House Agriculture and Forestry Committee
Re: Treated Seeds
Submitted by: Clara Ayer of Fairmont Farm

Thank you for the opportunity to send you a written testimony, I am sorry to not be able to join you in person today. I will keep my introduction brief as I know I have had the chance to talk to you already this year.

My name is Clara Ayer, I am part of the 3rd generation of Fairmont Farm. We have an LFO in East Montpelier and an MFO in Craftsbury. We take great pride in our mission statement and use it as a driving force for many decisions on the farm, "Fairmont will strive to be a profitable dairy farm with the utmost consideration for the safety and happiness of our people, the cleanliness of our environment and the health of our animals". We further sum it up with our tagline, "Farming for Future Generations". I share this with you today because I think it is important to understand our "why", we have seven 4th generation kids growing up on the farm and we want there to be opportunities for them to come back one day. We also own about 2,000 acres of conserved land with the Vermont Land Trust, I mention this because I believe it comes with a great responsibility to continue being stewards of that land forever into the future.

We crop 3,500 acres to feed our herd, of that 1,500 acres is corn ground. I understand you are discussing treated seeds so I wanted to share a little bit about our practices and the benefits we see in this technology. Firstly, this conversation is very relevant with the current markets, corn prices are almost double what we've experienced as "normal" over the past 10 years and have not hit this price since 2013. I just got back from a National Council of Farmers Cooperatives Annual Meeting where we heard speakers talk about the world markets, the corn shortage is a huge concern right now. China is growing their swine herd and have completely moved away from scrap foods to a corn-based diet to protect against disease, while they are increasing their corn acres their corn imports are also increasing. We are also continuing to compete with biofuels for corn acres in the United States as many industries are working to achieve net zero status by their deadlines. Add to that, the drought and water issues many states are dealing with and it's unclear when corn prices will come back down. In the northeast, farmers have the advantage of being able to grow much of their own feed, our farm typically grows about 60% of our cows diet. In good years, we're able to do some high moisture corn or snaplage that can replace corn meal. We are feeling lucky to have had an excellent corn crop last year, and we put up enough snaplage to get us through the first 3 quarters of 2022. The stability and improved margin this creates for us, as farmers in Vermont, is immeasurable.

What makes an excellent corn crop and how do treated seeds come into play? Treated seeds allow our corn to get a good early start and protect against early pests and diseases, thus increasing our yield potential and decreasing the chance for needing to replant. Replanting is obviously costly, but it also means additional trips over the field which can create soil compaction, leading to reduced water retention, and an increased risk in runoff events, as well as lowering the yield potential significantly as shorter day varieties are needed for replants. Seed treatments benefit the crop as being an Integrated Pest Management system rather than

a “rescue” treatment that do not work for all pests. One of the most amazing things about seed treatments is that it allows us to effectively treat our crop while only applying pesticides to 1% of the field as opposed to in-furrow treatments which is about 30% of the field or broadcast spraying which covers 100% of the field. The other benefit to seed treatments is knowing it is on the seed, which is planted two inches in the ground so it’s not sitting on top of the soil like the alternative treatments. On a financial note, allowing the treatment to be on the seed keeps our early season pesticide cost at around $15 an acre, if we were to switch to an alternative our price would jump to $37.50 an acre. For a farm our size that’s an increase of $33,750.

We feel good about the evaluations and research that has gone into this treated seed technology and believe it’s the safest way for us to protect our crops, and in turn corn yields. In a world where we are constantly searching for how we can do more with less, I believe treated seeds does just that. Thanks again for your time, and for reading my testimony. Please reach out with any follow up questions, clara@fairmontfarminc.com or 802-793-4251.