

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6289

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE USE OF DRONES TO ANALYZE, TREAT AND

**Title:** APPLY FERTILIZERS AND PESTICIDES TO CROPS.

**Vote Date:** 3/14/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/3/2025

**File No.:** 394

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Environment Committee

## **CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Rep. Vincent J. Candelora, 86th Dist.  
Sen. Heather S. Somers, 18th Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill authorizes the use of precision drone technology by Federal Aviation Administration licensed pilots and licensed commercial & private pesticide applicators to analyze, treat, and apply fertilizers and pesticides on crops. By making drones an option for farmers, they have a tool to reduce environmental impact, costs, and increase efficiency without compromising on effectiveness.

## **Substitute Language LCO 6221**

The substitute language adds the planting of seeds to the list of permitted uses.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection**

The Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) supports this bill with concerns. They recognize drones offer improved crop coverage and accuracy, which increases crop production and decreases off-target applications. DEEP explains how drone technology's flexibility makes it easier to address challenging invasive species. They're concerned about the proposed timeframe and resources necessary to develop appropriate regulations and permit administration.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Rep. Vincent Candelora, 86<sup>th</sup> District**

In Vincent Candelora's public hearing testimony, he expresses support for this bill and its effect on the agricultural community. He explains the efficiency innovative drone technology offers farmers, for example drones can gather data in real-time and their accuracy makes them environmentally responsible. To ensure safety, the bill mandates that drone operations be conducted by FAA-licensed pilots and licensed pesticide applicators.

### **Tracey McDougall, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association**

The Connecticut Farm Bureau Association's (CFBA) description of the benefits drone usage include increased precision, efficiency, and economic benefits. While CFBA's public hearing testimony supports this bill, they recommend substitute language correcting the outdated reference to traditional manned aircraft. Additionally, they request a subsection addressing the definition of a flying tractor, and that a farmer with the appropriate licenses can apply permitted products. CFBA also disagrees with the requirement of an additional license aside from the FAA license, as they deal directly with aircraft.

### **William Hyatt, Vice-Chair, Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council**

The Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council (FAC) supports this bill with the recommendation that it authorize drones to treat invasive species. Thanks to drones' environmentally friendly technology, they reduce the need for heavy equipment in areas like wetlands and overuse of pesticides. Thanks to the improved efficiency, less staff are required per project, reducing costs.

### **American Spray Drone Coalition**

The American Spray Drone Coalition (ASDC) submitted public hearing testimony in support of the bill, while in opposition with certain language regarding technology. They heavily disagree with the proposed ban on foreign-made drones, detailing the hindrances this ban would have on farmers in America. Currently, many drone manufacturers depend on Chinese-made components, therefore, a ban limits options and increases required expenses.

### **21 citizens expressed support.**

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

### **1 citizen expressed opposition.**

**Reported by: Phoebe Mann**

**Date: April 3, 2025**