

My name is Brian Wasser. I am a physician, a farmer and have a degree in environmental science. I am testifying in support of LD2013.

When I first moved to Maine, I was amazed by how robust the local agriculture community is. I got fresh, high-quality produce from the local coops and farmers market, met and befriended the people growing this food, and went to Common Ground and other MOFGA events. Maine's farms are true gems...we should consider ourselves very lucky. It's hard to find a community like this anywhere else.

I've also had the opportunity to work on several of these Maine farms, and have seen the brutally hard, never-ending labor. I've also seen the dedication these farmers have to providing Mainers with high quality food, but also to being thoughtful, responsible stewards of land, water and climate, working towards a sustainable, equitable future. Maine farms are truly an invaluable resource, owned and worked by some of the best humans I've ever met.

When I first heard about many of these farmers discovering PFAS on their farms, and learned about how these chemicals got into their soil and water in the first place, the doctor, the environmentalist and the farmer in me all knew how catastrophic this was going to be. Catastrophic for the farms and the farmers themselves, but also for Maine farmland as a whole, for all Mainers, and potentially for the future viability of this robust and essential community. And this crisis is on top of all the constant challenges and curveballs farmers face day-in and day-out.

From climate instability, to geopolitical conflict, to economic uncertainty, there's a lot that seems tenuous right now. From a common sense standpoint, investing in Maine's local agriculture, truly the backbone of sustainability moving forward, is the number one way to ensure Maine's resilience in increasingly uncertain times. And although this PFAS issue is a major step backwards in bolstering that resilience, LD2013 offers us the chance, at this crossroads, to invest in a more hopeful future. After all, it's on many of our Maine license plates! "Support Local Agriculture." This is how, in this moment of crisis, we come together and put those words into action.

Brian Wasser
Portland
LD 2013

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