



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
By Chelsea Gazillo, American Farmland Trust, New England Policy Manager
March 13, 2022

RE: Support for LD 2013 - LD 2013 – An Act Relating to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination in the State.

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Chelsea Gazillo, and I am American Farmland Trust’s New England Policy Manager. I appreciate this opportunity to testify on behalf of American Farmland Trust **in support** of LD 2013 - *An Act Relating to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination in the State*.

AFT is the nation’s leading conservation organization dedicated to protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. Since its founding in 1980 by farmers and citizens concerned about the rapid loss of farmland to development, AFT has helped protect over 6.5 million acres of farmland and led the way for the adoption of conservation practices on millions more. Established in 1985, AFT’s New England office works to save the land that sustains us across the region.

Maine’s farmland plays a vital role in our regional economy and food security. Maine has the most agricultural land of any of the six New England states by far and the largest amount of prime and important farmland in New England. According to American Farmland Trust’s [Farms Under Threat: The State of the States](#), 1.4% of ME’s agricultural land was converted to urban development or low-density residential land use between 2001 and 2016.¹ This 17,700 acres of land converted is enough to generate \$10 million in annual revenue.²

Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are a group of chemicals that are extremely persistent in the environment, including our agricultural soils, and in the human body. PFAS has been used in a lot of common household products since the 1950s ranging from food packaging to firefighting foam. And while the presence and persistence of PFAS contamination is an emerging national issue, the unfolding information we currently know about PFAS contamination in Maine is alarming, especially for farmers whose livelihoods are connected to the land.

We know that PFAS enter agricultural soils through a variety of means, and Maine farmers will need an unprecedented level of support to address the health and financial impacts of PFAS contamination. Maine’s producers need robust investments in research and remediation so that the state will not lose more farmland that is needed for a prosperous agriculture sector.

¹ Freedgood, J., M. Hunter, J. Dempsey, A. Sorensen. 2020. *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States*. Washington, DC: American Farmland Trust.

² https://storage.googleapis.com/csp-fut.appspot.com/reports/spatial/Maine_spatial.pdf

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AFT is supportive of LD 2013 because we understand this legislation will provide immediate relief to farmers whose farm businesses are impacted by PFAS contamination. We are also supportive of the legislative changes outlined in Maine Farmland Trust's testimony.

Please feel free to reach out to me at cgazillo@farmland.org or my colleagues at American Farmland Trust if you have any questions about this testimony or the importance of passing legislation like LD 2013 to promote and ensure the continuation of agriculture in Maine.

We strongly urge you to support and pass LD 2013. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this vital legislation.

American Farmland Trust is an agricultural non-profit organization with a mission to save the land that sustains us by protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. AFT is the only national agricultural organization that approaches its work in this comprehensive, holistic manner. We recognize the connection between the land, forward-looking farming practices, and the farmers who do the work.

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