

**Testimony of the
Connecticut Department of Agriculture
Submitted to the General Law Committee
2/8/11**

Proposed Bill 462

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF CONNECTICUT FARM WINE AT FARMERS' MARKETS

While this bill is sponsored by Sen. Meyer, the Department submitted similar legislation to the Environment Committee that will create a \$250 annual permit to allow farm winery permittees to sell Connecticut made wine produced at their winery, by the bottle, at Farmers' Markets at the invitation of the individual markets. The permit holder or an authorized representative must be present at the time of all sales. A farm winery permittee would be limited to no more than three farmers' market premises during the course of the year. The permit would be granted by the Department of Consumer Protection. There are over 120 Farmers' Markets in operation in Connecticut and many are held on or near church or school grounds. Because all local ordinances and state law must be adhered to with regard to the sale of alcohol, wine would not be allowed to be sold at those locations.

The Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council has requested consideration of this proposal in the Council's efforts to increase sales of Connecticut wines by building awareness and enhancing the image of Connecticut's farm wine industry. A primary business growth objective of each winery is to promote tourism to their properties and the communities in which they are located. The availability of Connecticut wines at Connecticut Farmers' Markets will assist in broadening awareness of the quality of Connecticut wines, showcase award winning wines thereby assisting in the continued development and economic viability of the industry while adding to the success of the Farmers' Market itself. Connecticut citizens are demanding locally grown and produced farm products. Farmers' Markets have evolved into critical venues where farmers connect directly with consumers and are a vital component of our agricultural economy. Farmers' Markets are most successful when they offer a wide range of Connecticut Grown foods and products. Allowing farm wineries access to Farmers' Markets will help sustain both the farmers and the markets.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture urges your support for PB 462.

Thank you for your consideration.