

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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128th MAINE LEGISLATURE

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No. 1445

H.P. 997

House of Representatives, April 13, 2017

An Act To Designate the Maine Farms Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability Recognition Program

Submitted by the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry pursuant to Joint Rule 204.

Reference to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative BLACK of Wilton.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 7 MRSA §162**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 356, Pt. A, §1 and amended by
3 PL 2011, c. 682, §38, is further amended to read:

4 **§162. Maine Farms Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability**
5 **recognition program**

6 The commissioner shall establish a process for designating "~~Farming for Maine"~~
7 farms Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability recipients
8 according to this section. This designation provides farmers an opportunity to ~~declare~~
9 recognize their commitment to ~~commercial agriculture sustainable agricultural practices~~
10 and long-term resource management and to increase public awareness of ~~farming in the~~
11 State agricultural producer commitment to best management practices.

12 **1. Application.** An applicant for designation as a "~~Farming for Maine"~~ farm Maine
13 Farm Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability recipient shall submit a
14 completed application ~~that has been verified for verification~~ in accordance with
15 subsection 3 to the ~~clerk for the municipality in which the farm is located and a copy of~~
16 ~~the application to the department. If the land is within an area under the jurisdiction of~~
17 ~~the Maine Land Use Planning Commission, the applicant shall submit the verified~~
18 ~~application to the executive director of the commission and a copy to the department.~~
19 The department shall develop an application form and make ~~the form~~ it available through
20 the offices of the soil and water conservation districts and private organizations and
21 public agencies that support or represent farmers in the State.

22 **2. Eligibility.** A farm is eligible for designation under this section if ~~the following~~
23 criteria are met it engages in the management of cropland or the production of livestock,
24 specialty crops or value-added products and meets the criteria established by the
25 commissioner as follows:

26 A. The farm consists of land classified as prime farmland, land of statewide or local
27 importance or unique farmland by the Natural Resources Conservation Service within
28 the United States Department of Agriculture. In counties where land of local
29 importance has not been identified, land that is actively farmed may be eligible as
30 provided in rules adopted under subsection 4;

31 B. ~~The land is used for~~ farm is engaged in the commercial production of agricultural
32 products; ~~and or~~

33 C. ~~Additional~~ The farm complies with additional criteria established in rules adopted
34 under subsection 4.

35 A farm that is farmed under a lease may be designated as long as the landowner and the
36 lessee sign the application.

37 **3. Verification of eligibility.** An applicant for designation as a "~~Farming for Maine"~~
38 farm Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability recipient shall
39 submit a completed application form together with support materials as required in rules
40 adopted under subsection 4 to a ~~soil and water conservation district office~~. Upon receipt

1 of an application, a district office shall verify the eligibility of the farm or notify the
2 applicant of the reasons why verification is denied. Upon request, the department shall
3 assist a district in determining eligibility the department for verification of eligibility.

4 **4. Rules.** The commissioner may adopt rules to further define the verification
5 process under subsection 3 and establish additional eligibility criteria as needed for
6 designation of "~~Farming for Maine~~" farms Maine Farm Agricultural Resource
7 Management and Sustainability recipients. The commissioner ~~shall~~ may provide signs or
8 certificates or develop other means of recognizing a farm that has attained designation as
9 a "~~Farming for Maine~~" farm Maine Farm Agricultural Resource Management and
10 Sustainability recipient. Rules adopted under this subsection are routine technical rules as
11 defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

12 **5. Fee.** ~~A municipality~~ The commissioner may charge a fee of not more than \$20 for
13 ~~filing a verified designation application under~~ fees as necessary for the administration of
14 this section.

15 SUMMARY

16 This bill replaces the Farming for Maine farms program with the Maine Farms
17 Agricultural Resource Management and Sustainability recognition program to recognize
18 sustainable agricultural practices and to increase public awareness of agricultural
19 producer commitment to best management practices.