

Heather Kerner
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Good morning,

My name is Heather Kerner and I am an Occupational Therapist, and Founder and CEO of The Good Crust in Canaan, Maine. Our company manufactures pizza and other dough products made with 100% Maine Grains...a manufacturing effort that combines a commitment to Maine agriculture, as well as workforce development programming for people with unique needs to enter the workforce.

Starting a value-added food manufacturing business in rural Somerset County is no small feat. With margins that can't compete with biomedical and tech start ups, food manufacturers always have the next piece of expensive automation equipment to buy, labor force, and ingredient costs....not to mention the marketing costs to showcase Maine products to the world! In 2024, we were awarded the Maine Made Domestic Trade Assistance Grant in order to grow new markets for our products.

The opportunity for this funding fast-tracked our success in breaking into new markets! Highlights include: realizing a product-market fit in Maine K-12 nutrition. The Good Crust helps schools meet local and whole grain ingredient sourcing goals.....and kids LOVE it! In the first quarter of serving schools, we have fulfilled direct sales to schools totaling \$147,614. Many of these customers will have a recurring monthly need for our product.

We established a profitable presence as a food vendor at the Common Ground Country fair, winning awards for "Best in Show," "Best Fresh and Simple," and "Best Value for Your Buck."

We successfully executed a 17-day presence at the Big E, with gross sales of \$73,551, featuring artisan garlic bread made with 100% Maine Grains. These are just a few of our marketing successes with Maine Made's help.

Because of the support we have received from this Domestic Trade Assistance Grant, we exceeded company goals to grow and diversify our markets across sectors, and exceeded company goals to grow distribution. As a 4-year old company, we now employ 28 employees.

We urge your funding support for this valuable program in growing Maine's small business economy!