



*Augusta, Maine*

Good afternoon. My name is Gardner Merriam, and on behalf of David Santos, the CEO of Phoenix Feeds & Nutrition, I am here today representing the company, which owns Phoenix Feeds of Maine, LLC in Augusta. Hailing from New Haven, Vermont, just south of Burlington, Phoenix is not just a feed milling company; it's a steadfast supporter of Maine's agricultural heritage. Our primary mission centers around servicing dairy farms throughout New England, Eastern, and central New York via our strategically positioned mills in Vermont and Maine.

A year ago, we made a substantial investment in Maine's agricultural vitality by acquiring the former Blue Seal mill in Augusta from Gold Star Feed & Grain. Beyond being a business venture, this was a heartfelt commitment to the prosperity of local communities. Currently providing employment to 80 individuals, with 20 dedicated team members stationed right here in Maine, Phoenix operates under a partial Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), contributing an annual payroll of approximately one million dollars to the state.

Our dedication to the growth and prosperity of Maine's agriculture is unrelenting. In the upcoming year, we are poised to elevate our feed manufacturing facility, incorporating cutting-edge equipment and technology. This expansion involves adding drivers and trucks to our fleet and upgrading our rail siding to facilitate more efficient rail-based feed deliveries.

However, as we invest in the future, we recognize that our success is interwoven with the support of the State of Maine. The significance of agriculture to local communities cannot be overstated. It is the lifeblood that sustains the fabric of our towns, providing not just sustenance but a sense of identity and resilience.

Phoenix Feeds & Nutrition's commitment to Maine's agricultural future is unwavering, and it's not merely about business; it's about securing the essence of Maine's identity. We firmly believe that by investing in local dairy farmers, the state is investing in its own prosperity. Therefore, we urge and encourage the State of Maine to continue making essential investments in local agriculture, ensuring a robust and thriving future for our state.

Our success story is intertwined with the success of Maine agriculture. We invite you to join us in fortifying this foundation, ensuring a flourishing future for generations to come. Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to your continued support in nurturing the heart of Maine's agricultural landscape.