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**HOUSE BILL NO. 1781**

Offered January 11, 2017

Prefiled January 9, 2017

*A BILL to amend and reenact § 3.2-3501 of the Code of Virginia and to repeal § 3.2-206 of the Code of Virginia, relating to farmers' markets; reports; farm and forest land conversion; plans.*

Patron—Plum

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That § 3.2-3501 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 3.2-3501. Commissioner to manage farmers market operations.**

A. In order to establish, operate and maintain a system of state-owned farmers market facilities within the Commonwealth, the Commissioner may carry out the provisions of this chapter, including the power to:

1. Cooperate with various state agencies and other organizations contributing to the development of the farmers market system;

2. Develop and implement policy for the management of state-owned farmers market facilities, including:

a. Guidelines for fees to be charged at the markets;

b. Standards for evaluating market operations;

c. Criteria for the expansion of existing state-owned farmers market facilities and the establishment of new markets in the future;

d. Changes in management of markets; and

e. Guidelines for the award of contracts for market management.

3. Employ such personnel as necessary to operate the system of markets in accordance with the Virginia Personnel Act (§ 2.2-2900 et seq.);

4. Receive and dispense funds;

5. Develop and manage a program budget for the farmers market system;

6. Provide marketing and promotional services for the farmers market system;

7. Develop detailed technical plans for, acquire or build, and manage the farmers market system;

8. Conduct such studies as are necessary to ensure the success of the farmers market system;

9. Make contracts and agreements and execute other instruments necessary for the operation of the farmers market system;

10. Enter into agreements with and accept grants from any governmental agency in furtherance of this chapter;

11. Enter into joint ventures with cities, towns, counties or combinations thereof in developing wholesale, shipping point, and retail farmers markets; and

12. Rent or purchase land and facilities as deemed necessary to establish markets or to enhance farmers market development.

B. If a market in the network is operated pursuant to a contract between the Commissioner and the market operator, such contract shall require that the operator annually submit to the Commissioner a plan for, and a report on, the operation of the market. The plan shall describe the operator's goals for the coming year as to the acreage to be served by the market, the types of crops to be sold at the market, and the number of brokers, buyers, and producers to utilize the market. The report shall describe the extent to which the goals for the previous year were met. ~~The Commissioner shall submit an annual report on or before February 1 summarizing the market operators' reports and plans to the Chairmen of the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Finance.~~

C. ~~The Commissioner shall report annually to the Board regarding the receipt and expenditure of funds as well as the policies, programs, and activities of the market operators in the state-owned farmers market facilities.~~

**2. That § 3.2-206 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.**

INTRODUCED

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