

## Farm and Market Report

1/13/15

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# Energy News

## The MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP)

MDAR and our new MFEP partner The Center for EcoTechnology, Inc., (CET) want you to know the MA Farm Energy Program is here to help you. Please visit our new website, get familiar with our new contact information and find out about our technical and financial assistance opportunities!

Please visit (and bookmark!) our new website: [www.massfarmenergy.com](http://www.massfarmenergy.com). Have you been meaning to get an energy audit for your farm? Are there energy efficiency projects you would like to complete? To learn more about how you can improve your farm's operations, reduce your energy use and save money, please complete the [Request Form](#) online or email us at [info@massfarmenergy.com](mailto:info@massfarmenergy.com) or call [413-727-3090](tel:413-727-3090). We look forward to hearing from you!

## USDA REAP Update

USDA Rural Development (RD) has issued an update regarding their Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP). Their Final Rule for REAP and the FY15 NOSA were published in the December 29, 2014 edition of the Federal Register.

<https://federalregister.gov/a/2014-30184> = NOSA

<https://federalregister.gov/a/2014-30133> = Final Rule

Program deadlines were announced as follows:

**Renewable Energy Systems (RES)/Energy Efficiency Improvements (EEI) Grant Application deadlines:** 1<sup>st</sup> deadline = April 30, 2015 and 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline= June 30, 2015 - Grants wishing to compete for \$20,000 or less set-aside funding must apply by the April 30, 2015 (1<sup>st</sup> deadline).

**RES/EEI Guaranteed Loan Application deadlines:** Reviewed and processed on a monthly basis the first business day of each month.

**REDA/ EA Grant Application deadline:** February 12, 2015

Applications are being accepted from small rural business and agricultural producers for grants for the installation of energy efficiency improvements & renewable energy systems.

The MA application templates for 2015 have been revised. There are 6 available templates, based on project size with links to download available to USDA's website: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/mareap.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mareap.html). Please use this link (all lowercase) for the most up to date revised MA application templates.

Please ensure that you are using the correct application.

- 1.) EE\_small\_80K or less = Energy Efficiency with Total projects cost of \$80,000 or less
- 2.) EE\_middle\_80K+-199K = Energy Efficiency with total project costs between \$80,001-199,999
- 3.) EE\_Large\_200k+ = Energy Efficiency with total projects costs of \$200,000 or more

- 4.) RE\_small\_80k\_less = Renewable Energy projects with total Project Cost of \$80K or less
- 5.) RE-middle\_80K+-199K = Renewable Energy projects with total projects costs between 80,001-199,999
- 6.) RE\_Large\_200k+ = Renewable Energy projects with total project costs of \$200,000 or more

Constructions costs incurred prior to the submission of a complete application & agency environmental review will not be considered.

It would be most helpful, while giving advice on realistic expectations of funding to have a working pipeline of potential applications per state. If you plan on submitting a REAP application for this upcoming funding cycle, please send an email to Anne Correia at [Anne.Correia@ma.usda.gov](mailto:Anne.Correia@ma.usda.gov) with the following:

- 1) State that the project located in
- 2) Name of applicant/organization
- 3) Amount or approx. range

This information is not public. It does not have to be exact, and you will not penalized if do not submit. A separate email will be sent when the REAP application deadline has been published. Please call USDA's RD Energy Coordinator if you have questions, Anne Correia, Energy Coordinator, BCP Specialist, Business & Cooperative Programs, Rural Development, USDA, West Wareham, MA. 508-295-5151 Ext. 3, [www.rurdev.usda.gov/ma](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ma).

### **MassCEC Announces Increased Incentives for Commonwealth Solar Hot Water Program**

Effective September 1, 2014, the cap for private sector commercial solar thermal hot water projects under MassCEC's Commonwealth Solar Hot Water Program will now be the lesser of \$100,000 or 40% of project cost, an increase from the former respective lesser of \$50,000 or 40% of project costs. This comes after MassCEC recently doubled their incentives for the solar system itself earlier this summer. With the new solar thermal alternative energy credits noted above and the current federal 30% investment tax credit due to expire December 31, 2016, now is a great time to consider implementing a solar thermal project on your farm. Please contact either Gerry Palano at MDAR at [Gerald.Palano@state.ma.us](mailto:Gerald.Palano@state.ma.us), 617-626-1706, or our MA Farm Energy Program at [info@massfarmenergy.com](mailto:info@massfarmenergy.com), 413-727-3090, if you are interested in developing a commercial solar thermal hot water project on your farm.

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## **The New England Farmers' Market Managers Professional Development Seminar**

**In conjunction with the Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show, Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge, MA**

**February 25, 2015, 8:30 am – 4:00 pm - Register here by Feb. 3 for early registration discount. Includes workshops, lunch and trade show**

Join market managers from across New England for hot topic discussions enlivened by peer wisdom: a time to share what's working and what's not and to take home new ideas to for your market.

## **SNAP/EBT Outreach Strategies**

Best practices for implementing SNAP at farmers' markets, including fundraising for match, community organizing, role of departments of health and human services and promotion and outreach. Learn what markets in our region, rural and urban are doing well and challenges to overcome.

## **Boost Your Sales in a SNAP!**

Taking SNAP (food stamp) benefits at your farm, farmstand or farmers' market can boost your sales and customer base as well as provide healthy, locally grown foods to the community. Beginning with the application process you'll learn about the latest innovations in the region as well as low-cost equipment options that you may qualify for that can allow you to not only process SNAP payments but also take credit and debit.

**Plain Talk About Insurance.** General Liability, Product Liability, and Directors and Officers Liability insurance: Navigating through liability insurance options can be daunting for even the most seasoned markets. Learn how these types of insurance differ, some guidelines for when each may be wise, and the questions to ask when making insurance policy decisions.

## **The Place of Farmers' Markets in Today's Local Food Landscape.**

Ever expanding local food purchasing options for consumers and local marketing options for vendors raises big questions about how farmers' market maintain relevancy. Managers share how they have strengthened their market's role in the local food marketplace along with insights and strategies for successfully competing for customers and vendors. What criteria would a market use in order to make a decision to close or stay open and change direction?

**Community Collaborations.** Explore ways in which farmers' markets around New England are benefiting from innovative collaborations with banks, Chambers of Commerce, hospitals, farm stands, CSA's, food co-ops and more to build traffic and sales.

Includes Trade Show and Networking Reception - Complete [conference agenda](#) can be found [here](#).

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## **Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show**



**New for 2015! - Visit The SNAP Resource Center at the Harvest New England Conference: One Stop Shopping for All Things SNAP!**

**Open in the trade show:** Wednesday: Noon – 7:00 pm and Thursday: 7:30 am – 3:15 pm

Visit the SNAP Resource Center located in the trade show at the Harvest New England Conference where you can meet

with representatives from USDA, MarketLink and state SNAP Representatives. Here you can:

- Get your farm, farm stand or farmers' market authorized for SNAP (formerly food stamps) and receive you FNS Number the very same day! USDA staff will be on site to walk you through the process and assist with your application.
- Find out about, and sign up for, low cost wireless equipment options to process SNAP payments (as well as credit/debit).
- Learn about other resources available.

If you intend on getting an FNS (SNAP) number, please bring copies of the following documents which will be attached to your application:

1. Picture ID (driver's license or passport)
2. Social Security Card (or other official document with your name and SSN)
3. Copy of voided check for bank account you will use to deposit funds

Questions, contact David Webber, 617-626-1754, [David.Webber@state.ma.us](mailto:David.Webber@state.ma.us).

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## MA Food Systems Planning Update

### Join a Working Group to affect change!

Phase II of the Massachusetts Food System Plan has been signed as a contract amendment between the facilitating entity, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and MDAR, on behalf of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. Two listening sessions are being planned for western Massachusetts, with details soon to be announced. The goal of the ongoing statewide initiative is to support increased consumption of Massachusetts agricultural and food products while preserving water and land resources, to support a strong, robust food system with less hunger, to provide more access to local and healthy foods, and to improve job and business opportunities.

Five Working Groups have been identified, offering an important opportunity to weigh in on what's happening in your local food system including on the farm, the food processing arena, in your community with food access and security and any other food system issue. These Working Groups are a platform to share what is being done well, challenges, and suggestions to improve our food system. **Your input is important** to better understand the major strengths and obstacles in Massachusetts and the region, and to support the development of a well-informed plan for the Massachusetts Food System going forward.

#### I. **Production:**

Agricultural and fisheries groups comprise the four Production sub-groups. Each Working Group will meet independently to discuss relevant issues. Then the four sub-groups will be brought together by the Production Working Groups leads to discuss cross-sectoral issues, and develop recommendations for coordination, synergy, and policy. Co Leads to contact: Cris Coffin, American Farmland Trust, [ccoffin@farmland.org](mailto:ccoffin@farmland.org), and

Brad Mitchell, Mass Farm Bureau, [brad@mfbf.net](mailto:brad@mfbf.net). A meeting for the Production and Land Access Working Groups is scheduled January 15, 10 -1: Charlton Public Library.

- a) Farming: Land-based agricultural production that includes fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy.
- b) Urban Agriculture: Land access and tenure, site remediation, innovations in production, production best practices, regulatory challenges and models, workforce training, business planning and marketing, community and back-yard food gardens. Lead contact: Ruth Goldman, Merck Family Foundation, [rgoldman@merckff.org](mailto:rgoldman@merckff.org). A meeting is scheduled January 27, 10:00 am - 12:30 pm, (snow date: February 2, 9:00 am – 12 noon): Charlton Public Library.
- c) Land Access and Management: Land availability and land management practices such as the use of preservation restrictions, zoning/regulations, land access and transfer, etc.
- d) Fisheries: Fresh and near-shore salt water fish, shellfish and land-based aquaculture with a focus on increasing local market opportunities and consumption. Lead contact is being identified.

## **II. Processing:**

Food processing, animal slaughter, bottling, packing facilities and services, as well as commercial kitchens, food business incubators, and food hubs will be discussed. Lead contact: Nico Lustig, Western MA Food Processing Center Processing, [nicol@fccdc.org](mailto:nicol@fccdc.org).

## **III. Wholesale and Retail Distribution:**

Industries activities that support the movement of food products at wholesale and retail levels, including transportation, warehousing, and aggregation and distribution, as well as the distribution to grocery stores, restaurants, farmers' markets, CSA programs and on-line food purchasing platforms will be addressed. This Working Group may also focus on wholesale and consumer demand for Massachusetts-produced food products and marketing opportunities. Lead contact: Jeff Cole, Federation of Mass. Farmers Markets, [jeff@massfarmersmarkets.org](mailto:jeff@massfarmersmarkets.org).

## **IV. Food Access and Consumption / Hunger Relief and Public Health:**

Public health, food accessibility and affordability for individuals and families, hunger relief, transportation, demand for culturally appropriate food and the need for increased food preparation and preserving skills at the individual consumer level will be discussed. Lead contact: Jessica del Rosario, Mass Convergence, [idelrosario@hria.org](mailto:idelrosario@hria.org).

## **V. Inputs, Waste, and Nutrient Management:**

Agricultural inputs including land, water, energy, soil, agricultural supplies (seeds and feeds), on-farm equipment, machinery and other infrastructure, residential and municipal organic waste production and opportunities for organics waste recycling and renewable energy production are the topics. Co Lead contacts: Lorenzo Macaluso, Center For Eco-Technology, [lorenzo.macaluso@cetonline.org](mailto:lorenzo.macaluso@cetonline.org), and Jennifer Rushlow, Conservation Law Foundation, [jrushlow@clf.org](mailto:jrushlow@clf.org).

For more information on the Massachusetts Food Systems Planning, check the MAPC website, [www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org), and MDAR's website: [www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/boards-commissions/food-policy-council.html](http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/boards-commissions/food-policy-council.html). For questions, contact Bonita Oehlke, [bonita.oehlke@state.ma.us](mailto:bonita.oehlke@state.ma.us).

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## Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) – Request for Feedback

Every year the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requests proposals for the Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) from eligible state agencies to research and explore new market opportunities for US food and agricultural products. This grant provides an opportunity to develop partnerships between relevant stakeholders to address key challenges facing the Massachusetts agricultural industry.

If you have an idea for a project, or if you are facing a particular challenge that you believe is shared by other growers or producers in your commodity group, please contact your agricultural association directly. For more information on the Federal State Marketing Improvement Program, and to view previously funded projects, visit [www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/FSMIP](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/FSMIP). You can also contact Rebecca Davidson at 617-626-1744, or by email [Rebecca.Davidson@state.ma.us](mailto:Rebecca.Davidson@state.ma.us), if you have any thoughts or questions.

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## MA ROPS is Up and Running

The Massachusetts [Rollover Protective Structure Program \(ROPS\)](#) is a PILOT Program designed to assist farmers in installing rollbars by offering a rebate of 70% of costs up to \$865. With the help of the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine & Health, MDAR is pleased to introduce a Tractor Rollbar Rebate Program for Massachusetts. This Pilot Program has limited funds, but we hope to assist in retrofitting 28 to 35 tractors with rollbars in 2015. Participants in the ROPS program will be chosen in a first come first served manner.

How the ROPS Rebate Program works for Massachusetts:

All participants must apply on-line at [www.ropsr4u.com](http://www.ropsr4u.com) or by calling the ROPS Hotline (1-877-ROPS-R4U or 1-877-767-7748). ROPS Hotline staff will provide estimated costs as well as sources for purchasing certified ROPS. Prior to ordering, participants must call for Pre-approval. Pre-approval is required to ensure funds are available. We do not guarantee the rebate until approval is given. This effectively helps us to track how much money is spent, promised out, got left, etc. Once Pre-approval is given, the participant may order the ROPS and then must re-contact the ROPS Hotline staff (within a day or two) to confirm where they ordered and what the estimated price is. [Flyer and complete details here.](#)

Contacts: Barbara Bayes - ROPS Hotline (1-877-ROPS-R4U or 1-877-767-7748), [bbayes@nycamh.com](mailto:bbayes@nycamh.com), Bob Rondeau, MDAR, 617-626-1804, [robert.rondeau@state.ma.us](mailto:robert.rondeau@state.ma.us).

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## Central Mass Grown – Sign up for New Directory

[Central Mass Grown](#) is a new initiative, born out of the need to highlight the farms of Central Massachusetts. Our organization's mission is to promote the purchase of local agricultural products and to foster education about the benefits to health, community, economy, and environment. We invite you to join us as part of **Central Mass Grown**. (Take a look at the website to see what farms, restaurants, markets and organizations, have already enrolled.!!!) Big farmer, little farmer, wood lot owner, bee keeper, herb grower? Farm stand operator, local restaurant owner, community grocery store owner? Country club restaurant chef, short order cook at the local diner, high end restaurant or local pizza house owner? Baker at the corner shop, or someone who just likes good local food and wants to support the local producers? From Harvard to Hardwick and Southbridge to Winchendon, we are already over 120 members and growing each day!

\*Forms received by January 31<sup>st</sup> will be included in the first print **Central Mass Grown** Directory. Advertising opportunities are available (enrollment fee included). To join, visit [centralmassgrown.org/online-enrollment-form-woofu/](http://centralmassgrown.org/online-enrollment-form-woofu/).

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments. We would welcome the opportunity to make a brief presentation to your business association, chamber of commerce, agricultural commission, Grange, or other clubs and associations.

Locally Grown in the Heart of the Commonwealth [www.centralmassgrown.org](http://www.centralmassgrown.org). Like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/centralmassgrown): [www.facebook.com/centralmassgrown](https://www.facebook.com/centralmassgrown), Follow us on Twitter: @CentralMAGrown

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## Minimum Wage Changes

Reminder that the minimum wage for agricultural employees in Massachusetts increases to \$8.00 per hour, effective January 1, 2015.

As you know, agricultural employers are required to pay the higher of either the federal minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour) or state agricultural minimum wage (\$1.60 per hour). As part of the legislation enacted into law last June An Act Restoring the Minimum Wage and Providing Unemployment Insurance Reforms, Massachusetts' minimum wage rate for agricultural employees will rise to \$8.00 per hour and this will be the new minimum hourly rate for agricultural employees.

According to Massachusetts law ([General Laws Chapter 151, §2A](#)), work on a farm and the growing and harvesting of agricultural, floricultural and horticultural commodities requires payment of no less than \$8.00 per hour as of January 1, 2015, except when such a wage is paid to a child seventeen years of age or under, or to a parent, spouse, child or other member of the employer's immediate family.

For further information regarding the Massachusetts state minimum wage, please visit [www.mass.gov/dols/mw](http://www.mass.gov/dols/mw).

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## Exporting Plant Materials from Massachusetts

One of the roles of the Inspection Services of MDAR's [Crop & Pest Service Division](#) is to help companies and individuals export plant materials throughout the world. A cooperative agreement with USDA APHIS Plant Protection & Quarantine allows for MDAR employees (currently 4) to be licensed as Federal-State Cooperators to inspect, verify, and certify shipments of everything from seeds to lumber. In 2014 MDAR inspectors have issued 748 Federal Phytosanitary Certificates for export to 44 different countries. Canada is by far our number one trade partner for export of plant materials, followed by the Netherlands, China, Korea, and Germany.

MDAR inspectors also issued 626 Massachusetts Phytosanitary Certificates for inter-state commerce in 2014. The majority of these certificates are issued for nursery stock going to Western states. The goal of the Department is to continue assisting companies in identifying export requirements, and providing services that will facilitate the movement of quality products.

For information on interstate shipping requirements of plant materials: <http://nationalplantboard.org/laws-and-regulations/>. For information on exports: [www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth).

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## New Berkshire County Grant Program Aids Farm Transfer and Farmland Access

To help farm families concerned with farm transfer and farmland access, American Farmland Trust announced recently funding for Berkshire County farmers and farmland owners to defray some of the associated costs with these issues. The John P. Farkas Fund will offer grants up to \$2500 to help defray the costs of professional services associated with:

- Farm transfer and succession planning
- Farmland protection
- Selling or leasing farmland to a farmer
- Farm business planning associated with any of the above

More information, including the grant guidelines and a formal application, is available at [www.berkshirefarmland.org](http://www.berkshirefarmland.org). For a paper copy of the application and grant guidelines, contact Peggy McCabe at American Farmland Trust. (413) 586-9330 , ext. 17 or at [pmccabe@farmland.org](mailto:pmccabe@farmland.org).

**Applications are due by January 31, 2015.** The John P. Farkas Fund is administered by American Farmland Trust, in collaboration with Land For Good, Berkshire Grown, The Carrot Project, and Sheffield Land Trust. This grant program is part of the Berkshire Farmland Initiative, which grew out of a three-year agricultural planning effort in Berkshire County. The Berkshire Farmland Initiative will: provide direct assistance and resources to farm families for farm succession planning and farm transfer strategies; help connect farmers and farmland owners seeking to sell or lease land with new and established farmers seeking to rent or buy; and develop a

network of partners who can assess landowner and farmer needs and help direct individuals and families to the appropriate resources.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS / WORKSHOPS

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### Regional Agricultural Commission Meetings

#### January 14

Worcester County Regional Gathering: 6:30 pm, Westminster Police & Fire Safety Building, 7 South Street, Westminster, MA, 2nd floor conference room. Contact: Lisa Trotto, NRCS-CD, [lisa.trotto@ma.usda.gov](mailto:lisa.trotto@ma.usda.gov). Hosted by the Westminster AgCom and NRCS-CD.

#### January 31

Pittsfield Regional Roundtable: 10 am to 1 pm, Berkshire Athenaeum Central Library, 1 Wendell Avenue, Pittsfield, MA, contact: Pete Westover, [westover03@comcast.net](mailto:westover03@comcast.net). Hosted by the Great Barrington AgCom, Berkshire Grown, Pittsfield AgCom, Sheffield AgCom, Williamstown AgCom and MAAC.

#### February 21

Cape & Islands AgCom Gathering: 10 am to 3 pm, Barnstable County Fairgrounds, 1220 Nathan Ellis Highway (Rte. 151) East Falmouth, MA 02536. Contact: Leslie Spencer, [leslie.skyfield@gmail.com](mailto:leslie.skyfield@gmail.com)) Hosted by the Barnstable County AgCom.

#### \*February 25

MAAC Annual Meeting at the Harvest New England Conference, held during lunch break, Sturbridge Host Hotel, 366 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566. Full day track of ag commission related sessions, along with annual meeting.

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## CISA (Community Involved In Sustaining Agriculture) Offers Two Marketing Workshop Series

### Advanced Marketing Workshops

The three sessions below will be targeted toward providing attendees with skills needed to leave class and develop a comprehensive marketing plan. Local hero members receive a discounted rate of \$35 for the three-part series, or \$15 for each individual session. The cost for non-members for all three sessions is \$45, or \$18 for individual sessions. Each class includes dinner. Register online at [buylocalfood.org](http://buylocalfood.org). For more information, contact Devon Whitney-Deal at 413-665-7100, ext. 22 or email [devon@buylocalfood.org](mailto:devon@buylocalfood.org).

**Strategic Marketing**, January 21, 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm, The Food Bank of W. MA, 97 North Hatfield Rd, Hatfield  
Is your marketing strategy "we sell whatever we have to anyone that will buy it"? Learn how a focused strategy and specific efforts can reduce your marketing labor needs and make every step count. If you want to sharpen and focus your marketing skills or just don't know where to begin developing a marketing plan, Matt LeRoux from Cornell Cooperative Extension is here to help you get started! Learn how to develop a marketing strategy around your core customers and how to develop communications based on this strategy, including customized special offers/promotions.

**Evaluating Market Channels and Setting Prices** - February 11, 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm, The Food Bank of W. MA, 97 North Hatfield Rd, Hatfield

This session will teach farmers how to evaluate market opportunities in different marketing channels and then to develop product pricing for each channel. Matt LeRoux from Cornell Cooperative Extension will cover practical methods to set the right pricing for your farm and market. Farmers will be better prepared to make informed decisions about setting prices (volume vs. niche, specializing vs. diversifying, etc.) and adjusting prices for different markets (What are the types?, Which are most effective?). Other topics include whether loss leaders or special sales are a good idea for your farm, and how to manage promotions.

**Market Research: Identifying your Customers** - March 11, 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm, The Food Bank of W. MA, 97 North Hatfield Rd, Hatfield

This advanced workshop will walk through the process of identifying your farm business' target audience and help you develop a clear understanding of your customer's perception of your brand. Attendees will break into small groups and "workshop" different farm target audiences. The class will also provide tools to assist farmers in completing their own market research with "core customers" (ideas for identifying top customers, sample interview questions for top 10 customers, etc.).

## **Branding & Communications Strategies Workshop Series**

This seven workshop series will provide farmers and business owners with effective communication strategies and one-on-one support to implement and improve direct marketing communications. Examples in the workshops will be farm related, but the skills and methodology will be relevant to all businesses. Participation in the whole series is encouraged, and to be eligible for free one-on-one support, you must attend a minimum of four workshops. Dinner will be served at each session. The cost to attend the series is \$80 for Local Hero members, or \$15 each for individual workshops. The non-member fee is \$100 for the series, or \$18 each for individual workshops. Register online at [buylocalfood.org](http://buylocalfood.org) or contact Devon Whitney-Deal at [devon@buylocalfood.org](mailto:devon@buylocalfood.org) or 413-665-7100.

- **Introduction to Brand Communications** - January 28
- **Media Communications: Creating a Press Release & Farm Story** - February 4
- **Writing for Electronic Communications** - February 12
- **Print Design and Critique** - February 18
- **Website Design and Development** - March 4
- **Place of Sale Design/Merchandising** - March 12
- **Branding Communications Curbside 1x1 Final Session**, March 25

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## MA Flower Growers (MFGA) Winter Meeting

**January 27 - King Farm Inc., 15 Scales Lane, Townsend, MA**

**MA Flower Growers (MFGA) holds its annual one day Winter Meeting** for members and non-members. Always include prominent speakers within the industry and provide a few workshops. Pesticide credits are available. [Updates here.](#)

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## Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Training Program

**January 27 - MA Farm Bureau Federation Office, Marlboro, 10 am - 4 pm**

UMass Extension and the MDAR are pleased to present a Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Training Program for growers and other fresh produce handlers. The key presenter for the training is A. Richard Bonanno, Ph.D., Extension Educator with UMass Extension. Registration cost is \$50.00 for the first person, and additional employees are \$10.00. [Details and registration here](#), or contact Doreen York at 413-545-2254, or email at [dyork@umext.umass.edu](mailto:dyork@umext.umass.edu).

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## Free Informational Session for Farmers, Food Entrepreneurs and Lawyers

**January 28 - Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 60 Congress Street, Springfield, MA, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm**

Info for Lawyers: 6:00 - 6:45 pm | Info for Farmers: 7:15 pm – 8 pm

Light snacks and drinks will be available to all from 6:45-7:15pm. Learn how the Legal Services Food Hub is connecting farmers and food entrepreneurs with pro bono legal help – and how local lawyers can get involved.

- Learn how the Hub works
- Meet lawyers and farmers who have benefited from its services
- Find out how farmers & food entrepreneurs might get assistance
- Learn how lawyers can join this growing network

RSVP to Molly Norton, [mnorton@clf.or](mailto:mnorton@clf.or) or 617-850-1771. Can't attend this event? Join us in Worcester on February 10 at the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission from 6:00 – 8:00 pm. Visit [www.legalservicesfoodhub.org](http://www.legalservicesfoodhub.org) to learn more.

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# Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom Sponsors 14th Winter Conference

**March 7 - The Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School, Palmer, MA**

[Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom](#) is sponsoring their 14<sup>th</sup> Statewide Winter Conference for all teachers on Saturday, March 7, 2015 from 9 am to 3:30 pm. Titled "*Growing Minds Through Massachusetts Agriculture*," the conference offers educational and networking resources, activity ideas and framework connections that can facilitate and enhance pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade classroom teachers alike and help bring agriculture to the classroom.

Registration and more information at

[www.aginclassroom.org/Conferences Workshops/Annual Winter Conference/annual\\_winter\\_conference.html](http://www.aginclassroom.org/Conferences_Workshops/Annual_Winter_Conference/annual_winter_conference.html).

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## USDA NEWS

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### **IMPORTANT REMINDER: Jan. 14 is Application Deadline for Expanded Protection for Eligible Fruit, Vegetable and Other Specialty Crop Growers**

#### ***Free Basic Coverage Plans and Premium Discounts Available for New, Underserved and Limited Income Farmers***

Greater protection is now available from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for crops that traditionally have been ineligible for federal crop insurance. The new options, created by the 2014 Farm Bill, provide greater coverage for losses when natural disasters affect specialty crops such as vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, and energy crops. Previously, the program offered coverage at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. Producers can now choose higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price.

The expanded protection will be especially helpful to beginning and traditionally underserved producers, as well as farmers with limited resources, who will receive fee waivers and premium reductions for expanded coverage. More crops are now eligible for the program, including expanded aquaculture production practices, and sweet and biomass sorghum. For the first time, a range of crops used to produce bioenergy will be eligible as well.

To help producers learn more about the NAP and how it can help them, USDA, in partnership with Michigan State University and the University of Illinois, created an online resource. The Web tool, available at [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap), allows producers to determine whether their crops are eligible for coverage. It also gives them an opportunity to explore a variety of options and levels to determine the best protection level for

their operation. If the application deadline for an eligible crop has already passed, producers will have until Jan. 14, 2015, to choose expanded coverage through NAP.

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## 2014 Farm Bill Risk Management Program Changes That May Affect You

The 2014 Farm Bill made several important changes that may affect your 2015 risk management plans. This farm bill expanded options available to Massachusetts farmers to cover their production and market risk.

Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program(NAP) sold by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) now has buy up provisions as follows:

In addition to the service fee, producers who elect buy-up coverage must pay a premium equal to the lesser of:

- 5.25% of the guarantee
- 5.25% of the payment limit

FSA will waive NAP service fees and reduce buy-up premiums by 50% for:

- Beginning farmers (BF)
- Limited resource farmers (LR)
- Historically Underserved farmers

The net results are that farmers can enroll at the minimum coverage level for free and if they choose buy-up coverage it cost them less than 3 cents for each dollar of protection. Payment limitation has been increased from \$100,000 to \$125,000. The sales closing date for 2015 aquaculture and perennial crops has passed, however FSA will give producers a 60 day window to purchase buy up coverage after the final rules are published in the federal register. The sales closing date for annual crops is March 15, 2015.

### Federal Crop Insurance

The 2014 farm bill created a Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) to replace the Adjusted Gross Revenue policies. WFRP will allow growers to insure their revenue from income losses related to natural disasters and/or market fluctuations. Beginning farmers will receive 10 percentage points of additional subsidy to reduce their premiums (Policy fees are also waived). The Risk Management Agency (RMA) considers individuals with less than 5 years of experience as beginning farmers.

Crop and insurance and NAP can provide meaningful protection for almost any crops that farmers grow. They will provide financial assurance to your business plan when disasters occur. Contact your FSA office or a crop insurance agent before the enrollment deadlines. UMass Extension works in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) to educate Massachusetts producers about Federal Crop Insurance and Risk Management Programs. For more information, please visit [www.rma.usda.gov](http://www.rma.usda.gov) or contact UMass Risk Management Specialists Paul Russell at [pmrrussell@umext.umass.edu](mailto:pmrrussell@umext.umass.edu) or Tom Smiarowski at [tsmiarowski@umext.umass.edu](mailto:tsmiarowski@umext.umass.edu).

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## Briefs / Classified / Job Opportunities

- **New Book - *Food, Farms, and Community Exploring Food Systems*** - By Lisa Chase and Vern Grubinger. *How food systems reflect our values and contribute to our economy, environment, and culture.* Throughout the United States, people are increasingly concerned about where their food comes from, how it is produced, and how its production affects individuals and their communities. The answers to these questions reveal a complex web of interactions. While

large, distant farms and multinational companies dominate at national and global levels, innovative programs including farmers’ markets, farm-to- school initiatives, and agritourism are forging stronger connections between people and food at local and regional levels. At all levels of the food system, energy use, climate change, food safety, and the maintenance of farmland for the future are critical considerations. The need to understand food systems—what they are, who’s involved, and how they work (or don’t)—has never been greater. ***Food, Farms, and Community: Exploring Food Systems*** takes an in-depth look at critical issues, successful programs, and challenges for improving food systems spanning a few miles to a few thousand miles. Case studies that delve into the values that drive farmers, food advocates, and food entrepreneurs are interwoven with analysis supported by the latest research. Examples of entrepreneurial farms and organizations working together to build sustainable food systems are relevant to the entire country—and reveal results that are about much more than fresh food. **Details here** or call to order at 800-421-1561.

- **Artisanal Cheese Production Company looking for Ambassador of Cheese (Springfield MA )** - The Ambassador of Cheese will support the development of a new artisanal cheese making company. The ideal candidate will help launch and steer the company's growth, coordinate and oversee discrete facets of its operations, and help ensure that the company reaches its full potential. The position will also act as the day-to-day point person and be one of the key public faces of the company. **More here.**

**How to Place a Classified Ad:** Classified ads/Briefs are accepted free-of charge on a first-come basis. Be sure to include a phone number. No display ads will be accepted. Only one ad per business/individual per issue, unless space permits. Ads may run in consecutive issues, space permitting. Ads must be of interest to Massachusetts farmers. The Massachusetts Dept. of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) reserves the right to refuse any listing it deems inappropriate for publication. E-mail, fax or mail ads to: *Farm & Market Report*, MDAR, 251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114, fax: 617-626-1850, [Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us).

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**MDAR**

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Next issue to be published for February / March. Please send news, calendar and/or classified information by February 2 to [Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us). To unsubscribe or change your address, send an e-mail message to [Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us) or call 617-626-1759.

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\*For our ongoing list of events and workshops, visit and bookmark:  
[www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/events/](http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/events/).

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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](http://mass.gov/agr), and/or follow at [twitter.com/MDARCommish](https://twitter.com/MDARCommish).