

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE
Augusta, Maine 04333

April 18, 2006

The Honorable Beth Edmonds
President of the Senate
The Honorable John Richardson
Speaker of the House of Representatives
122nd Legislature
State House
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Madam President and Mr. Speaker:

Pursuant to Title 3 Maine Revised Statutes, chapter 35, we are pleased to submit the findings of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry from the review and evaluation of the Maine Seed Potato Board under the State Government Evaluation Act. In its review, the Committee found that the Board is operating within its statutory authority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John M. Nutting'.

Senator John M. Nutting
Senate Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John F. Piotti'.

Representative John F. Piotti
House Chair

cc: Terry Bourgojn, Director of the Division of Plant Industry, DAFRR
Patrick Norton, Director, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE
Augusta, Maine 04333

April 18, 2006

To: The Honorable John Richardson, Chair
The Honorable Beth Edmonds, Vice-Chair
Legislative Council, 122nd Maine Legislature

From: Senator John M. Nutting, Senate Chair *J.M.N.*
Representative John F. Piotti, House Chair *JF*
Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Subject: Government Evaluation Act Review of the Maine Seed Potato Board

This memorandum is to inform you that the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has submitted its findings and recommendations from the review and evaluation of the Maine Seed Potato Board under the State Government Evaluation Act to the Legislature pursuant to Title 3 Maine Revised Statutes, chapter 35.

cc: Members, Legislative Council
David Boulter, Executive Director, Legislative Council

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Review of the Maine Seed Potato Board under the Government Evaluation
Act
March 2006**

The Government Evaluation Act

The Government Evaluation Act (“Act”) provides for a system of periodic review of the efficacy and performance of state government agencies. (3 MRSA § 951 et seq.) The keystone to the Act is the agency program evaluation report, which consists of a number of components required by the statute. Essentially, the report is an agency self-assessment, which the committee of jurisdiction uses as a starting point for its evaluation of the agency’s effectiveness, efficiency and performance.

Review Process

In May of 2005, the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture Conservation and Forestry notified the Maine Seed Potato Board of its intent to review the agency during the Second Session of the 122nd Legislature. The commission submitted its program evaluation report as required under 3 MRSA §956 in November 2005.

On January 9, 2006, Terry Bougoin, Director of the Division of Plant Industry within the Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources, presented the Seed Potato Board’s Program Evaluation Report to the committee. At the meeting the committee asked the Seed Potato Board to come back to the committee with some options for further supporting the work at the Porter Farm. This request was made realizing that although the Porter Farm does a tremendous job with the resources it has, those resources have in fact dwindled.

The General Fund appropriation to the Seed Potato Board has not been adjusted for cost of living increases under state employee contracts. The Budget Office has considered the appropriation as a grant and only intermittently applied the COLA to the board’s General Fund appropriation. Essentially the Seed Potato Board has been “flat- funded”.

The board met on January 26, 2006 and voted to raise the price of seed purchased from the farm beginning in 2007. The increases vary from 8% to 59% depending on the seed product. These price increases are expected to generate over \$30,000 in revenue for the farm. On March 6, 2006, the committee discussed the board’s response. Other recommendations from the board were to move the farm’s Program Manager and 2 laboratory positions to the General Fund thus assuring that future salary and benefit increases would not reduce funds available to the farm. The movement of these positions could, in fact , help the board to achieve long-term financial stability.

Findings and Recommendation

The Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has completed its review of the Maine Seed Potato Board. We find that the board is operating within its statutory authority, and that the Porter Seed Farm is vital to the potato industry in Maine. The committee has submitted legislation to appropriate an additional \$30,000 to the Seed Potato Board in FY2007. This would roughly match revenue generated from the self-imposed price increase on seed potatoes and would allow the purchase of essential equipment. The needed equipment this season includes an irrigation pump and a security system as well as lab equipment. The Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry is requesting that the \$30,000 increase in the Seed Potato Board's appropriations be ongoing. It is our hope that this modest amount will help the Porter Farm move forward with evaluating the hydroponic production of mini-tubers.

Detailed information on the Maine Seed Potato Board can be found in the board's Program Evaluation Report, which meets the criteria set in statute (3 MRSA §956). The Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry is recommending that the Maine Seed Potato Board be reviewed again in 2011.

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