4 rural Maine businesses to receive federal grants

firms will be among the 385 nationwide to receive grants awarded by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to help support the start-up or expansion of rural small

"The valuable projects being undertaken by four of Maine's innovative organizations will have a significant impact on an estimated 184 jobs in Maine in the local foods and other sectors. In addition, the grant funds USDA Rural Development is investing will have a posiproduction of local foods funds: throughout the state in Maine's rural communities," said Virginia Manuel, USDA Rural Development state director, in a USDA news release.

USDA is awarding the grants through the Rural Business Development Grant program. Recipients may use the funds to provide technical assistance, fund. The project has the training and job-creation ac-

— The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association will receive \$98,950 to assist with organic grower business consultation services, organic farming workshops, professional training and third-party loans for nonproduction purposes from an organic farmers' revolving loan potential to create 50 jobs.

- Kennebec Valley Coun-Four Maine businesses cil of Governments will rehave been selected to re-ceive \$89,000 to assist with

BANGOR — Four Maine tive long-term effect on the ceive a total of \$275,000 in expanding the Maine Grains tive adult, rural entreprevolves acquiring and installing oat-dehulling and related equipment and mechanical work, along with testing, package design, Web consultation for online marketing and project management. The project has the potential to create 21 jobs.

Aroostook Aspiration Initiative will receive \$25,000 to assist with expanding the Internship Hub of Aroostook program. The project will conduct leadership training for prospec-

oat project. The project in- neurs and managers, while establishing and developing rural learning programs that provide job training instruction related to potential employment and job advancement for adult students. The project has the potential over the next three years to create 75 jobs.

- Northern Maine Development Commission will receive \$62,050 to help develop marketing strategies and improve distribution channels throughout the Great Region Diversified Agricultural Community of Aroostook, Piscataquis and Washington counties. The project has the potential to create 38

Funding of each award is contingent upon the recipient meeting the terms of the grant agreement. In total, USDA is providing nearly \$20 million in grants nation-

Information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's website at rd.usda.gov/me.



ANTHONY BRINO | BDN

Jacob Buck examines barley being tested at the Maine Malt House in Mapleton.

Malt

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Afterward, the brothers sent an introductory letter and survey to every brewery in Maine (41 at the time) and heard back from about half.

'We got a lot of feedback saying 'Quality is where it's at," Buck said.

After they made their first batch in February, and got it tested in Canada, they loaded up their truck with the malt and visited breweries across Maine to pitch their product.

The Liberal Cup in Hallowell was the first to brew with the Buck brothers in its Drummer's Lane Brown Ale. This past summer, their malts were featured in beers at the Maine Brewer's Fest, including Marshall Wharf Brewing's 7 percent alcohol by volume "Little Toot Small Pale Ale.

At least a dozen breweries have used Maine Malt House ingredients, among them Gritty's. Allagash and Geaghan's, who along with others will be pouring their beverages Oct. 17 at the Aroostook County Brew Festival in Mars Hill. Central Street Farmhouse in Bangor also sells the brothers' malts to homebrewers.

Their first major customer, Square Tail Brewing Company in Amherst, along Route 9 east of Bangor, now sources 100 percent of its base malts from the Maine Malt House, not including specialities such as malted rye, and about 85 percent in

"When we made the swap, we had to rework some of our recipes," said Square Tail's head brewer Wes Ellington. "We were using a British malt, Maris Otter, primarily as our base, which has a more distinct, bready and robust profile.'

Ellington and the brewers

some of the Maine Malt House's two-row barley blends, "but we have gotten it nailed down pretty well,'

"We have a philosophy to keep our ingredients as local as possible," said Ellington. "In the past this has been difficult, due to the fact that there weren't that many options. But as the brewing industry grows, so goes the agri-industry in Maine."

Plying a trade for a local economy

When the Bucks were growing up, their mother told them that they had to get some kind of higher education.

Joshua Buck, who trained Maine Community College in Presque Isle, planned much of the malt house, a renovated former potato storage facility along Route 163. Jared Buck, who studied computer-aided drafting at NMCC, designed the grain cleaning-system, managed the fabrication and also focuses on planting and harvesting the grains.

He's kind of "behind the scenes," Jacob Buck said.

Buck and his twin, Caleb Buck, both earned engineering degrees from the University of Maine. Caleb Buck, a mechanical engineer, helped the family get the malt house off the ground before heading off to work for Boeing in Washington State. Jacob Buck uses his degree in electrical engineering to operate a programmable logic controller to run various parts of the seven day malting process

"We've tried to automate as much as we can," said

Space that used to store potatoes 20 feet high now houses an elaborate pipe system that cleans and screens the barley kernels into an exact size — 6/64th of an inch.

In a malt room, two tons

had to "play around" with of grain are steeped and dried three times over 48 hours, through a programmed system. Then the grain is spread on the floor 4 or 5 inches thick to germinate over four days — a step that does require someone to rake the grains every four-to-eight hours. ("We could automate that," Buck said.) The malting process ends with the barley being dried inside large bins in a kiln, built by Josh Buck.

So far, the brothers have made 20 2-ton batches of malted barely — enough to make more than 30,000 gallons of beer — and they say they could be malting a lot more of their barley harvest. Early next year, they hope keting to brewers before large orders are placed with the big maltsters for summer beers.

The brothers noted that their malted barley prices can be about twice as high as the big suppliers such as Cargill. They want to expand their volume and try to reduce their costs, but in the meantime, their higher prices aren't necessarily a barrier.

Square Tail Brewing buys about 1 ton of malted barley at a time and would pay about \$1,200 per ton for malt from a big supplier, Ellington said.

"My brewery isn't quite big enough yet to benefit from better pricing tiers,' he said. "We choose to pay more for certain products. We just have to find other places to save or cut. Our beer is what makes or breaks us.

The Buck brothers are confident that they can rely on more than 200 acres of barley grown at their family farm to make quality malt at a larger scale — as long as demand for craft beer continues.

'There's no bubble," Jacob Buck said. Aroostook County is not

home to the bustling craft breweries that have sprouted up across Maine, New England and other parts of the country. A brewery and pub that opened in Presque Isle in 2004, Slopes Northern Maine Restaurant and Brewing Company, closed for lack of business not long afterward. But, 10 years later, the Buck brothers are not trying to sell beer locally; they want to produce and sell malts across the state through an integrated farm and malthouse busi-

Their success may well depend on the sustainability of craft beer, which is still a niche, accounting for 11 percent of total U.S. beer sales in 2014, or almost \$20 billion. according to the Brewers Association. Part of craft beer's growth may depend on older beer drinkers changing their habits and buying locally-brewed ales, stouts and other brews, rather than the mass market mainstays.

"My generation were more of the Bud Lights and Miller Lights," said Bruce Buck, Joshua and Jacob Buck's father. ("Or Milwaukee's Best," Joshua Buck added in jest.) "I am now a fan of craft beer," Bruce Buck said.

The brothers are working with their craft brewery partners to pitch beers to the public that are all locally-grown and hand-crafted, and worth paying a bit more

"You can taste the local," Jacob Buck said.

"There is a shift in today's culture," argued Ellington. "People want to once again know where their food and drink are coming from. People are buying up to the fact that you might have to pay slightly higher prices for a pint of local brew because they like knowing not only where it was made, but also [knowing] the people who made it.'

Dan Cashman joins Bangor PR firm

BANGOR — Sutherland Weston Marketing Communications announced Friday

it is hiring Dan Cashman as its public new relations director.

Cashman served previously as Gov. John Baldacci's assistant

press secretary and worked in television and radio before that. For the past six years, he has run his own public relations firm, Cashman Communications.

Cashman

He is the host of "The Nite Show with Danny Cashman," a late night talk show broadcast via CBS and Fox affiliates on Saturday nights.

Cashman said Cashman Communications will continue operating but only to produce his late night talk show. He will bring his existing clients with him to the new job.

Sutherland Weston Marketing Communications is a marketing, advertising and public relations agency located in Bangor.

Milo firm named 'Business of the Year'

DOVER-FOXCROFT Piscataquis Chamber of Commerce will hold its annual business meeting and Business of the Year celebration 7-9 p.m. Friday, Oct. 9, at the new Mill at Dover Foxcroft event space.

Executive Director Denise Buzzelli will highlight the Chamber's successes and growth in 2015 and share her vision for 2016. Ron and Amy Desmarais of Maine Alternative Solutions of Milo will be honored as the recipients of the 2015 Business of the Year Award.

According to the Chamber's news release, Ron Desmarais,

who owns several businesses, also builds homes and apartments in an effort to provide affordable housing for local residents. He also has helped expand several Milo businesses by building additions and making improvements, donating his time and labor costs, and often materials.

Two of Desmarais' most visible projects are Three Rivers Kiwanis building and the Harrigan Learning Center with Solar.

To register, visit piscataquischamber.com. For information, call the Chamber at 564-7533.

Business Expo coming to Augusta

AUGUSTA — The Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce will host its annual Business EXPO 4-7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14, at Augusta Civic Center's main auditorium.

The event will showcase exhibits from more than 100 area businesses and organizations. Admission is \$5 at the door or free with your business card.

'We have greatly expanded this event in order to meet the demands of our growing region," said Ross Cunningham, Chamber president and CEO, in a news release. "This is a great opportunity for business professionals and the general public to come out and learn about what our region has to offer.'

Attendees will have the opportunity to enter to win a variety of prizes, totaling more than \$5,000, and may take advantage of promotional offers and product samples from the exhibitors. The grand prize of \$1,000 cash, sponsored by Ganneston Construction Corp, will be drawn at the end of the show.

A free reception from 5 to p.m. will include hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar will be available throughout the entirety of the show.

For information, visit KennebecVallevChamber. com or call 623-4559.



Neuman

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be out of business. Always have backups when it comes to your key business part-

Need help with your flood plan? Ask your insurance agent if they have any workbooks or guides available.

Other resources include the Federal Emergency Management Agency (fema. gov) and the Maine Emergency Management Agency (mema.gov).

Read Deb Neuman's Back to Business blog at backtobusiness.bangordailynews.

Forum

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they are fully tested and ready," Graves added.

Regulators listened and left out technology mandates. Trucking companies are expected to adopt changes that work best for them, likely starting with pollution control devices. Other changes may include more streamlined cabs, better and possibly fewer — tires and direct injection engines.

At the time standards were first proposed, one trucking executive estimated fuel savings over the lifetime of a truck at \$7,200. With cost estimated at ther examine whether or not

\$1.000, the math was clear. Getting more miles on less fuel and encouraging cleaner technologies add up to a triple win.

Not everyone's cheering, though. Some environmentalists are calling for higher mpg targets. The Consumer Federation of America, or CFA, filed comments Thursday with NHTSA and EPA. The group said, while the agencies had done a good job analyzing the problem, the cost-benefit figure to reach proposed targets is still about 6-to-1.

As CFA's research director Mark Cooper put it in a statement, "they are leaving a lot of fuel savings on the table. We urge them to furmore savings are achievable.

The proposed standards do not mandate hybrid engines in trucks. Some observers expect environmentalists to press for such a move in the future.

Consumer Forum is a collaboration of the Bangor **Daily News and Northeast** CONTACT, Maine's all-volunteer, nonprofit consumer organization. For assistance with consumer-related issues, including consumer fraud and identity theft, or for information, write Consumer Forum, P.O. Box 486, Brewer, ME 04412, visit http://necontact.wordpress.com or email contacexdir@live.com.

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Offers are combinable with AAA Member Benefit, but are not combinable with any other offer. Offer amounts vary by tour and departure
date. Other restrictions may apply. Call or visit AAA.com/MCV/offers for more details.

Offers may be withdrawn at any time without notice. Travel Sale will take place September 23 - October 13, 2015 during normal business hours. Certain restrictions may apply. AAA members must make advance reservations through AAA Travel to obtain Member Benefits and savings. Member Benefits may vary based on departure date. Rates are accurate at time of printing and are subject to oenens and savings, member benems may any ouse our organize duce. And a but act only as an agent for the various travel providers featured at the sale. Capyright © 2015 Auto Club Services, LLC. All Rights Reserved.