

katherine clark
windsor

My name is Katie Webb Clark, my husband Nate Clark and I own a 50-cow organic dairy farm in Windsor, ME where we are raising our 13 and 3 year old daughters. We also have one a daughter studying at UMaine Farmington.

The subject of PFAS hits home for us as we see in the news that PFAS has been found in milk, including organic milk, produced in Maine. As a farmer this is a scary time as the Department investigates land and evaluates if farmland is suitable for production of food. As organic milk producers, we immediately researched the sludge spreading history of our home farm and the hay fields that we rent, to evaluate the risk that unknowingly toxins could be getting into our milk. We feel reassured by what we found, but we hope that the Department of Ag Conservation and Forestry will share advisory information with the dairy community based on what has been learned from the explorations on a variety of farms in order to inform all of us where any potential risks may lie.

Next, as a mother of a young daughter who is in stage of rapid growth and development, both physically and intellectually as she learns language at an astonishing rate, and another I look around our household for sources of potential PFAS exposure. I identified that it is in my, and my husband's, work clothes. I am suspicious of the racks in our fruit and vegetable dehydrator. And in hearing the news about the number of contaminated wells discovered in the State, I am filling a sippy cup to head out to the barn to do our chores, my heart breaks for the families who have been unknowingly drinking and cooking with toxins in their water for years.

As organic farmers, my husband and I work with cycles every day. We manage nutrient cycling from our fields into the cattle as they graze or eat hay, or both, and as we amass the manure for composting and returning to our fields and pastures, to feed the soil microbes and fertilize the feed for our cows. So it came readily understood to me that the PFAS in our bodies is not separate from the PFAS in the ground water, in a dump site, in the sludge that is spread on Ag land, or in the consumer goods in our home. This PFAS cycles from us humans into our septic system, leaches out onto our lawn, and will be taken up in the grass where our children play and where we rake up and gather clippings to mulch our vegetable garden, never knowing there may be poison there. The PFAS cycles, does not break down, and spreads this way. I also readily understand that PFAS, as a "forever chemical", BIOACCUMULATES and becomes stronger and stronger in concentration as it moves up the food chain from soil to plants to herbivores and then to the humans that eat them. As an avid supporter of local food systems and the consumption of meat for human nutrition, we must work to keep the sources of our food and water here in Maine clean.

I believe it is in everyone's best interest to implement regulation on PFAS in drinking water as soon as possible. I am in support of requiring testing and filtration of drinking water. Particularly because of the effect of bioaccumulation, we must start with limits that are very low to accommodate for the fact that a farmer's livestock will be drinking water, or irrigating crops, and the PFAS levels will build up over time in the soil or in the livestock that are producing milk, meat and eggs. I applaud Maine's courage as they have embarked on the work of setting our own limits and on testing involved in keeping the water and milk supply safe for people to drink. And I would love to see Maine adopt similar levels as VT and MA for PFAS in drinking water, at 20 ppt.

Thank you for hearing my concerns and my perspective.

Respectfully,
Katie Webb
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Windsor, ME