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Mills Administration Dedicates $10 Million to New Program to Assist Maine Food and Agriculture Businesses with COVID-19 Infrastructure Expenses

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AUGUSTA - Governor Janet Mills and Commissioner of Economic and Community Development Heather Johnson announced today that the Administration is committing $10 million in federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funding (CRF) to a newly-created Agriculture and Food Processing Infrastructure Reimbursement Program.

The program, which was created in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and is being administered by Coastal Enterprises, Inc (CEI), is offering up to $100,000 to reimburse Maine food and agriculture businesses for infrastructure purchases or projects they invested in to address supply chain disruptions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Maine food and agriculture businesses include farms, food and beverage processors, value-added food and beverage producers, distributors, aggregators, and co-packers.

"Maine farms, producers, processors, and businesses have worked tirelessly to maintain our food supply chain during the pandemic, which, for many, has involved significant and unexpected investments in new infrastructure to meet demand while keeping people safe. This funding aims to help cover some of those unanticipated costs and sustain businesses across the food production and distribution landscape," **said Governor Mills**.

"As one of the sectors that is vital to our state's economic recovery, we are pleased to support the farm and food businesses that responded swiftly to the needs of Maine people and worked to maintain access to the high-quality products that they grow and produce," **noted DECD Commissioner Heather Johnson**.

"This program represents an important step toward helping Maine food and agriculture businesses manage some of the financial impacts associated with COVID-19, and we are hopeful that this funding will provide a timely and impactful injection of economic relief," **added DACF Commissioner Amanda Beal**.

Businesses involved in the food supply chain, which is the process by which food from a farm ends up on our tables, include food processors, wholesalers, retailers and others that have been disrupted by the coronavirus.

This funding can be used to reimburse equipment purchases, capital projects/improvements, and other eligible costs incurred between March 1, 2020, and December 18, 2020.

The program's application deadline is December 18, 2020, and funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible applicants.

Complete CARES Act Infrastructure Reimbursement Program (CFDA# 21.019) information is available on CEI's Maine Grant Programs webpage (//www.ceimaine.org/covid-19-resources-for-businesses/maine-covid-grants/) .

For questions or additional information, please contact Jenn Stein, CEI Food Systems Business Advisor at jenn.stein@ceimaine.org (mailto:jenn.stein@ceimaine.org) .

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