

It is increasingly difficult to be a passionate advocate for American agriculture. Often, advocates are attacked by opponents for defending farming and food production. Words must be carefully chosen so as not to raise the feathers of those looking for any reason to object to methods of agricultural practices and animal husbandry. Farmers are often unable to even find the time to advocate for or defend their chosen profession, not to mention attending important forums such as this one.

Time and money are the limitations of most agricultural pursuits....that and the weather. Farmers have limited hours to do their important work. They also have limited financial resources. Many are swimming in debt and uncertain about the future...the future of their families, their land and their profession. No one would want to live this reality.

The “Right to Farm” laws in this country bring an important piece of mind to the industry. Knowing that driving a load of silage or round bales back to the farm at nine in the evening after a long day in the field is a right that farmers need to protect. Our farmers are making great strides in the effort to improve the quality of our state’s rivers and lakes. More work is needed and Vermont’s farmers are making headway in these efforts. There is a keen desire to make the necessary changes in agricultural practices as displayed by the many farmers watershed partnerships.

Today, many people choose to point their fingers at others to satisfy their need to find solutions to the world’s problems. This is easy to do with social media platforms giving instantaneous recognition to opinions, many times false or misleading. The ease of legal revenge is at the fingertips of any one looking to call an attorney.

Farmers, and just about all citizens, are constantly looking over their shoulder wondering what perceived misstep will lead to a lawsuit. Every decision is measured carefully against what someone else may condemn. It is a toxic world.

The amended “Right to Farm” law will take the pressure off farmers, as it has in the past, but now with more teeth. Farmers, who by most accounts are improving our landscape here in Vermont, will continue to make improvements. There will always be problems and set-backs, it

the nature of agriculture, but with the invaluable guidance of the NRCS and the Agency of Agriculture, they will be limited and mitigated.

Vermont has always been an agricultural state, a bread basket for New England and beyond and shining example to the country of purity and healthy living. We need to protect this valuable asset as it has provided us with a way of life that is unique and unequaled, drawing people from around the world to bear witness to our hill farms, vast meadows and fields filled with livestock.

Needless and frivolous lawsuits brought about by disgruntled citizens, used to living in non-agricultural environments will not only rob our farmers of their valuable time but also their hard-earned money. This amended "Right to Farm" law will lead to the protection farm families need to continue making Vermont the special state in which we live.

Thank you.

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