

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2659

To authorized the establishment of a program for cooperative research and development in agriculture with the Government of Israel, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 25, 2017

Mr. SOTO (for himself, Mr. YOHO, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. GAETZ, Mr. CRIST, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, and Appropriations, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To authorized the establishment of a program for cooperative research and development in agriculture with the Government of Israel, 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 “United States-Israel
5 Agriculture Strategic Partnership Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The Agreement to establish the United
2 States-Israel Binational Agricultural Research and
3 Development (BARD) Fund, signed on October 25,
4 1977, between the United States Government and
5 the Government of Israel “to promote and support
6 agricultural research and development activities
7 which are of mutual benefits to the United States
8 and Israel”.

9 (2) Since its founding, the BARD Fund has
10 cultivated strategic partnerships between United
11 States and Israeli scientists and has been a bench-
12 mark for the establishment of cooperative agree-
13 ments.

14 (3) BARD Fund-sponsored research projects
15 have contributed billions of dollars to both United
16 States and Israeli economies, as determined by inde-
17 pendent economic surveys. As the major platform for
18 United States-Israel agricultural research collabora-
19 tion, the BARD Fund has funded more than 1,300
20 bi-national projects, awarded over \$300 million for
21 research and development, and supported other pro-
22 grams such as more than 250 postdoctoral fellows
23 and 50 scientific workshops.

24 (4) BARD Fund-sponsored research projects
25 have led to innovative developments, new tech-

1 nologies, and renewed focus in drip irrigation, pes-
2 ticides, fish farming, livestock, poultry, disease con-
3 trol, and farm equipment.

4 (5) The BARD Fund has been successful in re-
5 search collaboration between United States and
6 Israel without fraud, waste, or abuse for 40 years.

7 (6) The Memorandum of Understanding Be-
8 tween the U.S. National Institute of Food and Agri-
9 culture and the U.S. Israel Binational Agricultural
10 Research and Development Fund To Promote Sci-
11 entific Collaboration among U.S. and Israeli Sci-
12 entists and Engineers, signed on November 22,
13 2013, promotes collaboration between the United
14 States and Israel. The 2013 Memorandum of Under-
15 standing was intended to provide a framework
16 whereby Israeli scientists and engineers could receive
17 funding from the BARD Fund and United States
18 scientists and engineers could receive funding from
19 the National Institute for Food and Agriculture.

20 (7) It would be in the interest of the United
21 States to expand the 2013 Memorandum of Under-
22 standing to include cooperation with private entities
23 and to statutorily authorize the BARD Fund to en-
24 hance prospects for its long-term funding.

1 (8) In 2014, Congress enacted legislation de-
2 claring that Israel is a major strategic partner of the
3 United States and authorized the President to pro-
4 mote cooperation with Israel in multiple fields, in-
5 cluding agriculture.

6 (9) Joint cooperation can help solve specific
7 challenges, including food safety, food security, food
8 quality, and post-harvest issues, as well as maximize
9 production with limited resources, environmental
10 changes, water scarcity, and water management.

11 **SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF UNITED STATES-ISRAEL EX-**
12 **PANDED-BINATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RE-**
13 **SEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FUND.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture, in
15 coordination with the Secretary of State and the Adminis-
16 trator of the United States Agency for International De-
17 velopment, is authorized to establish a program for coop-
18 erative research and development in agriculture with the
19 Government of Israel.

20 (b) EXISTING AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of Agri-
21 culture shall establish and carry out the program author-
22 ized under subsection (a) in a manner consistent with the
23 Secretary's authority under section 1458 of the Food and
24 Agriculture Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3291).

1 (c) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the program author-
2 ized under subsection (a) shall be to establish a framework
3 to enhance the collaboration between the United States
4 and Israel in research and development activities relating
5 to agriculture, including between public and private enti-
6 ties.

7 (d) ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED.—Activities that may be
8 supported under the program authorized under subsection
9 (a) include—

10 (1) activities authorized under the Agreement
11 to establish the United States-Israel Binational Ag-
12 ricultural Research and Development (BARD)
13 Fund; and

14 (2) activities authorized under section 1458 of
15 the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977.

16 (e) NONGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE ENTITIES.—
17 Projects and activities under the program authorized
18 under subsection (a) may be carried out by nongovern-
19 mental and private entities, including through collabora-
20 tion with private universities, research institutions, and
21 corporations if such projects and activities support the ob-
22 jectives of the Agreement to establish the United States-
23 Israel Binational Agricultural Research and Development
24 (BARD) Fund.

25 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
2 appropriated to the Secretary of Agriculture such
3 sums as may be necessary to carry out this section.

4 (2) FUND; AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appro-
5 priated pursuant to the authorization of appropria-
6 tions under paragraph (1)—

7 (A) shall be known as the “United States-
8 Israel Expanded-Binational Agricultural Re-
9 search and Development Fund” or “E-BARD
10 Fund”; and

11 (B) are authorized to remain available
12 until expended.

13 (3) TRANSFER AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of
14 Agriculture may transfer amounts appropriated pur-
15 suant to the authorization of appropriations under
16 paragraph (1) to the heads of other relevant Federal
17 departments and agencies, including the Department
18 of State and the United States Agency for Inter-
19 national Development, for purposes of carrying out
20 the program authorized under subsection (a).

21 (g) BINATIONAL TASK FORCE.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State, in
23 coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture, is au-
24 thorized to seek to establish a binational task force
25 to provide guidance and oversight with respect to the

1 program authorized under subsection (a), including
2 to address matters described in paragraph (2).

3 (2) MATTERS DESCRIBED.—The matters de-
4 scribed in this paragraph are the following:

5 (A) Identifying funding priorities and inno-
6 vative developments in agriculture in evaluating
7 projects under the program.

8 (B) Proposing research competitions
9 among universities and private entities in se-
10 lecting projects under the program.

11 (3) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
12 Congress that the task force established under para-
13 graph (1) should be comprised of the following:

14 (A) The Secretary of Agriculture.

15 (B) The Israeli Minister for Agriculture
16 and Rural Development.

17 (C) Members of the board of directors of
18 the BARD Fund.

19 (D) The administrators of the Agriculture
20 Research Service, Economic Research Service,
21 and the National Institute of Food and Agri-
22 culture.

23 (E) The chief scientist of the Israeli Min-
24 istry of Agriculture and the director of the Ag-

1 ricultural Research Organization—Volcani Cen-
2 ter.

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