



Testimony of Garrett Mason  
in Opposition to LD 1323  
An Act to Prohibit the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides and the Use  
and Sale of Neonicotinoid-treated Seeds

Good Morning Sen. Talbot-Ross, Rep. Plucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

My name is Garrett Mason, I am a resident of Lisbon Falls and a partner with Dirigo Public Affairs. I am here today representing my client, the Maine Farm Bureau, one of the state's largest grassroots agricultural organizations, representing farmers both large and small across the state. The Maine Farm Bureau opposes LD 1323. The bill poses significant risks to Maine's agricultural economy, food security, and farm viability.

The Maine Farm Bureau represents farm families and agricultural stakeholders across the state, from potato growers in Aroostook County to diversified vegetable producers in southern Maine. Our members rely on science-based, carefully regulated tools to ensure they can provide food for Maine and beyond. Enacting LD 1323 would lead to unintended consequences that harm farmers, consumers, and rural communities.

LD 1323 proposes sweeping prohibitions on neonicotinoid pesticides and treated seeds, including bans on outdoor applications to soybeans, cereal grains, certain vegetable crops, and ornamental plants, as well as during bloom periods for any crop. Without access to neonicotinoids, growers face increased virus pressure, reduced yields, and lower-quality crops. The American Farm Bureau Federation has emphasized that neonicotinoids are a "precision tool" with lower environmental impact than older, broader-spectrum pesticides. Forcing farmers to revert to less effective alternatives could increase pesticide use overall.

While LD 1323 includes an exemption process for agricultural or environmental emergencies, the requirements are overly burdensome and unworkable in practice. Exemptions would require a detailed pest risk assessment, integrated pest management training, and field-by-field approvals, only valid for one year. The staff and capacity demands of such a process would no doubt require more staff at Maine ACF. Pest and crop disease outbreaks demand rapid response - sometimes a single day can be too late. This bill would severely lengthen the time to respond and would risk losing a crop. The American Farm Bureau Federation has warned that restrictive exemption processes in other states have left farmers unable to respond to pest pressures in real time, leading to significant economic losses.



The requirement that a “less harmful” alternative be unavailable ignores the reality that neonicotinoids are often chosen because they are the most effective and targeted option.

Vermont’s experience with a similar neonicotinoid ban, passed in 2024 underscores the risks of LD 1323. Vermont’s Senate Agriculture Committee is now reconsidering Vermont’s ban. Stakeholders have continually pointed out that the ban limits access to hybrid seed traits suited to Vermont’s climate, threatening corn production critical for dairy farming. These concerns mirror those we’ve heard from Maine farmers.

A ban on neonicotinoids could ripple beyond farms to consumers and rural communities. Reduced crop yields and quality will drive up food prices, hitting Maine families at a time when inflation and an unsteady global market is already challenging. Higher production costs or crop failures could force family farms out of business.

We respectfully request that the committee vote “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 1323.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions or provide additional information for work session.