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New group invests in Maine producer of garden supplies

The funds will help Coast of Maine Organics improve its facilities and positioning for growth in other states.

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Coast of Maine Organics has received an investment to recapitalize the business and position it for further expansion.

Carlos Quijano, the president and founder, said the money from Gemini Investors of Massachusetts allows the seller of garden products to buy out Coastal Ventures Limited Partnership, a fund created by Coastal Enterprises Inc., as well as another early investor in the company and a portion of the stake owned by Quijano and his wife.

Quijano will stay on as president and Sid Malone will remain as senior vice president of Coast of Maine.

The company sells organic compost, potting soil, plant mixes, mulch, topsoil and other gardening products. Some of the products include [ground lobster shells](#), which

are rich in nutrients for plants. The company's headquarters is in Portland and its main production facility is in East Machias.

Quijano declined to provide details about the transaction, but said he and his wife will go from being majority owners to holding a "significant," but minority, stake.

"We're very pleased," he said.

Quijano said the money will allow Coast of Maine to expand and deepen its production facilities and distribution network. He said the company's products are currently distributed as far south as the Carolinas and as far west as Chicago, but Coast of Maine needs more production facilities closer to those markets to expand sales.

He praised Coastal Enterprises and the other early investor, Peter Bottomley, for providing "patient venture capital."

Coastal Enterprises said it invested \$260,000 in Coast of Maine in 1996, in one of its first capital investments. The nonprofit economic development corporation said it realized a 10 percent annual rate of return on its investment.

"This investment exemplifies Coastal Ventures' initial vision: create and back companies that produce socially responsible products and services, that create opportunities for people with low incomes and that promote progressive management practices," said Nathaniel Henshaw, president of Coastal Ventures Limited Partnership.

Henshaw said the investment fund has put money into 20 ventures, creating about 900 new jobs. The Coast of Maine investment, he said, helped ensure the profitability of the fund.