

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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OFFICE OF  
THE GOVERNOR

NO. 11 FY02/03  
DATE May 6, 2003

**AN ORDER CREATING THE TASK FORCE ON THE SUSTAINABILITY  
OF THE DAIRY INDUSTRY IN MAINE**

**WHEREAS**, a healthy, vibrant dairy industry in the State of Maine is important for the economic and social wellbeing of many rural communities and Maine consumers; and

**WHEREAS**, prices for milk have recently been too low to allow dairy farmers to earn enough to cover their long-term costs of production, thereby jeopardizing the economic and social wellbeing of both the farmers and their communities; and

**WHEREAS**, the economic and public policy forces driving the national milk markets are creating conditions that threaten the sustainability of the Maine dairy industry; and

**WHEREAS**, the State has an interest in assisting viable dairy farmers to remain competitive, to help other dairy farmers diversify into more feasible farming enterprises, and to keep farmland of exiting farmers part of a working agricultural landscape; and

**WHEREAS**, local agriculture, where farms produce for local consumers, has substantial growth potential that can be developed and fostered by wise public policies arrived at by collaborative processes and crafted by informed and interested parties in the dairy industry; and

**WHEREAS**, the circumstances confronting the Maine dairy industry, and the economic and social communities closely tied to it, require a collaborative process to develop policy recommendations intended to support and enhance the long-term sustainability of the dairy industry in Maine;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, John E. Baldacci, Governor of the State of Maine, do hereby establish the Governor's Task Force on the Sustainability of the Dairy Industry (hereinafter "Task Force").

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Task Force is multifaceted and includes the following responsibilities:

1. Examination of the circumstances that have contributed to the current problems confronting the dairy industry.
2. Formulation of a wide range of strategies to assist dairy farmers to: (a) remain competitive producers of commodity milk, (b) diversify into appropriate farming enterprises, including those with a dairy component, or (c) leave farming with minimum erosion of the agricultural base.
3. Consideration of techniques most appropriate for farmers to accomplish the necessary transitions, including but not limited to, cost reduction strategies, crop diversification, value added enterprises, and market development activities.
4. Consideration of State programs appropriate to support farming transitions, including but not limited to, technical assistance for both production and marketing; financial assistance including both grants and loans, milk price regulations at the State and regional level; and evaluation of existing State policies affecting dairy farming.
5. Consideration of strategies to maintain the agricultural land base of exiting dairy farmers as a working landscape, especially considering the needs of entering farmers and generational transfer of agricultural lands.
6. Consideration of ways to maintain an adequate agriculture infrastructure, particularly as it affects the dairy industry.
7. Considering the above, make recommendations on how best to support the needs of existing and future dairy farmers and how to reduce the vulnerability of the dairy industry to economic forces from within and outside Maine, including those forces that are beyond the State's ability to control, through long-term stability programs.

To carry out the purpose of the Task Force, the members shall use the best information from all sources and expert input regarding the options available for addressing the needs of the dairy industry. Prior to submitting recommendations to the Governor, the Task Force shall hold at least one public forum to allow interested parties to comment on the draft recommendations of the Task Force.

## **Membership**

The Task Force shall be composed of no more than twenty (20) members who shall serve and represent the best interests of the State as a whole. Three (3) of the members shall be appointed from the Legislature. The President of the Senate will appoint one Senator

from the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. The Speaker of the House will appoint one Representative from the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House will jointly appoint a member of the Republican Party, from either body, upon the joint recommendation of the Republican floor leaders in the Senate and House. These members will serve at the pleasure of their respective appointers. All other members shall be appointed and serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The Task Force shall disband upon the discharge of its duties or on November 15, 2003, whichever occurs sooner.

The Governor and the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources shall designate the chair of the Task Force. The other members shall come from the following categories:

- Dairy farmer (large herd)
- Dairy farmer (small herd)
- Dairy farmer (organic herd)
- Dairy farmer (designated by Maine Dairy Industry Association)
- Representative from the Finance Authority of Maine
- Representative from Farm Credit
- Representatives (2) of the Agricultural Council of Maine (not dairy farmers)
- Representative from the University of Maine Extension Service
- Representative from a business involved in supporting the dairy industry
- Person knowledgeable in farmland issues
- Person with experience helping farmers respond to changing circumstances
- Agricultural economist
- Milk processor
- Milk retailer
- Feed dealer or supplier
- Legislators (3)

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources may compensate public members for reasonable travel expenses. Legislative members may be eligible for legislative per diem.

### **Timeline for Recommendations**

The Task Force shall submit its recommendations to the Governor no later than November 15, 2003, after which submission the Task Force will dissolve.

### **Meetings**

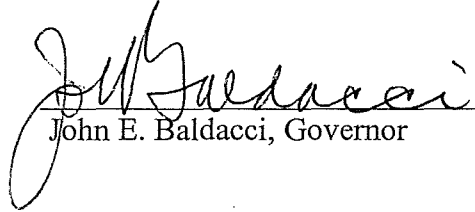
The Task Force shall meet as often as necessary to complete the assigned duties. All meetings shall be open to the public and held in locations determined by the Task Force.

**Staffing/Funding**

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources shall provide staff support to the Task Force, drawing upon existing resources. The Department may utilize its existing authority to accept contributions and donations of money, services and supplies to support the work of the commission.

**Effective Date**

The effective date of this Executive Order is May 6, 2003.

  
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John E. Baldacci, Governor