



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Office of the Commissioner

Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

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Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, Senator Hartley, Representative Gibson, Senator Somers, Representative Ferraro and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Governor Lamont's budget proposal for Fiscal Years 2022-2023 concerning the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg). For the record, I am Bryan Hurlburt, the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge Connecticut's agriculture and aquaculture sectors, but our producers are resilient and continue to find ways to innovate and support their communities by providing local, healthy foods and products. In Connecticut, agriculture is a \$4 billion industry that supports 22,000 jobs across 5,500 farms that work 380,000+ acres of land in our state. In addition to our land-based operations, the state's shellfish industry works nearly 60,000 acres in Long Island Sound.

Currently the Department has fifty-two General Fund funded employees who work hard on programs which develop, promote and regulate agricultural businesses; protect agricultural and aquaculture resources; enforce laws pertaining to domestic animals; and promote an understanding among the state's citizens of the diversity of Connecticut agriculture, its cultural heritage and its contribution to the state's economy.

The Governor's budget makes responsible appropriations to the agency which will allow the department to continue to meet its public health, support and safety obligations.

As in the FY 2020-2021 budget, the Governor's proposal did not sweep the Agricultural Sustainability fund which helps support the struggling dairy industry and acts as an offset to higher costs of production in state. This fund is critically important right now to offset the COVID-19 pandemic market disruption to the dairy industry. This industry was one of the hardest hit by the market fluctuations, and will continue to experience fluctuations until the service industry, schools, and hospitality have stabilized. This budget also holds past funding levels for its Women, Infant and Children and Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program so those struggling populations can continue to get local, healthy Connecticut grown products to bring back home to their families.

Governor Lamont's budget shows a commitment to maintaining a robust Department of Agriculture, and ensures that the agency has the resources we need to continue our strong support for these producers, business owners and their families.

My staff and I are happy to answer questions that committee members may have. With me today are Nathan Wilson, Director of Operations, Kayleigh Royston, Legislative Liaison, Carole Briggs, Staff Attorney and Jay Yasensky our Business Analyst from the Department of Administrative Services.