



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
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February 22, 2011

Testimony in Opposition to:

Committee Bill No. 207 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE INCLUSION OF NURSURIES AND GREENHOUSES IN FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

Submitted by: Donald Tuller, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of over 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and Members of the Environment Committee:

We cannot support Committee Bill 207. Connecticut's Farmland Preservation Program is based by statute, on maintaining the fertility and food production capability of the soil for future generations. That is what the taxpayer's money is being used to purchase. In exchange for receiving the money, the landowner, and future owners are legally bound to engage in agricultural practices that will not destroy the future productivity of the preserved farmland. The Commissioner of Agriculture is required to see to it that is honored. If this bill is passed, "THE USE OF THIS LAND AS A NURSERY OR GREENHOUSE SHALL NOT BE DEEMED TO DIMINISH THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE OF THE LAND OR TO PROHIBIT THE COMMISSIONER FROM ACQUIRING THE DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS TO SUCH LAND" Do you have any idea what practices that you are deeming to not diminish the agricultural value of the land? Connecticut Farm Bureau policy that was approved by our members, references that the growing of balled and burlap nursery stock is not allowed because of the soil removed during the harvest process. We support conducting research to determine how much soil is being removed, and if it is detrimental in the long term to the land. My understanding is that the research that has been done does not consider that practice to be sustainable. I have sold the development rights on my farm to a land trust. I cannot sell off the topsoil, or grow ball and burlap crops either. Both practices are considered to be bad for the long term productivity of the soil.

The Connecticut Greens industry uses approximately 8% of the agricultural land to produce nearly half of the agricultural product value annually. They are not currently denied access to the Farmland Preservation Program, provided that they do not engage in practices deemed destructive to the long term productivity of the soil. It would be interesting to look at how much of the land currently devoted to container plant production, those acres and acres of hoop houses, could ever be converted to food production. In many cases, the topsoil was stripped and sold before the hoop houses were constructed. That land is only suited to set pots on it, it will never return to it's original productivity, without hugely expensive remediation.

By not allowing those practices, a huge problem is being avoided. The current farmland preservation program is not broken. I encourage you to not take a wrecking ball to it by passing this bill. The better

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solution is to oppose Committee Bill No.207 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE INCLUSION OF NUSERIES AND GREENHOUSES IN FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS.

Thank you; Don Tuller Connecticut Farm Bureau Association