

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senator John Nutting  
Representative Wendy Pieh  
Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry  
115 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0115

Dear Senator Nutting and Representative Pieh:

As Chairman of the University of Maine Board of Agriculture I am pleased to submit an annual report of Board activities. Also enclosed is a long-range plan for the operation of the Agricultural Experiment Station and the agricultural programs of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension.

1999 was the first full year for the Board of Agriculture. We met three times with excellent participation of the membership. The minutes of these meetings are enclosed. The February and April meetings were devoted to further educating ourselves about the current activities of the College, the Station and Extension and to discussion of the role and responsibilities of the Board. We also conducted a survey of all agricultural groups in the State to determine their needs as related to University services. We met in December to review the survey responses and to establish action priorities. The results of this process are included in detail in the long-range plan. While several specific staffing recommendations were made, the survey clearly indicates other areas which must be addressed in the near future. It is the intention of the Board to continue this process by establishing committees of producers with similar interests to further define these needs.

We are very happy to be able to report that there have been many positive developments since the formation of the Board. Through the efforts of the University administration, the Chancellor's Task Force on Agriculture, the Agricultural Council of Maine and the Board of Agriculture, the status of agriculture within the University is much improved. Helped significantly by the improved fiscal situation created by state appropriations and bonds, the operating budgets of the research farms have been increased and capital improvements are underway. The formation of the Maine Agricultural Center is a major factor in the heightened visibility of agriculture and will continue the efforts to enhance communications between the University and the agriculture community. We see the work being done to improve the food science/human nutrition laboratories as having significant benefit for our industry. We were very gratified with the prompt actions taken to fill several critical positions which became open this year and we are encouraged by the increasing interest in joint appointments. We extend sincere thanks to all those involved for their willingness to reinvest in agriculture.

Despite the significant gains, there remain some areas of concern. Primary among these is the continued lack of resources for Cooperative Extension. Loss of base funding during the years of budget cuts has made it very difficult for Extension to refill critical positions needed to serve the industry. As the Board survey clearly shows, Extension provides critical development support to the industry. We are committed to addressing this problem and would welcome your involvement.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your support of Maine agriculture. We appreciate your recognition of the economic and environmental importance of agriculture to the State of Maine.

Sincerely,



Judith Dimock