

EXTENDING PROVISIONS OF THE BANKHEAD-JONES FARM TENANT ACT AND THE SOIL CONSERVATION AND DOMESTIC ALLOTMENT ACT TO THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

MAY 8 (legislative day, APRIL 21), 1947.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. CAPPER, from the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, submitted the following

REPORT

To accompany S. 512]

The Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, to whom was referred the bill (S. 512) to extend provisions of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act and the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act to the Virgin Islands, having considered same report thereon with the recommendation that it do pass with the following amendments.

1. On page 1, line 9, after the word "area" strike out the word "to".
2. On page 1, line 9, after the word "finance", insert a comma.
3. On page 1, line 9, after the word "State", insert a comma.

A letter from the Secretary of Agriculture, dated March 24, 1947, recommending the enactment of this legislation is attached hereto and made a part of said report.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
Washington, March 24, 1947.

HON. ARTHUR CAPPER,
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture and Forestry,
United States Senate.

DEAR SENATOR CAPPER: This is in further reference to your request of February 7, 1947, which was acknowledged on February 11, for a report on S. 512, a bill to extend provisions of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act and the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act to the Virgin Islands.

Section 1 of the proposed legislation amends subsection (b) of section 41, and section 54 of title IV of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act as amended, except insofar as these sections affect title III, by adding the Virgin Islands to the specified areas to which the provisions of the sections to be amended are extended. The Territories of Alaska and Hawaii, and Puerto Rico are named by the present sections and the proposed amendments merely add the Virgin Islands.

Section 2 of the bill amends subsection (a) of section 17 of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, by specifically adding the Virgin Islands to the areas in which that act shall apply. When the act of April 27, 1935 (49 Stat. 163-164), an act to provide for the protection of land resources against soil

erosion, and for other purposes, was amended by the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of February 29, 1936 (49 Stat. 1148-1152), by adding additional sections, section 17 (a) of the amendatory legislation while including most of the other lands of the Nation, unfortunately omitted naming the Virgin Islands. The United States, the Territories of Alaska and Hawaii and the possession of Puerto Rico were named and the proposed amendment merely adds the Virgin Islands. The language of section 2 of the bill is identical with section 1 of S. 2087 and H. R. 6088, introduced, respectively, by the chairmen of the Committees on Agriculture and Forestry of the Senate, and on Agriculture of the House, in the second session of the Seventy-ninth Congress, upon the recommendation of this Department.

Section 3 of the bill repeals all acts or parts of acts in conflict with the proposed legislation.

Under the provisions of the Farmers Home Administration Act of 1946 (60 Stat. 1062), the Farm Security Administration and the Emergency Crop and Feed Loan Division of the Farm Credit Administration were abolished and the assets, functions, and liabilities of these two agencies were transferred to the Farmers Home Administration on November 1, 1946. Prior to the enactment of this legislation, the Farm Security Administration was authorized to make rural rehabilitation operating loans in the Virgin Islands. However, no authority existed for the making of farm purchase loans by the Farm Security Administration under title I of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (7 U. S. C. 1000-1006) or for making crop production and harvesting loans by the Emergency Crop and Feed Loan Division of Farm Credit Administration under the act of January 29, 1937, as amended (12 U. S. C. 1020i-1020n, 1020o). The Farmers Home Administration Act provides for production and subsistence loans, tenant purchase loans, and insured mortgages, but does not provide authority for these operations in the Virgin Islands. The reasons for the exclusion of the Virgin Islands from the benefits of the programs administered by the Farmers Home Administration were not indicated in the legislative history of the act. The proposed legislation would authorize the Farmers Home Administration to administer such programs in the islands.

As already stated, legislation identical to section 2 of S. 512 was recommended by the Department to the Seventy-ninth Congress. Subsequent to this recommendation, Virgin Islands laws have created two soil conservation districts—one including the island of St. Croix and the other the islands of St. Thomas and St. John. These districts, as well as the farmers and ranchers, are requesting assistance from the Soil Conservation Service in carrying out of soil and water conservation work. Although, due to the size of the islands, the soil and water conservation problems do not affect as extensive areas as in most of the States, they are, however, of equal importance to the people concerned. Their voluntary action in forming soil conservation districts with which the Department could cooperate most effectively in rendering the needed assistance, has further increased the Department's desire of having the Soil Conservation Service give its full aid in helping them to establish a sound conservation program in the islands. The proposed legislation would permit such a program.

Similarly, the extending of authority of sections 7 to 17 of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act to the Virgin Islands will permit assistance in obtaining prompt and widespread application of suitable conservation practices through payments and other assistance to farmers provided in the agricultural conservation program administered by the Production and Marketing Administration. The Department is in favor of S. 512 from this point of view also.

The Governor recently forwarded to the President, the Senate, the House of Representatives, and to the Secretaries of the Interior and of this Department copies of a resolution passed December 6, 1946, by the legislative assembly, petitioning for the enactment of appropriate legislation to permit activities of the Farm Security Administration and the Soil Conservation Service in the islands. The Virgin Islands, as a possession of the United States, would appear equitably entitled to such assistance in accordance with the desires of its local governments and people. Moreover, the importance of protecting, maintaining, and improving suitable agricultural conditions on all of the agricultural lands of the Nation is generally recognized.

For these reasons the Department is in favor of S. 512 and recommends that it be enacted.

The Bureau of the Budget advises that it has no objection to the submission of this report.

Sincerely yours,

CLINTON P. ANDERSON, *Secretary.*

