

OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

To: Members, Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
From: Karen S. Nadeau, Legislative Analyst
Date: April 8, 2021
Subj: **LD 558** Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry To Study Alternative Cropping Systems for Farmers Affected by Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination

- Directs the DACF in consultation with UMaine, to study alternative cropping systems that are more cost-effective than soil and water remediation systems for farmers whose land has been contaminated by PFAS substances and whose business development has been limited.

Proponents: *Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association; Defend Our Health; Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy; Written only: Residents of China, Waterboro, Waldoboro*

- The issue of PFAS contamination is a major concern in our agricultural community as we see acreage of contaminated farmland increasing. If we don't act, we will see our farming community shrink as access to land will be constrained and we have to move off contaminated fields.
- We need to determine how we can utilize farmland in a way that still returns an income from the land despite contamination.
- MOFGA proposes a more stepwise approach; an initial goal of research this year to address immediate questions already raised by recent DEP, DACF and Extension research work would allow time for advance planning of future research and time to seek funding.
- We have to take this contamination seriously, firstly to protect the health of farmers, their neighbors and customers, and secondly, to assure that ME's reputation for safe, wholesome, and sustainably grown food remains intact.
- We can't take a wait-and-see approach. Most of the federal action so far has not been directed to agricultural impacts and solutions. The USDA has been slow to get involved. This Resolve could help Maine move ahead with our own research, while identifying best practices to help impacted farmers and making the case for funding and federal assistance.

Opponents: *None*

NFNA: *Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources*

- The discovery of PFAS contamination in ME has highlighted the critical need for research on the impacts, environmental and agronomic fate, and future remediation of PFAS in agricultural settings.
- Our department as well as Maine DEP and Maine CDC, who are our critical research partners, are limited in our ability to quickly manage and execute numerous research studies; we don't have funding to carry out additional research.
- Suggest directing the department and its agency and research partners to craft a robust research study plan that covers research topic areas, study needs, possible roles of state agencies and research collaborators to conduct the work, proposed timeframes, proposed budget and target sources of funding. Department would submit report to the 130th Legislature, Second Session and that allows committee to report out legislation.
- LD also directs department to focus on dual-use solar siting; DACF is currently working with the Governor's Energy Office to make developers aware of these potential locations.

PRELIMINARY FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT: *Not yet received.*