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JOINT RESOLUTION IN HONOR OF THE MAINE FARMER AND MAINE AGRICULTURE

WHEREAS, recent statistics show that Maine has about 8,000 farms, the bulk of which are small, family-owned operations, that provide full-time and part-time employment to more than 90,000 workers, approximately 13 percent of the State's workforce; and

WHEREAS, Maine's agricultural enterprises provide more than \$684 million through the sale of farm products and contribute more than \$2 billion annually to the State's economy, and an overwhelming majority of Maine people believe that buying local Maine agricultural products helps the State; and

WHEREAS, Maine farmers are the stewards of 1.36 million acres of land, a vital resource in maintaining the food security of Maine people; and

WHEREAS, Maine is first in New England in the production of food, first in New England in the value of aquaculture sales, first in the world in the production of wild blueberries, the world leader in the production of brown eggs, third in the Nation in the production of maple syrup, eighth in the Nation in the production of fall potatoes, second in New England in milk and livestock production and the only state anywhere involved in the commercial production of fiddleheads; and

WHEREAS, agriculture shaped Maine's past, maintains much of Maine's scenic open space, provides recreational opportunities, makes a significant contribution to the nature and character of Maine's many rural communities and provides for a strong future; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Legislature now assembled in the Second Regular Session, pause in our deliberations to honor Maine farmers and innovators who have contributed so much to the betterment of our State, to pledge our support and encouragement and to urge the youth of Maine to pursue the growing opportunities for careers in today's technologically advanced agriculture industry; and be it further

RESOLVED: That a suitable copy of this resolution, duly authenticated by the Secretary of State, be transmitted to the Commissioner of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources as a token of the esteem in which those in this vital field are held.