

From: akmdbarns-eaglespan@gci.net
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Alaskan Agriculture
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I have been farming in Alaska since 1956, My family homesteaded on the Kenai Peninsula. We have raised potatoes, huge gardens, grains (barley, oats, rye, nip oats) We had very limited equipment. We used binders and harvested our grain in bundles for animal feed. We now raise potatoes and rhubarb and strawberries (products moose don't seem to bother) for personal consumption and hay for sale to livestock owners. I was disappointed to see that the new bill that the state has passed that sets new guidelines for borough taxation has left out two important classifications. The new law leaves out peony farmers. Peonies are a niche product that I believe has great potential for our state. We can produce the flowers much loved as wedding flowers at a time of year that many other suppliers can not. Much work has been done by these farmers to get their fields ready and their flowers planted (a lot of work and a lot of money) I know they have looked into the transportation for their flowers and the storing to preserve them from harvest until they are delivered to their purchasers. I hope these farmers make their comments and concerns known. The allowance of such storage seems to be left out in the new bill. Having adequate appropriate storage at a reduced tax rate would be a great benefit for these farmers.

I also noticed that horses were left out of the livestock category for this new law. I have done research in the past to determine how much of an impact horse owners purchasing power has on the agriculture products sold in this state. It is huge and that does not include the feed store purchases. I was told that the horses as livestock classification was not affected -just for this borough tax guidelines. I started and ran a feed store in North Kenai years ago. Most of my customers were horse owners. We import so much of our animal feeds from other states. I believe that could be largely replaced by local agriculture production. Most of Alaska's soils are acidic and could use lime. We do not have lime that is mined in our state - to my knowledge. I am unsure where it could be found in our state but, it should be looked into. It is much needed and to bring in into our state is very expensive. I am always amazed at how cheaply lower 48 farmers can get their fields limed. We need to find ways to get the nutrients our varied soils need to be productive locally.

Our products are expensive to raise because our fertilizers and lime are expensive, We need to have ways to purchase the equipment we need, at a price we can afford, to be able to modernize our harvesting. We have such a narrow window to harvest our field crops due to weather and a short growing season, we need to get it harvested as quickly as we can. We need to have proper storage to be able to provide hay products year round. Having the new law state that agriculture buildings would have a reduced tax rate may make it more feasible for farmers to get storage buildings and I hope many will invest in buildings of their own.

My family and I have always worked hard to produce a quality product whether it was bundled oats, timothy hay, or a hybride hay we developed. Labor is hard to find and who can blame them. Hay handling is hard work and the pay is not great and the time the workers are needed is so short but, when they are needed, they are needed badly. More mechanization and more storage would greatly improve the end

product. Most customers do not have adequate storage for their hay and so cannot purchase as much as they would like out of the fields. The hay has to be properly stored and accessible to customers year round.

We live close to our customers and have had to resist annexation by the city of Soldotna for the last several years. To be able to sell directly to our customers is a plus. City regulations would make our operation much more difficult. Having to have no equipment running after early evening, not being able to go around the property on a four wheeler (to prevent soil compaction) and carry supplies. fuel and oil, and tools to

equipment in the fields, additional taxes, permits to build etc.

Canada has done some wonderful things for farm land near population centers, They have encouraged farming (and the laws governing that land and agricultural friendly tax structure) to keep producing farm land close to some of their cities-keep it classed as farmland-allow the farming to go on in perpetuity-which is beneficial to the farmers and to the city residents alike, using the land for its highest and best use. The established and undeveloped farmland is not pushed out by the cities, rezoned and the fertile soil is not covered over with houses and business and rendered forever unsuitable for farming, The new construction is moved out beyond the farmland, The population can be accommodated and the farming can continue or increase and the land that is unsuitable for farming provides homesites with beautiful views.

America is loosing its fertile farmland at the alarming rate of 2000 acres of agricultural land every day. Without the land, we cannot feed ourselves, our animals or a starving world.

We have no railroad to our area of the Kenai Peninsula. One road. Homesteaders had to be survivors, as self sufficient as possible. Todays population is much more vulnerable to agricultural shortages,

Please consider all these things when you discuss legislation.

Please do not be shortsighted or just focused on fast money.

I have encountered so many people who would be willing to work hard to produce products, animals, fiber, all manner of things and beauty to enhance their lives and the lives of the people who live around them. The wildlife habitat is benefited greatly. We love the wildlife, the domesticated animals and the wonderful lifestyle of living close to God's land and seeing it as His creation to be enjoyed and tended.

Alaska's land has not had 200 years of cultivation. We are newcomers. May we all cherish the land, utilize it for our sustenance, leave it in good condition to be enjoyed by our children, grandchildren, and beyond.

Alaska has land that is not useable as cropland. Let us view our agricultural land as a blessing.

So many things can be done to increase the viability of farming and ranching and letting others see and reap the benefits of our labors.

We have a long way to go. We can learn from the successes and mistakes of those who lived before us.

We need to encourage a market for our products, provide exceptional products for sale, make it possible to harvest and store our products, provide a viable means of transportation to get our products to more distant markets. We need to utilize any already existing buildings or areas for innovative practices that will increase our ability to produce.

My father always believed in using our own minds, our own hands and our blessings

to live a full productive life.

I am also opposed to paying farmers not to produce. A true farmer wants to produce. I would love to see some encouragement for young people to choose agriculture as a life's job (in schools, in farm apprenticeship programs, in infrastructure jobs and careers). With so many families being so separated from their elders-life experiences are not being shared. Knowledge is being lost.

We need processing plants for meat and poultry. I know we have some of the old cannery buildings unused. We need to encourage simple productive things. Many homes in towns as well as country could plant berry bushes, strawberries, and rhubarb beautifully in their yards. These berries and the rhubarb are easily harvested (no knives needed) even small children love to pick. If we had a cannery kitchen that could be utilized (co-op) and some refrigerated storage, people (children) could bring in self grown and picked harvests-sell to a co-op-the co-op could process and package for sale. Encourage it to grow and who knows. Children may love it, grow to appreciate hard work and the co-op could provide a great taste of local foods.

I am sorry I am so long winded. So many ideas come to my mind.

Questions are welcomed. Knowledge is always sought. Feel free to contact me. By snail mail or phone is best.

Priscilla Mott

33640 Echo Lake Road

Soldotna, Alaska 99669

907 262-2871