

From: [Will Hastings](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#); [House Finance](#)
Subject: Please Support Executive Order 136: Establishment of Department of Agriculture
Date: Monday, March 03, 2025 11:01:48 AM

To the Senate & House Finance Committees:

Good Day. My name is Will Hastings. I live off of Schrock Road and my wife and I own Sandhill Farms LLC. We raise hay and root crops for animal feed (we supply root crops to 4T% Ranch on the Kenai Peninsula). We started farming in 2021, after I finished working on the Slope and before that, 20 years in the US Air Force. I can tell you, moving into farming has been challenging. And it was immediately more challenging when I realized my state entity (the Div of Ag) was below the Department of Natural Resources.

Please support the establishment of a Department of Agriculture. Every state that takes agriculture seriously has a Department of Agriculture. The current structure whereby the Division of Ag is under the Department of Natural Resources inherently places a level of bureaucracy separating the agricultural industry of Alaska from the Legislature and The Governor. The Department of Natural Resource is primarily focused on oil and gas, mining, and other industries. Agriculture is a unique industry with unique difficulties, setting it apart from any other economic endeavor. Right now, there are impediments to increasing the agricultural industry in Alaska. For me to advocate to improve these conditions, I must first convince the Division of AG and then that person must convince the Department of Natural Resource, before it can go to the governor. The legislature faces the same hurdles, if you want to advocate an agricultural issue. Why is it, for instance, that Alaska does not have a system in place to encourage "custom farming activities", whereby I can use my equipment, on someone else's land, to be used to produce hay for their own purposes? If I were to do that today, I would be uninsured and be required to do the task for free. It is common for a wheat farmer in the Lower 48 to contract out a "custom cutter" to bring their combine to his land and harvest his wheat, due the high expense for the farmer to own his own combine. Why is it that Alaska does not have intellectual property protections for Alaskan agricultural producers developing new products and processes? Other states have these abilities and hence, their agricultural industries thrive. The Department of Agriculture could bring Alaskan Ag into the 21st century by being able to take these types of issues and advocate to the Governor and Legislature, without having to first argue the points to the Dept of Natural Resources.

Please support this new Department and let's begin to wean ourselves from the necessity to import 95-99% of our food.

Thank You,
Will & Beth Hastings
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