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TRAINING TARGETS MAINE'S FOOD INDUSTRY

PORTLAND, MAINE – A one-day intensive business skills seminar, called **Marketing & Other Strategic Pieces**, targets businesses in Maine's food industry with training in three locations throughout the state beginning September 27. Designed specifically for growers, grocers, and value-added food producers, the seminar is supported by a USDA Fund for Rural America grant and coordinated by the Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC). James F. Wilfong, a Maine entrepreneur and business skills instructor, will conduct the training, assisted by Maine SBDC certified business counselors.

The training, designed for businesses that want to refresh their strategic vision, leverage their competitive edge, stay relevant in today's marketplace, and increase profits, uses an interactive format. **Marketing & Other Strategic Pieces** workshop topics include vision, mission and core values; marketing fundamentals, strategic use of resources, monitoring performance, and identifying and improving process. Workshop participants will receive a workbook with exercises to help get a new and fresh look at their small businesses.

"This is truly a rare opportunity for Maine's food industry," said Maine SBDC State Director John R. Massaua, "Grant funding allows us to offer this full day of customized training at a cost to participants of only \$20.00 each."

Marketing & Other Strategic Pieces seminar will be held in all three locations from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., including:

- September 27 – Intown Learning Center, 68 High Street, Portland
- September 28 – Target Technology Incubator, 20 Godfrey Drive, Orono
- October 5th – St. Paul Center, Augusta

To register, call Sarah Hutchins at Maine SBDC at 207-780-4420 or 1-800-679-SBDC. On-line registration is also available at www.mainesbdc.org.

Marketing & Other Strategic Pieces is the first of a three-part initiative called *From the Ground Up*, custom designed for Maine food growers, grocers, and value-added food producers. The second part, a modular 36-hour small business course called **Calculated Risk**, will help businesses develop a comprehensive business plan. The course will also be offered at three locations (Bangor, Portland, Augusta) over the course of 12 weeks, one night each week, beginning in November and concluding in early March, 2006. The third part of *From the Ground Up* is individual counseling and assistance, available through Maine SBDC certified business counselors to help growers, producers and grocers gain new skills, tackle specific issues associated with operating and growing their business, and improve profitability. ###

About Maine SBDC: *Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC) and its tech-focused group, the Maine Small Business & Technology Development Centers (Maine SBTDC) provide comprehensive business management assistance, training, resource and information services to Maine's micro, small and technology-based business communities.*

Maine SBDC/SBTDC is a partnership program of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) in association with the SBA/OSBDC, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (Maine DECD), the University of Southern Maine (USM), and leading economic and/or community development hosting organizations, including the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG), Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), and the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC); with support from the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), and other contractors, allies and stakeholders.

Accredited by the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC) and administered by USM's School of Business, Maine SBDC/SBTDC operates a network of service centers and outreach offices located conveniently throughout the state.

*More information about the Maine SBDC/SBTDC can be found at www.mainesbdc.org.
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About Fund for Rural America: *In 2001, the University of Maine's Department of Resource Economics and Policy led an effort as part of USDA's Fund for Rural America project, to gather information about consumer preferences and develop new networks that could benefit rural, independent grocery stores in Maine. The study helped determine that Maine's rural and community grocery store owner/operators and their grower and producer partners sought a better understanding of business management principles and related technical assistance to help them successfully manage their businesses. During this fourth year of the project, the Maine SBDC – supported by UMaine's FRA funds – is providing a multi-step approach to coordinating education outreach for small businesses including growers, grocers and value-added food producers.*