

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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1 SECOND REGULAR SESSION
2

3 ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH LEGISLATURE
4

5 Legislative Document

No. 1725

7 H.P. 1217

House of Representatives, December 24, 1985

8 Submitted by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources
9 pursuant to Joint Rule 24.

10 Received by the Clerk of the House on December 24, 1985. Referred to
the Committee on Agriculture and 1,600 ordered printed pursuant to Joint
Rule 14.

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk

Presented by Representative Ayer of Caribou.

11 Cosponsored by Representative Mitchell of Freeport, Senator Black of
Cumberland and Representative McGowan of Canaan.

12 STATE OF MAINE
13

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

17 AN ACT to Establish a Research Program on the
18 Agricultural Utilization of Industrial
19 Waste Products.
20

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

23 7 MRSA c. 5-A is enacted to read.

24 CHAPTER 5-A

25 RESEARCH PROGRAM ON THE AGRICULTURAL
26 UTILIZATION OF INDUSTRIAL WASTE PRODUCTS

27 §131. Findings

28 1. Benefits of waste utilization. The Legisla-
29 ture finds that the availability of municipal treat-
30 ment plant sludge, paper mill sludge, wood ash, kiln
31 dust, seafood wastes and other food processing
32 byproducts alone or in combination with naturally oc-
33 curring substances such as seaweed, peat and minerals

1 present an opportunity for farmers to improve their
2 soils and reduce expenditures on fertilizers. Use of
3 these products in agriculture may be less expensive
4 and safer than traditional disposal techniques which
5 may cause pollution of ground water or surface water.

6 2. Research needs. While beneficial, waste
7 products may not be fully utilized because of inade-
8 quate information on the possible effects of exposure
9 to organic toxic substances. The State must ensure
10 that the public is not exposed to substances which
11 pose a reasonable risk of a health hazard. Farmers
12 need more information on long-term effects of re-
13 peated applications of some of these wastes on soils,
14 water quality and crops. Potential users need knowl-
15 edge about effective means of handling, storing and
16 applying these materials.

17 3. Role of the Agricultural Experiment Station.
18 All agricultural research activities within the State
19 should take advantage of the technical expertise res-
20 ident in the land grant college system.

21 §132. Waste utilization program

22 1. Identify research needs. The Commissioner of
23 Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources shall publish
24 an inventory of available waste byproducts with po-
25 tential agricultural uses, annually update that in-
26 ventory and identify outstanding research needs.

27 2. Program established. The commissioner may
28 establish a waste utilization research and demonstra-
29 tion program for promising industrial and municipal
30 byproducts to evaluate the long-term effects of re-
31 peated applications of these products on soil charac-
32 teristics, crops and water quality; to evaluate meth-
33 ods of handling and applying wastes alone or in vari-
34 ous combinations; to determine through field trials
35 the value of these products as a soil amendment; and
36 to determine economic feasibility of utilizing these
37 products.

38 3. Research at the University of Maine. The
39 commissioner may contract directly with the Agricul-
40 tural Experiment Station at the University of Maine
41 for research projects authorized in subsection 2. If

1 the Agricultural Experiment Station cannot conduct
2 the necessary research activities, the commissioner
3 may contract with other public or private agencies to
4 conduct these projects.

5 §133. Special revenues

6 1. Funds appropriated. Any funds appropriated
7 to carry out the purpose of this chapter shall not
8 lapse.

9 2. Funds contributed. Funds contributed by
10 firms, associations or individuals to carry out the
11 purpose of this chapter shall be deposited in a dedi-
12 cated account which shall not lapse.

13 STATEMENT OF FACT

14 An inventory of waste products with potential
15 for agricultural use indicates that the availability
16 of municipal treatment sludge, paper mill sludge,
17 seafood wastes and other food processing byproducts
18 presents an opportunity for farmers to improve their
19 soils and save money in cost of fertilizers.

20 Use of these products in agriculture also offers
21 a solution to the disposal problems. Disposal in the
22 water is no longer permitted and the space in accept-
23 able land fills is extremely limited. There is, for
24 example, no place to dispose of the large volumes of
25 waste exemplified by paper mill sludge.

26 There are some severe constraints to the wide-
27 spread utilization of these byproducts. First, there
28 are health concerns. The Department of Environmental
29 Protection's regulations are based on the most cur-
30 rent information available. While adequate, to pro-
31 tect the public from exposure to heavy metals or oth-
32 er toxic substances and bacteria, they are inadequate
33 to deal with exotic organic potentially hazardous
34 substances. There are also concerns about the long-
35 term effects of repeated applications of some of
36 these wastes on soil characteristics, water quality
37 and crops.

1 Odor nuisance problems have been a constraint.
2 Research is needed on methods of reducing odor in
3 land spreading of municipal sludge, seafood wastes,
4 potato and vegetable waste to overcome this problem
5 and on general handling and spreading techniques.

6 It is also difficult to calculate the economic
7 benefits of these products to the farmer without hav-
8 ing specific information on yield responses under the
9 State's resource conditions.

10 Because the pressure for utilization is so great
11 there already is considerable use of many of these
12 products. While the probability of long-term harm is
13 low the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Re-
14 sources does not feel it can responsibly advocate the
15 use of these products until some of these questions
16 are answered.

17 It is the governments responsibility to make
18 that information available and take measures to miti-
19 gate against any harm to human health or the soil and
20 water resources.

21 The University of Maine Agricultural Experiment
22 Station has expressed its commitment to research and
23 demonstration of waste utilization by the building of
24 methane digester, laboratory testing of dog fish
25 waste and working with the soil and water conserva-
26 tion districts in their challenge grants projects
27 which are field testing selected products.

28 This bill expresses the commitment of the State
29 and establishes a mechanism for encouraging research
30 into the utilization of waste products.

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