

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2343

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.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 25, 2018

Mr. WICKER (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. DAINES, and Mr. TESTER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Precision Agriculture
5 Connectivity Act of 2018”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Precision agriculture technologies and prac-
2 tices allow farmers to significantly increase crop
3 yields, eliminate overlap in operations, and reduce
4 inputs such as seed, fertilizer, pesticides, water, and
5 fuel.

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

9 (3) Studies estimate that precision agriculture
10 technologies can reduce agricultural operation costs
11 by up to 25 dollars per acre and increase farm yields
12 by up to 70 percent by 2050.

13 (4) The critical cost savings and productivity
14 benefits of precision agriculture cannot be realized
15 without the availability of reliable broadband Inter-
16 net access service delivered to the cropland and
17 ranchland of the United States.

18 (5) The deployment of broadband Internet ac-
19 cess service to unserved and underserved cropland
20 and ranchland is critical to the United States econ-
21 omy and to the continued leadership of the United
22 States in global food production.

23 (6) Despite the growing demand for broadband
24 Internet access service on cropland and ranchland,

1 broadband Internet access service is not consistently
2 available where needed for agricultural operations.

3 (7) The Federal Communications Commission
4 has an important role to play in the deployment of
5 broadband Internet access service infrastructure on
6 unserved and underserved cropland and rangeland to
7 promote precision agriculture.

8 **SEC. 3. TASK FORCE.**

9 (a) DEFINITIONS.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—In this section—

11 (A) the term “broadband Internet access
12 service” has the meaning given the term in sec-
13 tion 8.2 of title 47, Code of Federal Regula-
14 tions, or any successor regulation;

15 (B) the term “Commission” means the
16 Federal Communications Commission;

17 (C) the term “Department” means the De-
18 partment of Agriculture;

19 (D) the term “Secretary” means the Sec-
20 retary of Agriculture; and

21 (E) the term “Task Force” means the
22 Task Force for Meeting the Connectivity and
23 Technology Needs of Precision Agriculture in
24 the United States, as established under sub-
25 section (b).

1 (2) AGRICULTURAL TERMS.—For purposes of
2 this Act, the Secretary shall define the terms “agri-
3 cultural operations”, “cropland”, and “ranchland”.

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

9 (c) DUTIES.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Task Force shall col-
11 laborate with the Secretary and public and private
12 stakeholders in the agriculture and technology fields
13 to—

14 (A) identify and measure current gaps in
15 broadband Internet access service coverage of
16 cropland and ranchland;

17 (B) assemble a comprehensive guide of all
18 Federal programs or resources working to ex-
19 pand broadband Internet access service on
20 unserved cropland and ranchland;

21 (C) develop policy recommendations to pro-
22 mote the rapid, expanded deployment of fixed
23 and mobile broadband Internet access service
24 on unserved croplands and ranchlands, with a
25 goal of achieving reliable service on 95 percent

1 of croplands and ranchlands in the United
2 States by 2025;

3 (D) promote effective policy and regulatory
4 solutions that encourage the adoption of
5 broadband Internet access service on farms and
6 ranches and promote precision agriculture;

7 (E) propose new rules of the Commission
8 or amendments to existing rules of the Commis-
9 sion to achieve the goals and purposes described
10 in subparagraph (C);

11 (F) recommend specific steps that the
12 Commission and other Federal agencies should
13 take to obtain reliable and standardized data
14 measurements of broadband Internet access
15 service coverage as may be necessary to target
16 funding support to unserved croplands and
17 ranchlands in need of broadband Internet ac-
18 cess service; and

19 (G) recommend specific steps that the
20 Commission should take to ensure that the ex-
21 pertise of the Secretary and available farm data
22 are reflected in developing Federal programs to
23 deploy broadband Internet access service infra-
24 structure and to direct available funding to

1 unserved croplands and ranchlands where need-
2 ed.

3 (2) CONSULTATION.—The Task Force shall
4 consult with the Secretary to develop recommenda-
5 tions for the Commission that utilize the expertise,
6 data mapping information, and resources of the De-
7 partment that the Department uses to identify crop-
8 lands, ranchlands, and other areas with agricultural
9 operations.

10 (d) MEMBERSHIP.—The Task Force shall be—

11 (1) composed of not more than 15 members
12 who shall—

13 (A) be selected by the Chairman of the
14 Commission in consultation with appropriate
15 staff of the Commission and with the Secretary;
16 and

17 (B) include—

18 (i) agricultural producers representing
19 diverse geographic regions and farm sizes,
20 including owners and operators of farms of
21 less than 100 acres;

22 (ii) Internet service providers, includ-
23 ing regional or rural fixed and mobile
24 broadband Internet access service pro-

1 viders and telecommunications infrastruc-
2 ture providers;

3 (iii) representatives from the satellite
4 industry;

5 (iv) representatives from precision ag-
6 riculture equipment manufacturers, includ-
7 ing drone manufacturers, manufacturers of
8 autonomous agricultural machinery, and
9 manufacturers of farming robotics tech-
10 nologies; and

11 (v) representatives from State and
12 local governments; and

13 (2) fairly balanced in terms of technologies,
14 points of view, and fields represented on the Task
15 Force.

16 (e) REPORTS.—Not later than 1 year after the date
17 on which the Commission establishes the Task Force, and
18 annually thereafter, the Commission shall submit to Con-
19 gress a report that details—

20 (1) the status of fixed and mobile broadband
21 Internet access service coverage of croplands and
22 ranchlands;

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

1 (3) the steps being taken to accurately measure
2 the availability of high speed broadband Internet ac-
3 cess service on croplands and ranchlands and the
4 limitations of current, as of the date of the report,
5 measurement processes.

6 (f) EXISTING FUNDS.—The Commission shall use ex-
7 isting funds of the Commission to carry out the Task
8 Force and the duties of the Commission under this sec-
9 tion.

10 (g) TERMINATION.—The Task Force shall terminate
11 on January 1, 2025.

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