To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to guarantee investments that will open new markets for forest owners in rural areas of the United States, and for other purposes.

__IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES__

Ms. STABENOW (for herself and Mr. BRAUN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

__A BILL__

To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to guarantee investments that will open new markets for forest owners in rural areas of the United States, and for other purposes.

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 “Rural Forest Markets
5 Act of 2020”.

6 **SEC. 2. RURAL FOREST MARKET INVESTMENT PROGRAM.**

7 (a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:
(1) RURAL.—The term “rural” has the meaning given the term in section 343 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991).

(2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(b) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a program, to be known as the “Rural Forest Market Investment Program”, to guarantee an environmental impact bond, loan, or other investment vehicle, as determined by the Secretary, issued for the sole purpose of financing eligible projects described in subsection (c), to enable rural private forest landowners to participate in an innovative market for forest carbon or other products.

(2) CONSIDERATION.—In establishing the program under paragraph (1), the Secretary may consider ways to ensure that the program minimizes, to the extent practicable, disruptions to traditional forest products markets.

(c) ELIGIBLE PROJECTS.—An eligible project referred to in subsection (b)(1) is a project developed by private entity, or a publicly supported, charitable nonprofit organization, engaged in the aggregation of sustainable
forestry practices implemented by rural private forest
landowners to facilitate the sale of credits in the voluntary
carbon market or other environmental market, using a
methodology approved by a credible, third-party entity, as
determined by the Secretary.

(d) REQUIREMENTS.—A project described in sub-
section (c) that includes the practice of tree planting may
only be carried out, as determined by the Secretary—
(1) on land that was historically forested;
(2) using tree species that are native to the re-

gion and at ecologically appropriate densities; and
(3) in a manner that does not create other neg-

ative impacts to biodiversity or the environment.

(e) GUARANTEE AMOUNT.—The Secretary may guar-
antee not more than $150,000,000 with respect to each
bond, loan, or other investment vehicle under subsection
(b)(1).

(f) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 30 days after the
date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue
regulations to implement the program established under
subsection (b)(1).

(g) TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.—The authority
provided by this section terminates on September 30,
2023.