



Maine Grocers &
Food Producers
Association
PO Box 5234
Augusta, ME 04332
207.622.4461
info@mgfpa.org

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IN SUPPORT – LD 2094 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Support Maine's Agricultural and Forestry Sectors

Dear Senator Rotundo – Chair, Representative Gattine - Chair, and members of the Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

My name is Christine Cummings and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association (MGFPA). The Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association is a business trade association representing Maine's food community; Main Street businesses, including independently owned and operated grocery stores and supermarkets, food and beverage producers and processors, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and supportive service companies.

Maine's food producers and farmers have a significant economic impact here in Maine; Maine's total direct economic impact across agriculture, manufacturing, wholesaling, and on and off-premise retailing creates more than 108,000 jobs, \$4.5B in wages and \$15.8B in output.¹ Maine's agricultural and forest-based industries are integral to our economy, supporting thousands of jobs and contributing to our state's identity and sustainability. This imperative and timely bond ensures investments can be made for Maine's agriculture and food manufacturing businesses.

LD 2094 represents a strategic investment in Maine's food manufacturing sector by directing bond funding to the *Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund*—a tool for strengthening value-added production, processing capacity, and supply-chain resilience. Maine food manufacturers are facing growing demand but are constrained by limited access to capital for equipment, facilities, and cold storage. This bond will help maintain and create jobs, and ensure Maine-grown and Maine-made products can compete, scale, and stay in state.

A targeted statewide bond would help close regional gaps by catalyzing investment in food processing and cold storage infrastructure where it is needed most, particularly in northern and rural Maine. By unlocking capital for modern, scalable facilities, Maine can strengthen agricultural and forestry supply chains, support value-added food production, and ensure that economic growth and food system resilience are shared across the entire state. "Opportunities exist to expand both food processing and cold storage facilities, especially in underserved northern regions. The industrial real estate market's availability of adaptable spaces, combined with the unmet demand for multi-tenant cold storage solutions, makes a compelling case for strategic investments to support Maine's growing food and agricultural industries across the state." - *The State of Food & Beverage Processing in Maine, January 2025*².

Similar infrastructure and storage constraints are reiterated in *FocusMaine's Cultivating Prosperity: A Strategic Plan for Growing Maine's Food Economy*.³ The report notes that many food economy businesses (particularly small producers and value-added manufacturers) face limited access to capital tailored to their needs. Specific concerns that reiterate the need for funding include geographic inequity in financial resources, with rural producers often having fewer options, lack of flexible capital structures that fit the unique business models of farms, processors, and food startups and the need for enhanced technical assistance so businesses can better navigate existing capital sources and financing tools. Access to adequate capital is highlighted as a barrier across business start-up, scale-up, workforce training, and innovation

¹ *The 2025 Feeding the Economy report* | <https://feedingtheeconomy.com/>

² https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov/decd/files/2025-05/Final%20Report%20-%20State%20of%20Food%20Processing%20-%20Maine%20DECD-_0.pdf

³ <https://focusmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Final-Report-Food-Economy-FocusMaine-3-1.pdf>

priorities. These solutions are addressed in the *Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund's* program details. The fund is established, has an active advisory board, and is ready to execute on the outlined priorities.

In addition, significant work has been done to better understand and strengthen domestic trade marketing opportunities for Maine's food economy by examining how Maine-made products move beyond state borders and into regional and national markets. "Maine's food sector plays an important role in the economy as a traded sector. In recent years, agriculture, seafood, and food manufacturing have all seen strong employment growth and have high concentrations of employment in Maine. . . Warehousing and logistics represent key infrastructure that will be critical to the growth of the sector. For agriculture and seafood markets, producers need support to access markets, processors, and distribution networks to diversify and expand market opportunities." – *DECD's Domestic Trade Pilot Program's comprehensive look at the Food, Seafood, Wholesale Food, and Food Manufacturing*⁴

An extraordinary effort has gone into understanding what Maine's food economy needs to truly prosper, and this moment reflects years of thoughtful analysis, collaboration, and planning across the sector. We are excited and encouraged by this monumental opportunity to provide the additional capital necessary to close critical gaps and support producers, many of whom rely on Maine-grown ingredients, at every stage of growth. Investing in their success delivers a full-circle return, strengthening local supply chains, supporting good-paying jobs, and creating a powerful trickle-down effect that benefits communities across the state and Maine's economy as a whole.

We appreciate your consideration and ask the Committee to vote in support of this strategic bond initiative. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Christine Cummings
Executive Director

⁴ <https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov.decd/files/inline-files/Final%20Report%20-%20Master%20Food%20Sector%20-%20DECD.pdf>