

SENATE, No. 4753

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 5, 2026

Sponsored by:
Senator OWEN HENRY
District 12 (Burlington, Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean)

SYNOPSIS

Authorizes Department of Agriculture to designate “School of Agriculture for Next Century” to support education, research, and workforce development in advanced agricultural technologies.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT authorizing the Department of Agriculture to designate a
2 “School of Agriculture for the Next Century” and supplementing
3 Title 4 of the Revised Statutes.
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*
7

8 1. As used in this act:

9 “Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats” or
10 “CRISPR” means a gene-editing technology that allows the
11 modification of genetic material or segments of deoxyribonucleic
12 acid (DNA), to alter genetic expression, for use in medicine,
13 agriculture, and other industries.

14 “Department” means the Department of Agriculture.

15 “Drones” or “unmanned aerial systems” means autonomous or
16 remotely piloted electronic and electromechanical systems, which
17 allow for the operation of an airborne vehicle through a remotely
18 connected command system.

19 “Light detection and ranging technology” or “LiDAR
20 technology” means the remote-sensing technology used to measure
21 ranges, distances, and movements by targeting an object or surface
22 with a laser and measuring the time for the reflected light or wave
23 of energy to return to the receiver.

24 “Nanotechnology applications” means the manipulation of
25 matter with at least one dimension sized from one to 100
26 nanometers, or the manipulation of atoms and molecules for
27 fabricating or altering macroscale products.

28 “Satellite school” means a public institution of higher education
29 within the State system of higher education, a community college,
30 or an academic program, research center, or extension facility
31 affiliated with an institution of higher education.
32

33 2. a. The Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the
34 Secretary of Higher Education, shall designate one public or
35 nonpublic institution of higher education, or a school or academic
36 unit within that institution, as “The School of Agriculture for the
37 Next Century.”

38 b. In making a designation pursuant to this section, the
39 department shall consider whether the school demonstrates
40 expertise, instructional capacity, or research activity in emerging
41 and advanced agricultural technologies, including, but not limited
42 to:

43 (1) unmanned aerial systems, including drones;

44 (2) artificial intelligence and machine learning applications in
45 agriculture;

46 (3) light detection and ranging (LiDAR) technology;

47 (4) global positioning systems (GPS) and geospatial
48 technologies;

1 (5) smart irrigation systems and precision water management
2 techniques;

3 (6) hydroponic, aquaponic, and controlled-environment
4 agriculture systems;

5 (7) organic and regenerative agricultural practices;

6 (8) genetic and genomic breeding techniques;

7 (9) CRISPR and other gene-editing technologies, consistent with
8 applicable law;

9 (10) agricultural robotics, including both hardware and software
10 systems; and

11 (11) nanotechnology applications in agriculture, food systems, or
12 environmental management.

13 c. A designation pursuant to this section shall not create a new
14 public institution or require additional State appropriations unless
15 otherwise provided by law.

16
17 3. a. The Department of Agriculture may designate one or
18 more satellite schools for a period of three years to support the
19 mission of the "School of Agriculture for the Next Century."

20 b. Satellite schools may provide instruction, research, workforce
21 development, or applied training in areas consistent with the focus
22 of the "School of Agriculture for the Next Century."

23
24 4. a. The Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the
25 Secretary of Higher Education, shall encourage participating
26 institutions to establish academic pathways that allow coursework
27 completed at multiple community colleges to be applied toward a
28 degree program offered by the "School of Agriculture for the Next
29 Century."

30 b. Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the
31 authority of an institution of higher education to determine degree
32 requirements, academic standards, or credit transfer policies.

33
34 5. The Department of Agriculture shall, in accordance with the
35 "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et
36 seq.), shall adopt rules and regulations as necessary to implement
37 this act.

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39 6. This act shall take effect immediately.
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42 STATEMENT

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44 This bill authorizes the Department of Agriculture to designate
45 an institution of higher education, or a school or academic unit
46 within that institution, as "The School of Agriculture for the Next
47 Century." The purpose of the designation is to promote advanced
48 education, research, and workforce development in emerging

1 agricultural technologies critical to the future competitiveness and
2 sustainability of the State’s agricultural sector.

3 In making a designation, the Department of Agriculture is
4 directed to consider a school’s expertise in areas such as unmanned
5 aerial vehicles, artificial intelligence, LiDAR, GPS and geospatial
6 technologies, smart irrigation, hydroponics, aquaponics, and
7 controlled-environment agricultural practices, organic and
8 regenerative farming, genetic and genomic breeding, CRISPR and
9 other gene-editing technologies, agricultural robotics, and
10 nanotechnology applications in agriculture.

11 The bill also authorizes the department to designate satellite
12 schools, which may include public institutions of higher education,
13 community colleges, or affiliated academic programs or research
14 centers, to support the mission of the “School of Agriculture for the
15 Next Century” and to expand access to agricultural instruction and
16 training Statewide.

17 Additionally, the bill encourages the development of academic
18 pathways that allow coursework completed at multiple community
19 colleges to count toward a degree program offered by the
20 designated school, while preserving institutional authority over
21 academic standards and degree requirements.