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December 11, 2015

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COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



The days have gotten shorter but Mass. Agriculture keeps humming along. Though the traditional outdoor growing season is substantially over, greenhouses are gearing up and dairy, livestock and poultry never stop.

Two major meetings just took place. Mass. Farm Bureau just held a very special one in Framingham, celebrating its 100th Anniversary. I was very pleased to attend along with MDAR staff. Besides our informational table, MDAR participated in sessions on Nutrient Management, Pesticides, and Food Safety. I was also offered the opportunity to address the membership at a lunch session.

Farm Bureau has a proud tradition advocating for the best interests of farmers. Everyone at MDAR congratulates the leadership, membership and staff on this great occasion. We look forward to continuing our strong relationship.

There was a change in leadership in Farm Bureau that took place at the meeting. President Rich Bonanno chose not to seek re-election. Rich is moving on to a very exciting position at North Carolina State, running its very extensive Extension Service. Rich contacted me immediately after my appointment was announced last December, weeks before I officially began my position. He wanted to get a head start talking to me about Mass. Farmers. We had an excellent working relationship. Massachusetts' loss is North Carolina's gain. Best of luck in NC, Rich!

Farm Bureau elected Ed Davidian as its new President and I look forward to working with him to advance farming in Mass.

New England Grows!, the very large Green Industry conference and trade show moved its dates for the first time from late January/early February to early December. The event which is held at the Boston Convention and Exposition Center is one of the biggest shows of its type in the US. The New England Grows! team invited the Board of Agriculture to hold its meeting there, allowing the Ag Board to gain a greater appreciation of the wide scope of Nursery, Landscaping, and Arboriculture in Mass.

During October, an MDAR delegation enjoyed a Cranberry Harvest tour arranged by the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers. We were treated to a visit at A.D, Makepeace Co. to get an up close and personal understanding of the process. I managed to get the waders on and get out on the bog without incident.

Later that day we toured the processing operations at Decas Cranberry Products. It's quite a contrast from the quiet beauty out on the bog to the fast paced processes to manufacture and package cranberry products for purchase.

My apiary knowledge was greatly enhanced by two recent visits. Andy Reseska showed Chief Apiary Inspector Kim Skyrn and me much of what his Boston Honey Company does. We started out in the hives and then visited the production facility. It was fascinating.

Kim and I also attended the Mass. Beekeepers Association Fall Meeting at Red Apple Farm in Phillipston where there were many informative presentations. I was treated to hear a talk by North Carolina's State Apiarist Don Hopkins who runs one of the best programs in the country.

Of course the Christmas Tree season gets underway the day after Thanksgiving. Governor Baker issued a proclamation naming the day as *Green Friday*! Assistant Commissioner Jason Wentworth (and his kids) and

I travelled to the very impressive operation at Coward Farms in Southwick to cut the ceremonial first tree of the season. I cut a beautiful Fraser Fir among the thousands of beauties that John and his crew grow.

MDAR participated in the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting at the State House. This year MDAR organized displays by various Mass. producers and non-profits in the Great Hall to highlight the event's theme, to *Make it a Massachusetts Holiday*. Agriculture was heavily featured and many farm and specialty food product samples were available to delight of those who came to see the Governor light the tree, ably assisted by Santa Claus!

Both Governor Baker and Lieutenant Governor Polito walked the hall and visited with all those who had a display. It was a very well received addition to the program which likely will be repeated next year.

I also want to take a moment to call your attention the *Massachusetts Animal Fund*, a program established by legislation and administered by MDAR's Division of Animal Health, to address animal homelessness. Through donations, the Fund provides for spaying and neutering, and the training of municipal Animal Control Officers. Donations may be made online, by US Mail or by a voluntary donation through Line 32F of Mass Income Tax Return Form 1. For more information on the Fund and how one can help, please visit <http://massanimalfund.com/>.

Though the days are very short as we approach the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year, once we pass it the days slowly lengthen as we move ahead to spring. On behalf of everyone at MDAR, I wish you a happy holiday season and health and happiness.

Regardless of what holidays you may celebrate in the next few weeks, remember that to anyone involved in agriculture, what Santa really says is "Hoe, Hoe, Hoe!"



John Lebeaux, Commissioner



Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan Update

The "Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan" was accepted by the MA Food Policy Council at their December meeting. This is the Commonwealth's first comprehensive Food Action Plan since 1974, bringing to a close nearly two years of study in collaboration with more than 1,000 local farmers, consumers, advocates, policy makers and other stakeholders in the state's food system.

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, in collaboration with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and Massachusetts Workforce Alliance, worked with constituents across the state to develop the plan.

The plan is designed to increase production, sales and consumption of Massachusetts-grown food; create jobs and improve wages in food and farming; protect the land and water needed to produce food, while maximizing the environmental benefits of agriculture and fishing; ensure food safety; and reduce waste, hunger and food insecurity, while making available more fresh, healthy food to everyone who lives here. The plan offers recommendations for the public and private sectors to see these goals through to fruition. The plan is at www.mafoodplan.org. The next phase will focus on identifying priorities and implementation.

Energy News

Energy Audits – Now is a great time! Don't Freeze Out Funding This Winter!

As the colder weather sets in, consider what can be done while the ground waits to thaw. The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program is able to provide up to 75% of the cost of an energy audit. Audits are good for five years, and required for many grants.

Request yours now! 413-727-3090 - info@massfarmenergy.com or visit www.massfarmenergy.com, and submit a Request Form.

Upcoming Deadlines

The next REAP deadline for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency grants and loan guarantees is April 30, 2016 for all project sizes. For more information on applying, [click here](#).

REAP Application Assistance

Need help preparing your REAP application? The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program is able to provide it! Our program recently received a grant to help farms prepare their REAP applications, at no cost. But don't wait until the deadline approaches; REAP applications can be submitted any time, so contact us now!

Massgrown and Fresher Website



The *Massgrown and Fresher* [website](#) is looking to map honey producers and beekeepers. If you produce honey, and are looking to increase sales, please fill out our two page survey  . If you offer workshops or classes on beekeeping, please let us know, and we will add to our Massgrown [Calendar](#) as well. To submit an agricultural related event, click on submission form [here](#), or send date, details, and website to Julia.Grimaldi@state.ma.us. If you have honey bee or apiculture related questions, please contact Kim Skyrms at Kim.Skyrm@state.ma.us.

2015 Winter Moth Survey



It's that time of year again: winter moths and other related species have started to show up at porch lights across the state. The winter moth (*Operophtera brumata*) is an invasive species first discovered in Massachusetts in the 1990s. Winter moth caterpillars are highly efficient tree defoliators, often

stripping the leaves of oaks, maples and other hardwood trees down to lacy skeletons.

In mid-to-late fall, at a time of year where insect activity is practically at a standstill, these small brown winter moths will be seen across the eastern half of the state, sometimes congregating at porch lights by the hundreds. There are other similar-looking native moths active at this time of year, such as the Bruce spanworm moth and the fall cankerworm moth, but they are typically not seen in such large numbers. While the state does not regulate winter moth, some towns/cities do tree treatments, and the Elkinton Lab at University of Massachusetts Amherst currently has a [biological control program](#) underway.

If you see winter moths this December, we'd like to hear from you using the survey below. The information you share will help assess the distribution of this invasive pest in our state. [Click here for survey.](#)

Farm Businesses Celebrated

Farmers celebrated the Simon Grinspoon Farm Awards with philanthropist Harold Grinspoon who created the awards and named them for his father. The Farm Awards provide up to \$2,500 to help farmers make physical improvements on their farms to strengthen their farm businesses. All 88 farmers who applied were invited to the celebration where Grinspoon announced that applications for a second year of Farm Awards will be available in January [online here](#), so save this website.

Big Y will become a partner with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in 2016 to award farmer members of Berkshire Grown and CISA up to \$2,500 to improve their farm businesses. More info on the celebration is [here](#).

Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions Update

The Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions (MAAC) is updating its email list for communicating with Agricultural Commissions. Recently, MAAC sent out a Constant Contact email to the Ag Com emails that are on file. If you did not receive this email and you are on an Agricultural Commission, please email massagcoms.maac@gmail.com to update your Ag Com members in the Association's master list. Also, if you are in the process of forming an Agricultural Commission, have an Ag Com issue, or are interested in being on our general email list, contact Laura Sapienza-Grabski, brookview2@hotmail.com, or Pete Westover, westover03@comcast.net. *Please save the date for MAAC's Annual Meeting on February 27 at the Marlborough Holiday Inn.

UPCOMING EVENTS / WORKSHOPS

First Northeast New Farmer Winter Gathering

December 12, Greenfield, MA - 9:30 am – 8:00 pm

Join the Northeast New Agrarian Network—a new coalition of farm organizations with a focus on young and beginning farmers. The convergence will bring together farmers based across New England and New York State to consider issues facing agricultural community today: from diversity and justice, to organizing and leveraging the collective voice of young farmers towards legislative change.

New England Farmers Union is one of seven organizations hosting this event. The others are the National Young Farmer Coalition and its Hudson Valley, NY, chapter; the Beginning Farmer Network of Massachusetts; New Connecticut Farmer Alliance; Young Farmer Network (RI); and the Harvard Food Literacy Project.

This event is free and open to the public. If you are planning to attend, please RSVP at youngfarmers.org/winter-gathering.

FDA Public Meeting in New England: Food Safety Modernization Act Final Rules

Hosted by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

December 14 - Latchis Theatre, 50 Main Street, Brattleboro, VT - 9:30 am – 3:00 pm.

Join FDA Subject Matter Experts for an overview of three final Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Rules—Produce Safety, Preventive Controls for Human Food & Preventive Controls for Animal Food—and ask your questions about rule requirements and who must comply. This event is free and open to the public. No registration is required. Contact Kristina Sweet at (802) 522-7811 or email kristina.sweet@vermont.gov for more information. Visit <http://go.usa.gov/3SV3F> for updates.

New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference

December 15 - 17 - Radisson Hotel Manchester, NH

More than 30 educational sessions over three days, covering major vegetable, berry and tree fruit crops, plus an extensive trade show with over 100 exhibitors!

For the full agenda of programs and speakers, www.newenglandvfc.org/index.html

Processing Food for Sale From Your On-Farm/Residential Kitchen

December 17, Webinar - 10:00 am

Presenting a curricula for on-farm residential kitchen processors of food for sale (or other cottage food processors) For regulators, extension educators, others who provide support to home-based food entrepreneurs.

Most states allow at least some types of food products to be produced in a farm/home kitchen and sold to the public. This is a two-session curriculum, developed with funds from the USDA/Northeast Extension Risk Management Education program. Session I helps processors to understand regulations, business risks, potential food safety risks and liabilities, mitigating risks, feasibility/costs/benefits of business, business planning and considerations when scaling up.

This curriculum was designed to provide a training option focused on the needs of farmers and others who are allowed by regulation to process in a residential kitchen. It can be easily adapted to the needs of individual states.

Presented by: University of Connecticut and University of Rhode Island Food Safety Extension Programs

To register or for more information, contact: Diane Wright Hirsch, MPH, diane.hirsch@uconn.edu , 203-407-3163, or Lori Pivarnik, PhD, lpivarnik@uri.edu , 401-874-2972.

Making It Happen: Profitability and Success Workshop Series

Making It Happen: Profitability and Success will help small farmers build sound financial systems and use those systems to make business decisions. Farmers will learn about effective financial management tools and how and when to use them to improve their farm business. The workshop will help farmers: improve productivity, reduce costs, increase net farm income, and improve overall quality of life. Participants may also sign up for one-on-one financial planning assistance. Presenters are Benneth Phelps of The Carrot Project and Noelle Fogg of New Entry Sustainable Farming Project.

****Please view the pre-requisite requirements detailed on each event page prior to signing up****

December 7, Anawan Grange Hall, Bay State Road, Rehoboth - 9:30am-5 pm. [Register here.](#)

January 12, Luna Theater, Mill No. 5, 250 Jackson St. #402, Lowell - noon-5pm. [Register here.](#)

January 14, Union Station, 2 Washington Sq., Worcester - noon-5pm – [Register here.](#)

February 10, noon-5pm Pittsfield, MA Details soon [here.](#)

For more information, please contact Noelle Fogg, noelle.fogg@tufts.edu.

Biological Control in Greenhouses – Success is in the Details!

January 12 - Publick House, Sturbridge - 9:30 am – 3:00 pm

Topics will include: The Art of Releasing Biocontrols, Preventing an Aphid Apocalypse, Scheduling Biocontrols, Pesticide Compatibility and Grower to Grower Panel Discussion. 4 pesticide recertification credits. Co-sponsored by UMass Extension and UConn Extension. [Registration and details here.](#)

Winter Flower Growers Program

February 2 – Cavicchio Greenhouses, 110 Codjer Lane, Sudbury - 8:00 am to 3:30 pm

Morning greenhouse tours and open houses at Cavicchio Greenhouses (host), J.P. Bartlett (Rte 20) and Russell's Garden Center, Wayland.

Topics will include: Plant Growth Regulators for Hanging Baskets and Vigorous Floriculture Crops; Native Perennial Plants for Pollinator Gardens; Transplants for Ethnic Crops; Biocontrols to Manage Pests for Growers and Retailers; Updates for EPA Worker Protection Standards and Demonstration of New

Greenhouse Production Technology at Cavicchio GH. 2.5 pesticide credits. Co-sponsored by UMass Extension and Massachusetts Flower Growers Association. [Registration and details here.](#)

Introduction to HACCP Workshop

January 12 - 14 - UMass Amherst Campus, 243 Chenoweth Laboratory - Conference Room

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.

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 - [Click to here to register.](#)

NOFA Winter Conference

January 16 - Worcester State University. Annual one-day conference, which features 70 workshops and exhibitors; an all-day seminar and keynote speeches with Ben Burkett, family farmer and coordinator of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives; children's conference and more. All workshops are approved for AOLCP accreditation.

Ben Burkett, Mississippi based family farmer and cooperative business advocate, is this year's keynote speaker. In his day-long seminar "Cooperative Farming", Burkett discusses many of the steps involved in setting up a profitable, managed cooperative using his own family farm and cooperative history as a model.

Complete registration and details [here.](#)

4th Annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference

March 12 - Northeastern University Curry Student Center, 346 Huntington Ave., Boston

The annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference (UFC) is designed to advance the opportunities and address the barriers involved in cultivating a resilient and thriving Urban Farming sector. The UFC is a multi-sector stakeholder forum designed to share information regarding what is currently happening in Massachusetts. The UFC fosters solutions, sustainable networks and business relationships.

The UFC brings together participants representing all aspects of Urban Farming including, but not limited to, farmers (including roof top, chicken, bees, etc.), land trust managers, policy makers, commercial buyers,

foundations, investors and all others. The 3rd Annual Massachusetts UFC is comprised of interactive panels, demonstration workshops, expert discussions on diverse and relevant topics with distinguished Conversation Leaders and a networking reception.

[More here.](#)

[More events at MDAR Calendar](#)

USDA NEWS

USDA announces \$350 million Available to Help Protect Wetlands and Farmland

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced the availability of \$350 million to help landowners protect and restore key farmlands, grasslands and wetlands across the nation. The funding is provided through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), created by the 2014 Farm Bill to protect critical water resources and wildlife habitat, and encourage private owners to maintain land for farming and ranching. Through the voluntary sale of an easement, landowners limit future development to protect these key resources.

"The benefits of restoring, enhancing and protecting these working agricultural lands and critical wetlands cannot be overstated," said Christine Clarke, Massachusetts State Conservationist for NRCS. "USDA is committed to preserving working agricultural lands to help protect the long-term viability of farming here in Massachusetts and across the country as well as to restoring and protecting vital sensitive wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat and improve water quality."

ACEP's agricultural land easements not only protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses, they also support environmental quality, wildlife habitat, historic preservation and protection of open spaces. Native American Tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have farmland or grassland protection programs are eligible to partner with NRCS to purchase conservation easements.

Wetland reserve easements allow landowners to successfully restore, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Eligible landowners can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in 30-year contracts.

To learn about ACEP and other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS conservation programs, visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov or your local USDA Service Center.

USDA Conservation Program Funding Announced for 2016

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has 2016 federal conservation program funds available for Massachusetts farmers and forest land owners. Farmers and forest owners may apply for funding under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program at any time throughout the year by visiting their local

NRCS field office. \$3.9 million in EQIP funds and \$120,000 in AMA funds are available for Massachusetts projects in federal fiscal year 2016. Starting December 18, funding decisions will be made monthly and will continue until funds are exhausted.

A conservation plan must be completed before an application can be considered for funding, so farmers are encouraged to call or stop by their local [NRCS field office](#). General program information is available on the NRCS Massachusetts website at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov. Read more [here](#).

Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes [loans](#) to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by a [regional office](#) for help preparing and processing the application forms.

CLASSIFIED / BRIEFS / JOB OPPORTUNITIES

- **Farmland Opportunity:** Secure, long-term lease for experienced, entrepreneurial and community-oriented farmer for 15A prime soils and a house, 30 miles from Boston. Landowner open to supportive financial arrangements for farm infrastructure. Abundant markets and potential collaborations. [Details here](#) under "The Farm at Air Hill." Contact kathy@landforgood.org for January 9, 2016 open house and application information.
- **Farm for sale:** 36.8 acre farm for sale in Montague, MA. 18 acres of which are woodland. Organic, NON-GMO. A portion of the land is protected by Mount Grace Land Trust, the rest is under MDAR. Existing crops are 90 blueberry bushes, several fruit trees, raspberries, blackberries, asparagus, and blackberries. Owned by two families since the late 1700s. Contact Lisa Adams, 413-522-3853, and lisaadams3@verizon.net.
- **Farm for Sale:** 16A farm located in Methuen, MA (northeast). Small, quaint established farm dedicated to well-maintained vegetable and floral production for several years. Under Agricultural

Preservation Restrictions. There is a renovated (early 2000's) barn large enough for a truck to back in and unload goods from the gardens. Also, a detached four bay 30'x 54' garage built in the early 2000's. A five bedroom, 2.5 bathrooms 1940/50's house with two dated kitchens is part of the property. There are apple and pear trees near the house for personal consumption. Property subject to 61A. Elizabeth DeLucia, elizabeth_delucia@hotmail.com, or 978-470-0081.

- 2001 Massey Ferguson 1250, 26 hp 4x4 diesel, 630 hours - \$14,500. 2011 5' Woods Rotary Tiller - \$2000. Rain Flo Flat Bed Plastic Mulch Layer Model 560 with Drip Irrigation attachment - \$1000. Mazzei ¾" Model 384 Fertilizer Injector with check valve, gate valve and flow meter– new – \$75. 76" #10 Galvanized Wire Hoops for use with Polyethylene Row Cover– new – two bundles of 100 - \$70 each or both for \$130. Contact Sue at 978-877-7585 or 212fan@gmail.com.

About the *Farm & Market Report*

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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, and/or follow at twitter.com/MDARCommish.