



Anita Kopchinski and William Sokol
Hidden Brook Gardens, LLC
551 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, CT 06339
860-912-1767
www.hiddenbrookgardens.com
anitanbill@comcast.net

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee March 1, 2010
Anita F. Kopchinski, Ph.D.

Proposed House Bill 5287, ***An Act Allowing the Production and Sale of Acidified Food Products on Residential Farms***

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Anita Kopchinski and I run Hidden Brook Gardens, LLC, a small family-run certified organic farm in Ledyard, CT with Bill Sokol. Thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony in **SUPPORT** of this proposed bill.

I want to take a moment to tell you about myself. I received my Ph.D. in Chemistry from Kansas State University in 1994 and I spent 13 years in the pharmaceutical industry including 10 years at Pfizer in CT. In 2006 we were able to turn our avocation into our vocation when we started our own business - our farm. We are proponents of supplying high quality fruits, vegetables, herbs, seedlings, cider, jams and jellies in season to the local community.

The majority of our sales (97%) are direct retail (farm markets, home delivery, CSA) with 3% to restaurants. The percentage of our sales from value-added products (jams/jellies prepared under the current farm exemption and cider) for the last two years has averaged 7%. We conservatively estimate that we could double these value-added sales with the addition of acidified foods. The sale of these products is especially beneficial during the winter farm market season when fresh produce is limited.

In addition, fresh produce which is currently sold at a deep discount due to visual imperfections could now be sold for a premium as a salsa, pickle or other item. For example, in 2008 we sold 105 pounds of tomatoes as "seconds" for \$156 (a loss of 50% of their retail value). Estimating that 210 eight ounce jars of salsa could have been prepared from these tomatoes at \$5.50/jar, sales of over \$1000 could have been realized.

It is critical to the small farm operation to prepare and sell produce and value-added items of the highest quality since our customer base is comprised of the local community which supports us. Towards that end, I believe that this bill does a good job of ensuring safety by requiring standards on the kitchen's water supply, restricted access to the kitchen during product preparation, pH testing of the final product recipe and the successful completion (by successfully passing an exam) of an approved safe food handling class. I just completed the ServeSafe Food Protection Manager Class which addressed in great detail among other things, the handling requirements (time/temperature, personal hygiene, cleaning/sanitization, process and preparation controls) to ensure that harmful pathogens (including botulism causing bacteria and their potential spores) do not cause a food borne illness.

Allowing the preparation of acidified foods in the farm kitchen will allow individual processors to (1) increase their income during these difficult economic times, (2) increase the amount of money that circulates within the state (for example we purchase our glass jars/lids from AB Container in Enfield, CT, and sugar from Fiddleheads Natural Food Coop in New London, CT), (3) provide high quality value-added products to the local community who desire these artisanal products which are made with care in small batches.