



**Testimony of Shelley Megquier, Policy & Research Director, Maine Farmland Trust, to the
131st Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
May 3, 2023**

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Shelley Megquier and I am the Policy & Research Director at Maine Farmland Trust (MFT). I am providing testimony on behalf of MFT in opposition to LD 1214 – *An Act to Clarify the Laws to Combat Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination*.

MFT is a member-powered statewide organization that works to protect farmland, support farmers, and advance the future of farming. Since our founding in 1999, MFT has helped to permanently protect more than 330 farms and keep nearly 60,000 acres of farmland in farming. Our Farm Network includes over 500 farms and, in 2022, 2,250+ individuals demonstrated their commitment to the future of Maine agriculture through an MFT membership. In 2022, MFT supported 48 farm businesses with workshops, technical assistance, and grants – delivering over 680 hours of technical assistance and \$309,000 in business and seed grants to help businesses grow their profitability. Our main program areas are Farmland Protection, Farmland Access, Stewardship, Farm Business Planning, PFAS Support, Climate Resilience, and Policy and Research.

For the past several years, MFT has been deeply engaged in the strong and collaborative response to the challenge of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) contamination on Maine farms and farmland. The presence of PFAS in soil, water, crops and livestock is an emerging national issue, and PFAS contamination in Maine is alarming, especially for farmers whose livelihoods are connected to the land. The application of PFAS-contaminated sludge or residuals decades ago by farmers who were unaware of the presence and health risks of these chemicals can still impact PFAS levels in the soil and water today – with such high levels of contamination in some cases that agricultural production is simply no longer possible, at least in the near future until research is advanced on remediation methods. MFT staff have witnessed firsthand the significant impacts farm businesses and families have experienced from the contamination. These impacts include losing the financial value of products that can no longer be sold; making the investments to change farm management practices and adopt new infrastructure; and even having to purchase or lease additional land to use for their farming operations. These farmers have also had their wells contaminated, and live with ongoing concerns about the health effects of the PFAS contamination for themselves and their families. Finally, these farmers worry about the value of their land – their largest investment – and what their options might be if they are no longer able to farm there.

We advocate in partnership with impacted farmers and other organizations for state and federal policies that stop the ongoing contamination of agricultural land, ensure that impacted farmers receive the support they need, and advance PFAS research, including on critical topics such as soil remediation. To comprehensively support Maine's farmers and protect our agricultural land, we must slow the rate at which PFAS are entering the environment – eventually stopping it altogether.

We appreciated the PFAS source reduction measures and goals included under LD 1503 in the 130th Legislature and also appreciate efforts this session to ensure that the Maine law is realistic, focused, and fair. Ultimately, while we work together to mitigate the existing problem of PFAS contamination, we need to identify and implement solutions to turn off the PFAS tap all the way upstream before the chemicals enter our state.

LD 1214 seeks to change the definition of intentionally added PFAS in ways that we believe would continue to expose Maine farmland and waters to contamination. Not only would this revision override the consensus on a comprehensive definition for PFAS that was reached in the 130th legislature with overwhelming bipartisan support, but the revised definition would remove Maine's ability to track and regulate many dangerous fluorinated chemicals. Secondly, LD 1214 proposes to repeal language that would allow Maine's Department of Environmental Protection to ban particular products containing PFAS by 2030. MFT routinely hears from farmers who are deeply concerned about PFAS contamination and eager to see limits on the ways that PFAS can enter our environment. To remove Maine's ability to ban particular products found to have PFAS contamination is counterproductive to Maine's ongoing efforts to invest resources in and laudably work to support farmers impacted by PFAS contamination.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to urge you to vote *ought not to pass* for LD 1214. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.