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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/9/2007

SPONSOR B. Lujan LAST UPDATED _____ HB 744

SHORT TITLE Farmer-to-Farmer Education Program SB _____

ANALYST McOlash

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY07	FY08		
	\$100.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA)
Higher Education Department (HED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 744 appropriates \$100,000 from the General Fund to the NMSU Regents for NMDA for expenditure in FY 2008 for a Farmer-to-Farmer Education Pilot Program.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$100,000 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the General Fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY 2008 shall revert to the General Fund.

Both NMDA and HED categorize the expenditures as non-recurring. NMDA admits, however, it may make sense to make the funds available on a recurring basis in order for long-term benefits to accrue as a result of this program.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

According to NMDA, this appropriation would support a pilot project of “farmer-to-farmer” learning sessions where individual farmers would be paid a small stipend and travel monies to work with new or existing farmers to share experiences on what might work or be grown on an individual’s farm. The overall intent of these work sessions would be to introduce new crop varieties and new or innovative growing techniques on existing farms, to increase farm income, and to possibly bring idle acreage back into production.

This proposal is modeled after a current program that features apple growers in the northern middle Rio Grande valley where the New Mexico Acequia Association (NMAA) partnered with NMDA to share lessons learned in response to farmer needs. As a result, local farmers who coordinated the project have experienced economic viability of farming based on this peer process. This program aims to complement, not replace NMSU Cooperative Extension efforts.

This request was not submitted by NMSU to the HED for review and is not included in the Department’s funding recommendation for FY08.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

New Mexico State University’s Cooperative Extension Service currently conducts some of these activities on a limited basis through field days, workshops, and other venues. NMDA and the extension would work cooperatively to implement this program.

BM/nt