



Exploring Your Small Farm Dream **4-session Courses to be offered in Massachusetts** **April 2009**

Let us know of your interest now so we can contact you with details!

Are you considering starting an agricultural enterprise in Massachusetts?

- Do you need to test the feasibility of your idea before you invest?
- Is self employment and an agricultural life style right for you?
- Is there a market for your proposed product or service?
- What regulations will govern your enterprise and impact its cost?
- How will you manage the new risks associated with agriculture?
- How long can you afford to wait to break even– and how much contribution do you expect from this piece of your livelihood?
- Are there others in your family that share your vision and want to join you in its pursuit?
- What are the threats to your success?
- How will you know that you are on a sustainable track?

The *Explorer* Program is intended for those who are considering farming as a (small) business. Its purpose is to help pre-venture, aspiring farmers learn what it will take to start and manage their own profitable agricultural enterprise, and to decide whether this is a path they really want to/can take. *Explorer* makes use of four guided group sessions, an acclaimed workbook, Instructors experienced in starting ag businesses, and extensive supporting resources. The goal of *Explorer* is to help you decide whether starting an agricultural business is right for you and, based on that decision, to help you plan practical next steps. It was created to help you articulate the clear vision and goals you will need to guide a new agricultural venture.

This course is sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) Agricultural Business Training Program, in cooperation with the *Explorer* creator, the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) in Belchertown and our local site partners whose logos appear above.

In addition to the traditional Explorer course, MDAR will be offering limited additional paid technical assistance to up to four participants who are ready to move on to the next step in their plan.

Class size is limited to 14 prospective farms to maximize group time, with the opportunity to bring another person from your enterprise if space allows.

The registration cost of \$125 includes all materials, guest speakers, access to the in-class library as well as NESFI's extensive library in Belchertown, and (for the selected 4 members of the class) an extra boost from targeted help on a key next step.

You must have email and web access to take this course effectively!

More information about the basic NESFI Explorer course is available on their website at:

<http://www.smallfarm.org/explorer/index.htm>

We also have graduates of the Explorer course who have volunteered to share their experience should you want help deciding about taking the course.

For a Registration Form, please contact:

Rick Chandler, MDAR, 25 West Experiment Station, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003

Email: rhandler@umext.umass.edu

Phone: 413-577-0459

Out of state applicants

This course is sponsored and financially supported by a Massachusetts state agency for budding Massachusetts agricultural enterprises. If you are from a neighboring state that does not offer Explorer, or are planning to farm in another state, we can put you on a waiting list in case the course does not fill with in-state candidates. If you are then accepted, the fee will be \$200 and extra post-course technical assistance may be limited.