



# Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

## Common Ground Country Fair

May 4, 2021

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Heather Spalding and I'm deputy director of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA). I am submitting comments in support of LD 1599 - *An Act To Establish A Maine Pesticide Sales and Use Registry*. Our emphasis is on the need for data collection and analysis.

Since our beginning we have advocated for policies that reduce all farmers' and homeowners' reliance on pesticides, and all citizens' exposures to pesticides in their diets and in the air and drinking water. We believe that the dramatic increases since the 1950s in childhood and adult cancer rates, as well as immune system and reproductive abnormalities, are directly related to the toxins that increasingly contaminate our environment and threaten the very existence of the pollinators on which our food systems rely.

In 1997, Maine enacted two important policies to help the state minimize its reliance on pesticides:

1. What is now [Maine Title 22, Chapter 258, §1471-X](#).<sup>1</sup>

*"State policy; public and private initiatives to minimize reliance on pesticides. It is the policy of the State to work to find ways to use the minimum amount of pesticides needed to effectively control targeted pests in all areas of application. The agencies of the State involved in the regulation or use of pesticides shall promote the principles and the implementation of integrated pest management and other science-based technology to minimize reliance on pesticides while recognizing that outbreaks of disease, insects and other pests will necessitate fluctuations in pesticide use. These agencies, in cooperation with private interest groups, shall work to educate pesticide users and the general public in the proper use of pesticides and to determine other actions needed to accomplish the state policy."*

and

2. What was then [Maine Title 22, Chapter 724, §1471-M, sub-§7](#).<sup>2</sup>

*"Data collection; annual report. The board shall implement a system of record keeping, reporting, data collection and analysis that provides information on the quantity of product and brand names of pesticides sold. The board, in cooperation with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service, shall study ways to improve pesticide information data bases and to optimize the useful analysis of reported information."*

*No later than October 1, 1998, and each year thereafter, the board shall publish an annual pesticides report containing the quantity of product, sorted by the name and United States Environmental Protection Agency registration number, of all pesticides sold in the prior year, with the data further sorted by sector of use wherever possible."*

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<sup>1</sup> [State policy; public and private initiatives to minimize reliance on pesticides](#).

<sup>2</sup> [An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Relating to Review of the State Board of Pesticides Control Under the State Government Evaluation Act](#).

While early attempts to comply with the data collection and reporting law were heroic, they didn't last long and the Board asked the Legislature for leniency. In 2002 the BPC suggested narrowing the requirement to annual reporting for in-state dealers's sales data along with commercial agriculture application data. The BPC received that data in hard copy form, presenting an arduous workload for anyone trying to quantify sales and use trends, even for that subsection of overall pesticides sold and used in Maine.

Since 2002 we haven't had reporting, except for one alarming report from 2011, which no longer is available on the BPC's website. Long-term members of this committee have heard reference to that 2011 report that indicated a 700% increase of pesticides sold for home use. The BPC no longer stands by the report but allows that the trends generally provide an accurate picture.

MOFGA knows that the BPC staff and board members work incredibly hard to provide oversight of pesticides used in Maine. We also know that lack of data analysis creates a challenge for decision-making. Recent examples have presented themselves in discussions about how extensively the organophosphate chlorpyrifos is used in Maine, the frequency and volume and formulations of herbicides like RoundUp used in and around schools, and the sector use of neonicotinoid pesticides that are so toxic to pollinators. We know that the BPC staff worked incredibly hard to pull together disparate sources of data to report back to this committee and the people of Maine. It needn't have been that difficult to quantify the data.

LD 1599 provides a roadmap for getting back to the original intent of our stated pesticide policies. Advances in technology are there for our use. The BPC already has a website and portals for facilitating communication and training of applicators. LD 1599 is an opportunity to make recordkeeping requirements, as laid out in Chapter 50, much easier for the regulated community, and much more useful to the BPC staff, the scientific community, and policy makers.

We recognize that Maine's economy is struggling now but we also know that the BPC's budget generates a great surplus each year through its pesticide registration fees. We feel that LD 1599 is a critical initiative to helping Maine meet its desired goal of reducing reliance on pesticides, and should be a top priority for funding through the Board's existing budget.

This bill creates an opportunity to get Maine back on track toward minimizing reliance on pesticides while providing clear and easy record keeping opportunities. We urge you to vote ought to pass.

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## About MOFGA

*The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) started in 1971 and is the oldest and largest state organic organization in the country. We're a broad-based community that educates about and advocates for organic agriculture, illuminating its interdependence with a healthy environment, local food production, and thriving communities. We have a staff of just under 50 employees, a membership of more than 10,000, and an amazing community of about 2500 volunteers, many of whom we rely on to host our annual Common Ground Country Fair.*

*MOFGA is a statewide organization that has experienced significant growth over the past couple of decades. By the year 2030, we aim to increase the number of certified organic growers from 550 to 750 and the amount of organically managed land from 7% to 10% of the state's agricultural land.*

*We offer an introductory farm apprenticeship program, beginning farmer training through our two-year Journey person program, and a Farm Resilience Program for farmers in years 5-10 of their business when they're statistically the most likely to experience business failure.*

*MOFGA Certification Services (MCS) is our USDA accredited organic certification program. MCS also administers MOFGA's Certified Clean Cannabis program for medicinal and adult cannabis use in Maine. MCS certifies more than 70,000 acres of farmland in Maine, representing more than \$60 million in organic farm product sales. MOFGA-certified operations are run by Maine businesspeople for whom economic health and environmental health are interdependent.*

*While we envision a future of healthy ecosystems, communities, people and economies sustained by the practices of organic agriculture, we attribute our success to collaboration and outreach to growers across the management spectrum. We are members of the Agricultural Council of Maine and, while we don't always agree on all policy measures, we recognize and wholeheartedly agree that farmers must be financially successful if we expect to have a healthy Maine agriculture.*