

Letter to the Editor

Maine Farmers Need Your Help

The Maine Department of Agriculture has proposed new rules that will affect hundreds of small poultry producers in Maine. There has long been an exemption for producers of less than 1,000 birds a year, and the legislature renewed that law this year, with the intention of fostering and protecting this important small farm sector.

However, new rules developed by the Department of Agriculture to accompany this law are so strict as to threaten the livelihoods of many of these producers. They directly contradict the intent of the legislature in passing the law.

Farmers raising less than 1,000 birds are limited to selling their poultry from the farm, to farmers markets, or to local CSA's. They are a vibrant part of the new food revolution, where increasing numbers of consumers are learning about the superiority of food raised locally; in taste, in safety, and in the positive effect on their health. There is nothing like being able to look your farmer in the eye, and to know the person raising your food.

I'm asking all those who value buying foods locally and who support Maine farms to contact Hal Prince in the Division of Quality Assurance and Regulations (hal.prince@maine.gov), and Ned Porter (Ned.R.Porter@Maine.gov) by December 31. Let them know that you are a supporter of local farms, and that they need to re-write the rules for small exempt poultry producers in a way that won't force them to either go into debt, or to go out of business. Let them know that you consider locally produced farm products superior and safer than food shipped to us from outside the state.

"Control oil and you control nations; control food and you control the people."
(Henry Kissinger)

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