



Testimony of Jimmy DeBiasi, Director of Programs, Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets, before the 130th Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Good afternoon Senator Dill, Representative O'Neill, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. I write on behalf of the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets and the 120+ farmers' markets that we help promote and support. I ask that you please support *LD 2013 - An Act Relating to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination in the State*.

This bill seeks to help address the PFAS catastrophe threatening the existence of many Maine farms. The farmers' market community, including the farmers, small businesses, and the tens of thousands of customers that they serve every year, stands to benefit from swift state action in addressing this crisis via LD 2013.

For the farmers' market community, LD 2013 will help support many market farmers (those who sell at farmers' markets) as they transition their businesses to new land, and/or install costly pieces of infrastructure to keep their products free of PFAS. The COVID-19 pandemic has already led to markets losing vendors. Losing additional vendors due to PFAS contamination will further harm markets across the state.

The farmers' market community in Maine supports the livelihoods of thousands of farmers and small food businesses. Millions of dollars of transactions occur through farmers' markets every year. These sales boost local economies, support new and established farm and food businesses, and drive consumers to downtown areas throughout the state. These farmers' markets are vital community hubs for healthy food access, recreation, social connections, and education for Mainers of all ages and incomes, as well as tourists. When farmers' markets suffer loss of business, whole communities feel the impact.

Shoppers seek out local food for many reasons, and a primary reason is trust in local farmers to provide healthy, clean, fresh food. People like to know where their food comes from. Recent news about PFAS is shedding light on the contamination of land and water where some of this food is grown. We are beginning to see a crisis of confidence among concerned consumers due

to the news of widespread PFAS contamination. MFFM is working on messaging to help farmers and markets communicate with their customers about this issue. One of the best messages we can share with concerned consumers is that the State is taking major action to address PFAS. LD 2013 constitutes a major action that will boost consumer confidence and help farmers' markets strengthen consumers' trust in local food.

Our testimony is focused on the direct impact to the farmers' market community due to the PFAS crisis, and how LD 2013 will help resolve some of our concerns. We echo the concerns relating to human and environmental health of our allies Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, and the many Public Health Organizations submitting testimony in support of LD 2013.

Sincerely,



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