

Ryan Dennett
Jefferson
LD 2013

My name is Ryan Dennett (she/her) and I have a farmstead in Jefferson, ME where I grow my own food, keep a family milk cow and winter my flock of sheep. My business, Crescent Run Farm, sells lamb and provides grazing services under solar arrays. I am also the director of farmer programs at the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association.

I am writing today in favor of LD 2013 - An Act Relating to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination in the State.

It is crucial that the state acts now to provide a safety net for farms with contamination. The farms who have made public statements about contamination on their farms are absolutely heroic for doing so, but additional farms will only continue to follow suit if this bill is passed. We need farms to be able to make the difficult choice to pull potentially and actually contaminated products from the market while the science of establishing safety thresholds catches up. Consumer trust in Maine food demands that farmers are able to take this proactive approach. The future of farming in Maine demands it. We have one of the highest rates of beginning farms in the country. Who is going to come here or stay here to farm if we set the example that finding contamination results in devastation for the farmer? How can we abandon those who have come here or stayed here to build up the economy in our rural towns and resilience in our food system?

As an agricultural service provider, I have fielded multiple calls each day since January from farmers dealing with high levels of stress and uncertainty. I've never experienced anything like it. They want to know what their risk is, whether to test or not, what to test, what to tell their customers, and what to ask their suppliers. They need assurance that there is a way through this crisis. Farm workers need assurance as well. Their health and livelihood matter as well, and ignoring this compounds the labor shortage that we already face.

Farms are stepping up to protect their communities and we must in turn protect them from the health and financial risks they bear as a result of the state's decision to endorse and aggressively push the application of biosolids on their land. This includes income replacement and mortgage payments, health monitoring, relocation services and the buying and selling of agricultural land. Health monitoring and income replacement is needed for farm workers. For the future of these individuals and the sake of our local food system and economy, we must invest in new agricultural infrastructure and research. You must pass LD 2013.

Thank you for considering this bill and personal statement.