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Nick Managan, Partner & Community Marketing Manager

Cabot Creamery

Testimony before the House Agriculture Committee

Background:

My name is Nick Managan and I am the Partnership and Community Marketing Manager at Cabot Creamery. I grew up in Bellows Falls, and like many of my colleagues attended the University of Vermont. I have worked for Agri-Mark & Cabot Creamery for more than 13 years and sampled cheese during a brief NY City stint for a few years before that.

Today we have just under 600 farm families in our co-operative, including 133 here in Vermont. We have more than 1,000 total employees and here in Vermont we are headquartered in Waitsfield, make cheese in Middlebury and Cabot, package our cheese in Cabot, operate our distribution center here in Montpelier, and have a cheese-aging warehouse in St. Albans. We have our Retail Store in Waterbury which welcomes approximately 100,000 visitors in an average year. We are working to expand the Annex and provide more of an experience for visitors, and we are also working on another location as part of the Yellow Barn project in Hardwick. We also make cheese in Chateaugay NY and Butter in W. Springfield MA.

The strength of our co-operative is our people, and our brand. We have been making world-class dairy products with love, pride, and purpose since 1919 and became the first dairy co-op to achieve B Corp certification in 2012. This certification demonstrates our commitment to environmental and social impacts for our consumers, employees, and our co-operative of dairy farm families.

Co-op and Tourism:

The relationship between the Dairy Industry and Tourism is symbiotic here in Vermont and we're proud of the partnerships we've developed over our history to support tourism, and grateful for the opportunities tourism has afforded our co-op, our farm families, and our communities.

Early in our brand's history when we didn't have budgets to promote our products outside Vermont, we were still able to grow because visitors from a few of the best markets in the world came to us. We love to say we grew our brand by lobbing cheese at tourists!

We work closely with Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance, Vermont Ski Area Association, Vermont Mountain Bike Association, Vermont Fresh Network, Vermont Farm to Plate, New England Inns & Resorts, Vermont Adaptive, Vermont Tourism & the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Vermont

Area Attractions, and many ski areas partners to develop community, ensure a great experience here in Vermont, and lob cheese at those visiting the Green Mountains.

Together, Vermonters have created one of the best food AND outdoor recreation scenes in the world; it's no wonder people love to visit and live in Vermont!

Farmers and Tourism:

In addition to the role Tourism has played in growing the Cabot Brand, it also directly benefits many of our farm families. While the milk check remains the most critical income for dairy farmers, nearly all are diversified in some way, and many here in Vermont benefit from both neighbors and tourists to support their side businesses.

Cabot Farmers here in Vermont operate Bed & Breakfasts, produce their own cheese, operate farmstands (with Sweetcorn, pumpkins, maple syrup, beef, Cabot Cheese, and more). Many are also sugarmakers and some will host the public later this week for Maple weekend.

We sell several our farmers' products at our Waterbury Annex and promote those businesses through our social media and on our website, through our Cabot Farm Trail. We also work with member farms to host open farm days, and support those who host their own events.

Support for Trails and strong communities:

As a co-op, we enthusiastically support outdoor recreation for its economic development and community building. It creates communities current and potential employees want to live in.

We have been proud to provide to sponsor the following projects over the past several years, in addition to ongoing support in each of our Plant Communities:

- The new Vermont Adaptive facility at Sugarbush
- A new pump track in Middlebury through the local VMBA chapter, coming this summer.
- We also provided VMBA Trail Grants for projects in St. Johnsbury, Rochester, Ascutney, Essex, Stowe, and Waitsfield.
- Likewise, several of our farm families support tourism and community development by making their land available to the public with ski and bike trails.
 - o Many of the best outdoor recreation opportunities require private landowner support and we appreciate efforts to better protect and reward landowners who host the public.

Like most businesses, staffing was our biggest challenge these past few years and continues to be a concern in our plants, in our retail store, and on our member farms.

THANK YOU for your efforts to address staffing shortages and invest in workforce and economic development to promote career pathways. We appreciate your work to make Vermont the best place to visit, work, and live.