

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

—
H.P. 374 - L.D. 606

Resolve, to Study Barriers to Financial Assistance Programs for Farmers and Food Producers

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, farmers and food producers are facing increasing challenges when trying to access both state and federal grant programs; and

Whereas, this legislation needs to take effect before the expiration of the 90-day period to allow the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources to study the bureau's financial assistance programs to identify barriers to and improve effectiveness of these programs as soon as possible; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1. Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to seek stakeholder input on lowering barriers to financial assistance programs.

Resolved: That the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall direct staff of the Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources to study the bureau's financial assistance programs for farmers and food producers to identify barriers to these programs and methods to eliminate those barriers and increase the effectiveness of the programs in addressing farmer and food producer needs. This study must be undertaken within existing resources and must include at least 2 listening sessions with farmers and food producers. The listening sessions must encompass topics, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Application materials, submission procedures and timelines for application retention by the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry;
2. Contact procedures to inform applicants of new program opportunities;
3. Accessibility for beginning and emerging farmers and the expansion of education about department programs, partnerships with community organizations to reach new

groups of farmers and identification of farmers who currently underuse department programs; and

4. Input on how the department can organize and consolidate its financial assistance offerings.

Sec. 2. Report. Resolved: That, by January 15, 2026, the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall submit a report detailing the results of the study under section 1 and any recommended legislation to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, which may report out legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.