



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
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Appropriations Committee

Testimony regarding: Governor's Mid-term Budget proposal for 2013

Submitted by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, 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 Harp, Representative Walker

On behalf of over 5,000 members of The Connecticut Farm Bureau I am pleased to be here today to provide testimony on the Governor's Mid-term budget proposal for 2013 as it relates to the Department of Agriculture and Agricultural Experiment Station.

Agriculture is a \$3.5 billion industry comprising over 20,000 jobs in Connecticut according to a 2010 University of Connecticut study on the impact of the agricultural to the state's economy. I am proud to serve as Co-chair of the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development. There has been significant interest in local foods and farm products and we finally are considering the potential for growth in agriculture as a legitimate economic development strategy.

We are fortunate to have a very efficient and effective stand-alone Department of Agriculture that has helped our agricultural businesses immensely over the years through promotion and protection of agricultural business and resources and protection of animals, consumers and public health. The creation of the CT Grown program and the impressive record of the farmland preservation program are shining examples of the success of the Department has enjoyed over the years. The Department has been asked to more with less as the realities of the recent budget cycles have emerged. The additional cuts of \$454,828 outlined in the 2013 proposed budget have raised significant concerns from the agricultural community about the ability of the Department to continue to carry out its responsibilities. Of particular concern is the reduction of the permanent full-time positions from 51 to 48. Through early retirement and cuts in this and previous budgets the areas of Regulation and Inspection and the Aquaculture Laboratory are of particular concern. We are faced with the risk of not being able to ship key agricultural products because of the inability to conduct necessary inspections. Food safety and confidence of our dairy, poultry and seafood products are at stake. We cannot afford to operate these critical functions at such dangerously low levels as we try to grow our local food production and boost our agricultural economy.

The agricultural community has similar concerns about the \$264,635 cut to the Agricultural Experiment Station budget. In both cases farmers and consumers rely deeply on the programs and services provided by the Department of Agriculture and Agricultural Experiment Station and we need to make sure they are funded adequately to carry out their important work.