1. The following subcommittee members were in attendance on the call:
   • Chair: Larry Shaw, MMG Insurance
   • Jesse Connolly, Office of Representative Chellie Pingree
   • Bob Dorko, Sappi
   • Sam May, Maine Harvest Federal Credit Union
   • Alan Perry, Farm Technologies Network
   • Steve Schley, FOR/Maine
   • Matt Schlobohm, AFL-CIO
   • Staff and Support Experts:
     o Mary Grace Schley, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development
     o Richard Qualey, Intern, University of Maine School of Law
     o Hannah Carter, UMaine Cooperative Extension
     o Nancy McBrady, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

2. Sector Overview:
   • There are approximately 7,600 farms in operation over 1.3 million acres. The highest proportion of farms are between 10 and 49 acres.
   • Our largest agricultural counties are also our most rural counties, which correlates with lowest incidence of confirmed COVID-19 cases.
   • The total number of farms has decreased from 2012 to 2017, largely due to conversion of acreage to other uses.
   • Agriculture represents $660 million for the state as of 2017.

3. Agriculture Sector Pandemic Impacts:
   • All sizes and scales of farms have been impacted.
     o The scope of impacts has been different, largely due to supply chain impacts from closing restaurants and schools.
     o Many farms were able to shift from wholesalers to direct to consumers, but the transition can be expensive and complicated due to processing and packaging requirements.
     o There is a lack of production capacity in the state.
   • Agriculture was in a crisis before COVID-19, but it has changed the nature of the crisis.
   • The impact on migrant workers, and farm labor generally, has presented new challenges related to safe housing, transportation, sanitation practices, etc.

4. Other Considerations:
   • Bridges should be built between small/new farms and the larger/more established farms to strengthen the sharing of lessons learned. There could potentially be a SCORE-type organization connecting these farmers for mentorship.
   • The DACF and University of Maine Cooperative Extension relationship is strong and healthy and can be a valuable resource to address many of the technical needs of the agriculture industry, including during the COVID-19 crisis. Continued and increased federal funding of the Extension is important.
The challenges surrounding the migrant workforce range from travel bans and disruptions to the need to improve migrant worker living and working conditions.

- Is there an opportunity to match the housing needs of the migrant workforce with the lodging industry who is seeing low occupancy due to the tourism restrictions?

5. Follow-Up Information Requested:
- How does the economic impact to Maine’s agriculture compare with other New England states? – Hannah Carter
- What are the specific changes to USDA nutrition regulations that would make the programs more accessible? – Hannah Carter

6. Stabilization Recommendations from Industry:
- Financial Assistance
  - Access to capital/loans, relief/loan forgiveness, compensation for lost markets, direct purchase of products.
  - PPP program continuance and revisions.
  - Economic Damage Relief Package USDA loans/grants.
- Technical Assistance
  - Financial support for technical assistance needed to adjust businesses operations (e.g., adopting new technology, reconfiguring operations/engineering; addressing safety protocols, etc.)
  - Additional staff to increase bandwidth at Maine DACF could help with this.
- Infrastructure Investment
  - This has been a long standing need since before COVID-19, but was made worst when COVID-19 hit and strained the national supply chain. This could be an opportunity for public-private partnership due to the large financial burden of meeting processing, packaging, and storage needs.
  - Investments could provide co-location opportunities and help to attract business into Maine. This will be an issue to address in conjunction with other industries.
- Marketing Assistance
  - The State is launching a marketing campaign to emphasize the Maine brand, assist with adapting to changing end markets, and expand market access in and out of state.
  - This is an opportunity to connect consumers back to the farmers who grow their food.
- Material Procurement
  - Access to PPE and sanitization supplies, potentially through State purchasing or subsidy.
- Address Labor Needs
  - COVID-19 screening, testing, and medical support.
  - Challenges related to farmworker education, housing, transportation, and sick leave policies.
  - Support for H-2A and clarification on how it is working.
  - Address disproportionate impact on racial minorities and immigrant populations.
  - Address challenges of extended benefits for unemployment claims hindering back to work needs.
- Health and Welfare Investment
o Provide resources to address mental health, increased stress of the industry.
o Child care and elder care assistance.

• Food Insecurity Assistance
  o Continue to expand the coordination between emergency food systems and farmers and increase funding to these programs.
o Encourage USDA to allow states to enhance current programs financially (e.g., Maine supplements existing SNAP benefits, WIC benefits, and other programs, to allow for more significant purchasing of local ag products by program participants).

• Immediate disruptions in agriculture that need to be promptly addressed:
o We wiped out institutional markets for many of our growers and need to find an outlet for the food that is still being produced.
o Direct financial assistance to farmers.
o Access to PPE, sanitization supplies, and widespread testing.

7. Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 9, 2020, 3:30pm – Manufacturing Deep Dive
  • Panelists:
o Larry Robinson, Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership
o Lisa Martin, Manufacturers Association of Maine