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October 8, 2015

October / November Farm and Market

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COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Perhaps there will be Indian Summer this year, but the change in weather from summer to fall to date has been a very quick one.

The first item I'd like to call to your attention is the very real possibility that Massachusetts may see during this fall and winter incidents of a very severe strain of Avian Influenza (AI) affecting all components of the bird population, both wild and domestic. This disease significantly impacted domestic poultry and wild fowl in twenty-one western and central states last winter and spring. It spreads very quickly and strikes suddenly. There is no other way to say it:

though AI has not been found to affect people, it is deadly to many domestic poultry species. It is believed that AI moves in a variety of ways; this fall/winter are highly probable timeframes for AI to affect Massachusetts and the Eastern US because of the migration patterns of wild birds, particularly water fowl.

MDAR has been working for several months with a wide range of state and federal partners to prepare the necessary response to an outbreak. The overarching goal is to prevent any outbreak from rapidly spreading throughout the thousands of flocks in the state.

To accomplish that, we need your help. I ask everyone who raises poultry to do the following:

- Prevent wild birds from mixing with your flock.
- Avoid unnecessary movement of poultry between different locations.
- Keep newly acquired birds or those returning from fairs or shows isolated for at least one month.
- Limit who has access to your flock.
- Do not share any equipment with other bird owners without thoroughly disinfecting before transferring. Better still-refrain from sharing in the immediate future.
- Think about biosecurity, make your own written plan, and follow it routinely.

To everyone who receives this Farm and Market Report, whether or not you keep birds, please encourage every poultry raiser you know to subscribe as we will email important notifications whenever necessary. Notices will also be posted at the MDAR website. The most current detailed notice is at www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/news/extras/2015/ai-awareness-10-2-15.pdf. **Any unusual, unexplained or unexpected bird mortality or other signs should be reported immediately to MDAR Animal Health (617-626-1795) for domestic flocks or the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (508-389-6300) for wild birds.**

Mark your calendar (and spread the word!) to attend the public release of the draft **Massachusetts Food Systems Plan on Food Day** at the State House on Friday, October 23,

9AM - 1 PM.

The Massachusetts Food Policy Council, MDAR and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) invite you to attend the public release of the draft Massachusetts Food Systems Plan on Friday, October 23 in conjunction with a celebration of Food Day at the State House. The Food Systems Plan is very relevant and deserves your attention. The 1974 Plan introduced two concepts that developed into elements of Mass. Agriculture that remain essential forty years later: the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program and the Massachusetts Grown and Fresher brand. Now everyone has a first-hand opportunity to interact with topic experts and provide feedback on a variety of the 2015 MA Food Systems Plan goals. October 23 is the beginning of a two week public open-comment period.

Learn more about the Food Policy Council at www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/boards-commissions/food-policy-council.html and the Food Plan itself at www.mafoodplan.org/.

We hit the road pretty hard in August and September. My first “official” visit to Berkshire County was in August at the 75th Anniversary of Berkshire County 4-H Fair in Pittsfield. It is our oldest 4-H fair and I was happy to help recognize 4-H member Henry Cadorette, III for all his efforts. There is ongoing fundraising to maintain and improve the fairgrounds. Anyone interested may donate through the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation at their [website](#).

I was happy to see the Dairy Industry well represented at the GENYOUth Massachusetts Youth Empowerment Town Hall at Tufts University in Medford. Hosted by New England Dairy and Food Council and ChildObesity180, the event supports local efforts to address nutrition and physical activity challenges in Massachusetts schools - and works to empower youth as stewards of their own healthy, high-achieving futures. I was very impressed by the work that so many of our young people have put into this program.

Later in August, I had a Cranberry Industry “doubleheader”: the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association Summer Meeting and the Cranberry Oversight Committee meeting, both on the same day in Plympton. Though not officially on the clock until the following Monday, MDAR Assistant Commissioner Jason Wentworth joined me at the CCCGA meeting and we made the rounds speaking to the growers.

Speaking of new hires, I’m pleased to announce that we have a new Chief Apiary Inspector! Dr. Kim Skyrms joins MDAR with a very impressive resume in both the academic world and in the practical world of apiculture. Kim has been meeting with beekeepers by means of individual visits and attending beekeeper association meetings. She is actively surveying the landscape and starting to consider how MDAR can be most effective and helpful in this very important element of our agriculture.

Participating in 31st Annual Massachusetts Tomato Contest was great fun! At its new fabulous location, in the Kitchen of the Boston Public Market, teams of judges evaluated beautiful tomatoes on both flavor and appearance. Congratulations to the winners: MacArthur Farm, Holliston

(Slicing); Dancing Bear Farm, Leyden (Cherry); Red Fire Farm, Granby (Heirloom); and Langwater Farm, N. Easton (Heaviest, at 2.46 lbs.) and to all who participated and attended.

A week or so in late August we were on quite a roll! Friday, a visit to the Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Fair and farm tours; Monday, a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) event at the Truro Farmers Market; Tuesday, Congressman Jim McGovern's tours of Worcester County farms; Wednesday, the Board of Agriculture's farm tours in Pioneer Valley; Thursday, the Marshfield Fair; Friday, the Middlesex County 4-H Fair in Westford; Saturday, the Worcester County 4-H Fair in Spencer, the Farm Fresh Festival at Mt. Wachusett in Princeton, the Shelburne Grange Fair, the Cummington Fair; and the 300th Anniversary of the Shepard Family's Elm View Farm in Warren!

MDAR staff and I enjoyed a fascinating tour of the apple processing facilities at JP Sullivan & Co. in Ayer and Fairview Orchard in Groton to kick off Apple Season! Governor Baker issued a proclamation designating September as Apple Month! Next stop was a beautiful Saturday at the Spencer Fair.

Later in September, MDAR moved into high gear at the Big E in West Springfield. As the agency that manages the Massachusetts Building and arranges the Massachusetts Day ceremonies, MDAR staff needs to be present throughout the entire seventeen day fair, plus set up and teardown. Staff escorted Governor Baker through the Building; I did likewise with Lieutenant Governor Polito; Secretary Beaton joined us for Massachusetts Day! It was a very successful 2015 Big E with over 1.3 million attendees! I want to thank MDAR staff for the great job it did in West Springfield: Building Managers Director of Agricultural Markets Mary Jordan and Marketing Specialist Howie Vinton, onsite manager Steve Quinn, the entire Ag Market team, and all the MDAR staffers who volunteered to take a shift at the MDAR booth. Dairy Inspector Sheila Phelon and I took the afternoon/evening shift the last Saturday of the fair and enjoyed interacting with many booth visitors (and enjoyed some people watching, too).

During the Big E period there were also presentations to the Southern New England American Planning Association in Hartford and the Waltham Rotary Club and a trip to the Topsfield Fair. On an absolutely gorgeous day, I attended the 100th Anniversary Celebration of Bigelow Nurseries at its Boylston Farm. My family's business and Bigelow's were almost immediately adjacent to each other and our families have been friends for decades, so it was a real treat to attend on behalf of MDAR!

I hope everyone has time to enjoy another New England Autumn. As we displayed on our sign, "Our Leaves are Falling for You!"

John



John Lebeaux, Commissioner



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FOREFRONT

Attention Poultry Producers and Backyard Poultry Owners

Tuesday, October 13, 6:00 pm, MDAR conference room, 101 University Drive, Suite C4, Amherst. The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) will host an informational forum on High Path Avian Influenza (HPAI). Presenters: Dr. Lorraine O'Connor, MDAR Chief Veterinarian Health Officer, Dr. Lauren Harris & Lech Szkudlarek, USDA – APHIS.

MDAR & APHIS are seeking to educate poultry owners about the risk HPAI poses to their birds in hopes that owners will take every precaution to prevent their flocks from being exposed. Additionally, we want poultry owners to understand what will happen if their flock becomes infected.

Wednesday, October 14, 6:00-8:00 pm, Eloranta Room, Forbush Memorial Library, Westminister. Westminister's Agricultural Commission presents "Keeping your Backyard Poultry Safe in the Age of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)" - Come and learn about Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and become proactive about keeping your flocks healthy. If you have backyard flocks of any common domestic birds – chickens, ducks and/or turkeys then you **NEED TO KNOW** about this! Free and Open to the Public. For more information and to RSVP (for handouts): Contact M.L. Altobelli: altobelliml260@comcast.net and put "backyard" in the subject line.

Questions specifically about your bird's health should be directed to Esther Wegman, Animal Health, 617- 626-1795. RSVP and/or questions about the forum to Julia Grimaldi, 617-626-1763, julia.grimaldi@state.ma.us.

Other resources:

- Oct. 2 Release: [Avian Influenza Alert: Backyard Bird Biosecurity and Illness Reporting](#)

- [Avian Influenza Information](#)
- [FAQ about Avian Flu](#)
- USDA: [Bio-security for Birds](#)

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Draft MA Food System Plan to be Unveiled on Food Day, October 23, at the State House, Boston



The Massachusetts Food Policy Council and Chair Commissioner John Lebeaux, (MDAR) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) will publicly release the draft Massachusetts Food Systems Plan on Friday, October 23 in conjunction with a celebration

of Food Day. Matthew Beaton, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs will kick off the program.

This exciting event will offer a first-hand opportunity to interact with topic experts and provide feedback on a variety of the MA Food Systems goals. October 23 is the beginning of a two week public open-comment period. Goals and strategies of the MA Food Plan will be discussed including to:

- Increase production, sales and consumption of Massachusetts-grown foods;
- Create jobs and economic opportunity in food and farming, and improve the wages and skills of food system workers;
- Protect the land and water needed to produce food, maximize the environmental benefits from agriculture and fishing, and ensure food safety; and
- Reduce hunger and food insecurity, increase the availability of fresh, healthy food to all residents, and reduce food waste.

The program will begin at the Boston State House, 2nd floor Grand staircase and Nurses Hall (9:30 – 11:30 am) and will feature an opportunity to interact with topic experts as part of the public release of draft MA Food Systems Plan at the State House. Then a discussion at the Boston Public Market KITCHEN's "Let's Talk About Food" will follow from 12 – 1 pm.

The MA Food Plan will be available at www.mafoodplan.org for comments. Over the past two years, more than 1,000 people have been involved, with input from growers, food processors, consumers, food and agricultural organizations and advocates.

The Massachusetts Food Policy Council with support from MDAR and the MAPC has facilitated the development of the draft MA Food Plan in collaboration with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Franklin Regional Council of Government, and the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance.

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New Plant Nutrient Regulations

New Plant Nutrient Regulations (333 CMR 31.00) were promulgated and published on June 5, 2015. The Department developed these regulations in response to “An Act Relative to the Regulation of Plant Nutrients” (Act) passed by Massachusetts Legislature in 2012. The regulations ensure that plant nutrients are applied in an effective manner to provide sufficient nutrients for maintaining healthy agricultural and non-agricultural land, including turf and lawns, while minimizing the impacts of the nutrients on surface and ground water resources to protect human health and the environment.

The Act and regulations establish standards for the applications of plant nutrients to agricultural land and non-agricultural turf and lawns. The regulations for non-agricultural turf and lawns became effective on June 5, 2015. The regulations for agricultural land will become effective on November 5, 2015.

The Department is developing outreach and educational materials to assist agricultural producers, turf professionals and homeowners with the implementation and compliance with these regulations. **Information, resources, and FAQ’s are now available on MDAR’s [website](#).** The Department will also provide outreach at various agricultural events and meetings. If individuals or groups are interested in meeting with Department representatives for more information, training, education, or outreach, please contact Taryn LaScola, Taryn.Lascola@state.ma.us. For technical questions regarding the regulations, please contact Hotze Wijnja, Hotze.Wijnja@state.ma.us, 617-626-1771.

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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. 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 or call 413-727-3090. We look forward to hearing from you!

USDA REAP Workshops and New Fiscal Year Grant Deadlines

Upcoming Deadlines - The next REAP application deadline for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency grants and loan guarantees is October 31, for all grant requests of \$20,000 or less. The next REAP application deadline will be April 30, 2016 for all grant requests.

Workshop

Interested in grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy for your farm? Think about applying to REAP! [Rural Energy in America Program](#)

- **October 9** – 10am - 1pm, UMass Cranberry Station, 1 State Bog Road, East Wareham, MA 02538

Anne Correia of the U.S. Department of Agriculture will provide an overview of REAP grant guidelines and application requirements for farms, developers and grant writers interested in applying for assistance with installing energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements. There will also be a step by step walkthrough of a sample application to give specific guidance to farmers and grant writers. This is intended to educate farmers, project developers and grant writers about REAP's offerings and the application process, which has recently changed.

Additionally, representatives from the Massachusetts Farm Energy Program will speak on the recent USDA RBDG grant award they received to provide technical assistance for REAP grant writing, as well as give insight on how the process will work for the upcoming REAP deadline.

To pre-register or receive further information, please contact Megan Denardo at the Massachusetts Farm Energy Program (MFEP) at 413-727-3090 or megan.denardo@cetonline.org.

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Fall Clean Up: a Good Time to Check for Asian Longhorned Beetle and Other Wood-boring Pests

The Massachusetts Introduced Pest Outreach Project wants to remind everyone that as trees lose their leaves, it becomes easier to spot the signs of an Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) infestation. Consider setting aside a few minutes during this year's fall clean up to check your trees for signs of ALB and other wood-boring insects. A guide to tree damage and a list of ALB host trees can be found at massnrc.org/pests/albdocs/ALBtreeguide.pdf. The Massachusetts Asian Longhorned Beetle Cooperative Eradication Program continues its efforts to eradicate the beetle from Worcester County, but also relies on reports from the public. Suspicious sightings of beetles or tree damage

should be reported by calling 508-852-8090 or visiting this website:

massnrc.org/pests/albreport.aspx. For additional information on other invasive forest pests in Massachusetts, please visit: massnrc.org/pests/index.htm.

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Boston Public Market Offers Vendor Opportunities



The Boston Public Market opened its doors in July 2015 with nearly 40 local vendors offering fresh food from Massachusetts and New England. With thousands of excited, eager customers each day and room to grow, the Market is looking for additional permanent vendors offering fresh produce, grains and legumes, mushrooms, and other grocery items.

During the holiday season, the Market will also open spaces to seasonal purveyors who bring products that round out a holiday table, such as cranberries, pies, and other baked goods. In keeping with the Market's mission, all vendors' products must be grown, raised, landed, or produced in Massachusetts or New England. Contact Tiffani Emig for details at temig@bostonpublicmarket.org.

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Greylock WORKS at Greylock Mill in North Adams: Poised to Become a Transformative Economic Development Project in Northern Berkshire County

Set across 240,000 SF, the Mill will house craft food entrepreneurs, an incubator kitchen, cheese aging cellars, and a year round roof greenhouse. The development will also include hospitality and residential accommodations, along with a cultural venue that reflects its central location between Mass MoCA and the Clark. Local food will be the catalyst!

Connect with us. We want to hear from all craft food producers working in the region!

If you are an established food enterprise looking for a supportive opportunity to expand, we'd love to hear from you. Whether you are a cheesemaker, coffee roaster, chocolate maker, butcher, baker, cider maker, brewer or any other small batch food maker with zeal for your product, we'd love to help you form a viable business plan at Greylock WORKS.

We are excited to join the vibrant New England food community to promote, support, and celebrate the local food system. Please contact Liz Stretch at Latent Productions for more details at liz@latentnyc.com.

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USDA – Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Releases Organic Reimbursement Funds for Certified Producers and Handlers

The MDAR has received funds from the USDA – AMS and is authorized to reimburse certified Producers and Handlers (Processors) for the Federal 2015 Fiscal Year. Reimbursements are limited to 75% (seventy-five percent) of an individual certification. Handlers (processors) are reimbursed for a maximum of \$750 of certification. Producers are eligible for reimbursement of up to three categories of certifications, for a maximum of \$750 per each certification.

The categories are:

- **Crops:** Pastures, cover crops, green manure crops, catch crops, or any plant or part of a plant intended to be marketed as an agricultural product, fed to livestock, or used in the field to manage nutrients and soil fertility,
- **Wild Crops:** Any plant or option of a plant that is collected or harvested from a site that is not maintained under cultivation, and;
- **Livestock:** Any cattle, sheep, goats, swine, poultry, or equine animals used for food or in the production of food, fiber, feed, or other agricultural-based consumer products; wild or domesticated game; or other non-plant life, except such term shall not include aquatic animals for the production of food, fiber, feed, or other agricultural-based consumer products.

Applicants must successfully receive their first organic certification from a USDA accredited certifying agent or have incurred expenses related to the renewal of certification between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015, thus the 2015 Federal Fiscal Year. Complete applications will be processed on a first come basis until all funds are expended. In order to receive reimbursement, please click here for [required forms](#). Questions, contact Ellen Hart, 617-626-1742, Ellen.Hart@state.ma.us.

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Farm Grant Opportunities

[Greener Fields Together](#) (GFT) engages farmers, distributors, foodservice operators and retail locations in efforts to work toward safer produce from seed to fork. GFT is offering grants in the amount of \$3,000 – \$10,000 for a number of categories including Food Safety and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) improvements, certification assistance, infrastructure development, and marketing / communications. Applicants must be GFT members or submit paperwork for membership by October 25th, 2015. For more about this grant opportunity and to apply click here: www.greenerfieldstogether.org/cultivating-change.

[Northeast SARE](#) is offering farmer grants for commercial producers who have an innovative idea they want to test using a field trial, on-farm demonstration, marketing initiative, or other technique. A

technical advisor--often an extension agent, crop consultant, or other service professional--must also be involved. Projects should seek results other farmers can use, and all projects must have the potential to add to our knowledge about effective sustainable practices. Grants are awarded up to \$15,000 and the application deadline is November 12th, 2015. Click here for application: www.nesare.org/Grants/Get-a-Grant/Farmer-Grant.

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MA Food License Plate Update



A total of over 800 paid registrations have been received to date – keep them coming in! Once all the \$40 checks / payments are in hand from all 1,500+ people who have expressed interest, a completed package can be sent to RMV to print the plates. **Help us put a MA food plate on the road!** *Sign up for your special Massachusetts Choose Fresh and Local Food Plate.* Show

your support for healthy, nutritious food, working landscapes, and vibrant community markets by [signing up for your special food plate](#) today! The additional cost of a special plate is a tax-deductible charitable contribution. Here is [how it works](#). Join us in putting the plate on the road!

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UPCOMING EVENTS / WORKSHOPS

Twilight Meeting: Nutrient Management, Soil & Crop Fertility

Friday, October 9 - 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm, Langwater Farm, 209 Washington St, North Easton, MA. This year's Twilight Meeting will focus on nutrient management from the bottom up and will feature: Explanation of new statewide nutrient management regulations which will go into effect on December 5, 2015 by MDAR. Cover crop-based fertility and on-farm composting at Langwater Farm by farmer Kevin O'Dwyer, Compost analysis and interpretation by Katie Campbell-Nelson, Weed management by Rich Bonanno. [More here.](#)

Worcester County Conservation District's 70th Anniversary and Annual Meeting

Wednesday, October 28 - 6:00 pm Pot Luck Dinner, 7:00pm Presentation, Rutland Free Public Library

The presence of coyotes are a source of fascination and for some people, concern. Marion Larson, of the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, will talk about our largest wild canid (dog) in

Massachusetts, answering some of the most common questions people have about these animals. Learn how you can help keep coyotes, pets, and people at a respectful distance!

Marion Larson, Chief of Information and Education Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, will be the featured speaker. She has worked with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts since 1985. She has a degree from the University of Vermont in Environmental Interpretation and began her career as an Environmental Police Officer (game warden) patrolling northern Middlesex and Worcester Counties. (Law enforcement is just another form of education!) She transferred to the Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife in 1991 as a Wildlife Education Specialist, then as an Outreach Coordinator working with tourism groups, writing newsletter articles, providing agency web page content and answering questions on a variety of wildlife topics. Currently Marion serves as Information and Education Biologist with Mass Wildlife. She will not only talk about education programs, but will also conduct an activity or two for you to experience. Please RSVP by October 21st to Lisa Trotto at 508-829-4477, ext. 5 or email Lisa.trotto@ma.usda.gov.
www.worcesterconservation.org.

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Upcoming UMass Food Science Programs

Better Process Control School: November 17-20, 2015. UMass Amherst. To learn more and register go to: [Register BPCS](#)

This course will train food processors principles of acidification, and container closure evaluation programs for low-acid and acidified canned foods as required by FDA regulations in CFR 108, 113 and 114. The purpose of these regulations is to help ensure the safety of consumers by training producers. This course will satisfy both USDA and FDA requirements. For guests that are traveling out of the area, we have a room block rate of \$125/night at the UMass Hotel until October 19th. The code is BEP15C and guests can either reserve online (<http://www.hotelumass.com/>) or call 877-822-2110.

Introduction to HACCP: January 12-14, 2016. UMass Amherst. To learn more and register go to: [Register HACCP](#)

This course covers the fundamentals of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) taught by certified International HACCP Alliance instructors. This particular course will have an emphasis on fresh-cut produce, beverages (including juice and cider), baked goods, and dairy products. The concepts will be reinforced by breakout group activities in which participants will have the opportunity to prepare a HACCP plan. All participants will receive an International HACCP Alliance certificate issued through the University of Massachusetts upon successful completion of the course. For guests that are traveling out of the area, we have a room block rate of \$125/night at the UMass Hotel until December 14th. The code is HAC15C and guests can either reserve online (www.hotelumass.com/) or call 877-822-2110.

Course topics will include: HACCP overview Prerequisite Programs, Overview of the Seven

Principles, Sanitations and SSOPs, Biological, Physical, and Chemical Hazards, Conducting a Hazard Analysis, Determining Critical Control Points, Establishing Corrective Actions, Establishing Monitoring, Establishing Verification & Validation Procedures, Documentation Practices & Record Keeping, Regulatory Issues, Auditor Expectations.

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New England Grows!

December 2 – 4: New Dates! Boston Convention & Exhibition Center Boston, MA. For every horticulture professional who shares our passion for growing and caring for plants -- and the environment. Just about everyone from the Northeast's commercial horticulture and green industry attends NE Grows! With horticulture seminars designed specifically for the landscape, nursery, arboriculture, and related horticulture professions, New England Grows is the acclaimed green industry educational conference and exposition for professionals seeking contact hours and CEU credits, as well as a connection to the green industry's leading suppliers. In addition to a host of horticultural and green industry design topics, important business issues like effective marketing, social media, and customer retention will be addressed. [More here.](#)

The 2015 New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference

December 15 – 17: Radisson Hotel, The Center of New Hampshire, 700 Elm St, Manchester, NH. The Conference and Trade Show includes more than 25 educational sessions over 3 days, covering major vegetable, berry and tree fruit crops as well as various special topics. A Farmer to Farmer meeting after each morning and afternoon session will bring speakers and farmers together for informal, in-depth discussion on certain issues. There is also an extensive Trade Show with over 100 exhibitors. This conference is special because it is put together with close collaboration between growers and Extension from across the region. The steering committee gathers the best speakers from within our region and across the country to tell you about the latest innovations and advances in the fruit and vegetable industry. Almost every session includes both farmers and research or extension personnel, so you are getting the “best of both worlds.” www.newenglandvfc.org.

4th Annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference

Save the Date!

Saturday, March 12: 7:30 am – 5:30 pm - Northeastern University, Boston MA

The 4th Annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference (UFC) is designed to advance urban farming issues ranging from farming techniques and business models to climate change adaptation and food security. Network with Massachusetts' diverse, multi-sector stakeholders in this dynamic event that looks at current issues, emerging practices and programs, and markets that can contribute

to Massachusetts' urban farming sector resiliency.

Presented by: City Growers and Urban Farming Institute, in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. For more information, contact Rose Arruda at MDAR; Rose.Arruda@state.ma.us.

*More events listed [here](#). If you have an event to add, email Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us.

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USDA NEWS

USDA Awards \$113 Million to Support Specialty Crop Production, Grow Opportunities for Rural Communities

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded more than \$113 million in program grants to support farmers growing fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and nursery crops, also known as "specialty crops," through research, agricultural extension activities, and programs to increase demand and address the needs of America's specialty crop industry.

The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) works to improve global opportunities for U.S. growers and producers. AMS grant funding supports a variety of programs, including [organic certification cost-share programs](#), the [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#), the [Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program](#), and the [Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program](#). This funding is one of the ways that USDA invests in the future of rural America and the nation's agricultural sector.

Click on the links to the grant programs above to learn more, and to see the list of projects funded through each program. Read the full press release [here](#).

USDA Commits \$2.5 Million to Expand New Farmer Education

Training Will also Help Returning Service Members, Underserved, and Urban Producers

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden recently announced that \$2.5 million in grants is now available for projects to educate new and underserved farmers about more than 20 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency programs that can provide financial, disaster or technical assistance to the agricultural community. The grants will be awarded to nonprofits and public higher education institutions that develop proposals to improve farmer education on topics such as financial training, value-added production, recordkeeping, property inheritance, and crop production practices.

USDA will conduct four evaluation periods to review applications, with the deadlines of Nov. 20,

2015, Jan. 22, 2015, Mar. 18, 2016, and May 27, 2016. Awards between \$20,000 and \$100,000 per applicant will be available. To learn more about the funding solicitation and the related Farm Service Agency programs, details can be found at www.grants.gov with the reference number USDA-FSA-CA-2015-001. For nonprofits and public institutions of higher education that are considering participation, an online informational session will be conducted on Sept. 28, 2015. Additional information is posted on the Web at www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach.

This funding builds on historic investments made in rural America over the past six years and supports programs enacted by the 2014 Farm Bill, which achieved meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for the taxpayer. Since enactment, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has progressively implemented each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/farmbill.

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Time to Consider 2016 Risk Management Plan for Massachusetts Fruit Growers

Massachusetts apple and peach growers have until November 20, 2015 to purchase Federal crop insurance on next year's crop. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing policies also have until November 20 to do so. Producers of other tree and small fruit crops also have until November 20, 2015 to purchase catastrophic or "buy-up" coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Program (NAP) available through the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Crop insurance provides coverage against production losses due to damage caused by natural perils and adverse weather conditions such as hail, wind, frost, and drought. Your amount of coverage will be determined from your actual yields and the protection level you select. Protection levels for apples and peaches range for 50 to 75 percent of your average yield. Indemnity payments are made when actual production falls below the covered or guaranteed protection level. The loss production is multiplied by the applicable price election to determine the indemnity amount. Information, such as the 2016 prices, premium rates and transitional yields, are available from crop insurance agents.

Federal Crop Insurance for apples is available for all Massachusetts counties. Peaches are insurable in Hampden, Hampshire, Middlesex, and Worcester counties. Peaches may be insurable in other counties by written agreement if specific criteria are met. Contact an insurance agent for more details.

Contact the USDA-FSA Office that serves your farming operation for more details on NAP. Subsidies to the cost of NAP catastrophic and "buy-up" are available to beginning, limited resource and socially disadvantaged producers. Fruit producers should consider making Federal crop

insurance and NAP an essential part of their overall risk management plan for all their fruit crops to help protect their operations from financial loss. For more information, producers are encouraged to visit the RMA website at www.rma.usda.gov, contact their local Federal crop insurance agent or FSA Office as soon as possible.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers or on the RMA website at: www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html.

CLASSIFIED / BRIEFS / JOB OPPORTUNITIES

- **NOFA/Mass Policy Director** - Application Deadline: Wednesday, Oct 21. Through education and advocacy NOFA/Mass promotes organic agriculture to expand the production and availability of nutritious food from living soil for the health of individuals, communities and the planet. The NOFA/Mass Policy Director has overall responsibility for organizational advocacy. www.nofamass.org/content/nofamass-policy-director. Glenn Oliveira, glenn@nofamass.org, 774-678-9644.

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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 \[twitter.com/MDARCommish\]\(https://twitter.com/MDARCommish\).](#)