March 18, 2019

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York strongly supports the passage of S.2156 (Kaminsky) / A.2477 (Englebright), which would prohibit the use of the toxic pesticide chlorpyrifos in New York and protect farmers and consumers from exposure.

Founded in 1983, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY) is the premier statewide organization growing a strong organic and sustainable agriculture movement in New York State with 2251 members, of whom a majority are farmers, providing organic food to many thousands of New Yorkers. NOFA-NY provides education and assistance to local organic and sustainable farmers; connects consumers with organic and sustainable farms; advocates for policies that support a sustainable and fair food and farm system at both the state and federal levels; and is the largest U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-accredited organic certifier in New York, certifying over 1,000 organic operations.

Organic agriculture is one of the fastest growing components of New York’s agricultural economy, producing food and other products on approximately 213,000 acres. New York is third in the nation for number of organic farms, fourth in organic acreage, and seventh for organic farm sales. Organic farmers have attained their success without the use of chlorpyrifos. Organic farmers are dedicated to building healthy soils and consequently shun the use of toxic materials that damage soil life. Indeed, under federal law, organic farmers cannot use synthetic pesticides and instead must rely on less toxic alternatives, especially cultural, biological, and mechanical practices.

Any claim that farmers need chlorpyrifos to grow crops simply is not supported by the experience of organic farmers in New York. For example, the USDA Organic Integrity Database lists 183 organic farms in the state certified to grow cabbage and/or onions. This includes successful farms on Long Island. There are detailed guides to the organic production of fruits and vegetables available from the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program. The guide to the organic production of cole crops such as cabbage lists farming practices and 15 less toxic products than chlorpyrifos for controlling cabbage maggot. With good rotations and sanitation, organic farmers can avoid using any of these products.

Chlorpyrifos must also be banned because it can drift long distance from a user’s field and contaminate neighboring communities and organic farms. Organic farmers who operate near conventional corn and soybean farms are particularly at risk of having their organic status jeopardized. A survey of nearly 1,000 farmers across the country, including NOFA-NY
members, found that over 20 percent of organic farmers had to sell some of their product as non-organic as a result of drift and some lost their organic certification (in whole or part) as a result of drift.

The organic certification process is not an easy one, but producing food in a way that protects and promotes both human and environmental health makes it worthwhile. Studies have found that people living or working in rural communities are most exposed to toxic pesticides like chlorpyrifos. Pesticides on food and in drinking water expose consumers, too. By not using these chemicals, organic farmers do their part to protect the people of this state. We urge you to ban all use of one of the most toxic pesticides — chlorpyrifos — to make food and farming in New York safer for all.

Signed,

[Signature]

Andrianna Natsoulas,
Executive Director