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## **EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES AGRI-MARK, INC. TO INVEST NEARLY \$30 MILLION TO MODERNIZE MANUFACTURING FACILITY UPSTATE**

### ***Agri-Mark to Expand Cheese Production Operations, Retaining More Than 100 Jobs in the North Country***

Empire State Development announced today that dairy cooperative Agri-Mark, Inc. will invest nearly \$30 million to expand its cheese manufacturing facility in Franklin County and retain 106 jobs in the North Country Region. The expansion will enable Agri-Mark to continue to thrive and support future generations of New York dairy farmers.

“Agri-Mark’s investment to expand and modernize their Chateaugay facility is a win-win for the Upstate economy,” **said Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Howard Zemsky.** “The expansion will retain over 100 jobs in the North Country, allowing for the continued support of Agri-Mark’s 600 New York dairy farms across the state.”

The expansion and restoration of Agri-Mark’s Chateaugay facility in Franklin County involves rebuilding the current 110,641 square-foot manufacturing facility, reengineering the layout of the facility, and purchasing new machinery and other equipment. Empire State Development will support the dairy co-op with up to \$6 million in funding, including \$4 million in Economic Transformation Program funds to retain 106 full-time jobs and modernize its Chateaugay operations.

The Economic Transformation Program (ETP), enacted in the 2014-2015 State Budget by Governor Cuomo, committed \$32 million to support economic development initiatives and provide tax credits for projects that create jobs in communities affected by the closure of state correctional and juvenile justice facilities. ETP funding is administered by Empire State Development in consultation with Regional Economic Development Councils and the affected communities.

Agri-Mark is a dairy farmer cooperative that dates back to 1913. The co-op bought the Chateaugay cheese manufacturing facility in 2003 after its former owner closed the plant. Since then, Agri-Mark has invested millions of dollars in the facility as it has expanded production of cheese for the farmer-owned McCadam and Cabot dairy brands. The co-op markets farm milk produced by its 1,100 regional dairy farms and is one of the largest suppliers of farm produced

milk in the Northeast. Agri-Mark's membership is made up of dairy farms in communities across six states, including 600 farms in New York State.

**Chairman of Agri-Mark Neal Rea Board of Directors and dairy farmer from Cambridge, New York said,** "Our farmers are making a substantial investment in our cheese plant in Chateaugay because we believe that the New York dairy industry has a strong future, and our farm families are part of that future. We realize that our facility is one of the economic engines in the North Country and by undertaking this project we are letting everyone in Chateaugay and the surrounding communities know that we are here to stay and the jobs and benefits we bring are also here to stay. We would like to thank everyone involved with helping us receive this important funding."

Agri-Mark, Inc. has a proud history with 100 years of experience working with dairy farms and their products, including some of the most recognized brand names in the nation. Award-winning McCadam Cheese is produced at the Chateaugay facility, and it is the second oldest cheese company in the United States. Some types of Cabot cheese, known for being the "World's Best Cheddar" are also produced at Agri-Mark's Chateaugay facility.

In 2015, Agri-Mark marketed milk for more than 1,100 Northeast dairy farms, which amounted to more than 336 million gallons of farm fresh milk. In addition, 100 percent of Agri-Mark's profits are reinvested into the dairy farms it serves. During the past five years alone, Agri-Mark has returned more than \$150 million in year-end profits and milk quality and other premiums to its co-op member farms. To learn more about Agri-Mark, visit [www.agrimark.coop](http://www.agrimark.coop).

**State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball said,** "This is great news for the hundreds of dairy farmers that supply Agri-Mark with milk for their cheese manufacturing facility, and for Agri-Mark, which has a long-standing tradition of producing some of New York's finest dairy products. This expansion will help solidify Agri-Mark's future in the North Country and ensure New York State remains a leader in the dairy industry."

New York's dairy industry generates more than \$3.5 billion in farm-gate sales, constituting approximately one-half of the state's total agricultural receipts. There were nearly 5,000 dairy farms throughout New York State in 2015, making the State a leading producer of milk in the nation, with 618,000 dairy cows producing 14.1 billion pounds of milk annually.

"This joint investment by the Agri-Mark cooperative and the State of New York is very good news for the North Country region, our dairy farmers and the hard-working employees who turn out award-winning products at the Chateaugay facility," **said Senator Betty Little.** "Modernization is critically important to improve efficiency and to remain competitive, so this is good news also for consumers who I know love McCadam Cheese as much as I do. I commend Empire State Development President and CEO Howard Zemsky and Agri-Mark Board of Directors Chairman, Neal Rea, for their collaboration."

"I extend my sincere thanks to Empire State Development and Agri-Mark for their investment in the Chateaugay manufacturing facility. The support of our North Country Regional Economic Development Council was instrumental in working with Economic Development and Agri-Mark to secure the investment being made by both entities" **said Assemblywoman Janet Duprey.** "This expansion will assure the retention of more than 100 jobs for local people and provides a

stable market for hundreds of local dairy farms. For all of us consumers, it means we will continue to know the very best cheese is being produced right here in the North Country.”

“I am extremely pleased and want to thank Agri-Mark for their investment in our community. This will help to retain over 100 jobs and is a key asset for our dairy farmers across the North Country Region,” **said Franklin County Legislature Chairman Billy Jones.** “The “cheese plant” is the backbone of our community and is an economic engine regionally. I would also like to thank Empire State Development, Agri-Mark Board of Directors, North Country Regional Economic Development Council, (and Co-Chairs Garry Douglas and Tony Collins), and everyone who has worked so hard to get this accomplished. This is a great day for our agricultural industry and the economy of the North Country.”

“Our community, farmers and our workers are grateful New York State recognizes the impact McCadam has in our community,” **said Town Supervisor Don Bilow.** “The Town of Chateaugay is extremely pleased to learn Agri-Mark will complete renovations necessary to enable the local cheese plant to remain competitive in the market. Farmers all across northern New York State depend on McCadam to provide a market for their milk and this plant has a positive impact on all of them.”

**About Empire State Development:**

Empire State Development (ESD) is New York’s chief economic development agency ([www.esd.ny.gov](http://www.esd.ny.gov)). The mission of ESD is to promote a vigorous and growing economy, encourage the creation of new job and economic opportunities, increase revenues to the State and its municipalities, and achieve stable and diversified local economies. Through the use of loans, grants, tax credits and other forms of financial assistance, ESD strives to enhance private business investment and growth to spur job creation and support prosperous communities across New York State. ESD is also the primary administrative agency overseeing Governor Cuomo’s Regional Economic Development Councils and the marketing of “I Love NY,” the State’s iconic tourism brand. For more information on Regional Councils and Empire State Development, visit [www.regionalcouncils.ny.gov](http://www.regionalcouncils.ny.gov) and [www.esd.ny.gov](http://www.esd.ny.gov).

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