

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND NINETEEN

H.P. 726 - L.D. 971

Resolve, To Establish a Specialty Crops Certification Cost-share Pilot Program

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry stands ready to establish immediately a specialty crops certification cost-share pilot program for qualified farms to certify their crops under the "Good Agricultural Practices" and "Good Handling Practices" voluntary audit programs under the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service; and

Whereas, as implementation of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act progresses, there is an increasing interest among growers of specialty crops in voluntary audit programs; and

Whereas, these voluntary audit programs are among the best tools available to growers and distributors of specialty crops to ensure a base level of sanitation and food safety; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1. Establishment of a specialty crops certification cost-share pilot program. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall establish a specialty crops certification cost-share pilot program, referred to in this resolve as "the pilot program" for a period of 4 years. Under the program, qualified farms may be entitled to reimbursement of up to 50% of the cost of certification of specialty crops under the "Good Agricultural Practices" and "Good Handling Practices" voluntary audit programs under the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service. "Specialty crops" means qualifying fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture;

Sec. 2. Reimbursement. Resolved: That reimbursement of funds under the pilot program is for initial one-time payment and may not be more than \$500 per qualified farm;

Sec. 3. Report. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall monitor the pilot program and report findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee having jurisdiction over agricultural matters no later than December 15, 2023. The joint standing committee having jurisdiction over agricultural matters may submit a bill to the Second Regular Session of the 131st Legislature relating to the subject matter of the report.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.