

## Testimony April 6, 2021 on LD 954 and LD 574

Chairman Dill, Representative O'Neil, members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, I am Dan Davis of Porter, Maine testifying for myself on behalf of **LD 954 and LD 574**.

Communities should be able to decide what form of food transactions suit their needs, whether it is from an available Grange, a regional farmer's market, market gardens, delivery to say the aging in place, through community supported agriculture, at other places of worship and assembly. Seems pretty silly to even have to defend this right.

This is particularly important given the vast size of the state, its depreciated transportation infrastructure, the understanding that "*you can't get there from here*", and the fragility of Maine's economy. While some food producer locations may be better-positioned to entertain and attract consumers, other sites of production may not be as accommodating (*poor road conditions, distance, small land acreage, etc.*) and need to reach out to be more accessible to others.

Similar to the statutory allowable *points of sale* for small poultry producers (*Title 22 Section 2517c*), food producers within communities that have adopted the Maine Food Sovereignty Act should be allowed to have the same, if not more, expanded exchanges that fit their situation, whether it is direct from a farm, from farm or fish trucks, delivering to a consumer, at a market garden, through community supported agriculture, or other central venues where farmers and consumers can assemble.

Also, if State of Maine can't even settle on what a farm is (*there are at least three (3) different definitions for farm on the books*), why can't a local community with their own legal legislative body (*the townspeople*) decide what "farm" means to them?

Legislators acknowledging "*scale*" and letting each community decide will help create a space for a substantial segment of farms that have been discounted in Maine, and improve our food and economic resiliency.

Regarding UT's and Plantations, roughly 11,300+ citizens have inadvertently been disenfranchised, unable to equally experience the benefits of the Maine Food Sovereignty Act. These areas remote to centralized State social services and vulnerable to food supply chain disruptions should have the same legal rights as incorporated municipalities: To access, grow, and exchange food of their own choosing for their families, friends, and neighbors. Seems pretty silly to have to defend this too.

Numerous plantations to-date have expressed direct interest in the MFSA, but are not sure how they can legally participate until the State recognizes them as a shareholder and participant in Maine.

In addition, the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee last year did not provide a seat at the table for many small farmers, leaving roughly 50% of the farms in the state to fend for themselves while Maine's food safety nets were being overwhelmed (*a number of them in UT's and Plantations*).

The purpose of the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is to assure **less vulnerable and more disaster-resistant communities**, although there's been no one on the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) for several years now that represents *commerce*, and a County EMA director noted last year during the height of the pandemic that he was aware of the need to expand food resiliency to UT's and Plantations, but stated it was the responsibility of State legislators, not him, to act on this need.

We have a poor and aging state that is not food diversified and the "end-of-the-line" with respect to food supply chains. When the pandemic impacts took hold last year, it was no surprise that Maine ranked the 4<sup>th</sup> most vulnerable state in the country.

I respectfully urge you to support LD 954 and LD 574, two bills that are in the best interest of all Mainers.

Dan Davis  
Porter

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