



# MAINE AgrAbility

**Rural State, Lean Team!**

**Bella Russo  
Maine AgrAbility Program Coordinator**

# PRESENTER



Bella Russo, RYT 200

Bella has been farming for the last nine years throughout New England primarily on small-scale diversified vegetable and livestock operations. Her background is in biology and agricultural sciences with a focus in plant pathology. Bella is starting her own small farm enterprises and hopes to further her education in agriculture, plant pathology, and forestry. She is also a certified yoga instructor.

# Objectives

- Understand how the unique makeup of natural resources industries in Maine are served by the AgrAbility team
- How as a lean team we address geographic challenges and industry diversity through diversity in team members, resourcefulness and flexibility

Bella shows logger Ron Ridley, a warrior pose to stretch the spine and legs on days with lots of mechanized equipment work.

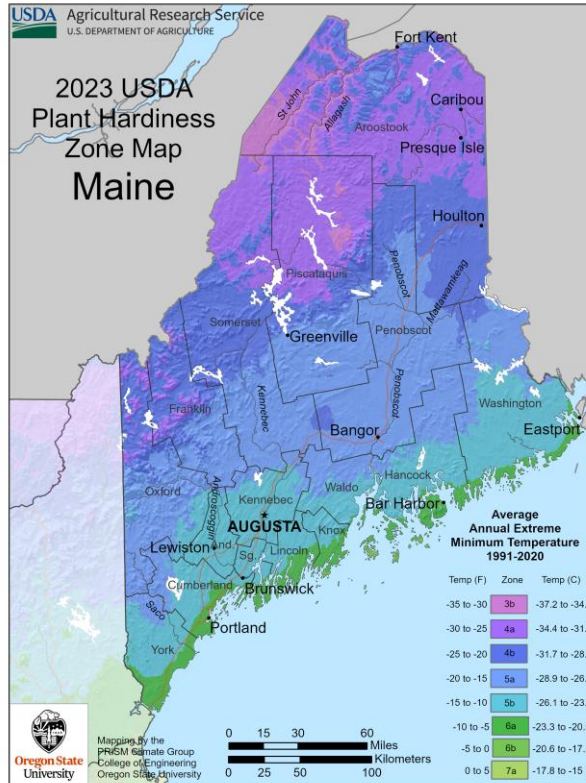




# Producers in Maine

**Seasonality** → shorter growing seasons impact how natural resource businesses operate. Second businesses, diversity during growing season

**Sales** → on-farm sales and value, direct to consumer, institution, and agritourism continue to grow as farms adapt to changing markets. Types of farmers changing.



**Market/consumer demands** → high number of specialty producers in Maine. Specialty products include veg and fruit, sugaring, hay/forage, nursery crops, Christmas trees, and livestock . 63% of ag sales in ME are specialty crops.

# Shifting seas and timbers

What do our producers in Maine actually need? How do we know?

Layers of complexity and history to these organizations. How does AgrAbility serve them all equally?

Loggers, fishermen, and farmers share certain challenges, and have distinct needs in terms of injuries, chronic illness, and pain

Who do we rely on for quality information and inroads into these communities?



# Power of a Lean Team

## “One big small town”

Resourcefulness- honed resource management → primarily time

- labor division between contractors and team lead
- resources for travel and travel plans

Multi-skilled team members → collaborative expertise

- current small farmers on team
- what expertise lies in our networks

Ability to respond to changing needs fast

- regulations and food safety in fishing
- needs of large-scale ag producers

**Maine AgrAbility- a.k.a. Team Oyster!**



# Foray into the Forest

Logging is our youngest program,  
and learning the logging landscape has taken  
dedication.

- We identified a few leaders with varied industry connections and inroads to understand the main groups and organizational history (PLC and CLP/MaineTree). Helped identify needs, and what services were already available.
- Met the different needs of loggers in ME → we can get to them at Spring Safety, and at MLOP. Identified how to reach them consistently where they are at





# Loggers like to hang out in the woods!





# We're ADAPTIVE

## RESOURCES

We are creating and adapting resources to make them relevant and useful to our loggers.

## SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Our dynamic team is able to serve ME loggers partly through their time with AgrAbility, and through their time as an OT.

## WORKPLACE

Distinct differences in the work that conventional and mechanized loggers do.

## GETTING TO THEM

Many mechanized loggers and fleet truck drivers participate in annual "spring safety training" around the state. Good time and opportunity for Ag/LogAbility to reach them

# Diving into Fishing (and beyond)

ME AgrAbility serves commercial fishermen including lobstermen, groundfishermen, elvers, and aquaculturists including oysters, clams, mussels, scallops, and other shellfish.

Having a well-connected team member with layered experience has helped us learn the landscape and determine focus areas and opportunities.

How are we continuing to reach this audience effectively?



# Navigating the sea-scape



Some of these industries are new and adapting, some are historic and revered. Differences in values and goals.

Considerations and constraints are unique- regulations, bait, licensing, gear, changing resources, gentrification, and mortality are a few distinct challenges.



# Specific Example

Learned through some of our clients and collaborators how regulations, specifically food safety regulations impact their work on the job.

A regulatory change can cause significant changes in how the work is done including location(s), transportation, storage, timeliness, and general functionality.

This is part of the education work that we do with other service providers and healthcare workers, even those that work more with equipment.



# On the Farm

ME has a highly varied farm landscape, our team brings and has learned a lot about many different types of specialty production operations in Maine.

Our approach with this body of knowledge is very “from the ground up” meaning we identify the major tasks first, consider the tools and techniques and compare to what’s existing already on the operation. There are many ways we’ve learned to use multi-functional tools with highly varied operations.

Connecting with geographically distanced growers, like potato producers in Northern Maine We learned some about the healthcare landscape there, and use this as a connection point in for those growers.



# Team Approaches



Dynamic teams mean there is a lot that we all bring to the space. How do we prioritize, share what's important, and continue to make progress?

What is a whole-team vs. a more executive decision? How do we use the strengths of the team functionally and constructively?

When does it help to call in other areas of expertise?



# RESOURCES

Connect: [Maine.AgrAbility@maine.edu](mailto:Maine.AgrAbility@maine.edu)

**207-944-1533**

Website:

<https://extension.umaine.edu/agrability/>

- On the website you can find
  - News
  - Network Connections
  - Solutions & Resources
  - Videos



# Questions?

*Thanks for attending!*

