

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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1 FIRST REGULAR SESSION  
2

3 ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH LEGISLATURE  
4

5 Legislative Document

No. 635

6  
7 H.P. 434

House of Representatives, February 20, 1985

8 Referred to the Committee on Agriculture and ordered printed. Sent up  
9 for concurrence.

10 EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk

Presented by Representative Michael of Auburn.

11 Cosponsored by Representative Whitcomb of Waldo and Representative  
McGowan of Canaan.

12 STATE OF MAINE  
13

14 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD  
15 NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIVE  
16

17 AN ACT to Create the Commission on Farmland  
18 Loss.  
19

20 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as  
21 follows:

22 Sec. 1. Commission on farmland loss. It is the  
23 policy of the State to ensure an adequate and  
24 affordable supply of productive agricultural land to  
25 meet the needs of existing and future agricultural  
26 operations, to protect viable agricultural lands from  
27 conversion to development, to protect agricultural  
28 operations from constraints on necessary agricultural  
29 practices due to encroachment of incompatible land  
30 uses into farming areas, to enhance the economic  
31 viability of agricultural operations and to support  
32 the supply and market structures needed for a viable  
33 agricultural economy in order to arrest the abandon-  
34 ment of productive agricultural land and its subse-  
35 quent reversion to forested land and conversion to  
36 development.

1           1. Commission established. A Commission on  
2 Farmland Loss is established to assess the problem of  
3 farmland loss in Maine and to report its findings and  
4 recommendations for legislative action to the Joint  
5 Standing Committee on Agriculture during the 112th  
6 Legislature. A preliminary report shall be made no  
7 later than February 15, 1986.

8           A. The Commission on Farmland Loss shall have 17  
9 members: Two members of the House of Representa-  
10 tives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of  
11 Representatives, both of whom must be members of  
12 the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture and  
13 one of whom is a member of the majority political  
14 party and one of whom is a member of the minority  
15 political party; 2 members of the Senate, ap-  
16 pointed by the President of the Senate, both of  
17 whom must be members of the Joint Standing Com-  
18 mittee on Agriculture and one of whom is a member  
19 of the majority political party and one of whom  
20 is a member of the minority political party; one  
21 representative each selected by the Maine Farm  
22 Bureau, the Maine Association of Conservation  
23 Districts, the Maine State Grange, the Maine Or-  
24 ganic Farmers and Gardeners Association, the  
25 Maine Small Farm Association, the Maine Municipal  
26 Association and the Maine Homebuilders Associa-  
27 tion; the chairman of the State Soil and Water  
28 Conservation Commission; the League of Women Vot-  
29 ers of Maine, the Natural Resources Council of  
30 Maine and 3 members representing the public at  
31 large. The public members shall be appointed by  
32 the Governor, and the Commissioner of Agricul-  
33 ture, Food and Rural Resources, who shall serve  
34 as a nonvoting chairman of the commission.

35           B. The commission shall:

36           (1) Further define the nature of the prob-  
37 lem. The commission shall examine current  
38 information about the nature of farmland  
39 loss in Maine, shall support additional  
40 studies as necessary to develop a common un-  
41 derstanding of the causes and extent of  
42 farmland loss throughout Maine, and shall,  
43 in its final report, describe the nature of  
44 farmland loss in Maine;

1 (2) Describe Maine's important agricultural  
2 land. The commission shall consider the  
3 characteristics of agricultural land which  
4 the State in its policy and programs is  
5 seeking to protect. The commission shall  
6 make recommendations as to how the land  
7 should be identified;

8 (3) Review programs in other states for the  
9 protection of agricultural land. The com-  
10 mission shall review agricultural land pro-  
11 tection programs in other states and shall  
12 consider which of those programs are most  
13 appropriate to Maine in light of the nature  
14 of Maine's farmland loss in various parts of  
15 the State, their effectiveness in preventing  
16 future farmland loss, their impact on far-  
17 mers, other landowners and taxpayers and the  
18 financial resources available to deal with  
19 the problem of farmland loss;

20 (4) Hold public hearings. The commission  
21 shall hold at least 5 public hearings  
22 throughout the State to report on its as-  
23 sessment of the nature of farmland loss in  
24 Maine, the characteristics of land to be  
25 protected and farmland protection programs  
26 in other states. At these hearings, the  
27 commission shall solicit public input on the  
28 kind of programs which would be most appro-  
29 priate for Maine; and

30 (5) Recommend a farmland protection pro-  
31 gram. The commission shall, in its final  
32 report, make recommendations to the 112th  
33 Legislature for legislation to reduce  
34 farmland loss. These recommendations shall  
35 reflect the findings of the commission with  
36 respect to commission activities under para-  
37 graphs A to C.

38 C. The commission shall be provided staff sup-  
39 port by the Department of Agriculture, Food and  
40 Rural Resources. Commission members shall not  
41 receive a per diem but shall be reimbursed for  
42 expenses incurred in the course of the commis-  
43 sion's work.



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STATEMENT OF FACT

2       This bill establishes a state policy which recog-  
3 nizes the importance of agriculture to the state's  
4 economy and the need to ensure an adequate and  
5 affordable supply of productive agricultural land as  
6 the basis for that activity. The State has already  
7 adopted a food policy, the Resolves of 1983, chapter  
8 51, which stresses the vital relationship between our  
9 land base and our future as a food-growing region.

10       It also creates a 17-member Commission on  
11 Farmland Loss to further define the nature of  
12 farmland loss in Maine; to define those agricultural  
13 lands which are important to protect; to review pro-  
14 grams in other states to protect agricultural land  
15 and to identify those applicable to Maine; to hold  
16 public hearings throughout the State to report its  
17 findings and solicit public input on appropriate ac-  
18 tions to protect Maine's important agricultural  
19 lands; and to recommend a farmland protection program  
20 to the Maine Legislature.

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