

Daniel Devereaux
Brunswick
LD 299

Letter of Support for “An Act to Build a Viable Future for Maine Agriculture”

Senator, Representative, and members of the Committee,

My name is Dan Devereaux, and I am a Maine shellfish farmer. My family operates a shellfish farm in Brunswick Maine. I am writing in strong support of the proposed amendment to include aquaculture and sea farming within the definition of “producer” under the Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund.

For those of us who make a living on the water, farming the sea is not very different from farming the land. We prepare our “fields,” plant our crop, tend it through the seasons, and rely on the weather, water quality, and natural conditions that are largely outside our control. Like many small agricultural producers in Maine, our farm operates on tight margins while taking on significant risk each year.

Our family farm invests years of work before seeing a return. Shellfish take multiple growing seasons before they are ready for market. During that time, we face risks from storms, ice, disease, changing ocean conditions, and market fluctuations. One bad winter storm or environmental event can undo years of work overnight. Despite these challenges, we continue farming because we believe in producing healthy local food and contributing to Maine’s coastal economy.

Aquaculture farms are, in every practical sense, agricultural operations. We raise crops, steward the environment they grow in, and provide a sustainable source of food. Yet historically, sea farmers have not always had access to the same financial tools available to land-based farmers. This amendment helps recognize that reality and brings parity between agriculture on land and agriculture in the ocean.

Including aquaculture and sea farming in the definition of “producer” will allow family farms like ours to access grants and low-interest loans that can help us invest in equipment, infrastructure, and resilience. These types of investments can make the difference between a small farm surviving a difficult year or being forced to shut down.

Maine’s working waterfronts depend on small family operations that are willing to take risks, innovate, and work hard to produce high-quality food. Supporting aquaculture through programs like the Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund will help ensure that the next generation of farmers—whether they farm soil or seawater—has a viable future in this state.

Thank you for considering this important step toward recognizing aquaculture as the agriculture that it truly is.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Devereaux

Maine Shellfish Farmer

Mere Point Oyster Co.