

For Immediate Release

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Rep. Kuster Joins NOFA-NH at Kearsarge Food Hub to Hear from Community Stakeholders on Upcoming Farm Bill

Bradford, NH, August 30, 2022 — On Wednesday, August 24th, Congresswoman Annie Kuster (NH-02) participated in a 2023 Farm Bill Listening Session organized by the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire (NOFA-NH) as a part of their 2022 CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliances for Farmer Training) series and hosted by the Kearsarge Food Hub. Rep. Kuster is a senior member of the House Agriculture Committee and played a key role in crafting the last two Farm Bills. The Farm Bill is passed once every five years and drafting of the 2023 Farm Bill will begin next year. Following Wednesday's conversation, Kuster toured Sweet Beet Farm, where farmers shared how a market garden functions, its connection to the Kearsarge Food Hub and community, and ways that the Farm Bill can support small farms to thrive.

Forty plus community stakeholders attended the event and shared their views on how the Farm Bill can adequately address their hopes for agriculture in the state, region, and nation. Attendees named organic integrity, meat processing infrastructure in New Hampshire, consolidation in agriculture, agricultural justice, nutrition, climate resiliency, subsidies, ecological health, pollinator protection, farm to school, land access, and support for building local, vibrant, and rural food systems as key areas of concern for the next Farm Bill.

"I appreciated the opportunity to hear from Granite State farmers, producers, and food distributors about their ideas and insights as I prepare to work with my colleagues on the 2023 Farm Bill," **said Congresswoman Kuster**. "The Farm Bill is an important opportunity to put small rural farmers first and invest in communities throughout our state. This comprehensive legislation touches upon everything from farming and nutrition assistance to rural development programs and renewable energy. Thank you to the Northeast Organic Farming Association and the Kearsarge Food Hub for hosting this listening session – I look forward to bringing the ideas and perspectives I heard with me to Washington."

"We are grateful to Rep. Kuster's ongoing commitment to supporting our local farmers, food system and initiatives that support climate adaptation and resilience for NH agriculture. The urgency of the needs of our sector were demonstrated by the diversity of the nearly 50 stakeholders that attended to share their hopes for the Farm Bill reauthorization that ranged from protecting pollinators habitat to lack of meat processing infrastructure to social justice issues facing farm workers," **said Julie Davenson, NOFA-NH Board President and Policy Committee Chair**. "The Northeast Organic Farming Association's six principles for the reauthorization of the Farm Bill will be critical to the future of food, our rural economies, and the environment. We are grateful Rep. Kuster is representing the interest of New Hampshire farmers in D.C. We think our regional collaborations and initiative make a sound pilot for rebuilding regional food systems that can serve as demonstration for the rest of the country and look forward to continuing to work with the Congresswoman on reauthorization of this important bill."

NOFA's Farm Bill Principles advocate for a Farm Bill that ...

1. Actively invests in and protects the integrity of organic and agroecological practices as a core solution to our climate and biological crises.

2. Ensures fair treatment and just livelihoods for farmers and workers throughout the food and farming system.
3. Invests in rural communities, increases fairness and resilience of local and regional supply chains and breaks up consolidation in agriculture.
4. Centers racial justice across all programs and repairs past and ongoing racialized harm.
5. Promotes food sovereignty for disadvantaged communities and ensures nutrition security for all.
6. Eliminates the use of toxic substances on farmland and in our food system while supporting a just transition for farmers.

“Kearsarge Food Hub was honored to partner with NOFA-NH as hosts for the Farm Bill Listening Session with Rep. Annie Kuster here at Sweet Beet in Bradford, NH,” **said Hanna Flanders, Co-founder, Director of Marketing & Communications, Kearsarge Food Hub.** “We were truly blown away by the people in the room - farmers, community partners, state representatives, and even the Commissioner of Ag. Shawn Jasper. The questions and discussions illuminated how much this community values sustainability, regeneration, and well-being for our lands and people, and how food is a powerful instrument for connection and healing. There is a lot of energy and hope behind the promise that Farm Bill policy can honor these values. We ended with a lovely tour on Sweet Beet Farm, tasting some veggies and enjoying the sunshine! Thank you to NOFA-NH for organizing this important event, Rep. Kuster for taking the time to visit, and everyone who joined us.”

In the 2018 Farm Bill, Rep. Kuster helped to secure a number of key wins for the Granite State, including the passage of legislation to support farmers transitioning to organic agriculture, major reforms for dairy margin coverage, and increased funding for broadband infrastructure and the Northern Border Regional Commission. Kuster has approached the Farm Bill in a bipartisan way, and she is already working with colleagues on proposals to strengthen technical assistance programs for farmers, streamline enrollment processes for nutrition assistance, and increase access to locally grown food.

[NOFA-NH actively promotes organic, regenerative, ecologically sound farming, gardening, eating, and land care practices for healthy communities. NOFA-NH helps people build local, just, and sustainable food systems. Contact info@nofanh.org for more information.]

[Kearsarge Food Hub and Sweet Beet Market + Farm + Café envision a resilient and connected community where everyone is empowered to access healthy food, where local farmers are supported and the land is nourished, and where all people share a common sense of place. Their mission is to reinvigorate our community within a restorative local food system by cultivating food sovereignty, growing engaged learners, and nurturing community. Contact info.kearsargefoodhub@gmail.com for more information.]

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