

**Town of Windham
Community Development Block Grant
Planning Grant**

**Agriculture Incubator
Fact Sheet**

The Town of Windham in cooperation with the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) and the Threshold To Maine Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area applied for and received a Planning Grant under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program with the Department of Economic and Community Development to investigate the possibility of establishing a business incubator center with an exclusive focus on agriculture businesses.

CDBG Planning Grant Funds will support both a process and product that includes the following components:

- Planning committee involving local farms, municipalities, industry associations, and state and federal agencies
- Development of an incubator business plan outlining management structure, potential clients and tenants, programs and services, and start-up and operating costs
- Identification and analysis of potential locations for the facility based on criteria such as acreage, zoning, and transportation access
- Development plan outlining public and private partners and resources

The concept of an *Agriculture Incubator Center* is to support and develop agriculture businesses that will offer the most practical method to expand local food consumption in Maine and the region. Basic figures exist on what Maine farmers produce and what Maine residents consume. While this is a good start at understanding where gaps exist in local production and consumption, the Incubator will work to help businesses start or expand to take advantage of changing demographics and consumer habits. Aside from identifying new business opportunities or ideas to increase Maine food consumption, the Center will also provide a framework for looking into other food consumption factors such as consumer tastes and preferences. This expanded understanding of the consumer market can then be translated into usable information by the agriculture sector to start or expand more valued added products businesses or shift production to other more consumer valued products. Expanding the business opportunities to include these other factors will better serve the agriculture sector and help capitalize on trends and opportunities available to it for expanding farm gate receipts and net farm income.

An Advisory Committee for the project, made up of local representatives of the community, agriculture, and supporting organizations, will advise the project partners on implementation of the planning grant and review all work products produced. Meetings of the Advisory Committee will be held about every six weeks beginning in August and running through to the end of the planning grant period in February 2005.