



Miller Farms LLC
PO Box 669 Houlton ME 04730
PH 207-532-3290 FX 207-532-6516
jenniferapd@pwless.net

TO: ACF Committee
FROM: Jennifer Gogan
DATE: April 11, 2025
SUBJECT: LD1323 An act to prohibit the use of neonicotinoid pesticides and the use and sale of neonicotinoid-treated seeds.

I am writing to you today to address LD1323. I am part owner of Miller Farms LLC, a seed potato business located in Littleton Maine. We grow Frito-Lay varieties, lamoka, snowden, dark red norlands, caribou and russet. We provide seed to the Frito-Lay chip growers and to McCain and Pineland process growers in Maine as well as potato growers in Florida, up thru the eastern seaboard and into Canada.

Quality disease-free seed is important to maintain Maine's potato industry. The past few years has seen a decrease in the number of seed growers. Some seed growers have retired, however the decrease is also due to economics. Growing seed is risky, it takes a considerable investment of work, time and money to keep seed disease free. There are extra measures taken such as disinfecting equipment, physically scouting and roging fields for volunteers, pests and disease and applying aphicides to prevent Potato Virus Y (PVY). PVY causes mosaic in the leaf, necrotic symptoms in the tuber and reduces yield. In recent years the prevalence of PVY has increased. The State of Maine requires 0.55% or less for Foundation Certified seed and the maximum of 5% for Certified seed. The level of PVY in seed potatoes is determined with post-harvest lab tests of tubers. PVY is spread by both colonizing and non-colonizing aphids. From the time the potato plant emerges until it is time to harvest the potato it is at risk to contamination from aphids. Neonicotinoids along with stylet oil is how we protect the crop from aphids. Without neonics we cannot keep our seed within tolerance. If our crop does not pass for seed, it cannot be sold as seed. If we cannot sell our crop as seed, we have storages full of potatoes with no market and our customers have no seed to plant their next crop.

All pesticides go thru a rigorous EPA assessment before approved for use on crops. Growers rely on their land and crops for survival. We have a vested interest in protecting our soil, water, environment and crop. It is in our own best interest to follow federal and state guidelines when applying spray material. Efficient, responsible application of aphicides not only protects our crop it prevents disease resistance in general and keeps costs down. As for pollinators, potatoes do not require pollinators, potato blossoms are not ideal nor a major resource for pollinators. It has been shown that neonicotinoids are safe and the Varroa mite is the real threat to the bee population.

Before neonicotinoids the potato industry relied on aldicarb (Temik) to control aphids. When Temik was under threat of market withdrawal in the early 90s there was research done that led to the use of neonicotinoids. Current day there are pro-active researchers doing work to find a replacement for neonics. The USDA has approved a four-year Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) grant to develop and evaluate potential alternatives to neonicotinoids for pest management in potatoes. Should neonics be banned the aphids will still remain a threat to our potato industry. Please give us time to find an alternative before taking away the one effective tool to provide clean quality seed for Maine's potato industry. I ask that you please vote no on LD1323. Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully

Jennifer Gogan