

The Hatch Act of 1887

The earliest American settlers engaged in agricultural experimentation, but it was not until the 1800s that agricultural research was organized with both public and private support. The first state agricultural experiment stations to remain in continuous operation were established in Connecticut and California in 1875. Similar operations were developed in other states, but a full state agricultural experiment station system was not created until the passage of the Hatch Act of 1887 by the U.S. Congress. The Act was signed into law by President Cleveland on March 2, 1887, providing annual funding to support state agricultural experiment stations in each state in conjunction with the land-grant universities.

Often confused with an unrelated piece of legislation bearing the same name, the Hatch Act of 1887 made possible the original research and scientific studies that provided information on the application of scientific knowledge to farming, the environment, conservation of natural resources, and rural life. By establishing experiment stations in conjunction with the land-grant universities, the Act provided a continued investment in the nation's future, greatly increased the efficiency of American agriculture as the country's leading industry, and established research as a function of the American land-grant university. By providing continued funding for state experiment stations, the Act created a system for the development and training of personnel devoted to scientific research and original investigations in agriculture and for the education of new research workers expanding the frontiers of knowledge.

XXVI

The Hatch Act of 1887

LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING FEDERAL GRANTS FOR AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS

ACT OF 1887 ESTABLISHING AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS

[Hatch Act]

AN ACT To establish agricultural experiment stations in connection with the colleges established in the several States under the provisions of an act approved July second, eighteen hundred and sixty-two, and of the acts supplementary thereto

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in order to aid in acquiring and diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects connected with agriculture, and to promote scientific investigation and experiment respecting the principles and applications of agricultural science, there shall be established under direction of the college or colleges or agricultural departments of colleges in each State or Territory established, or which may hereafter be established, in accordance with the provisions of an act approved July second, eighteen hundred and sixty-two, entitled "An act donating public lands to the several States and Territories which may provide colleges for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts," or any of the supplements to said act, a

department to be known and designated as an "agricultural experiment station": *Provided,* That in any State or Territory in which two such colleges have been or may be so established the appropriation hereinafter made to such State or Territory shall be equally divided between such colleges, unless the legislature of such State or Territory shall otherwise direct.

SEC. 2. That it shall be the object and duty of said experiment stations to conduct original researches or verify experiments on the physiology of plants and animals; the diseases to which they are severally subject, with the remedies for the same; the chemical composition of useful plants at their different stages of growth; the comparative advantages of rotative cropping as pursued under the varying series of crops; the capacity of new plants or trees for acclimation; the analysis of soils and water; the chemical composition of manures, natural or artificial, with experiments designed to test the comparative effects on crops of different kinds; the adaptation and value of grasses and forage plants; the composition and digestibility of the different kinds of food for domestic animals; the scientific and economic questions involved in the production of butter and cheese; and such other researches or experiments bearing directly on the agricultural industry of the United States as may in each case be deemed advisable, having due regard to the varying conditions and needs of the respective States and Territories.

SEC. 3. That in order to secure, as far as practicable, uniformity of methods and results in the work of said stations, it shall be the duty of the United States Commissioner [now Secretary] of Agriculture to furnish forms, as far as practicable, for the tabulation of results of investigation or experiment; to indicate from time to time such lines of inquiry as to him shall seem most important, and, in general,

to furnish such advice and assistance as will best promote the purpose of this act. It shall be the duty of each of said stations annually, on or before the first day of February, to make to the governor of the State or Territory in which it is located a full and detailed report of its operations, including a statement of receipts and expenditures, a copy of which report shall be sent to each of said stations, to the said Commissioner [now Secretary] of Agriculture, and to the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States.

SEC. 4. That bulletins or reports of progress shall be published at said stations at least once in three months, one copy of which shall be sent to each newspaper in the States or Territories in which they are respectively located, and to such individuals actually engaged in farming as may request the same and as far as the means of the station will permit. Such bulletins or reports and the annual reports of said stations shall be transmitted in the mails of the United States free of charge for postage, under such regulations as the Postmaster General may from time to time prescribe.

SEC. 5. That for the purpose of paying the necessary expenses of conducting investigations and experiments and printing and distributing the results as herein-before prescribed, the sum of fifteen thousand dollars per annum is hereby appropriated to each State, to be specially provided for by Congress in the appropriations from year to year, and to each Territory entitled under the provisions of section eight of this act, out of any money in the Treasury proceeding from the sales of public lands, to be paid in equal quarterly payments on the first day of January, April, July, and October in each year, to the treasurer or other officer duly appointed by the governing boards of said colleges to receive the same, the first payment to be made on the first day of October, eighteen hundred eighty-seven. *Provided, however,* That out of the first annual appropriation so received by any station an amount not exceeding one-fifth may be expended in the erection, enlargement, or repair of a building or buildings necessary for carrying on the work of such station; and thereafter an amount not exceeding five per centum of such annual appropriation may be so expended.

SEC. 6. That whenever it shall appear to the Secretary of the Treasury from the annual statement of receipts and ex-

penditures of any of said stations that a portion of the preceding annual appropriation remains unexpended, such amount shall be deducted from the next succeeding annual appropriation to such station, in order that the amount of money appropriated to any station shall not exceed the amount actually and necessarily required for its maintenance and support.

SEC. 7. That nothing in this act shall be construed to impair or modify the legal relation existing between any of the said colleges and the government of the States or Territories in which they are respectively located.

SEC. 8. That in States having colleges entitled under this section to the benefits of this act and having also agricultural experiment stations established by law separate from said colleges, such States shall be authorized to apply such benefits to experiments at stations so established by such States; and in case any State shall have established, under the provisions of said act of July second aforesaid, an agricultural department or experiment station in connection with any university, college, or institution not distinctly an agricultural college or school, and such State shall have established or shall hereafter establish a separate agricultural college or school, which shall have connected therewith an experimental farm or station, the legislature of such State may apply in whole or in part the appropriation by this act made to such separate agricultural college or school, and no legislature shall be contract, express or implied, disable itself from so doing.

SEC. 9. That the grants of moneys authorized by this act are made subject to the legislative assent of the several States and Territories to the purpose of said grants: *Provided,* That payment of such installment of the appropriation herein made as shall become due to any State before the adjournment of the regular session of its legislature meeting next after the passage of this act shall be made upon the assent of the governor thereof duly certified to the Secretary of the Treasury.

SEC. 10. Nothing in this act shall be held or construed as binding the United States to continue any payments from the Treasury to any or all the States or institutions mentioned in this act, but Congress may at any time amend, suspend, or repeal any or all the provisions of this act.

Approved March 2, 1887 (24 Stat. L. 440).