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Date: (Filing No. S-)

AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

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**STATE OF MAINE
SENATE
130TH LEGISLATURE
SECOND REGULAR SESSION**

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT “ ” to S.P. 717, L.D. 1998, “An Act To Establish a Disaster Relief Fund for Potato Farmers Adversely Affected by Drought Conditions”

Amend the bill by striking out the title and substituting the following:

'An Act To Establish a Fund for Farmers Adversely Affected by Drought Conditions'

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and inserting the following:

'Sec. 1. 7 MRSA c. 8-A, sub-c. 4 is enacted to read:

SUBCHAPTER 4

FARMERS DROUGHT RELIEF GRANT PROGRAM

§220-A. Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program

1. Grant program established. The Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program, referred to in this section as "the program," is established in the department to assist farmers in the State to overcome the adverse effects of drought conditions by providing grants in accordance with this section.

2. Eligibility. A farmer in the State may apply for a grant under the program if the farmer needs to establish a source for irrigation water to alleviate the risk of crop losses due to drought. The source for irrigation water must be sustainable, environmentally sound and affordable.

3. Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program Fund. The Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program Fund is established as a nonlapsing fund to provide funding to achieve the purposes of the program. The fund consists of any funds received from private and public sources. The fund must be held separate and apart from all other money, funds and accounts. Any balance remaining in the fund at the end of any fiscal year must be carried forward to the next fiscal year.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT

1 **4. Rules.** The department shall adopt rules to implement the program. The rules must
 2 include grant eligibility requirements, grant application and award procedures and grant
 3 funding limits. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as
 4 defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

5 **Sec. 2. Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to examine**
 6 **ways to streamline permitting new sources of water for farmers.** The Department
 7 of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural
 8 Resources shall work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Maine
 9 Land Use Planning Commission and other appropriate agencies to examine the permitting
 10 process for farmers seeking to secure permits for new sources of water for irrigation and to
 11 develop recommendations, including suggested legislation, to streamline the permitting
 12 process. No later than January 1, 2023, the department shall submit a report with findings
 13 and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction
 14 over agriculture, conservation and forestry matters. The joint standing committee may
 15 submit a bill to the First Regular Session of the 131st Legislature relating to the subject
 16 matter of the report.

17 **Sec. 3. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and
 18 allocations are made.

19 **AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY, DEPARTMENT OF**
 20 **Bureau of Agriculture 0393**

21 Initiative: Provides one-time funding for contractual services to complete rulemaking,
 22 coordinate with other state agencies on strategies to streamline the irrigation permitting
 23 process and report back on findings.

24	GENERAL FUND	2021-22	2022-23
25	All Other	\$0	\$75,000
26			
27	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$0	\$75,000

28 **Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program Fund N947**

29 Initiative: Provides allocations to establish the fund and to allow for acceptance of funding
 30 from private and public sources.

31	OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS	2021-22	2022-23
32	All Other	\$0	\$500
33			
34	OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS TOTAL	\$0	\$500

35
 36 **AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND**
 37 **FORESTRY, DEPARTMENT OF**
 38 **DEPARTMENT TOTALS**

39		2021-22	2022-23
40	GENERAL FUND	\$0	\$75,000
41	OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS	\$0	\$500
42			
43	DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS	\$0	\$75,500

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Amend the bill by relettering or renumbering any nonconsecutive Part letter or section number to read consecutively.

SUMMARY

This amendment, which is the majority report of the committee, establishes the Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program to assist farmers in the State to overcome the adverse effects of drought conditions by providing grants, rather than a disaster relief grant program for potato farmers as in the bill. The amendment specifies that a farmer may apply for a grant if the farmer needs to establish a source for irrigation water to alleviate the risk of crop losses due to drought.

The amendment also directs the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources to work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Maine Land Use Planning Commission and other appropriate agencies to examine the permitting process for farmers seeking to secure permits for new sources of water for irrigation and to develop recommendations, including suggested legislation, to streamline the permitting process. The department is required to submit a report with findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over agriculture, conservation and forestry matters no later than January 1, 2023. The joint standing committee is authorized to submit a bill to the First Regular Session of the 131st Legislature relating to the subject matter of the report.

FISCAL NOTE REQUIRED

(See attached)