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MAINE TOWN PASSES LANDMARK LOCAL FOOD ORDINANCE *Sedgwick becomes first town in Maine to adopt protections*

SEDGWICK, MAINE - On Saturday, March 5, residents of a small coastal town in Maine voted unanimously to adopt the Local Food and Self-Governance Ordinance, setting a precedent for other towns looking to preserve small-scale farming and food processing. Sedgwick, located on the Blue Hill Peninsula in Western Hancock County, became the first town in Maine, and perhaps the nation, to exempt direct farm sales from state and federal licensing and inspection. The ordinance also exempts foods made in the home kitchen, similar to the Michigan Cottage Food Law passed last year, but without caps on gross sales or restrictions on types of exempt foods.

Local farmer Bob St.Peter noted the importance of this ordinance for beginning farmers and cottage producers. "This ordinance creates favorable conditions for beginning farmers and cottage-scale food processors to try out new products, and to make the most of each season's bounty," said St.Peter. "My family is already working on some ideas we can do from home to help pay the bills and get our farm going."

Mia Strong, Sedgwick resident and local farm patron, was overwhelmed by the support of her town. "Tears of joy welled in my eyes as my town voted to adopt this ordinance," said Strong. "I am so proud of my community. They made a stand for local food and our fundamental rights as citizens to choose that food."

St.Peter, who serves on the board of the [National Family Farm Coalition](#) based in Washington, DC, sees this as a model ordinance for economic development in rural areas. "It's tough making a go of it in rural America," said St.Peter. "Rural working people have always had to do a little of this and a little of that to make ends meet. But up until the last couple generations, we didn't need a special license or new facility each time we wanted to sell something to our neighbors. Small farmers and producers have been getting squeezed out in the name of food safety, yet it's the industrial food that is causing food borne illness, not us."

"And every food dollar that leaves our community is one more dollar we don't have to pay for our rural schools or to provide decent care for our elders," adds St.Peter. "We need the money more than corporate agribusiness."

Three other towns in Western Hancock County will be voting on the ordinance at or ahead of their town meetings in the coming weeks. Penobscot, Brooksville, and Blue Hill all have the ordinance on their warrants.

Click here to view a copy of the [Local Food and Self-Governance Ordinance of 2011](#).

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