

115TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to encourage soil health, and  
for other purposes.

---

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

---

Mr. BENNET introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred  
to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

---

## A BILL

To amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to encourage  
soil health, and for other purposes.

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

3        **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4        This Act may be cited as the “Conservation for Very  
5        Erodible Row Cropland Act of 2018” or the “COVER  
6        Act”.

7        **SEC. 2. SOIL HEALTH INITIATIVE.**

8        Section 1240B of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16  
9        U.S.C. 3839aa-2) is amended by adding at the end the  
10       following:

1 “(j) SOIL HEALTH INITIATIVE.—

2 “(1) DEFINITION OF COVER CROP.—In this  
3 subsection, the term ‘cover crop’ means a grass, leg-  
4 ume, or forb that is planted for seasonal vegetative  
5 cover.

6 “(2) SOIL HEALTH INITIATIVE.—

7 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall  
8 provide payments under the program for prac-  
9 tices that—

10 “(i) improve soil health;

11 “(ii) enhance the ability of a farmer  
12 to absorb and recover from shocks and  
13 stresses to production;

14 “(iii) increase the storage of carbon  
15 on agricultural land; and

16 “(iv) achieve other conservation out-  
17 comes, as determined by the Secretary.

18 “(B) DIVERSITY.—The Secretary shall en-  
19 sure that producers receiving payments for  
20 practices described in clauses (i) through (iv) of  
21 subparagraph (A) are located in areas that re-  
22 flect diverse conditions with respect to region,  
23 water quantity, and agricultural practice.

24 “(3) SOIL HEALTH PRACTICES.—

1           “(A) IN GENERAL.—Practices that im-  
2           prove soil health under paragraph (2)(A)(i)  
3           shall—

4                   “(i) reflect regional soil and climate  
5           conditions; and

6                   “(ii) include—

7                           “(I) any practice that improves  
8                           soil health, as determined by the Sec-  
9                           retary; and

10                           “(II) not fewer than 2 of the  
11                           practices described in subparagraph  
12                           (B).

13           “(B) PRACTICES DESCRIBED.—The prac-  
14           tices referred to in subparagraph (A)(ii)(II) are  
15           the following:

16                   “(i) The planting of a regionally ap-  
17                   propriate cover crop.

18                   “(ii) No-till or reduced-till agriculture.

19                   “(iii) Resource-conserving crop rota-  
20                   tion.

21                   “(iv) The use of organic soil amend-  
22                   ments, including compost, biochar, and  
23                   digestate.

24                   “(v) The integration of livestock graz-  
25                   ing.”.

1 **SEC. 3. COVER CROP PILOT PROGRAM.**

2 Section 1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16  
3 U.S.C. 3839aa–8) is amended—

4 (1) by redesignating subsection (c) as sub-  
5 section (d); and

6 (2) by inserting after subsection (b) the fol-  
7 lowing:

8 “(c) COVER CROP PILOT PROGRAM.—

9 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall estab-  
10 lish a pilot program to provide payments under this  
11 subsection to producers to encourage—

12 “(A) the measurement of outcomes relat-  
13 ing to the planting of a regionally appropriate  
14 cover crop; and

15 “(B) opportunities to increase farm in-  
16 come.

17 “(2) THIRD-PARTY PARTNERS.—In carrying out  
18 the pilot program under paragraph (1), the Sec-  
19 retary shall give priority to producers that partner  
20 with—

21 “(A) academic entities to study the impact  
22 of soil carbon sequestration on soil health and  
23 farm productivity;

24 “(B) carbon offset protocol developers to  
25 develop quantification methodologies for carbon  
26 offset protocols;

1                   “(C) livestock producers to integrate graz-  
2                   ing where regionally appropriate; or

3                   “(D) food manufacturers—

4                    “(i) to enter into supply agreements  
5                    for food produced under the pilot program;  
6                    and

7                    “(ii) to develop marketing products  
8                    relating to the soil health benefits of that  
9                    food.

10                  “(3) DIVERSITY.—The Secretary shall ensure  
11                  that producers receiving payments under paragraph  
12                  (1)—

13                   “(A) are located in areas that reflect di-  
14                   verse conditions with respect to region, water  
15                   quantity, and agricultural practice; and

16                   “(B) plant regionally appropriate cover  
17                   crops that enhance nutrient cycling and the ca-  
18                   pacity of soil to hold water.

19                  “(4) FUNDING.—Of the funds made available  
20                  to carry out this chapter, the Secretary shall use to  
21                  carry out this subsection \$20,000,000 for each of  
22                  fiscal years 2019 through 2023.”.