June 5, 2020

Governor Janet Mills  
1 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

DACF Commissioner Amanda Beal  
22 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Governor Mills and Commissioner Beal,

We the undersigned 123 farms, fishing operations, and organizations thank you for your commitment to Maine’s farms, and in this moment, ask that the administration take further steps to ensure that farms and fishing operations survive, and the people of Maine are nourished with healthy local food.

Specifically, we ask that the Governor’s office utilize an initial $5 million of the emergency funds that were allocated by the Maine State Legislature or by the federal COVID-19 relief funds to purchase food from Maine farms and fishing operations that have lost markets, and provide that food to the food banks, shelters, schools, and other community food programs that are providing emergency food to those who need it.

Global and national supply chain disruptions due to COVID-19 may continue to happen, and could leave retail store shelves with limited supply of certain products. Meanwhile, Maine’s summer tourist economy, which many depend upon for employment and markets, could be severely limited this summer.

Farms are currently planting, and making decisions on carrying through with existing plans for this growing season. Fishing operations are also assessing their operations. Most plans will be finalized in the coming weeks. We request that out of the $5 million, $2 million immediately be used to enter into contracts through the Mainers feeding Mainers program or a similar program, so that farmers and fishing operations can have certainty in their markets. Contracts should be granted at market rates based on the cost of production so that farms and fishing operations can maintain their labor and additional costs to make it through this season.

The additional $3 million should be used later in the season to back stop other markets that have been lost, or may be lost throughout the season, including restaurant markets, agricultural fairs, institutional markets, and commodity markets. The administration should use these funds to become a buyer of last resort for lost markets to ensure that healthy, edible food does not go to waste, and that it reaches the people who need it most. These funds should be used to help as many farms and fishing operations as possible, at every scale, and in every production scope. The administration should develop a program to equitably administer these funds.
We further request that the Governor’s administration work to support Mainers’ food self sufficiency and our rural economies by reviewing and adapting any current programs or regulations to ensure all Mainers can receive adequate and culturally appropriate nutrition in the manner they choose. We also ask that the administration work with the stakeholders signed onto this letter to assess the gaps in our critical food system infrastructure, including processing for dairy, meat, seafood, and produce, and make a plan to invest significantly in Maine’s food system so that we will be more resilient when the next pandemic, or disruption arrives.

While these funds are just a beginning to the potential financial need of our farm and fishing communities, we hope that the Governor’s administration will work quickly to implement these requests as time is of the essence as the growing season gets underway, and that the administration will allocate more funds to these efforts as they become available.

Sincerely,

Andrews Farm
Androscoggin Gleaners
Annabessacook Farm
Apple Creek Farm
Be Pure Grace
Beech Hill Farm
Belfast Bay Wild Blueberries
Bell Farms
Blue Hill Berry Co.
Blue Hill Itinerant Slaughter
Broadturn Farm
Bruce Flewelling Farms
Bumbleroot Organic Farm
Celebration Tree Farm
Center for an Ecology-Based Economy
Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI)
Come Spring Food Pantry
Commercial fishing F/V Aiden & Sadie
Commercial fishing F/V Hello Darlings II
Commercial fishing F/V Michelle Lee
Commercial fishing F/V Miss Tiffany
Commercial fishing F/V MMMMOOLAH
Commercial fishing F/V Priceless
Commercial fishing F/V Scrimshaw
Commercial fishing boat owner Lawrence Moffet
Conservation Law Foundation
Cooperative Development Institute
Cosmic Goat Farm
Crescent Run Farm
Crown O'Maine Distribution Company
Crystal Lake Farm and Nursery
Cultivating Community
Cumberland County Food Security Council
Daisychain Farm LLC
Dandelion Spring Farm
Darthia Farm
Deer Isle Cider Company
Elmina B. Sewall Foundation
Etna-Dixmont School
Exeter Veterinary Services
Folklore Farm
Food for Maine’s Future
FoodCorps
Full Fork Farm
Fuzzy Udder Creamery
Good Land Farm
Goranson Farm
Grace Pond Farm
Green Spark Farm
Gulf of Maine Research Institute
Halcyon Grange
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation
Hatchet Cove Farm
Healthy Communities of the Capital Area
Healthy Island Project
Heart 2 Harvest
Highland Blueberry Farm
Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources
Killdeer Croft Farm
Knotty Lady Lobster
Knox County Food Council
Knox County Gleaners/SNAP-Ed
Kramer’s Inc.
Lost & Found Farm
Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries
Maine Climate Action NOW!
Maine Conservation Voters
Maine Farm to Institution
Maine Farm to School Network
Maine Farmland Trust
Maine Federation of Farmers’ Markets
Maine Food for Thought
Maine Network of Community Food Councils
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Maine School Nutrition Association
MCH, Inc.
Meadowcroft
Morgan Bay Farm
Morning Dew Farm
Mulberry Farms
Nash Farms, Inc. (Wild Maine Blueberries)
Nettie Fox Farm
Nezinscot Farm
Nights and Weekends Homestead
North Haven Oyster Co.
On the Mountain Farm
Paramount Behavioral Services, Inc.
Pemaquid Falls Farm
Pinetree Garden Seeds
Portland Public Schools
Quill’s End Farm
Rabbit Hill Farm & Cheryl Wixson’s Kitchen
Rainbow Farm
Renew Rockland / Rockland Community Farm Project
Rich Enterprises
Rosemont Market and Bakery
RSU#13 21st Century After School Program
Scratch Farm
Seek-No-Further Farmstead
Sheepscot Valley RSU #12
Shore Shop Gifts, LLC
Sierra Club Maine
Slow Money Maine
Songbird Fram
Sowbelly Butchery
Stonecipher Farm
Sweet Relief Farm
Swell Farm
The Milkhouse
The Resilience Hub
The Salvation Army
The Shire
Tidewalker
Turning Page Farm
Turtle Rock Farm
Two Farmers Farm
Whatley Farm
Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine
Wild Ledge Farm
Wild Tilth Farm
Winterberry Farm
Wise Acres Farm
350 Maine