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University of Maine Board of Agriculture
5782 Winslow Hall, Room 101
Orono, Maine 04469-5782
January 21, 2003

Senator Bruce Bryant
Representative Linda Rogers McKee
Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
115 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0115

Dear Senator Bryant and Representative McKee:

As chair of the University of Maine Board of Agriculture, I am pleased to submit to you the annual report of Board activities for the year 2002. As you can see from the report, the Board continues to work closely with the University to address the needs of Maine agriculture. We are also pleased to report that the Board is witnessing the fruit of the Legislature's efforts to support Research and Development at the University. The new wing of Hitchner Hall, funded through the R&D bond in 1999, opened this fall and a new food scientist position funded through the R&D initiative has been filled. Many of the joint accomplishments of the Board of Agriculture and the University could not have been done without the R&D funding provided by the Legislature.

This year's legislative agenda presents new challenges and opportunities. We, like many others, are concerned with the current budget outlook and the potential impact it may have on Maine agriculture, the University, and agricultural programs it offers. I and other members of the Board stand ready to support R&D funding and other programs that assist agriculture.

Members of the Board would be happy to meet with the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry at your convenience to review this report and to answer your questions. Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Bell". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "D" and a cursive "Bell".

David Bell, Chair
Board of Agriculture

University of Maine Board of Agriculture

Annual Report, CY 2002

January, 2003

The University of Maine Board of Agriculture met twice during 2002 to discuss issues related to the agricultural extension and research programs of the University and new developments in the agricultural industry. The highlights of the meetings are summarized in this report to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry of the Maine Legislature.

Actions taken by the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station (MAFES) and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMCE) to address budget cuts were discussed at the April meeting. UMCE reduced its budget by \$122,000 and the MAFES/College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture reduced its budget by \$364,000 as part of the cuts in operating budgets required to pay higher health care costs for University employees. Plans have been developed to reprogram money in the College/MAFES as faculty positions become vacant over the next three years. Board members offered their views on the budget process and generally approved of the actions outlined by the College/MAFES and by UMCE.

The search and selection process for the food scientist who will work with the industry in the development of new value-added food products was completed in 2002. The successful candidate begins working at the University of Maine in May 2003. The food scientist position is one of the priority positions identified in the Maine Agricultural Center's strategic plan and is funded by research and development dollars appropriated by the Legislature. This position is also important in providing the expertise and coordination so that Maine value-added food processors can utilize the new pilot kitchen funded by R&D bond funds invested in the new Hitchner Hall food science facility.

The fall meeting of the Board was held on October 31st and the agenda included a tour of the new wing of Hitchner Hall and a discussion with new University administrators. Chancellor Westphal met with the Board for the first time and led a far-ranging discussion of how the University System can help meet the needs of Maine's agricultural community. The Chancellor challenged the Board with three questions: Have we met the goals outlined in the Maine Agricultural Center (MAC) strategic plan? Are we utilizing other resources beyond agriculture, such as business and marketing experts? Are we prepared to review the present structure of agriculture, both in the industry and the University? Based on these questions the Board agreed to draft a revised MAC strategic plan for consideration at the next meeting in spring, 2003. The Board also informed the Chancellor of some of the pressing needs in the industry, including marketing, risk management, climate change concerns, land use measures and tax-related issues. Sustainable water management was identified as one of the highest priorities facing Maine agriculture at the present time.

The Board also had a chance to meet and interact with Deirdre Mageean, Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, and Jake Ward, Executive Director for Research and Economic Development. Both individuals expressed an interest in meeting with the Board again in the near future.

The Board is appreciative of recent R&D investments made by the people of Maine through the Legislature's appropriations, and it will work closely with the Legislature through the current budget challenge.