



Build a Resilient and Healthy Economy in Maine with the Maine Foods Bill

"Across Maine, farmers and food producers are making every effort to provide healthy, locally grown food to our state. This bill offers a needed boost to these efforts. The low-interest loans and Farm to School opportunities will accelerate the good work already being done on our farms and in our schools."

-Marada Cook, Crown of Maine Organic Cooperative

Despite a rich agricultural heritage, Maine imports 90 percent of the food we consume

- The ingredients for an average meal travel 1,900 miles from farm to fork.
- Our nation's industrial agricultural system creates severe environmental problems, from the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, to major pollution in the Chesapeake Bay.
- This large-scale, highly-consolidated agricultural system is also vulnerable; we saw this when major droughts hit the Midwest two and three summers ago and food prices spiked nationally.
- Fortunately, Maine is well positioned to build a strong infrastructure of resilient farms, and *food hubs* will be a key part of the infrastructure necessary to improve our state's food system and self-reliance.



Maine's small, sustainable farms can feed more of our state if we develop food hubs

- Individually, Maine's small farmers cannot always produce crops at a large enough scale to serve institutions like schools, but it could become possible if they coordinate through food hubs.
- Food hubs allow small farms and fisheries to aggregate, store, process, and distribute their products to larger markets. Existing food hubs are already doing this with success, including the Somerset Grist Mill in Skowhegan, Crown of Maine Organic Co-Op in Vassalboro, and Northern Girl of Caribou.
- The Maine Foods Bill (LD 1431) will spur development of up to 10 regional food hubs across Maine by providing market research grants and low-interest loans through the Agricultural Development Fund.

We can provide growing school children with nutritious food grown right here in Maine

- The Maine Foods Bill addresses core structural barriers to schools purchasing local food that were identified by the 2010 *Report and Recommendations of the Maine Farm to School Work Group*.
- The bill provides a small amount of funding for incentivized training programs to help food service personnel procure and cook with local foods, and doubles the matching dollars available to schools who participate in a training to purchase local foods.
- The Maine Foods Bill doesn't create programs that carry recurring costs. It is simply a jumpstart to people who want to create food hubs, and training and a jumpstart to school food programs using more local foods to meet the new USDA healthier school lunch requirements.
- The Maine Foods bill has no mandates, and is all opt-in. It has no sticks, only carrots and kale.

The Legislature should pass Sen. Chris Johnson's bill:

An Act To Support School Nutrition and Expand the Local Foods Economy, LD 1431

For more information, please contact Taryn Hallweaver, 207-712-6351 or taryn@environmentmaine.org



Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition

is a partnership of 28 environmental, conservation and public health organizations representing over 100,000 members who want to protect the good health, good jobs and quality of life that our environment provides.

We are counting on Maine policymakers to take the important steps needed to make wise use of Maine's extraordinary environment so Maine people and Maine's economy can thrive.

350 Maine	Maine Lakes Society
Appalachian Mountain Club	Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Atlantic Salmon Federation	Maine People's Alliance
Bicycle Coalition of Maine	Maine Rivers
Conservation Law Foundation	Maine Wilderness Guides Organization
Environmental Health Strategy Center	Natural Resources Council of Maine
ENE (Environment Northeast)	Physicians for Social Responsibility, Maine Chapter
Environment Maine	Product Policy Institute of Maine
Friends of Casco Bay	RESTORE: The North Woods
Maine Audubon	Sierra Club, Maine Chapter
Maine Center for Economic Policy	The Ocean Conservancy
Maine Conservation Alliance	The Wilderness Society
Maine Council of Churches	Toxics Action Center
Maine Council of Trout Unlimited	
Maine Interfaith Power & Light	