

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

Amend the amendment by striking out everything after the title and before the summary and inserting the following:

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Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §12004-I, sub-§1-C is enacted to read:

1-C.

Agriculture

Maine Farm-to-Plate
Commission

Not Authorized

7 MRSA §219

Sec. 2. 7 MRSA §219 is enacted to read:

§ 219. Maine Farm-to-Plate Commission

The Maine Farm-to-Plate Commission established in Title 5, section 12004-I, subsection 1-C and referred to in this section as “the commission,” is established to advise the commissioner on critical issues of agricultural regulation, food safety and local and regional food-related issues. Membership and duties of the commission are set forth in this section.

1. Members. The commission consists of members appointed as follows:

A. One representative of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, who serves as chair of the commission, appointed by the Chancellor of the University of Maine System;

B. One member of a statewide organization dedicated to ensuring food for the State's future, jointly appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

C. One member of a statewide organization dedicated to ensuring sustainable agriculture in the State, jointly appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

D. One member of a statewide organization dedicated to organic farming and gardening, jointly appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and

E. One member of a statewide organization organized to strengthen the State’s farming, fishing and food economy, jointly appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The commission shall invite as members 2 small-scale farm owners, 2 large-scale farm owners, one small-scale producer of prepared food, one large-scale producer of prepared food, one member representing a local or regional food policy council, one member representing a statewide organization dedicated to encouraging tourism in the State and one member representing a statewide organization dedicated to aquaculture in the State.

2. Terms. Each member of the commission serves for a term of 3 years. If a member is unable to complete the term, the appointing authority shall appoint a person to serve out the remainder of the unexpired term.

3. Duties. The commission shall:

A. Advise and assist the commissioner in the implementation and oversight of initiatives recommended by the commission;

B. By February 1st annually, submit a report concerning the commission's activities to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Clerk of the Senate, the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the chairs of the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over agriculture, conservation and forestry matters; and

C. Periodically review and update the strategic plan for agricultural economic development developed in accordance with subsection 4.

4. Strategic plan. The commission shall develop a strategic plan for agricultural economic development. In developing the strategic plan, the commission shall:

A. Inventory the State's food system infrastructure by gathering existing data, studies and analysis about:

(1) The types of foods produced in the State, the number of producers of each type of food, the amount of each type of food produced and the financial viability of each food-producing sector;

(2) The types of food processors in the State, how much food produced in the State is purchased by processors within the State and the financial viability of the food processing sector in the State;

(3) The current and potential markets in which the State's food producers and processors are able to sell their products;

(4) The extent of existing agricultural lands that could be expanded and the resources available to expand food production in the State;

(5) The potential for new farmers and food processors to enter the local food economy, the methods for new farmers to acquire land and other farm infrastructure and the availability of and barriers to farm and processing labor; and

(6) The potential for entirely new local products and the existence of barriers to farmers and processors entering new markets;

B. Identify gaps in the infrastructure and distribution systems and ways to address these gaps; and

C. Use resources available from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension.

5. Implementation. The commission shall use the information gathered in the course of developing and updating the strategic plan required under subsection 4 to identify methods and the funding necessary to strengthen links among producers, processors and markets, including, but not limited to, actions:

A. Supporting the work of existing farm-to-school programs to increase the purchase of local foods by schools, with a particular emphasis on procurement of nutrient-dense animal foods;

B. Collaborating with the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and with other relevant departments to increase procurement of local foods by businesses and institutions; and

C. Educating lenders regarding the information collected under this section to facilitate availability of agricultural financing.

6. Funds. The commission may seek and accept gifts, donations and grants from any public or private source to support farm-to-table direct marketing, including farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture operations and to support and encourage so-called regional community food hubs. The commission may use technical assistance, loans, grants or other means approved by the commissioner.

Sec. 2. Development of strategic plan. The Maine Farm-to-Plate Commission shall develop the strategic plan for agricultural economic development pursuant to Title 7, section 219, subsection 4 by November 1, 2014.

Sec. 3. Report. The Maine Farm-to-Plate Commission shall investigate the feasibility, logistics and propriety of instituting in the State food sovereignty under which local governments may regulate local food systems by local ordinance. The commission shall submit a report of its findings to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry no later than January 1, 2014.'

SUMMARY

This amendment strikes the committee amendment and replaces it with language that:

1. Establishes the Maine Farm-to-Plate Commission to collaborate with and advise the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry on critical issues of agricultural regulation, food safety and local and regional food-related issues;
2. Directs the commission to develop a strategic plan for agricultural economic development;
3. Directs the commission to use the information gathered in the course of developing and updating the strategic plan to identify methods and the funding necessary to strengthen links among producers, processors and markets; and
4. Requires the commission to investigate the feasibility, logistics and propriety of instituting in the State food sovereignty under which local governments may regulate local food systems by local ordinance and directs the commission to submit a report of its findings to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry no later than January 1, 2014.

FISCAL NOTE REQUIRED
(See attached)