

Currently, any timber cut on land classified as forest cropland is subject to a yield tax of 6%. The bill repeals the yield tax on forestry products (Sections 254.075, 254.150, 254.160, 254.170, 254.180, and 254.210).

CAPTIVE CERVID SLAUGHTER

For purposes of the Meat Inspection Program administered by the Missouri Department of Agriculture, the bill changes the definitions of "meat" and "meat product" to include captive cervids and the definition of "commercial plant" to include an establishment in which captive cervids are slaughtered, and the

definition of "unwholesome" to include captive cervids, which have died other than by slaughter (Section 265.300).

MISREPRESENTATION OF MEAT

Currently, no person advertising, offering for sale, or selling a carcass may engage in any misleading or deceptive practice including misrepresenting the cut, grade, brand or trade name, or weight or measure of any product. The bill also prohibits misrepresenting a product as meat that is not derived from harvested production livestock or poultry (Sections 265.490 and 265.494).

SEEDS AND FERTILIZERS

This bill prohibits any political subdivision from adopting or enforcing any ordinance, rule, or regulation relating to the labeling cultivation, or other use of seed or fertilizers. The provisions of the bill do not apply to any ordinance, rule, or regulation enacted before August 28, 2018 (Section 266.600).

FUEL STANDARDS

Currently, all fuels shall meet American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards, in addition to rules promulgated by the Director of the Department of Agriculture. The bill allows the director to waive specific requirements, or establish temporary alternative requirements in the event of an extreme and unusual fuel supply circumstance. The waiver must be as limited in scope and applicability as necessary, and applied equally and uniformly to all persons and companies in the impacted fuel supply and distribution system (Section 414.032).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that with regard to the fuel standards provisions, this bill codifies what the Department of Agriculture is already doing. The seeds and fertilizer provisions help provide consistency for farmers who farm property across boundaries of political subdivisions.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Munzlinger; Missouri Petroleum Council; Missouri Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association; Missouri Cattleman's Association; Missouri Deer Breeders Association; Missouri Forest Products Association; Missouri Corn Growers Association; Missouri Pork Association; Missouri Soybean Association; Missouri Farm Bureau; Mo-Ag; and the American Heart Association.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill expressed concerns about prohibiting local ordinances relating to fertilizer provisions

because the definition of fertilizer is broad and could be interpreted to include manure and limiting labeling of meat to only products derived from livestock because many other products use the word meat, which can mean the hearty portion of a plant, such as coconut meat. Opponents also expressed concerns about changing statutes relating to the slaughter of captive cervids while litigation is pending.

Testifying against the bill were Brian Smith, Missouri Rural Crisis Center; Amanda Good, Humane Society of the United States; Conservation Federation of Missouri; and Ed Smith, Missouri Coalition for the Environment.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill provided a history of the yield tax on forestry products and also expressed concerns about changing statutes relating to the slaughter of captive cervids while litigation is pending.

Testifying on the bill was the Missouri Department of Conservation.