

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Food and Farmland Study Commission

Report of a Study by the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture  
to the Maine Legislature December 17, 1982.

Senate Chairman: Hitchens of York

House Chairman: Mahany of Easton

Senators: Shute of Waldo  
Wood of York

Representatives: Locke of Sebec  
Michael of Auburn  
Lisnik of Presque Isle  
McCollister of Canton  
Smith of Island Falls  
Sherburne of Dexter  
Nelson of New Sweden  
Conary of Oakland  
Callahan of Mechanic Falls

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Food and Farmland Study Commission

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Appendix C Proposed Legislation:

The Joint Standing on Agriculture does not offer proposed legislation at this time. The Committee has approved a proposal to independently study the question of food self-sufficiency for Maine and to work toward the development of a comprehensive and realistic Food Policy for the State. The Committee may submit legislation or request a study order later in the 111th Legislative Session.

Appendix D Study Order

Appendix E Highlights of Testimony before the Agriculture Committee, July 8, 1982.

Appendix F Legislative Proposal to Develop a Food Policy, Nov. 19, 1982.

Note: Appendices D, E and F are not included in the summary report. The full report is available through the Office of Legislative Assistants.

## Introduction and summary:

The Food and Farmland Commission study was authorized by the Legislative Council at the conclusion of the Second Regular Session of the 110th Legislative Biennium. The Study was conducted by the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture. The Committee met twice during off session to review information presented by those officials responsible for implementation of the numerous recommendations offered by the Commission to strengthen Maine agriculture.

The Food and Farmland Study Commission was established in 1977 through legislative action taken by the 108th Legislature. The Commission was composed of 24 members from agricultural industries private organizations and public agencies who met regularly for over a year to study and deliberate on the problems of Maine Agriculture. The study report was completed in June of 1979 and contained several major findings and recommendations related to the Commission's study emphasis: farmland preservation and farm economics. Given time and resource constraints, the Commission was unable to determine the degree of food self-sufficiency within Maine and it did not develop an overall food policy, even though it quite clearly selected a goal of increased local production of food.

As a result of its review of the Food and Farmland Study report, the Agriculture Committee of the Legislature was able to refresh its memory about the importance of this major policy document. The Committee learned that most of the recommendations in the report either have been or are in the process of being implemented, and the Committee did not find any evidence whatsoever that suggestions made by the Commission were not addressed. The Committee also appreciated learning about the extensive research and developmental work that has been carried out by the reorganized Department of Agriculture in Maine. This department has been seriously working on plans and strategies to revitalize the Maine agricultural economy, using their limited resources to maximum effect. Finally, both Frederick Hutchinson, Chairman of the Commission, and Stewart Smith, Commissioner of the Department acknowledged the important role the Study Commission played in justifying the need to reorient the Department toward a developmental role and to provide more funding.

Despite the assurance the Committee on Agriculture gained about the vigorous pursuit of improvement in conditions for Maine agriculture, the Committee also learned that inadequate resources in the soil conservation, research and developmental areas limit the progress of public institutions. The Soil Conservation Service has a large amount of projects that have to wait because priority planning means that the most serious soil problems receive attention first. Meanwhile, of course, farms with problems of less than an emergency nature may find their erosion difficulties intensified and their productivity diminished. In

the Research area, the Experiment Station at Orono is struggling to meet an increased demand for information about increasing crop yields and the value of food product while the Institution operates under severe financial constraints. On the developmental front, the newly reorganized Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources is implementing its prodigious responsibilities with less than half the amount of funding considered adequate when the request to the Legislature was submitted over three years ago.

The Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture concluded its review by voting to approve a Legislative Proposal to develop a Food Policy for the State of Maine. The Committee intends to pursue this assignment on its own during the Legislative Session. The Committee will develop a schedule for meetings, collect information, talk with knowledgeable people and draw upon resources within state government to more fully understand the State's current level of dependence on imported foods and to advocate increased production of food that can be effectively grown in Maine. As a result of this attempt to more fully understand an important public policy question, The Agriculture Committee may formulate legislation for the Legislature to consider in the Second Regular Session of the 111th.

Areas of study for the Committee to consider in this effort include the following:

**Nutrition:** encourage production of various foods with high nutritional value and offer fresh food produced in Maine to the Maine consumer.

**Economics of Agriculture:** investigate opportunities for expanding agricultural production of foodstuffs which enjoy or could enjoy a comparative advantage.

**Marketing:** explore steps beyond the direct marketing level to increase distribution of food to the wholesale and institutional sectors of the food system.

**Processing and Storage of farm products:** consider methods for storing Maine grown food to reduce seasonal over-supply and off-season under supply, and to explore various processing opportunities which make food more usable by consumers.

**Transportation:** to monitor developments in the feed grain terminal proposal and to keep abreast of issues which affect the competitive position of Maine Agriculture.

**The Private Sector Infrastructure of Agriculture:** equipment, supplies, service, repairs.... Is there an adequate supply of supply/service personnel and structures available to service existing agricultural enterprises and is this sector capable of meeting the "appropriate technology" needs of newer agricultural industries which are emerging or may expand over the next 5 to 10

years. i.e. vegetables, sheep, small orchards and fruits, etc.

Education: review agricultural programs which are preparing young people and adults for serious food production and to look at the level of understanding of the general public about the importance of a strong, more self-reliant agricultural economy within Maine.

Farm Credit: determine the capacity of financing institutions to back agricultural enterprises which can increase the supplies of food for which there is a local, regional demand.

Research for Productive Crops: review the efforts of the Experiment Station to meet the needs of the various agricultural sectors of Maine and to assess the capacity of this and other institutions to study scientific improvements in production techniques, plant varieties etc.

Farmland Preservation and Conservation: to review already assembled information on the conversion rate of agricultural land to other uses, to determine an accurate view of Maine's agricultural landbase and its projected needs for conservation and future production.

Appendix D: Study Order

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

1. Implementation of the recommendations of the Maine Food and Farmland Study Commission.

Analysis of the problem and reason for study.

The Maine Food and Farmland Study Commission was established by the 108th Legislature to study and recommend action to strengthen Maine Agriculture. The Commission thoroughly studied Maine agriculture and made recommendations on farmlands, marketing, transportation, energy, finance, government, education, and entrance to farming. It proposed a major departure in the State's role in agriculture by proposing that it deal with non-regulatory agriculture functions.

The 1980's will be a difficult period for Maine agriculture. Interest rates and inflation, market conditions, dramatic changes in Federal programs, and other influences have had or will have profound consequences for all of agriculture, but especially for the dairy, potato and poultry sectors. The recommendations of the Commission need to be evaluated in the light of these prospects, with the purpose of determining the appropriate State action.

Staff Assignment  
Christos Gianopoulos  
Bill Brown

Appendix E

Food and Farmland Study Review  
Highlights of Testimony, July 8, 1982

Daniel Webster, Associate Commissioner, Department of  
Transportation

Too early to tell the extent to which the Motor Carrier Act and the Staggers Act have improved the transportation of agricultural products.

Consolidation of rail industries into one system is being accomplished by Guilford Transportation Industries which has bought Maine Central Railroad and has applied for control of Boston and Maine and the Delaware/Hudson.

Feed Grain Terminal: \$3m bond issue passed. Preliminary agreement signed between the State and Pillsbury on July 1. December 1 is the deadline for a final agreement. Location of the grain terminal must be in a place serviced by at least two competing railroads.

Dunbar Seamens, Agricultural Consultant, Department of Education

State Board of Education has adopted a Food Policy Statement.

Vocational agriculture programs in 8 schools.

The adult education network is capable of offering practically any course dealing with the practical aspects of agriculture. The programs need to be generated by citizens in their local and regional school systems.

David Staples, Executive Director, Agricultural Stabilization and  
Conservation Service

Agency policy requires allocation of funds to farms with the greatest soil loss first.

Agency emphasizes long term agreements with farmers. 75% cost reimbursement.

Dwight Sewall, State Director, Farmer's Home Administration

Explained Agency budget: \$100m total, \$30m for Agriculture, \$26m of which is allocated to Aroostook growers.

Funded storage cooperative in northern Aroostook.

Agency recommends farmers in Aroostook borrowing FHA money apply for a Conservation Plan.



Major problem is collapse of the poultry industry and the need to find alternative uses for poultry barns and facilities.

Lending to dairy producers has been curtailed.

Billy R. Abercrombie, State Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service

Important Farmland Soils Maps have been completed along the IS 95 corridor, except for York-1982.

Using agency resources in the following order: prime farmland, land of statewide importance, land of local importance.

Ken Wing, Dean of the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture

New Soil Audit Program working.

Farm Apprenticeship program working very effectively-25 apprentices this year.

Strong Department of Food Science needed to implement recommendation calling for study of alternative crops for Aroostook and for new markets to handle these alternatives as well as under-sized and off-grade produce.

Strong student interest in Agricultural studies at the University. Enrollment figures:  
1966- 900 students  
1976- 2300 students  
1982- 2100 students, not counting the Forestry students who were included in the previous counts.

Harold Macneil, State Director- Cooperative Extension service

Mission of the Agency is education, not service

Programs to help the small farmer include: Yankee Woodlot TV program, Financial Management Seminars, New Soil testing Program.

IPM program in blueberries and other IPM programs planned.

Frederick Hutchinson, Chairman of the Commission

Expresses his appreciation to the Committee for pursuing its interest in this important report.

Urges farmers to add organic matter to the soil.

Commission concentrated on the commercial family sized farm in Maine, not the new, small farm.

Preservation of Agricultural land is not a big problem in Maine compared to states in New England. But good farmland in Maine ought to be preserved if and when it is threatened.

Forestry and Agricultural groups ought to get together to form an alliance.

Stewart Smith, Commissioner

Food and Farmland Report extremely important. Formed the basis for reorganizing and redirecting programs of the Department.

Funding for the Agriculture Department not adequate, however. Only received one half the funding necessary to implement development efforts.

Appendix F

A Legislative Proposal to Develop A Food Policy for the State of  
Maine  
Presented to the joint standing Committee on Agriculture,  
November 19, 1982.

While it is more than obvious to state that food is a basic requirement of life, the American food consumer has grown accustomed to finding food available in the supermarket in adequate amounts and at an acceptable price. The average American consumes about 1400 pounds of food a year, and except for fish that food originates on farms. Just because that food which is needed has always been available in adequate supply, does not guarantee the future supply of these vital substances at an affordable price.

As a result of some of our bitter experiences in the 1970's with supply shortages of fuel, increased cost of transport, and disruptions in the normal supply system, policy makers and citizens in New England apprehensively view this region's dependence on outside sources of food. For a long time, it seemed more than sensible to let other regions with a competitive advantage grow our food and ship it great distances to New England for little extra cost. But given the large uncertainties of contemporary life, these are some of the facts that have prompted most New England states to develop food policies:

- \*\*\*\* Fifty years ago New England farmers were able to supply the region with a majority of its food requirements, now the region is 80-90% dependent on food production outside the area.
- \*\*\*\* There is only a two-week supply of food in New England at any given time and this limited supply is totally dependent on steady, reliable transportation from the South, West, and foreign countries.
- \*\*\*\* Food travels an average of 1300 miles from producer to consumer, sometimes taking an average of two weeks to reach its destination.
- \*\*\*\* The New England Food consumer pays an average of 6-10% more for their food than do those in any other region of the Continental United States.

Although the issue of food self-sufficiency may not be urgent at the present time, very few of us were prepared for, let alone anticipated, the major problems caused by depending on outside sources of fuel and energy. We were not ready for the gas lines, and we don't have much insurance against breadlines, however, remote and preposterous the mere suggestion sounds. As water supply problems in the West grow more serious, soil erosion continues, population increases, transportation costs continue to rise, and demand for U.S. farm exports rebound, the capability to produce food locally will become much more important.

Maine is at the furthest end of the food and transportation supply line. Even though we grow and sell more agricultural product than any other New England state, we are just as vulnerable as our neighbors, and we are the only state in the region, with the possible exception of Rhode Island, which does not already have a food policy formulated. This may come as some surprise because the recent Food and Farmland Study Commission was charged with that responsibility, but because of time and resource constraints, this part of the job didn't get done.

Therefore, it is proposed:

That the Legislature determine a method for the development of Food Policy for the State of Maine

That the Food Policy be realistically formulated to emphasize production of crops and livestock for which there is a local demand and to concentrate on foods that can grown effectively in Maine.

That the Food Policy incorporate the following vital elements to make a sound statement:

- 1.Nutrition
- 2.Economics of Agriculture
- 3.Marketing
- 4.Processing and Storage of Farm Products
- 5.Transportation Issues
- 6.The Infrastructure of Agriculture: supplies, equipment service,repairs
- 7.Education on Agriculture and for Farming as a profession
- 8.Farm Credit and Finance
- 9.Research for more Productive Crops
- 10.Farmland Preservation and Conservation