

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2343

AN ACT

To require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a task force for meeting the connectivity and technology needs of precision agriculture in the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Precision Agriculture
3 Connectivity Act of 2018”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) Precision agriculture technologies and prac-
7 tices allow farmers to significantly increase crop
8 yields, eliminate overlap in operations, and reduce
9 inputs such as seed, fertilizer, pesticides, water, and
10 fuel.

11 (2) These technologies allow farmers to collect
12 data in real time about their fields, automate field
13 management, and maximize resources.

14 (3) Studies estimate that precision agriculture
15 technologies can reduce agricultural operation costs
16 by up to 25 dollars per acre and increase farm yields
17 by up to 70 percent by 2050.

18 (4) The critical cost savings and productivity
19 benefits of precision agriculture cannot be realized
20 without the availability of reliable broadband Inter-
21 net access service delivered to the agricultural land
22 of the United States.

23 (5) The deployment of broadband Internet ac-
24 cess service to unserved agricultural land is critical
25 to the United States economy and to the continued

1 leadership of the United States in global food pro-
2 duction.

3 (6) Despite the growing demand for broadband
4 Internet access service on agricultural land,
5 broadband Internet access service is not consistently
6 available where needed for agricultural operations.

7 (7) The Federal Communications Commission
8 has an important role to play in the deployment of
9 broadband Internet access service on unserved agri-
10 cultural land to promote precision agriculture.

11 **SEC. 3. TASK FORCE.**

12 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

13 (1) the term “broadband Internet access serv-
14 ice” has the meaning given the term in section 8.2
15 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any suc-
16 cessor regulation;

17 (2) the term “Commission” means the Federal
18 Communications Commission;

19 (3) the term “Department” means the Depart-
20 ment of Agriculture;

21 (4) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary
22 of Agriculture; and

23 (5) the term “Task Force” means the Task
24 Force for Reviewing the Connectivity and Tech-

1 nology Needs of Precision Agriculture in the United
2 States established under subsection (b).

3 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 1 year after
4 the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall
5 establish the Task Force for Reviewing the Connectivity
6 and Technology Needs of Precision Agriculture in the
7 United States.

8 (c) DUTIES.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Task Force shall con-
10 sult with the Secretary, or a designee of the Sec-
11 retary, and collaborate with public and private
12 stakeholders in the agriculture and technology fields
13 to—

14 (A) identify and measure current gaps in
15 the availability of broadband Internet access
16 service on agricultural land;

17 (B) develop policy recommendations to
18 promote the rapid, expanded deployment of
19 broadband Internet access service on unserved
20 agricultural land, with a goal of achieving reli-
21 able capabilities on 95 percent of agricultural
22 land in the United States by 2025;

23 (C) promote effective policy and regulatory
24 solutions that encourage the adoption of

1 broadband Internet access service on farms and
2 ranches and promote precision agriculture;

3 (D) recommend specific new rules or
4 amendments to existing rules of the Commis-
5 sion that the Commission should issue to
6 achieve the goals and purposes of the policy rec-
7 ommendations described in subparagraph (B);

8 (E) recommend specific steps that the
9 Commission should take to obtain reliable and
10 standardized data measurements of the avail-
11 ability of broadband Internet access service as
12 may be necessary to target funding support,
13 from future programs of the Commission dedi-
14 cated to the deployment of broadband Internet
15 access service, to unserved agricultural land in
16 need of broadband Internet access service; and

17 (F) recommend specific steps that the
18 Commission should consider to ensure that the
19 expertise of the Secretary and available farm
20 data are reflected in future programs of the
21 Commission dedicated to the infrastructure de-
22 ployment of broadband Internet access service
23 and to direct available funding to unserved ag-
24 ricultural land where needed.

1 (2) NO DUPLICATE DATA REPORTING.—In per-
2 forming the duties of the Commission under para-
3 graph (1), the Commission shall ensure that no pro-
4 vider of broadband Internet access service is re-
5 quired to report data to the Commission that is, on
6 the day before the date of enactment of this Act, re-
7 quired to be reported by the provider of broadband
8 Internet access service.

9 (3) HOLD HARMLESS.—The Task Force and
10 the Commission shall not interpret the phrase “fu-
11 ture programs of the Commission”, as used in sub-
12 paragraphs (E) and (F) of paragraph (1), to include
13 the universal service programs of the Commission
14 established under section 254 of the Communica-
15 tions Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 254).

16 (4) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary, or a des-
17 ignee of the Secretary, shall explain and make avail-
18 able to the Task Force the expertise, data mapping
19 information, and resources of the Department that
20 the Department uses to identify cropland, ranchland,
21 and other areas with agricultural operations that
22 may be helpful in developing the recommendations
23 required under paragraph (1).

24 (5) LIST OF AVAILABLE FEDERAL PROGRAMS
25 AND RESOURCES.—Not later than 180 days after

1 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary and
2 the Commission shall jointly submit to the Task
3 Force a list of all Federal programs or resources
4 available for the expansion of broadband Internet ac-
5 cess service on unserved agricultural land to assist
6 the Task Force in carrying out the duties of the
7 Task Force.

8 (d) MEMBERSHIP.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Task Force shall be—

10 (A) composed of not more than 15 voting
11 members who shall—

12 (i) be selected by the Chairman of the
13 Commission; and

14 (ii) include—

15 (I) agricultural producers rep-
16 resenting diverse geographic regions
17 and farm sizes, including owners and
18 operators of farms of less than 100
19 acres;

20 (II) an agricultural producer rep-
21 resenting tribal agriculture;

22 (III) Internet service providers,
23 including regional or rural fixed and
24 mobile broadband Internet access

1 service providers and telecommuni-
2 cations infrastructure providers;

3 (IV) representatives from the
4 electric cooperative industry;

5 (V) representatives from the sat-
6 ellite industry;

7 (VI) representatives from preci-
8 sion agriculture equipment manufac-
9 turers, including drone manufactur-
10 ers, manufacturers of autonomous ag-
11 ricultural machinery, and manufactur-
12 ers of farming robotics technologies;
13 and

14 (VII) representatives from State
15 and local governments; and

16 (B) fairly balanced in terms of tech-
17 nologies, points of view, and fields represented
18 on the Task Force.

19 (2) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.—

20 (A) IN GENERAL.—A member of the Com-
21 mittee appointed under paragraph (1)(A) shall
22 serve for a single term of 2 years.

23 (B) VACANCIES.—Any vacancy in the Task
24 Force—

1 (i) shall not affect the powers of the
2 Task Force; and

3 (ii) shall be filled in the same manner
4 as the original appointment.

5 (3) EX-OFFICIO MEMBER.—The Secretary, or a
6 designee of the Secretary, shall serve as an ex-offi-
7 cio, nonvoting member of the Task Force.

8 (e) REPORTS.—Not later than 1 year after the date
9 on which the Commission establishes the Task Force, and
10 annually thereafter, the Task Force shall submit to the
11 Chairman of the Commission a report, which shall be
12 made public not later than 30 days after the date on which
13 the Chairman receives the report, that details—

14 (1) the status of fixed and mobile broadband
15 Internet access service coverage of agricultural land;

16 (2) the projected future connectivity needs of
17 agricultural operations, farmers, and ranchers; and

18 (3) the steps being taken to accurately measure
19 the availability of broadband Internet access service
20 on agricultural land and the limitations of current,
21 as of the date of the report, measurement processes.

1 (f) TERMINATION.—The Commission shall renew the
 2 Task Force every 2 years until the Task Force terminates
 3 on January 1, 2025.

Passed the Senate December 6, 2018.

Attest:

Secretary.

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