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## **Beyond Buying Local: Maine Food Strategy Calls for Collaboration to Strengthen and Secure the State's Food System**

Portland, Maine (August 9, 2016) – Locally-sourced food offers the potential to drive economic growth statewide, and ensuring its long-term viability benefits businesses and individuals dependent upon it.

The **Maine Food Strategy** (MFS) offers a clear vision to create a sustainable, and more balanced food system through the **Framework**, a model to focus and coordinate individuals and groups working towards widespread food systems change.

The Framework is based on input from stakeholders who identified priorities particularly important to the future of Maine's food system. Pursued together, these activities enable economic development opportunities while also contributing to a healthy and resilient environment, enriching our communities and expanding access to healthy food to more people.

Five goal areas were developed through this input and focus on ways to:

- Achieve annual market growth in a sustainable manner
- Improve the ability of businesses across the food production supply chain to manage marketplace growth and change
- Increase incomes and access to benefits for food supply workers
- Promote public policies that support farms, fisheries and other food production supply chain businesses
- Ensure food insecure individuals have access to resources that address their needs

The Maine Food Strategy is guided by a Steering Committee whose members are involved in various food system areas, and by subcommittee work groups, which have a wider net of participants focused on projects related to specific goals and objectives.

"The purpose of the Maine Food Strategy and the Framework document is to mobilize Maine people working in these areas to support the growth we've seen while also keeping the system in balance," said MFS Project Director Tanya Swain. "To find new solutions that allow us to do this will require looking beyond specific problems and seeking to understand what these issues, together, say about how the system is operating.

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Speakers at a press event shared examples of programs currently underway that can be replicated in other areas, or that serve as resources.

Portland-based **Allagash Brewing Company** is a leader within its industry, advocating for locally grown ingredients to source its craft beer. Brewmaster Jason Perkins shared how Allagash partners with local producers such as Doles Orchard in Limington who provides cherries for their Coolship Cerise and Nancy labels. Processors from across Maine including Maine Malt House, Blue Ox Malthouse, Maine Grains and Aurora Mills & Farm supply malted barley, raw wheat and oats for Allagash's newest release, Sixteen Counties.

Given that 90% of the seafood consumed in the US is imported, groups like LocalCatch.org are critical to creating links to national distribution channels. Founder Joshua Stoll shared how **Localcatch.org's** network of fishermen, researchers and community advocates provide local, healthful, low-impact seafood via community supported fisheries (CSFs) and other direct marketing arrangements.

**Veggies for All** is a food bank farm working to relieve hunger by growing vegetables for those in need, while collaborating with partners to distribute and increase access to quality nutritious food. Veggies For All Director Sara Trunzo said Framework is a solution that looks beyond providing the next meal, taking the entire food system into account to create long-term change.

The Maine Food Strategy will assess progress around each goal area at its annual gathering held Friday, December 2 at the University of Maine's Wells Conference Center in Orono.

Organizations and businesses are encouraged to participate through the following:

- Volunteer on a Maine Food Strategy subcommittee
- Take the Network Pledge at [mainefoodstrategy.org](http://mainefoodstrategy.org)
- Attend a Framework Workshop:
  - **August 23, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm**  
Mitchell Sustainability Center, University of Maine, Orono
  - **August 24, 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm**  
Good Shepherd Food Bank, Auburn
  - **September 7, 12:00pm – 1:00pm** Webinar
- Attend the Maine Food Strategy Network Gathering December 2, 2016

RSVPs requested: Email [mfs@mainefoodstrategy.org](mailto:mfs@mainefoodstrategy.org) for details. All documents related to Framework are on the web at [www.mainefoodstrategy.org](http://www.mainefoodstrategy.org).

### **About the Maine Food Strategy**

The Maine Food Strategy is an initiative to bring together interests across the state to advance goals and objectives that strengthen the food system in Maine now, and in the future. The initiative is advised by a volunteer Steering Committee and accomplishes its work through the support and involvement of people and organizations working in and on food systems in the state. The Maine Food Strategy is fiscally sponsored by Third Sector New England and can be found online at [www.mainefoodstrategy.org](http://www.mainefoodstrategy.org), on Facebook and Twitter at @MEFoodStrategy.

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## **Framework Recommendations Cited at the Press Conference**

(Please refer to Framework for a complete list)

- Develop certification programs for Group Agricultural Practices; (G1)
- Convene public sector organizations and industry groups that promote Maine food to develop consistent marketing messages; (G1)
- Expand programs working to develop systems that enable the tractability of seafood in Maine from boat to market; (G1)
- Expand technical assistance available to businesses interested in scaling up production for larger markets; (G1)
- Explore tax incentives and credits as a tool to encourage investment in food systems infrastructure development and improvements that benefit Maine businesses; (G2)
- Develop sustainable funding sources that support ongoing capitalization of the Working Waterfront Access Protection Program; (G2)
- Increase the number of employees and businesses using workforce development resources; (G2)
- Include personal financial training as part of programs for sustainable agriculture, farm and fishing businesses, and journey person programs; (G3)
- Promote and expand youth programming on employment in food sector jobs; (G4)
- Strengthen and expand programs that promote local food production as a community, ecological and economic asset including those offered through downtown and tourism promotion councils, public health organizations, conservation groups and emergency food service providers; (G4)
- Create a tax incentive for landlords who provide garden space to tenants; (G5)
- Work with New Mainers, food retail establishments and farm-garden supply businesses to increase business awareness of consumer demand for food products and seeds used by immigrant communities living in Maine; (G5)
- Develop statewide policies, partnerships and incentives that support increased access to healthy foods for all Mainers, especially those living in poverty; (G5)

For a comprehensive list, please refer to Framework posted on the [Maine Food Strategy](#) website.