

STATE OF MAINE

—
 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
 TWO THOUSAND AND SEVENTEEN

—
 H.P. 997 - L.D. 1445

**An Act To Designate the Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management
 and Sustainability Recognition Program**

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 7 MRSA §162, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 356, Pt. A, §1 and amended by PL 2011, c. 682, §38, is further amended to read:

**§162. Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability
 recognition program**

The commissioner shall establish a process for designating ~~"Farming for Maine"~~ farms Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability recipients according to this section. This designation provides farmers an opportunity to ~~declare~~ recognize their commitment to ~~commercial agriculture~~ sustainable agricultural practices and long-term resource management and to increase public awareness of ~~farming in the State~~ agricultural producer commitment to best management practices.

1. Application. An applicant for designation as a ~~"Farming for Maine" farm~~ Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability recipient shall submit a completed application ~~that has been verified for verification~~ in accordance with subsection 3 to the clerk for the municipality in which the farm is located and a copy of the application to the department. ~~If the land is within an area under the jurisdiction of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission, the applicant shall submit the verified application to the executive director of the commission and a copy to the department.~~ The department shall develop an application form and make the form it available through the offices of the soil and water conservation districts and private organizations and public agencies that support or represent farmers in the State.

2. Eligibility. A farm is eligible for designation under this section if ~~the following criteria are met~~ it engages in the management of cropland or the production of livestock, specialty crops or value-added products and meets the criteria established by the commissioner as follows:

A. The farm consists of land classified as prime farmland, land of statewide or local importance or unique farmland by the Natural Resources Conservation Service within the United States Department of Agriculture. In counties where land of local importance has not been identified, land that is actively farmed may be eligible as provided in rules adopted under subsection 4;

B. ~~The land is used for~~ farm is engaged in the commercial production of agricultural products; ~~and or~~

C. ~~Additional~~ The farm complies with additional criteria established in rules adopted under subsection 4.

A farm that is farmed under a lease may be designated as long as the landowner and the lessee sign the application.

3. Verification of eligibility. An applicant for designation as a ~~"Farming for Maine" farm~~ Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability recipient shall submit a completed application form together with support materials as required in rules adopted under subsection 4 to ~~a soil and water conservation district office. Upon receipt of an application, a district office shall verify the eligibility of the farm or notify the applicant of the reasons why verification is denied. Upon request, the department shall assist a district in determining eligibility~~ the department for verification of eligibility.

4. Rules. The commissioner may adopt rules to further define the verification process under subsection 3 and establish additional eligibility criteria as needed for designation of ~~"Farming for Maine" farms~~ Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability recipients. The commissioner ~~shall~~ may provide signs or certificates or develop other means of recognizing a farm that has attained designation as a ~~"Farming for Maine" farm~~ Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability recipient. Rules adopted under this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

5. Fee. ~~A municipality~~ The commissioner may charge a fee of not more than \$20 for ~~filing a verified designation application under~~ fees as necessary for the administration of this section.