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- **USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant RFR**
 - **Agriculture & Food Conference of Southeastern Massachusetts - February 23**
 - **Agricultural Commissions Annual Meeting & Conference**
 - **MA Office of Public Collaboration (MOPC) Offering 2-day Workshop “Building Skills for Effective Collaboration”**
 - **Building Healthy Soils on Your Farm – March 5**
 - **MAGIC Agricultural Forum – March 5**
 - **Farm Share Fair - March 14**
 - **Important Risk Management Deadline - March 15**
 - **Massachusetts Poultry Enhancement Council Meeting - March 28**
 - **Town of Dartmouth - Invitation to Bid**
 - **USDA Extends Census Deadline, Reminds Producers It’s Not too Late**
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USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant RFR

MDAR is soliciting proposals through a competitive RFR process for approximately \$400,000 in USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant funds. ***Funding is contingent upon the passage of the Farm Bill (Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012).***

Grants are awarded to projects that strengthen the market for Massachusetts specialty crops such as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. Socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers, commodity groups, individuals, agricultural organizations, colleges and universities, producers, municipalities, state agencies, and agricultural nonprofits are eligible for this grant program, provided their proposals meet all the specifications in the Department’s RFR and the USDA’s Notice of Federal Assistance.

USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program information, the RFR and all necessary documents, including concept proposal submission requirements and deadlines can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/markets/specialty-crops.html> and on the Commonwealth’s E-procurement website Comm-pass at www.comm-pass.com. Contact: Julia.Grimaldi@state.ma.us or 617-626-1763.

Agriculture & Food Conference of Southeastern Massachusetts - February 23



You're invited to our 6th Annual Conference! Presented by SEMAP and Bristol County Conservation District, Saturday, February 23, 2012, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM, Bristol County Agricultural High School, 135 Center Street, Dighton MA.

Whether you're a professional farmer, a backyard gardener, or just curious about locally grown food, this is the event for you! This year's offerings include workshops for the public and youth ages 7-12, as well as info-packed sessions for farmers of all experience levels and workshops specific to organic methods.

Registration includes a locally-sourced lunch (yes, in February!) and at the Resource Fair you'll learn about local organizations and businesses that provide services and products to help you grow, whether you've got a hundred acres or a couple of window boxes. Registration is \$35 for farmers, \$50 for the public, and \$20 for youth and students. Businesses or organizations interested in exhibiting can contact Kristen at kirvin@semaponline.org. [Details and registration here.](#)

Agricultural Commissions Annual Meeting & Conference

March 2 - Sturbridge Host Hotel, 366 Main St., Sturbridge, MA - [Details and registration flyer](#) 

Registration 9:30 AM

Sessions start at 10:00 AM

Lunch and annual meeting 12:00 noon

Sessions 1:15 - 4:30 PM

Social 4:30 PM

Cost \$30.00 conference & lunch, Cost \$20.00 lunch & annual meeting only

Make checks payable to MAAC. Mail to: Laura Sapienza-Grabski, 2 Brookview Road, Boxford, MA 01921

MA Office of Public Collaboration (MOPC) Offering 2-day Workshop "Building Skills for Effective Collaboration"

This training is being offered in two locations:

- 1) March 20 & 21 - 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM - UMass Boston Campus
- 2) March 27 & 28 - 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM - MDAR Office, Amherst

MOPC is offering this training at no cost to employees who are members of municipal agricultural commissions in Massachusetts, to staff of MDAR and USDA. Others who are employees of MA environmental, land use or natural resources agencies may attend for a discounted fee of \$300 per person

Space is limited (maximum # of participants: 30 per session) so register ASAP. Deadline is March 1, 2013. Contact MOPC: 617-287-4040 or Courtney.Breese@umb.edu.

Building Healthy Soils on Your Farm – March 5



The [Worcester County Conservation District](#) and [USDA/Natural Resource Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) is sponsoring a free soils workshop “Building Healthy Soils on Your Farm” Tuesday, March 5th (snow date March 6th), 2-4 PM, West Brookfield Town Hall lower level meeting room, 2 East Main St., West Brookfield; Featuring guest speaker USDA/NRCS Conservation Agronomist Thomas Akin. This workshop is designed to benefit vegetable and corn silage growers in Worcester County and will cover the continued capacity of the soil to function as a vital living system that sustains plant, animal and human health. RSVP by February 28 to Lisa Trotto 508-829-0168, ext. 5 or email Lisa.trotto@ma.usda.gov.

MAGIC Agricultural Forum – March 5

Tuesday, March 5, 6:00 - 9:00 PM, Assabet River Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center, Multi-Purpose Room, 680 Hudson Road, Sudbury, MA 01776

Please join us for an Agricultural Forum sponsored by the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC). The Forum presents a unique opportunity for farmers, municipal officials, and federal, state, and regional farm service organizations to discuss agricultural barriers in their community. Your feedback at the Forum will guide recommendations made as part of the MAGIC Comprehensive Agricultural Planning Project.

For more information on the project please visit mapc.org/magicagriplan. Questions regarding the Forum: contact Amanda Chisholm at (617)-933-0736, achisholm@mapc.org.

Farm Share Fair - March 14

5:30-8:30 PM, Cambridge College, 1000 Mass Ave., Cambridge

Do you love local, fresh food? Well, come join us in Cambridge on March 14, and meet the fantastic farmers from across this state that bring local produce to the Boston area. Compare and learn about all the various options: veggies, fruit, flowers, meat, eggs, dairy, and specialty products. Over 30 vendors will be at the fair, including some wonderful sustainable food product companies and service providers. Spend your food dollars on locally grown, and sign up at the Farm Share Fair!

Questions? info@farmsharefair.com. Accepting sponsorships and farm vendor signups!

We're social! Facebook: www.facebook.com/FarmShareFair, Twitter: [@FarmShareFair](https://twitter.com/FarmShareFair)

Important Risk Management Deadline - March 15

Massachusetts farmers have until March 15, 2013 to make their crop insurance decisions! The following annual crops, potatoes, corn, sweet corn, tobacco are covered by a Federal crop insurance policy with a final signup deadline of March 15. Farmers can elect a guarantee of 50% to 75% of their normal production at 67% to 100% of the market price for their 2013 crops.

Farmers of all crops can elect to guarantee their farm income with an Adjusted Gross Revenue-lite Policy (AGR-lite). AGR-lite policy can protect a farmer from income losses due to a natural disaster or market fluctuation. An AGR-lite

policy compliments the grower's current crop insurance policy. If a grower missed the deadline for an apple, cranberry, shellfish or nursery policy the AGR-lite policy will provide a level of protection. The growers expected income is established as an average of the previous 5 schedules 'F' filed with the IRS. Growers must sign an AGR-lite policy application by March 15 to insure their 2013 farm revenue. Farmers can select a guarantee rate of 65%, 75% or 80% with a payment rate of either 75% or 90%.

Producers must provide the following information when completing an AGR-Lite application:

- History calculation worksheet, including 5 years of allowable income and expense data from IRS tax returns (Schedule F or equivalent forms);
- An annual farm report for the insurance year listing each commodity to be produced, the expected quantity of the commodity to be produced, and the expected price for the commodity;
- Indication of changes that will result in less income for the insurance year than the historical average.

Federal Crop Insurance policies are sold by authorized private agents. Growers can find an agent by visiting the USDA Risk Management Agency website www3.rma.usda.gov/apps/agents/. Crop insurance policies premiums are subsidized by USDA from 48% to 67% to make these policies affordable.

Farmers of annual crops not covered by federal crop insurance can purchase a Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy from the local USDA Farm Service Agency. NAP provides 50% production guarantee and 55% of the established price. Enrollment deadline for NAP is also March 15, for most spring crops.

For more information visit the UMass Extension, Risk Management Education [website](#) or visit us on [facebook](#).

Massachusetts Poultry Enhancement Council Meeting - March 28

Rutland Public Library, 280 Main St., Rutland, MA 01543 – 6 PM to 8:45 PM

Topics/Agenda:

- NE Poultry News (Salmonella pullorum and MG updates)
- 2013 Feed Report/Stewart Hall
- Poultry Enterprise Budget (calculation)/Jennifer Hashley
- Poultry Legislation/Brad Mitchell
- Time for questions or concerns

Open meeting for anyone interested in poultry. No RSVP needed. Questions, contact Edward Hageman, 617-626-1796, Edward.Hageman@state.ma.us, or Megan Megrath, 617-626-1798, Megan.Megrath@state.ma.us.

Town of Dartmouth - Invitation to Bid

Sale of Schofield Farm at 155 Old Fall River Rd., Dartmouth.

The Town of Dartmouth, Massachusetts ("the Town") is selling the Schofield Farm property located at 155 Old Fall River Road. The property is comprised of a 964,374 square foot parcel (22.1 acres) The main residence and attached accessory apartment and nearby barn are included on a sub-parcel of approximately 68,574 square feet (1.574 acres) which is

referred to as the Infrastructure Envelope. The Town will convey the property in fee simple subject to an agricultural use restriction. [Complete details here.](#)

USDA Extends Census Deadline, Reminds Producers It's Not too Late

Many Farmers Already Counted – Are You One?



Farmers and ranchers across the country are heeding the call to have their voices heard and their farms represented in the 2012 Census of Agriculture. With 1.4 million Census forms returned, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is thanking everyone for speaking up for their communities, their industry and their future by sending in their Census form. For those who missed the deadline, USDA reminds producers that their farm is important and needs to be counted. As a result, Census forms are still being accepted.

Farmers and ranchers can return their forms by mail or online by visiting a secure website, www.agcensus.usda.gov. Federal law requires all agricultural producers to participate in the Census and requires NASS to keep all individual information confidential. Anyone with over \$1,000 in ag sales in 2012 is considered a farmer for the Census of Agriculture. If a person didn't receive a questionnaire indicates we may not have their mailing address. *Those that didn't receive a questionnaire in the mail should sign up at the same site by March 31 and we will send them a questionnaire.

"Information from the Census of Agriculture helps USDA monitor trends and better understand the needs in agriculture," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Providing industry stakeholders, community leaders, lawmakers and individual farm operators with the most comprehensive and accurate U.S. agricultural reports, we all help ensure the tools are available to make informed, sound decisions to protect the future of American agriculture."

More Events/Workshops: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/events/>



MDAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – MDAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit MDAR's website at mass.gov/agr, and/or follow at twitter.com/MDARCommish.