

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE MEETING

Zoom

Orono, Maine

March 24, 2022

Approved at the December 2nd, 2022 meeting

Present: A. Beal; D. Bell; S. Belle; J. Bolton; K. Campbell; H. Carter; R. Causey; J. Ferrini-Mundy; J. Gray; M. Kilkelly; R. LaGarry; A. Lambke; J. Leahy; B. Malay; E. Mallory; D. Marean; N. McBrady; M. Meyerhans; J. Mills; D. Rowland; J.A. Smith; H. Spalding; T. Sullivan; J. Tapley; K. Woltemath

Call to Order – *Julie Ann Smith*

Julie Ann Smith called the meeting to order at 12:17 pm. Following opening remarks, each Board member said a few words about their organization and the research needs of each commodity group. Amber Lambke holds seat 1 on the Board and represents the Maine Grain Alliance. She thanked the governor for her support in agricultural infrastructure programs and seed development, and requested funding for research on PFAS in grains. Donald Marean holds seat 2 on the Board and represents the equine industry in Maine. His organization requested funding for research on contagious diseases in the equine industry. Kevin Woltemath holds seat 5 on the Board and represents the Agricultural Council of Maine. He requested funding to maintain the momentum brought by Dr. Colt Knight, a livestock specialist at the University of Maine, to increase the number of trained meat cutters in Maine. Jeannie Tapley holds seat 6 on the Board and represents the Maine Potato Board. She commended the University of Maine's potato breeding program and the work being done by Dr. Greg Porter. Her organization would like to see increased UM Extension support in Aroostook county. Bill Malay holds seat 7 on the Board and represents the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine. He explained the effect spotted-wing drosophila flies pose to wild blueberries, and thanked the University for their efforts in developing integrated pest management strategies. Marilyn Meyerhans holds seat 8 on the Board and represents the Maine State Pomological Society. She thanked UM Extension for supporting the apple industry, particularly the root stock research being conducted at Highmoor Farm. The Maine State Pomological Society requested funding for PFAS research and supports the establishment of a diagnostic lab in Orono. Katey Campbell holds seat 12 on the Board and represents the Maine State Florists and Growers Association. She was also representing the Maine Landscape and Nursery Association at this meeting. The Maine State Florists and Growers Association and the Maine Landscape and Nursery Association have benefited greatly

from the University's greenhouse plastic recycling facility. Both organizations would like to request assistance from the University in PFAS research and in improving composting practices. Heather Spalding holds seat 13 on the Board and represents the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association. She thanked Governor Mills for taking time to meet with agricultural producers who are struggling with PFAS contamination. She requested funding for PFAS research on uptake rate, establishing thresholds for food safety, and to explore contamination levels in soil and water. Justin Gray holds seat 9 on the Board and represents the Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association. He thanked the University for the research being conducted at Highmoor farm, and requested long-term funding for agricultural research. Theodore Sullivan holds seat 10 in the Board and represents the Maine Dairy Industry Association. He thanked the University for impending upgrades to Witter Farm, particularly their efforts to upgrade the milking facilities. He requested funding to support applied research on reducing contamination loads on farms where PFAS chemicals are present, and proposed research on feed additives to reduce PFAS bioaccumulation. Marge Kilkelly holds seat 16 on the Board and is the governor's appointee representing livestock production. She thanked the University for Extension and ongoing livestock research. She requested funding to increase processing capacity. She also requested information on getting goat farmers involved in feeding and food programs. The goat farmers she represents want to expand their market and to increase access of alternative protein sources to individuals living in rural areas. Sebastian Belle holds seat 20 on the Board and represents the Maine Aquaculture Association. He thanked the governor for her leadership during this difficult time, and thanked the University for their Extension and Research activities. He also thanked the Aquaculture Research Institute for attracting and training aquaculture experts and Dr. Gayle Zydlewski for her aquaculture research. David Bell, an invited guest, thanked the University for their research and development efforts, which are critical to the agricultural industry of Maine. Amanda Beal holds seat 3 on the Board and is the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Agriculture. She thanked the University for being there to assist with a number of issues facing the agricultural community. She also thanked Extension for their on-the-ground assistance with PFAS chemicals. Joan Ferrini-Mundy, President of the University of Maine, thanked Governor Mills and the Board of Agriculture for supporting the University, and highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of the agricultural community. Hannah Carter holds seat 19 on the Board and is the Dean of Extension at the University. She thanked both Julie Anne Smith and Governor Mills, and wished the Board a happy Ag Week. Robert Causey holds seat 18 on the Board and is an equine scientist at the University. He emphasized the importance of infrastructure to the agricultural community and thanked Governor Mills for her infrastructural initiatives. He also wanted to highlight the University's diagnostic lab. Diane Rowland is the clerk of the Board, and is Dean of the College of Natural Resources, Forestry, and Agriculture at the University. She introduced herself and highlighted the research being conducted by the University, especially emphasizing ongoing research into alternative uses for agricultural waste such as lobster shells. Julie Ann Smith is chair of the Board and is the official designee of the Maine Farm Bureau. She thanked the University for the Research and Extension they provide, and requested funding for PFAS research.

Governor's Remarks – Governor Janet Mills

Governor Mills thanked the agricultural producers of Maine for being team players through the COVID-19 pandemic and for helping to feed the people of the nation when the effects of the pandemic have been felt so strongly by the industry. She is aware that Maine requires more processing facilities, and would love to provide the funding to do so. She would also like to expand the market for Maine's agricultural products, and would love to see more year-round production, especially in greenhouses produce in Maine. She is also aware of the labor shortage facing Maine farmers, and stressed that lack of labor is a hardship being felt by all aspects of Maine's economy. She is working on bringing more people to Maine, and is loath to see agricultural land urbanized. Governor Mills fully supports research and development at the University of Maine. Maine is ahead of the PFAS curve. While Maine's brand is at risk of being diminished, Maine produce and products are health and valid for national and international markets. Governor Mills requested the Boards assistance in encouraging producers to have their land tested for PFAS chemicals, as many farmers are reluctant to test. Governor Mills stressed that no farm should be diminished by PFAS chemicals, they should instead be elevated for taking steps to reduce the scale of the problem. The governor has already asked the legislature to supply \$5 million for PFAS testing and analysis within Maine. She has also put another \$60 million aside to set up, among other things, an advisory committee to discuss how to support farms suffering from PFAS contamination through short and long-term difficulties. She has also set up a seed account to receive federal or settlement funds if those ever become available. Governor Mills ended her remarks by stressing the importance of being transparent and facing the PFAS issue head on. She will ensure that farms are supported, and feels that not a single farm should fail because of PFAS chemicals. Within her office, one will always find an open door, an open mind, and an open heart.

Meeting Adjourned – 12:45