



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
775 Bloomfield Ave., Windsor, CT 06095-2322
(860) 768-1100 • Fax (860) 768-1108 • www.cfba.org

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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 Gentile, and Members of Environment Committee:

Raised Bill No. 443 AN ACT CONCERNING PESTICIDES ON SCHOOL GROUNDS, PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, ATHLETIC FIELDS, AND MUNICIPAL GREENS.

On behalf of our members, I would like to speak against adopting any amendments to this bill that might have a profoundly negative impact on Connecticut Farmers, whether intended, or unintended. Before I speak to the merits of the possible amendment I have some questions about the bill as proposed. Does the term PARKS refer to all State Parks and City and Town Parks as well? If yes, if we have a wet summer, will mosquito spraying be prohibited when there is a West Nile outbreak? How will poison ivy and invasive species be handled? Will those of you who support this bill be volunteering to pull out the poison ivy etc.? Not being able to use herbicides will certainly require additional labor costs in every park that has noxious or invasive species. Has a fiscal note been calculated? I believe that the City of San Francisco tried a ban like this, and then realized that they had no answer for invasive species. I think they repealed it. Must we repeat their mistake?

And now to the merits of an amendment that we haven't seen yet. Here is some background information. Farmers actually use fewer pesticides when they grow GMO crops compared to conventional crops. A UMASS study done was in 2005 with 10 farmers (1223 acres). It compared their herbicide use with conventional field corn production methods, to their herbicide use after they started growing GMO field corn. There was a 34% reduction of pounds of active ingredient of herbicide per acre with the GMO corn. We will be happy to supply you with this information if you would like to see it. If this data was extrapolated for the entire corn crop grown that year in Mass, it would have meant a 33,660 pound reduction in herbicide use. A lot is being made about the amount of Roundup that is being used, a good analogy would be if someone was extremely concerned about the increase in our use of natural gas for electricity generation. The rest of the story is that it is replacing coal and oil. A win for the environment wouldn't you agree? With the use of GMO crops, farmers make fewer trips over the field, reducing the amount of fuel burned, (smaller carbon footprint), the soil is not bare, (less opportunity for soil erosion), greater carbon sequestration in covered soil. Part of the benefit of GMO crop production has been that farmers could stop using more dangerous herbicides, that were applied to bare soil, with the possibility of leaching down into the groundwater. Roundup is much safer to use, and gets trapped in the topsoil and broken down. Farmers are using a lot less of the more dangerous pesticides. When farmers use more Roundup, it doesn't mean that they are using more herbicides. They are actually using less (like less coal and oil, more natural gas.) It's actually a good thing. Concern has been raised about finding glyphosate in streams and rivers. You should be aware that it is approved for use in watercourses (special formulation without a surfactant, not Roundup). Farmers

spray it on vegetation in fields, non farmers spray in on vegetation growing in cracks in sidewalks and pavement. All the overspray waits for the next rainstorm to be washed away. If you ban GMO grass seed, will that include the GMO grass crops that Connecticut Farmers are currently growing? That will devastate the Connecticut Dairy Industry, and if they are able to recover, they will be forced to resume more expensive and environment damaging practices. The work that is being done on GMO crops also includes drought and disease resistance, and more efficient use of fertilizer. Are those bad ideas that shouldn't be available in Connecticut? Herbicides are expensive. Farmers can't afford to waste expensive crop inputs, by pouring them on crops. They use the least amount possible. Resistance is not a new problem. Living things adapt to changing conditions since the beginning of time. People do, plants do, diseases do, it's part of the living world, not unique to GMO crops. This is not a simple issue. Springing it at the last minute like this, so those of us who are opposed do not have a chance to make our case about a specific proposal that we haven't seen yet is irresponsible and not worthy of the Connecticut legislature. I urge you to not amend this bill, and I think you should think long and hard about passing any of it.

Thank you: Don Tuller President of Connecticut Farm Bureau Association