

VT Right to Farm Testimony

Good morning, legislators, my name is Lisa MacDougall and I am a vegetable farmer in Shaftsbury Vermont and President of the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association, which represents over 300 vegetable and berry farm operations in Vermont.

I am here this morning to testify on behalf of the VVBGA in favor of the amendments being proposed to Vermont's Right to Farm Bill. The bill needs updating to ensure that farmers in Vermont, who practices are following state and federal regulations have protection, are not wrongfully brought to court.

Our Right to Farm bill is currently inadequate for protecting farmers. Now is the time to update and modify the bill so only cases that are truly considered to be a nuisance are brought to court, saving farmers time and money. Farms are disappearing in our state and need protection from urbanization. Under climate change predictions, Vermont's farms will be crucial to the sustainability of our local food systems. Every farm in this state is valuable to our local economies, providing food, employing local people, and keeping Vermont's farm landscape beautiful.

It is in our best interest to make proactive updates to the bill rather than wait for lawsuits to justify the need for a change. Our right to Farm law is currently one of the weakest in the nation, as compared to 32 other states that have right to farm laws.

On my farm we follow a nutrient management program, adhere to the compost/manure spreading bans, practice conservation tillage and no – tillage methods, and water test annually to ensure our irrigation water is in good condition. These are just a few of the many practices we employ to ensure a health farm environment for our crops and neighbors.

Farmers have many regulations to comply with and those in good standing deserve protection. Supporting S268 is supporting Vermont Farmers. Not supporting this bill is harming them. The Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association hopes you will join us in support of S268.