

March 10, 2022

Dear House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry:

Members of the AgriMark's Vermont Legislative Committee would like to provide our perspective on H.626. Pollinator health is vitally important to all of us and we support efforts to assist pollinators and improve the environment in order to help stabilize their health status.

Vermont's dairy farmers have been adopting new land management practices at lightening speed when prompted by science and regulation. These new practices have changed our crop selection options along with the timing and scouting of our fields. These practices are also creating challenges under the soil surface and we continue to work to manage these changes and threats.

Vermont has lead the way on doing surface water testing for neonics and the results are extremely positive with almost zero detects and even the one or two that have been found are at levels so low that they are even barely able to affect macro invertebrates, not pollinators.

Vermont has lead the nation over the last 10 years on neonic policy by passing bills that allow the Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets to regulate treated articles, by banning homeowner use of neonics outside, making neonics a restricted use pesticide, etc. The legislature also set up the Agriculture Innovation Board in 2021 to tackle the big issues facing agriculture and the environment so that we would stop seeing the piecemeal approach to policy that has become the norm over the last 10 years. The Agriculture Innovation Board is going to report back to the legislature for the first time this fall and yet the committee is passing a bill on an issue that they are slated to deal with during this year.

Once again, Vermont's farmers are looking at policy that is coming so fast and furious that it is beating out policy that has not yet had a chance to take affect.

AgriMark's Vermont Legislative Committee asks the committee to let their policy passed just last year creating the Agriculture Innovation Board to actually take affect and work before passing new policy. We ask that you follow the science which shows that neonics are not creating problems for Vermont's pollinators. We wonder when these policy changes like RAPs, global warming, pesticide restrictions, etc., will stop coming on an annual basis and we will have a chance to collectively take a breath and catch up to it all.

AgriMark's members are dedicated to sound conservation practices and are leading the way in their rates of adoption. This work is tricky and we are finding that new challenges are being created with new practices. We want to be doing the best work possible on our farms following sound science but that takes time.

Please consider holding off on this bill until the Agriculture Innovation Board has had a chance to meet and put forth their proposal, until another year of data is collected on growing treated vs. untreated corn seed and until there is science to say that neonics used as a seed treatment are causing measurable harm to pollinators in Vermont.

Thank you,

Margaret Laggis on behalf of

AgriMark's Vermont Legislative Committee