



2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Massachusetts Department of
Agricultural Resources



Table of Contents

<i>Commissioner’s Letter.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Agency Organizational Overview.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Snapshot of Massachusetts Agriculture.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Financial Report.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Environmental Justice Program.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>MassGrown Wellness Program.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Division of Agricultural Markets.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Division of Animal Health.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Division of Crop and Pest Services.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Division of Agricultural Food Safety.....</i>	<i>75</i>

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Department of Agricultural Resources

100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor, Boston, MA 02114
www.mass.gov/agr



Maura T. Healey
GOVERNOR

Kimberley Driscoll
LIEUTENANT
GOVERNOR

Rebecca L. Tepper
SECRETARY

Ashley E. Randle
COMMISSIONER

Commissioner's Letter

I am pleased to present our 2024 Annual Report from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. In this past calendar year, we've been busy at the Department, launching new initiatives and growing our team to reflect the evolving needs of agriculture in Massachusetts. I'm proud of the work we've done at MDAR, with our team collaborating with stakeholders in a common mission to support and enhance local agriculture. This report includes detailed summaries of each of our divisions that work to cultivate a robust and equitable agricultural economy, promote a safe and resilient food system, and preserve a healthy environment for Massachusetts farmers, animals, and consumers.

In 2024, we established the first-ever Massachusetts Agricultural Youth Council. Workforce development has been a top priority for MDAR, and investing in youth is the best way to foster their interest in farming and encourage them to work in agriculture here in the Commonwealth. Comprised of high school seniors, the inaugural class was announced at Agriculture Day at the State House in April. The Council has been attending meetings and industry events, learning about the legislative process, engaging with farmers and food system members, and building their leadership skills.

In July, our Agricultural Markets Division launched the official Massachusetts Ice Cream Trail with our partners at the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism and Massachusetts Dairy Promotion Board. This delicious listing of dairy farms and ice cream shops across the state that feature Massachusetts dairy products highlight our hardworking dairy farmers (and their cows) and showcases the best frozen treats that we have to offer. We were excited to have Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll help us kick off the trail, and we will continue to promote it throughout the upcoming seasons since we all know that ice cream is a year-round love affair here!

Last December, our Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance introduced the ambitious Farmland Action Plan, a long-range strategic initiative that addresses the alarming rate of farmland loss in the state and the many longstanding issues that prevent beginning and historically underserved farmers from entering the sector. We've risen to the challenge by hiring new staff to break down these barriers while bringing together a diverse coalition to work toward the goal of preserving farmland. DACTA continues their important work of protecting farmland through the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program which has preserved nearly 1000 farms spanning over 75,000 acres of land since its inception in 1977.

In February, our Animal Health Division celebrated an amazing milestone of having helped more than 20,000 animals through its Spay/Neuter Voucher Program, with funding provided by the Massachusetts Animal Fund. Since 2012, the Fund has helped pet owners across the state with critical veterinary care. The Fund turns voluntary contributions on Line 33F of the Massachusetts State Income Tax Return into resources for the state's

most vulnerable pet population. The Fund's Voucher Program works with a collaborative network of municipal animal control officers and veterinary providers.

With the first cases of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza appearing in dairy cattle in the country in March, we took the threat very seriously and moved swiftly to work with our dairy farmers to implement mandatory testing of all licensed dairy farms for HPAI. We were the first state in the country to test all of our dairy herds with 100% negative results and no trace of the virus. The testing was important to ensure public health and demonstrate the safety of the local food supply at Massachusetts dairies.

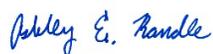
Our Department now manages the transformative Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) Program. Begun during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, this innovative grant program addresses the gaps and vulnerabilities in our local food system and aims to bolster and strengthen it with targeted investments in our local farms and other food system enterprises. To date, it has invested more than \$100 million in the food system in just four years, and has been a game-changer in allowing longstanding, new businesses, and entrepreneurs the resources and ability to modernize and strengthen their operations with climate resiliency in mind for long-term success.

These are just some of the highlights of the past year. It's certainly been an eventful one and through it all, our farmers continue to do what they do best: grow the food that sustains us, steward the land that they farm on to preserve it, and employ best practices to sustain and enhance the resources on that land for the benefit of generations to come. After a challenging year in 2023 that saw extreme weather with devastating floods and extreme cold temperatures, we saw a resurgence of a bountiful harvest in 2024!

Our farms thrive when we work together and identify resources that allow them to thrive in an ever-changing environment and market. Ultimately, their success is dependent on consumers who buy local and directly from the producers, from retailers who prioritize stocking Massachusetts products, and our Department that works to support their needs by providing grant opportunities and technical assistance to give them the resources to ensure their short and long-term viability.

Thank you for letting us provide you with this Annual Report and providing updates on what the Department has been doing to serve our agricultural sector and deliver results that benefit us all in the Commonwealth.

Respectfully submitted with gratitude for our farming community,

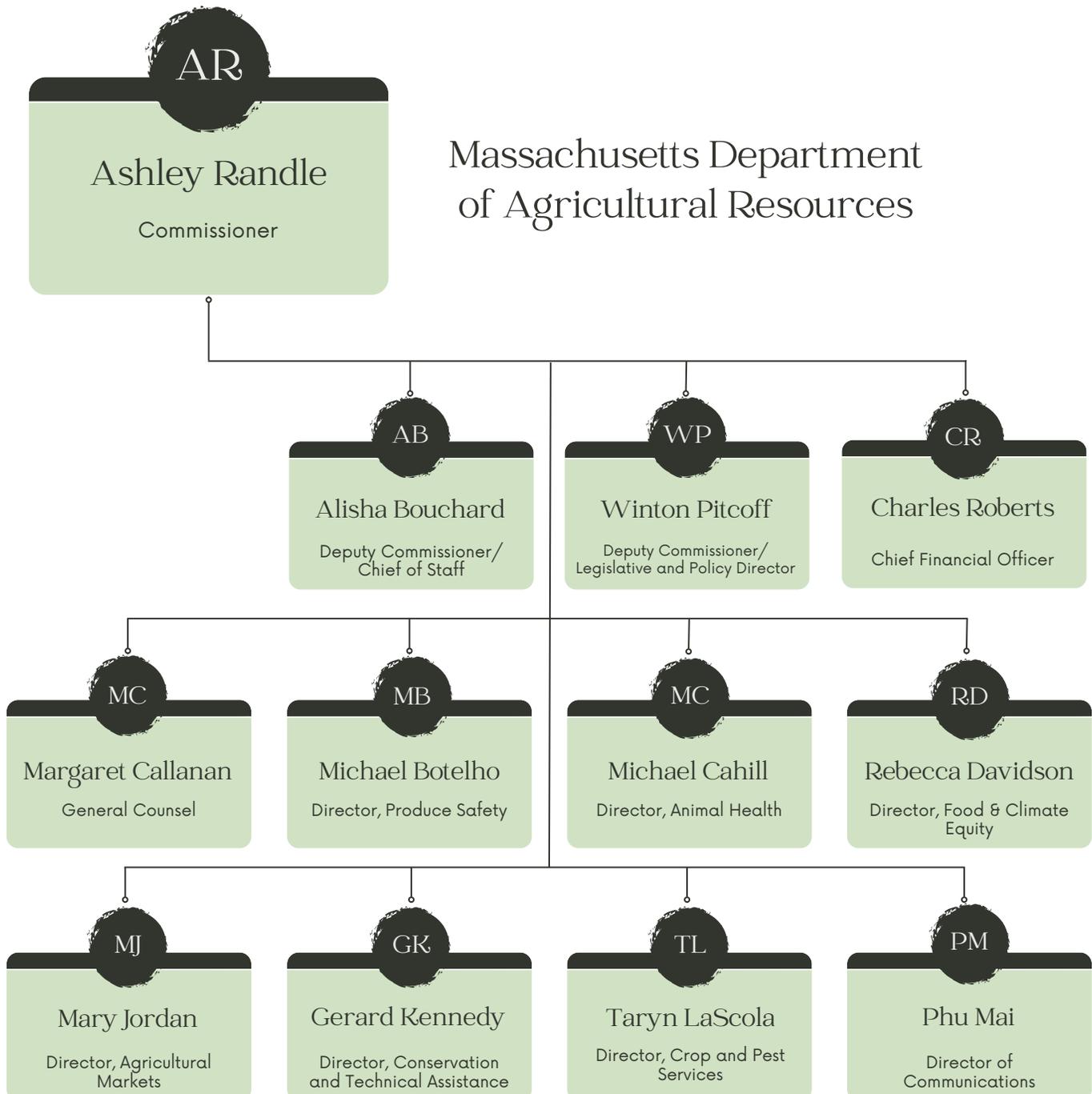


Ashley E. Randle
Commissioner

Agency Organizational Overview

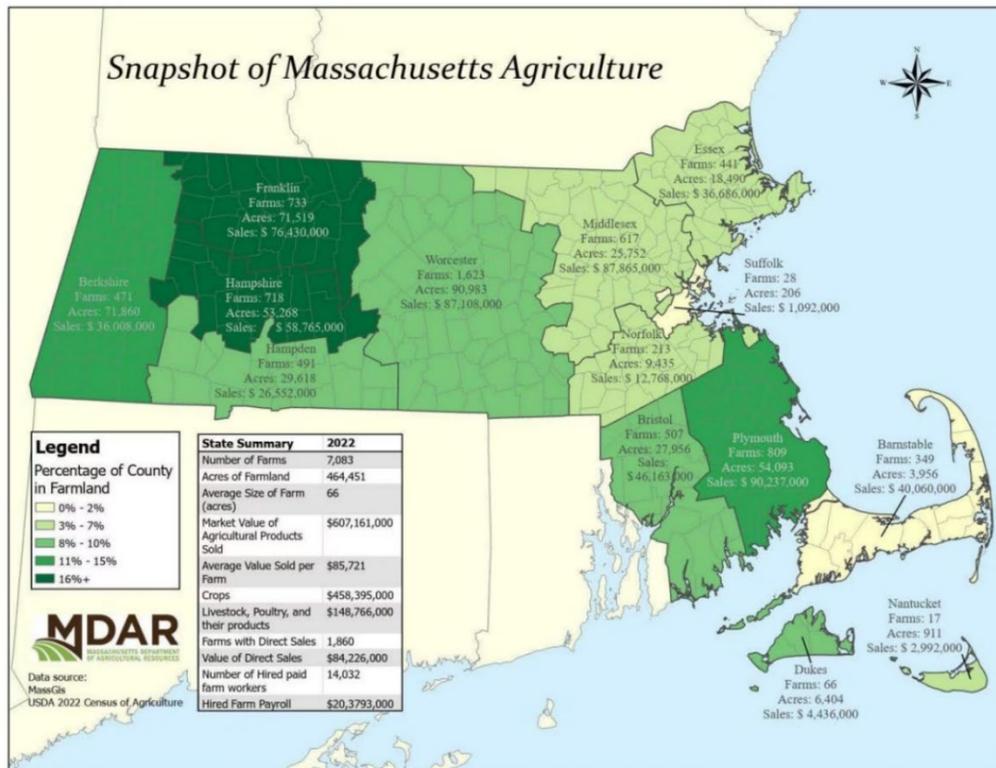
MISSION: The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' (MDAR) mission is to cultivate a robust and equitable agricultural economy, promote a safe and resilient food system, and preserve a healthy environment for Massachusetts farmers, animals, and consumers

HISTORY: MDAR has a long and illustrious history dating back prior to the creation of the US Department of Agriculture. As early as 1852, the various county presidents of the Agricultural Societies across Massachusetts came together to create the Board of Agriculture, a body that has, over the years, evolved into the current Board of Agriculture and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources within the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.



Snapshot of Massachusetts Agriculture

Massachusetts has 7,083 farms on 464,451 acres.¹ The entire agricultural industry produces an annual market value of over \$607 million dollars in agricultural goods. Most farms are individually, or family owned (95%) and fall into the category of “small farms” (94%).² The average farm produces \$85,721 in annual agricultural sales on 66 acres.



Massachusetts is the third most densely populated state in the U.S with 897 individuals per square land mile,³ and is ranked the 4th highest state for average farmland value at \$15,300 per acre.⁴

Greenhouse & Nursery

The greenhouse and nursery industry is Massachusetts’ largest agricultural sector. With 423 commercial greenhouse and nursery businesses⁵, it has a market value of over \$164 million⁶, and accounts for approximately 27% of the state’s agricultural economy.

Fruits, Tree Nuts, and Berries

This sector has an annual market value of over \$131 million, and accounts for 34% of the agricultural economy.⁷

¹ All statistics are from the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture unless noted otherwise.

² The United States Department of Agriculture defines small farms as farms with sales below \$250,000.

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183588/population-density-in-the-federal-states-of-the-us/>

⁴ https://www.nass.usda.gov/publications/highlights/2023/2023landvaluescashrents_FINAL.pdf

⁵ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Massachusetts/st25_1_039_040.pdf

⁶ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Massachusetts/cp99025.pdf

⁷ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Massachusetts/cp99025.pdf

Vegetables, Melons, and Potatoes

There are 1,463 vegetable farms over 17,217 acres,⁸ with over \$127 million in sales.⁹

Cranberries

Massachusetts is the second largest cranberry producing state in the U.S. The cranberry industry is the third largest agricultural sector in Massachusetts with approximately 384 growers on 12,875 acres.¹⁰

Livestock & Poultry

The livestock associated businesses account for over \$36 million in sales for the Massachusetts agricultural economy with poultry and egg farms accounting for over \$12 million.

Dairy

Massachusetts had 95 dairy farms in 2023¹¹ that produced 178 million pounds of milk¹², and over \$61 million in sales.¹³

Aquaculture

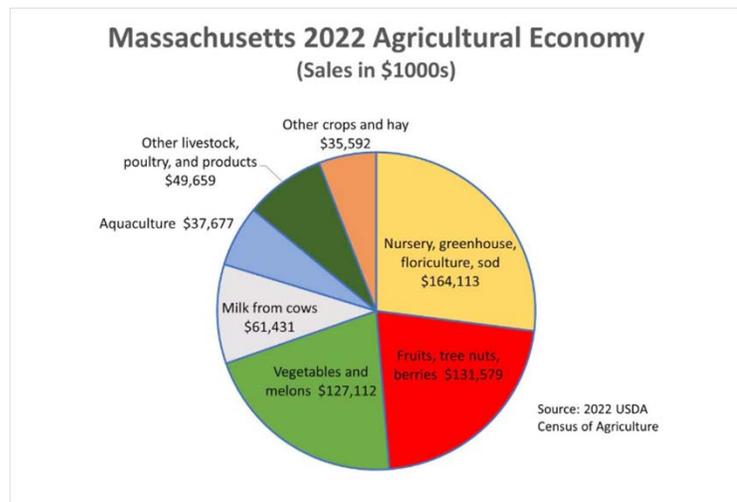
Massachusetts aquaculture industry ranks 15th in the country with sales over \$37 million.¹⁴

Maple Syrup

Massachusetts has 261 farms with sales over \$3.1 million.¹⁵

Christmas Trees

Massachusetts has 459 farms on 2,952 acres with with sales over \$4.5 million.¹⁶



⁸https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Massachusetts/st25_1_036_036.pdf

⁹https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Massachusetts/cp99025.pdf

¹⁰https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Massachusetts/st25_1_038_038.pdf

¹¹ Internal MDAR Animal Health records

¹² https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?state=MASSACHUSETTS

¹³ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Massachusetts/cp99025.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Massachusetts/cp99025.pdf

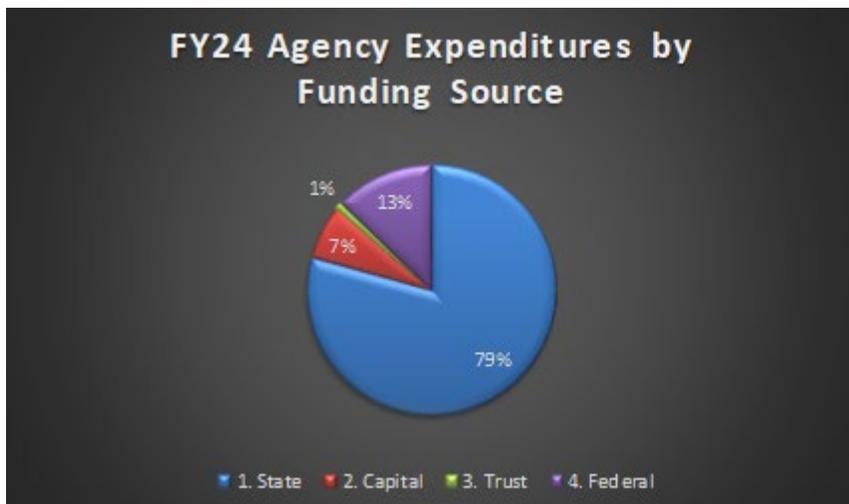
¹⁵ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Massachusetts/st25_1_039_040.pdf

¹⁶ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Massachusetts/st25_1_039_040.pdf

Financial Report

In FY24, MDAR had total expenditures of \$103.5M which represented a 36% increase, or \$27.1M, as compared to FY23 when expenditures were \$76.4M. The increase was primarily driven by additional funding made available through [Chapter 26 of the Acts of 2023](#) which appropriated \$20M towards support for costs associated with natural disasters that occurred in 2023 – primarily a deep freeze in February 2023, a severe frost in late May 2023, and most notably, the extensive flooding that hit the region in July 2023 (with a total of 339 farms/organizations receiving payment). In addition, there was an increase in \$6.4M in spending in FY24 that went towards supporting the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) as well as the earmarks that sit in line items 2511-0105 and 2511-0107 that support food security initiatives. While spending continues to occur within our ARPA-related funding sources, authorized in [Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021](#) and [Chapter 268 of the Acts of 2022](#), there was only \$10.7M spent in FY24 versus \$14.1M spent in FY23. Many of the earmarks, of which there were more than 150, have been fully spent and those projects that are still in process have until June 2027 to fully expend the funds.

The chart below depicts MDAR expenditures, in FY24, by funding source:



Figures in Millions (rounded)

	FY24
1. State	\$ 82.0
2. Capital	\$ 7.3
3. Trust	\$ 1.0
4. Federal	\$ 13.2
	\$ 103.5

Budgetary Appropriations

Administration Appropriation (2511-0100)

The Administration appropriation funds the day-to-day operations of the agency.

MDAR had total expenditures of \$11.6M in FY24 which represented a 13% increase, or \$1.3M, as compared to FY23 when expenditures were \$10.2M. The primary drivers of this increase are an increase in the number of earmarks (grants) as well as an increase in employee salaries and benefits costs.

Administration appropriation spending by category in FY24 includes:

- Employee salaries and benefits were \$7.4M.
- Earmarks accounted for \$3.2M including \$0.8M for Buy Local organizations.
- Leased facilities and utilities were \$0.3M.

Cannabis and Hemp Agricultural Oversight Appropriation (2511-0103)

The Cannabis and Hemp Agricultural Oversight appropriation was established in FY19, and funds costs associated with agricultural oversight of hemp and cannabis. The appropriation is funded 100% from the Marijuana Regulation Fund. MDAR had total expenditures from this line of \$970K which represented a \$40K increase compared to FY23. The driver of this increase was salaries and benefits which are subject to collective bargaining agreements.

Supplemental Food Appropriation (2511-0105)

The Supplemental Food appropriation provides for the purchase of supplemental foods for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP). MDAR had expenditures of \$36.2M in FY24 which represented a \$5.8M increase compared to FY23. Most of this funding goes to the Greater Boston Food Bank which is responsible for the distribution of a percentage of funds earmarked for other Massachusetts food banks under a contractual agreement. In FY24, the funding provided to the Greater Boston Food Bank provided 34,267,455 equivalent meals. The agency utilizes 2% of the Supplemental Food funding to administer the program.

Community Food Security Appropriation (2511-0107)

This appropriation was first established in FY22 and is entirely earmarked, representing 44 earmarks in FY24 totaling \$2.068M. These earmarks are for the advancement of community food security and the protection of public access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

Integrated Pest Management Appropriation (2511-3002)

The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program had expenditures of \$74K in FY24 which equaled spending in FY23.

Capital Accounts

MDAR had capital (bond) expenditures of \$7.3M in FY24 which represented a 21% decrease, or \$1.9M, as compared to FY23 when expenditures were \$9.3M. This decrease was largely driven by a decrease in available capital funding for land protection programs, however it was more than offset by the availability of ARPA funding for land protection which wasn't fully expended in FY24 and will continue to support land protection efforts in FY25 and FY26.

Capital funded programs include the Climate Smart Agriculture Program (CSAP), Agriculture Preservation Restriction (APR) Program, Farm Viability Enhancement Program (FVEP), Urban Agriculture, Agriculture Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP), the Massachusetts Food Venture Program, the Cranberry Bog Renovation Program, Food Security Infrastructure Grants (FSIG) and the Massachusetts Food Trust which has been supported through an

Interdepartmental Service Agreement (ISA) with the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development for \$1M each fiscal year (which ended in FY24).

Federal Funds

MDAR had federal expenditures of \$13.2M in FY24 which represented a 53% increase, or \$4.6M, as compared to FY23 when expenditures were \$8.6M. The increase was primarily driven by the previously mentioned ARPA-funded federal program [Local Food Purchase Assistance Program](#) (LFPA) which awards funds to food security stakeholder groups that then use the funds to purchase food from socially disadvantaged farmers and producers to provide to underserved communities. This program had expenditures in FY24 of \$6.8M in its second year of a multi-year program funded at \$14.6M. Additionally, and to a lesser degree, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program had expenditures of \$1.7M in FY24 compared to \$1.2M in FY23 which is primarily due to additional ARPA-related funding that allowed the coupon benefit for low-income seniors to be increased from \$25 to \$50.

Trust Funds

Trust funds totaled 1.0% of agency spending in FY24 totaling \$1.01M which represented an 18% decrease, or \$226K, as compared to FY23. The primary trust accounts from which spending occurred were the Homeless Animal Prevention and Care Fund (57%), the MA Exposition Building Maintenance Fund (18%), and the Dairy Promotion Trust Fund (15%).

Revenue

MDAR collects 29 fees, ranging from pesticide applicator and milk dealer licenses to nursery and greenhouse inspection fees. The decline in revenue seen in FY19 (in the table below) was due to a new online renewal and product registration portal that was introduced in 2019. Applicants were granted an extension due to the complexities of the new system and the shortfall of revenue in FY19 was offset with an increase in revenue in FY20.

Year	Revenue
2019	\$ 5,093,355
2020	\$ 7,705,511
2021	\$ 6,672,992
2022	\$ 6,823,370
2023	\$ 6,848,400
2024	\$ 6,829,485

Dairy Farmer Tax Credit Program

In 2023, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) continued to administer the Massachusetts Dairy Farmer Tax Credit Program. This program was established in 2008 to offset cyclical downturns in milk prices by providing financial assistance to dairy farmers in the form of a tax credit. The state budget for the program was increased from \$4 million to \$6 million in 2018 and then in 2023 the state budget increased the tax credit to \$8

million. For each month that the average cost of production exceeds milk prices, the dairy tax credit is triggered for the given month(s).¹⁷ In 2023, the average cost of production exceeded the price of milk for all 12 months which triggered the tax credit for every month. This means that the full \$8 million was distributed to dairy farmers. The resulting tax credit payment to Massachusetts dairy farmers was \$4.474 per hundredweight of milk. Anecdotally, the tax credit helps dairy farmers to qualify for loans, pay for feed, and undertake new projects.

Retail Coupon for Fluid Milk Program

This program was established to allow for the use of fluid milk coupons in promotional and marketing campaigns to benefit businesses and consumers. The goal of the program is to increase fluid milk consumption, and promotional coupons provide consumers discounts of milk. The program ensures compliance with [M.G.L. Chapter 94A](#), which seeks to create and protect a competitive milk market in the Commonwealth. To be compliant with Massachusetts law, milk coupon promotions must not result in a sale of milk that is below the cost of production, nor appear to be predatory towards any Massachusetts dairy farm that directly markets and sells its own fluid milk to consumers.

MDAR's Environmental Justice Program

MDAR's Environmental Justice (EJ) Team aims to foster equitable engagement and empower underserved farmers and communities by developing inclusive policies, providing multilingual resources, and facilitating access to all agency resources. Through strategic partnerships, capacity building, and data-driven initiatives, we seek to create a more just, sustainable, and resilient agricultural landscape and food system in Massachusetts.

MDAR recognizes the historic and consistent barriers to farmland and agricultural resources for [Historically Underserved Farmers and Producers](#), as well as the marginalization of [Environmental Justice communities](#), and MDAR's EJ Team works to understand, outline, and address barriers to accessing farmland, healthy food, and other resources.

The department's Environmental Justice goals and activities are outlined within [MDAR's Environmental Justice Strategy](#), a document shaped by constituent and partner organization feedback. In addition, the EJ Team supports Language Access efforts and implements MDAR's Language Access Plan.

Environmental Justice Strategy

EPA's EJ Policy and Executive Order 552 required that EPA agencies, including MDAR, develop their own strategies to "proactively promote environmental justice in all neighborhoods in ways that are tailored to their agencies' mission." EPA's EJ Office convened and led the EJ Task Force to develop this [draft EJ Strategy](#). The 2022 [Draft Environmental Justice Strategy](#) is available in the following languages:

[English](#) | [Español \(Spanish\)](#) | [Português \(Portuguese\)](#) | [中国人 \(Simplified Chinese\)](#) | [Kreyòl ayisyen \(Haitian Creole\)](#) | [عربي \(Arabic\)](#) | [ខ្មែរ \(Khmer\)](#) | [Русский \(Russian\)](#) | [Kriolu \(Cape Verdean Creole\)](#)

In January 2023, MDAR conducted a public listening session to solicit feedback on the agency's Environmental Justice Strategy. MDAR also received written comments. The public comment period on the draft EJ Strategy concluded on February 17, 2023. The oral and written comments were integrated, or responded to, into a final Environmental Justice Strategy. The EJ Team would like to thank the thoughtful, honest feedback received from partner farmers and organizations throughout the public comment period.

MDAR also adopted a model of continuous feedback and tracks important input on our programs and services. Constituents can provide anonymous (or non-anonymous) feedback on MDAR's Environmental Justice work, through [this survey](#).

Grants and Metrics

In 2023, MDAR implemented a system to track the following metrics within all MDAR Grant Program Request-for-Responses (RFRs). This process continued in 2024:

- Number of new applicants to MDAR Grant Programs
- Locations of funded and non-funded projects within Environmental Justice Communities
- Applications and awards to Historically Underserved Farmers or organizations with representation or leadership from Historically Underserved Farmers or Groups.

MDAR RFRs included an Environmental Justice Questionnaire, and the metrics are being tracked understand our progress on Environmental Justice goals.

In addition, MDAR’s EJ Team supported webinars, outreach efforts, and language access efforts for several grant programs in an effort to enhance access to information and reduce barriers to participation.

Outreach and Access to Information

MDAR launched an Environmental Justice Newsletter in March 2023 to provide updates on grants, events, resources, and MDAR’s progress on key environmental justice goals. The newsletter also provides an opportunity to celebrate the agricultural diversity in Massachusetts through Heritage Month features, community spotlights, and farmer stories.

Since its launch, the newsletter has published two dozen issues and expanded its reach across the Commonwealth.

The public can view [past issues](#) and [subscribe](#).

Additionally, in an effort to enhance access to information, MDAR published a booklet of Programs and Services. The booklet is organized into sections, and translated into 10 languages.

[MDAR Overview of Programs and Services Booklet](#) | [Kriolu di Cabo Verde](#) | [简体中文](#) | [繁體中文](#) | [Kreyòl ayisyen](#) | [Lus Hmoob](#) | [ភាសាខ្មែរ](#) | [Português, Portugal](#) | [Soomaali](#) | [Español](#) | [Tiếng Việt](#)

Language Access

MDAR prioritizes language services to ensure meaningful access to all programs and services. MDAR’s Language Access Plan outlines MDAR’s responsibilities and processes in regard to language services.

In 2024, MDAR implemented the following language access initiatives:

- Creation of a dedicated [Language Access webpage](#) and public list of [all MDAR Translated Content](#).
- Development and implementation of MDAR’s [Language Access Plan](#).
- Staff training to ensure consistent understanding of MDAR’s Language Services
- Development of a [webinar series](#) to share information on how to request Language Services for MDAR constituents.

- Completion of 36 translation jobs and six interpretation events.

MDAR remains committed to deploying efficient and effective language access services to Massachusetts farmers, residents and partner organizations.

MassGrown Wellness Program

The MassGrown Wellness program was launched by MDAR in 2023 to provide statewide mental health and well-being services to the Commonwealth's farmers, and those that support them. Program funding through USDA's Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) was utilized to develop a responsive resource focused on helping overcome the stigma associated with discussing mental health challenges and be equipped to provide resources to those seeking assistance.

Over the course of the program's development, Massachusetts farmers have faced natural disasters, unfavorable growing conditions, and most recently Avian Influenza, all of which have directly impacted productivity and profitable operation of farms. MassGrown Wellness was able to address these unforeseen circumstances, through resources developed to specifically address the mental health impact these events had and how farmers might better manage their reactions.

The Peer Support Network ("Network"), formed in 2023, provided farmers facing unforeseen circumstances with fellow peer farmers available to discuss the situation and provide guidance resulting from the conversation. The Network graduated fifteen peer support network leaders, who each participated in 18 hours of focused training over the course of six training sessions. These trained peers are available to speak with fellow farmers and food system members about their mental health and wellbeing.

MassGrown Wellness outreach included efforts to reach the diverse farming community of Massachusetts. This outreach took into consideration the changing demographics of the Commonwealth's agricultural community and took steps to meet all community members where they are and in conversation that the community would understand and benefit.

MDAR hired Dr. Sherine Brown in late 2024 to provide more specialized services to the agricultural community and further support the work of the Peer Support Network. Dr. Brown is collaborating with MDAR's Environmental Justice team to coordinate efforts to connect with farmers and provide expanded outreach and resources to Massachusetts farmers. There are plans to attend conferences as well as MDAR-led Resource Fairs in 2025 to engage in additional outreach measures as well.

For more information on the MassGrown Wellness Program, please see its [webpage](#).

Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance

Agricultural Business Assistance

MDAR offers agricultural business workshops, courses, and one-on-one assistance to support the development of successful commercial farm businesses in Massachusetts. The courses are taught by contracted instructors with agricultural business experience who provide guidance and resources to help farm managers improve their business skills.

MDAR offered two free, virtual workshops in January 2024 to Massachusetts farm owner/operators or farm managers looking to improve their financial and/or marketing knowledge and skills. The Financial Foundations workshop, attended by 40 farmers, covered financial information including how to set up your financial statements, cash flow budgeting, fixed vs. variable expenses and Cost of Goods Sold. The Reaching Your Market workshop, attended by 17 farmers, covered marketing concepts including identifying who you are trying to reach, what makes your farm stand out and how to communicate this in your messaging, as well as what's working and what's not to help focus efforts and save time.

MDAR offered the Growing Your Farm Business Plan course in West Springfield to owners of nine diverse farms from across the state, from the Berkshires to Martha's Vineyard. The course was provided as a combination of in-person and virtual classes over six weeks. Course topics included resource assessment, financial management, marketing, quality of life, and goal setting. All participants completed a farm business plan with financial projections by the end of the course to guide their farm business and earned a certificate of completion presented to them by MDAR Commissioner Randle.

The Farm Transfer Planning Assistance program (Farm-Pass) was launched in August 2024 to provide one-on-one planning assistance to farm owners and their identified successors to work through financial assessments, retirement plans, and future farm business goals. Farms will be assigned a dedicated planner from MDAR's list of contractors with expertise in farm business and transfer planning with the pilot round of farm transfer plans to be completed by June of 2025.

Agricultural Climate Resiliency & Efficiencies Program (ACRE)

The Agricultural Climate Resiliency & Efficiencies (ACRE) Program provides reimbursement grants to Massachusetts agricultural operations for projects that strengthen climate resiliency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve economic sustainability across the agricultural sector. Established in Fiscal Year 2018 as part of the Commonwealth's broader climate strategy under Executive Order 569, ACRE supports farms in adapting to the effects of a changing climate while advancing environmental and economic goals.

Since its inception, the program has awarded over \$6 million to more than 216 projects statewide. In Fiscal Year 2025, ACRE awarded \$699,342 to support 21 on-farm projects

designed to reduce vulnerability to climate impacts and enhance operational efficiency.

Through direct reimbursement to agricultural operations, ACRE funds innovative conservation and energy projects that improve soil health, increase water use efficiency and availability, reduce or displace greenhouse gas emissions, enhance carbon sequestration, and strengthen overall farm resiliency. Priority is given to projects that integrate both adaptation and mitigation practices.

ACRE is one of the programs offered through MDAR's Climate Smart for Agriculture Program (CSAP), a unified grant process that supports climate-resilient and environmentally responsible agricultural practices statewide.

Examples of funded projects include reduced- or no-till equipment, compost spreaders, water and soil monitoring systems, maple monitoring technology, and dairy barn modifications.

[Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program \(AEEP\)](#)

The Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP) is a grant program that provides financial assistance to Massachusetts agricultural operations for implementing conservation practices that protect the Commonwealth's natural resources while supporting the long-term sustainability and productivity of farms.

Since its inception in 1999, AEEP has supported more than 700 projects statewide, investing approximately \$10 million in environmental improvements that enhance on-farm sustainability and resilience. In Fiscal Year 2025, the program awarded \$349,500 to support 12 farm projects across the Commonwealth.

Through direct reimbursement to agricultural operations that adopt eligible conservation practices, AEEP helps prevent, reduce, or eliminate environmental impacts from agricultural activities. These projects contribute to cleaner water, improved soil health, efficient water use, enhanced air quality, and broader conservation goals such as wildlife habitat protection. Examples of funded projects include installation of manure management systems, pesticide storage facilities, livestock exclusion fencing, improved irrigation systems, and water control structures.

AEEP is now one of several programs offered under MDAR's Climate Smart for Agriculture Program (CSAP), a unified grant process that supports climate-resilient and environmentally responsible agricultural practices statewide.

[Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture \(MEGA\)](#)

The Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture (MEGA) program offers business planning and technical assistance to beginning farms between one and ten years in business that are developing commercially viable farm businesses, along with one-to-one matching grants of up to \$30,000 per farm. Selected farm owners participate in a business planning process which helps identify the best use of the grant funds, which must be spent on equipment or capital

improvements that will enhance farm viability.

In FY25, \$148,910 in total grants of up to \$30,000 per farm were awarded to eight participating MEGA farms for identified farm improvements. Farmers contributed more than \$176,000 of their own funds towards these projects. Grant projects include the following purchases: wood processor, skid steer, and equipment; truck and cooler; hay equipment; tractor; tractor, sprayer, and electric UTV; hay equipment and cattle handling equipment; and tractor. In addition, participating farmers received direct business and technical assistance valued at a total of \$37,485 (an average of \$4,685 per farm).

Since MEGA began in 2010 in response to the needs of beginning farmers in Massachusetts, \$1,228,172 total grants (an average of \$9,825 per farm) and \$517,638 of technical assistance (an average of \$4,141 per farm) have been awarded through 15 rounds of the program to 125 diverse beginning farms located across the state.

Buy-Protect-Sell Program

In November 2024, Governor Healey signed Mass Leads: An Act Relative to Strengthening Massachusetts' Economic Leadership, more informally known as the economic development bill. Among many other activities, the bill allows MDAR to establish a program to acquire and sell land under permanent protection. Prior to this, MDAR did not have the authority to purchase land in-fee and having that capacity was one of the priority recommendations from the state's 2023 Farmland Action Plan. This will be an important tool in helping mitigate farmland loss and will allow the Department to move quickly to purchase farmland when it becomes available for sale and apply permanent restrictions to ensure it does not convert to other uses in the future.

Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (APR)

The APR Program helps to preserve agricultural land and to keep valuable farmland soil from being developed for non-agricultural purposes. It is a voluntary program for farmers making decisions about the future of their farms. The APR program preserves and protects agricultural soils from use for non-agricultural purposes or any activity detrimental to agriculture. With a deed restriction the APR program protects productive farmland and revitalizes the agricultural industry by making land more affordable for farmers and their operations more financially secure.

To date the program has acquired 974 farm properties, while protecting approximately 77,346 acres.

During FY25 the APR program acquired eleven farm properties. These projects helped protect roughly 1,120 acres, with an APR value of \$13,475,000. The Commonwealth contributed \$12,389,850 towards the purchase price, with the remaining consideration being local contributions from municipalities and non-profits totaling approximately \$623,900 and landowner bargain sales of roughly \$257,500. Funding from the Landscape Partnership Grant Program, and a one-time funding source from the federal American Rescue Plan Act were also expended on qualified APR projects.

Farm Name	Town	Acres	Farm Operation/ Property	Project Partners
Padula/ Sterling Realty Trust	Sterling	21.49	This property is used by a local farmer with approximately 12 acres used for hay production, while the remaining land is forest or wet. Roughly 55% of the soils are classified as prime or farmland of statewide importance.	USDA- NRCS
Lauzier Farm	South Hadley	204.9	The open farmland had been rented to local dairy farms for forage corn and hay production. Once protected the property and associate farmstead were purchase by a former tenant dairy farm. The property consists of approximately 68% prime or statewide important soils.	USDA- NRCS, Town of South Hadley, and Kestrel Land Trust
Yellow Stonehouse Farm	Westfield	15.251	The farm is a USDA Certified Organic vegetable operation in Hampden County. The farm sells organic vegetables to its CSA members, growing its produce on approximately 14.2 acres, consisting of 100% prime farmland soils.	USDA- NRCS, and City of Westfield
Whittier Farms, Inc.	Sutton	79.6	Whittier Farms, Inc. is a 5th generation dairy with a headquarters located in Sutton. The farmland consists of 34 acres of hay, three acres of oats and six acres of corn. The remainder is unmanaged woodland. 54% of the land is prime/state important soils.	Town of Sutton
Hamel Family Farm, LLC	Southampton	29.845	The farmland is in an active agricultural area, abutting the Fournier APR, and is used for forage crops including hay, pasture, and corn. Also, a portion of the property is used for vineyard stock. Soils on the property consists of 56 % prime and statewide important farmland.	Town of Southampton and Kestrel Land Trust

Herrick Farm Trust	Rowley	137.49 7	The Herrick Farm, one of the oldest farms in Essex County, is a diverse dairy selling milk, corn, vegetables, hay, compost and timber. Soils on the APR consists of 51.8% prime and state important farmland.	Essex County Greenbelt Association
Louis T. Aragi and Louis T. Aragi, Jr.	Sheffield	443.97 2	Louis Aragi and Louis Aragi Jr. (Pine Island Farm Partnership) utilize the farmland for rotation production of corn and hay to support Pine Island Dairy Farm’s nearly 1,500 dairy cows. Soils for this APR consist of prime farmland (15.4%), farmland of statewide importance (23.7%), and farmland of local importance (22.1%).	Sheffield Land Trust and the Trustees of Reservations
Morven G. Allen	Sheffield	13.856	Morven Allen and his son use this property to raise corn silage for their dairy herd. Soils on the APR consists of 81.2% prime soils.	USDA-NRCS
Douglas J. Warner & Cassandra Lorrey	Williamsburg	31.66	For many years this property has been farmed by the abutting former dairy for corn and hay. Doug Warner currently harvests hay/ forage for beef and sheep farm operation. Soils on the parcel consist of 83.37% prime/state soils	Town of Williamsburg and Kestrel Land Trust
Lyons Street Trust	Granby and Ludlow	86.368	This property is utilized for the production of mixed vegetables. Soils on the parcel consist of approximately 47.5% prime/state soils.	Kestrel Land Trust
Jonathan C. Galenski and Justin Galenski	Whately	55.736	This property is utilized for the production of mixed vegetables. Soils on the parcel consist of approximately 42.3% prime/state soils.	USDA-NRCS and Town of Whately

APR Transfers

In Fiscal Year 2025, MDAR issued a total of seven waivers for APR transfers that had Right of First Refusal (ROFR, two properties) or Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV, five properties) terms. The department did not exercise its right or options on any OPAV or ROFR APR transfers.

APR Improvement Program (AIP)

The APR Improvement Program (AIP) helps sustain active commercial farming on land protected through the Department's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program. AIP provides business planning and technical assistance to help improve the productivity and profitability of participating farms with the goal of enhancing the significance of APR farm operations and their contribution to the state's agricultural industry. Participating farmers may be eligible for grant funds for projects identified through the planning process which must be spent primarily on farm infrastructure – capital projects to build or improve farm buildings or resource improvements that will help maintain or enhance the farm property.

In FY25, eight farms were selected for the APR Improvement Program and moved forward to receive a total of \$38,223 in business planning and technical assistance (average of \$4,778 per farm) and total grant funding of \$970,000 (average of \$121,250 grant per farm). These eight farms have a combined total of 1,178 acres protected under APR. Grant projects include construction of a hay storage barn; construction of a barn for a retail store and equipment and product storage; construction of a wash, pack, and storage building; renovation and repairs to livestock housing and grain storage; construction of a sheep barn and installation of fencing; construction of an equipment storage barn; construction of a barn for equipment storage, cattle handling, hay storage, and a workshop; and construction of a cattle barn.

Since the program began in 2009, AIP has awarded a total of \$9,375,140 in grant funding and \$704,212 in planning and technical assistance to 126 participating Massachusetts farms through 16 rounds of the program. These farms own a combined total of 17,511 acres of farmland that has been permanently protected from development under APRs.

Stewardship Assistance and Restoration on APRs (SARA)

The purpose of the Stewardship Assistance and Restoration on APRs (SARA) program, initiated in Fiscal Year 2016, is to improve the overall utilization of APR land resources for commercial agriculture. In FY25, SARA provided grant funding of up to \$50,000 per farm, with a 15% required cash match, for identified improvements that helped restore protected resources on an APR farm. The Program assists participants with conducting activities that will restore the continued use of the agricultural resource, which may include but are not limited to improving soil health; stabilizing soil loss; reactivating cropland use that had been negatively impacted by erosion, flooding, natural disasters, or inactivity.

In FY25, 27 respondents applied for SARA funds and a total of \$519,070.41 in grants were provided to 19 APR farms in seven counties. These funds helped to clear field edges and fence lines to renovate, seed and fertilize pasture and hay land (180 acres improved). SARA also provided resources to restore farm access roads (7,250 feet of road repaired), make drainage improvements to eliminate field wetness and erosion (13,000 feet of drainage installed) and to clear clogged drainage ditches (1,300 feet of ditches cleared). SARA funding was also used towards a bridge replacement and the removal of accumulated debris from former landowners on several APRs to maximize open land and safety on these farms.

APR Program Stewardship Surveys

The APR Program contracts out boundary surveys for APR properties which entered the program without a full boundary survey. These properties typically contain old property descriptions which are vague and difficult to follow, thus creating challenges in understanding stewarding the APR. In FY25, four boundary surveys were completed, totaling 496.271 acres.

Agricultural Composting Program

Through its Agricultural Composting Program, MDAR encourages and supports composting on farms. Application of compost to agricultural soil improves tilth, soil organic matter, water holding capacity, and contributes nutrients. Composting farm manure provides a more stable form of nutrients, reducing odor, and resulting in a material which is lighter and easier to spread than manure.

Within DACTA, MDAR administers an Agricultural Composting Registration process which allows qualifying farms to register their operations with MDAR under an agricultural waste composting exemption in MassDEP's solid waste regulation, 310 CMR 16.00. Under that exemption, any farm that wishes to compost organic materials other than those that are generated on their own farms, may register their operation with MDAR, while adhering to MDAR's Agricultural Composting Program regulations, 330 CMR 25.00.

MDAR is responsible for registering new agricultural composting sites, as well as renewing the registration of existing sites annually. Throughout the course of the year, MDAR's Agricultural Composting Specialist conducted routine and unannounced site visits to registered composters and prospective farms wishing to engage in agricultural composting to address any concerns that arise on registered sites, providing technical assistance, monitoring, and troubleshooting to improve the composting operation. Additionally, two agricultural composting trainings were presented to MDAR registered composters and farmers interested in becoming registered in MDAR's Agricultural Composting Program, covering Department regulations and composting best management practices.

MDAR's Agricultural Composting Improvement Program (ACIP), a grant program established in 2019 and designed to facilitate on-farm composting and compost use to improve soil on farms, provided \$342,732 in funding to eleven farms during FY25. This money helped these farms purchase equipment such as compost spreaders, turners, in-vessel systems, and screeners, as well as funding the construction of new compost pads, improving the efficiency of their composting operations and helping to improve their farm soils through application of compost.

Aquaculture Program

Aquaculture is the 5th highest valued agriculture sector in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. After experiencing a 40% drop in sales due to the pandemic, the value of the Massachusetts shellfish aquaculture industry continued to rebound to more than \$31.5 million in 2024, with a total of 402 aquaculture growers cultivating 1,382 acres and producing more

than 53 million oysters and nearly five million hardshell clams. In addition to oysters and quahogs, Massachusetts growers also culture soft shell clams, blue mussels, bay scallops, surf clams, and a type of seaweed called sugar kelp.

Massachusetts is also home to ten trout farms, producing fish worth more than \$2,000,000, and a large recirculating aquaculture facility in Franklin County which produces barramundi, an Asian sea bass.

Energy Efficiency, Conservation, And Renewables Program (AgEnergy Grant Program)

Since 2009, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) annually invites Massachusetts agricultural operations to submit proposals seeking funding for agricultural energy projects under our Agricultural Energy (AgEnergy) Grant Program. Now part of the Climate Smart Agricultural (CSAP) suite of programs, AgEnergy is an effort to improve energy efficiency and facilitate adoption of alternative clean energy technologies so farms can become more sustainable, and the Commonwealth can maximize the environmental and economic benefits from these technologies. These projects also help farms contribute to the local food production goals of the MA Local Food Action Plan and the MA 2050 Zero Net Energy and De-Carbonization goals. Since inception our annual AgEnergy Grant has helped fund more than 390 farms for a variety of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, providing total funding of more than \$5.60 million dollars toward approximately \$26 million dollars of total project construction costs, resulting in more than \$1,790,000 in either annual energy savings or energy generation.

In FY25 MDAR awarded 22 AgEnergy grants totaling \$694,562 to Massachusetts farmers to implement renewable energy systems and improve energy efficiency on farms, reducing equivalent annual CO2 emissions by approximately 190 tons. Project funding was awarded to the following communities:

Acton, Andover, Ashfield, Canton, Dracut, Hardwick, Lincoln, Lunenburg, Mattapoisett, Millers Falls, Montague, Monterey, Petersham, Sherborn, Shelburne Falls, South Dartmouth (2), South Yarmouth, Sturbridge, Westport, and Williamstown (2).

The projects were a combination of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects including: 11 roof- or ground-mounted, behind the meter, solar photovoltaic systems totaling more than 238 kW, for a variety of farm sector operations including vegetable, two poultry/livestock operations, equine, cranberry and aquaculture. The aquaculture solar PV is an off-the-grid floating system engineered tandem with and to support a floating upwelling system. Energy efficiency improvements included: new reverse osmosis, evaporators, or vacuum pumps for maple syrup operations; energy efficient walk-in cooler refrigeration for a new farmstand; dairy barn creamery envelope and heating and cooling upgrades; heat pumps replacing both electric and propane heating; greenhouse ventilation controls; new energy efficient greenhouse components including a new thermal curtain, natural roof venting, electronic controls and coverings; replacement of inefficient freezers and coolers for a CSA; LED lighting fixtures replacing old fluorescents; and an energy-efficient cold storage facility. Additionally, one project converted an

existing diesel-fired refrigerated trailer to electric, ultimately tying into an existing roof-mounted solar system.

Farm Viability Enhancement Program (FVEP)

The Farm Viability Enhancement Program provides business planning, technical assistance, and grants to commercial farms to improve farm viability and to preserve and support the stewardship of agricultural resources. In FY25, seven farms participated in the program. These farms received \$36,989 total in business and technical assistance (\$5,284 average per farm) and \$800,000 in total grant funding, while 517 acres were placed under short-term covenants to keep the land in agricultural use.

Farm improvement projects funded with FVEP grants include: construction of a livestock housing building, the construction of a sheep housing building, a storage building, purchase of a livestock trailer, purchase of a new farm vehicle and installation of deer fencing, construction of a solar panel and installation of a walk-in freezer, construction of an equipment storage building, purchase of a new tractor, spraying and tillage equipment, and construction of a multi-use maintenance and storage building and walk-in cooler.

Since FVEP was initiated in 1996, 556 farms have been selected to participate in the program and a total of 480 farms have been protected by covenants and received grant awards. Program results to date include:

- 480 farms have benefited from assistance and grant funding.
- 46,704 acres placed in protective covenants.
- Total of grants paid to participant farms \$23,476,472, an average of \$48,909 per farm.
- Total spending on grants per acre placed in protective covenant: \$503 per acre.

Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan Implementation

In December 2023 the Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan 2023-2050 was released. There are three overlapping goals in the plan: accelerate the permanent protection and stewardship of farmland, increase access to farmland, and support and enhance the viability of farms and farmland.

Plan implementation in 2024 focused on sharing the plan with a wide variety of audiences and exploring how potential partners could get involved with implementing the plan. Over 470 people receive the MFAP newsletter, most of whom are potential partners.

The implementation matrix was created to organize all the next steps from the plan. Many meetings with potential partners focused on reviewing the working draft matrix to identify for each task a potential timeline for implementation and potential implementers, as well as clarify language where relevant and add additional tasks as needed.

For more information about work to date, visit the MFAP newsletters, Progress Reports and

Implementation Matrix at www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

Urban Agriculture Program

Urban Agriculture is an important component of the growing local food movement, nationally and across the Commonwealth.

MDAR recognizes that urban food production plays an important role in addressing health, social, economic, and environmental issues, and is works with organizations and sister agencies to support initiatives for sustainable urban food production.

Since its establishment in 2014, grants from the Urban Agriculture Program have been awarded to more than 122 urban farming projects. The program addresses challenges facing urban farmers and supports municipalities with technical assistance to help with the development of zoning ordinances, public education, and land assessments. The program is designed to build community partnerships, increase access to fresh, nutritious food for urban residents and to promote viable farming methods and support local initiatives that organizations and cities can replicate and benefit from.

Urban Agriculture Grant Awards

Municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and other governmental entities are eligible to apply for grants in the range of \$5,000 to \$50,000 with preference for projects that attract multiple partners and funding sources. \$100,000 is also available for the purchase of land, for which applicant must have at least 25% cash match.

The Urban Agriculture Grant program helps enterprises in cities across the Commonwealth grow their own food. The funds help address some of the challenges facing urban farmers, such as securing suitable land, improving nutrient-poor soils, meeting high start-up costs, and complying with restrictive zoning rules. Funding is also awarded to community gardens and community food production projects.

In FY25 MDAR received seventeen proposals and awarded twelve grants for proposals totaling \$300,000. Projects included soil regeneration, commercial greenhouses, and infrastructure improvements.

Massachusetts Food Venture Program

The Massachusetts Food Ventures Program (MFVP) is designed to advance the objectives of the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan by providing funding through grants to support food ventures, primarily in communities of low or moderate income, including Gateway Cities and rural communities. Participants who are selected to participate in the program will be reimbursed up to \$250,000, and the minimum award is \$50,000. MFVP investments include food processing infrastructure to meet the needs of the growing local food system, improved

distribution systems to support opportunities for equitable access to fresh local food, and innovative retail outlet strategies that enhance access to healthy food.

The Food Venture Program received ten applications for funding in FY25 and awarded a total of \$525,852 to six projects.

Massachusetts Food Trust Program

The Massachusetts Food Trust Program (MFTP) is a statewide healthy food financing initiative aiming to increase access to healthy, affordable food in low-income urban, suburban, and rural communities with an emphasis on entrepreneurs producing, promoting, and selling healthy food grown, caught, or harvested in Massachusetts. The MFTP offers critical financing tools and business resources to launch and expand businesses, create jobs, increase economic opportunities, and stimulate the local economy.

A CDFI or Consortium of CDFIs with a designated lead, that demonstrates its ability to provide grants and loans across the Commonwealth which will further the goals of the Food Trust Program is selected to implement the program. Eligible applicants were Community Development Financial Institutions certified by the United States Treasury. Preference was given to applicants that had previous experience working with food-related entities that operate in underserved communities and that have strong finance backgrounds. Applicants had to demonstrate the ability to leverage private and federal funds.

The department awarded \$180,000 for administrative costs to the Consortium of **Local Enterprise Assistance Fund (LEAF) - Lead; The Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC)** for its management of the Massachusetts Food Trust Program (MFTP) in FY25.

In FY25, sixteen projects were funded representing 12 counties, combined, to create or retain 170 jobs, and will serve an estimated 52,000 people by providing greater access to fresh food. 96% of the projects accept or plan to accept SNAP and half accept WIC. All offer MA-produced food.

MA Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP)

MEFAP provides food for residents of the Commonwealth in need. Through the program, a consistent supply of quality, nutrient-rich foods and locally-grown fresh produce is provided through four food banks to 968 emergency food providers (pantries, kitchens, shelters). MEFAP consists of two food purchasing programs - Core Food, representing 90.5% of funding for food purchases and The Massachusetts Grown Initiative, representing 7.5% of food purchase funding; an administrative charge of 2% is retained by the department.

The Greater Boston Food Bank is the largest food bank in the state and received 68.20% of MEFAP funding in FY'25.

Total MEFAP funding in 2025:

\$41,500,000

Core Food Purchases: \$35,774,603

Mass Grown Initiative: \$3,670,396

Food Banks Operating Funds: \$852,500

MDAR Administrative Charge: \$805,000

Division of Agricultural Markets



2024 brought several 'first' initiatives for the Division of Agricultural Markets including the first annual Agricultural Resource Fair, coordinating the activities of the inaugural class of the Massachusetts Youth Council, the development of the first Massachusetts Ice Cream Trail, and an expanded Agricultural Event Certification program making farm-brewers, pub-brewers and farm-distilleries eligible to sell and sample their products at certified agricultural events in Massachusetts.

The Division of Agricultural Markets team continued the Massachusetts Grown & Fresher branding initiative to pursue increased educational and consumer awareness opportunities which align with the goals to increase access to local food through marketing, promotion, branding, and creative content for social media messaging. The Division, in collaboration with the farming community and agricultural stakeholders, published the second [Massachusetts Agriculture](#) magazine in late fall. The goal of the magazine is to provide an informative overview of the Massachusetts agricultural industry by giving the reader a good perspective of how agriculture is thriving in the Commonwealth. The content showcases the contributions of agriculture to the State of Massachusetts through engaging articles, photography, and design.

Agricultural Education

Interest in agricultural education continues to be strong, with student enrollment at the four agricultural high schools in the Commonwealth increasing year-over-year for the past two academic years. These highly specialized public secondary schools provide future generations with the knowledge and skillset they will need to be successful in the agricultural sector, from farm machinery to animal husbandry.

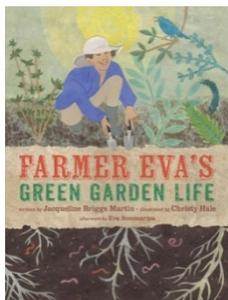
Student enrollment at the four agricultural high schools is as follows:

	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
<i>Bristol County Agricultural HS</i>	499	549	592
<i>Norfolk County Agricultural HS</i>	588	580	586
<i>Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical HS</i>	1654	1,694	1,745
<i>Smith Vocational and Agricultural HS</i>	547	566	569

Agricultural education youth organizations continue to be a popular outlet for students, particularly the Massachusetts chapters of the FFA and 4-H Club. There are currently 19 FFA chapters in Massachusetts with a total membership of more than 2,700 students. During the 2023-2024 program year, Massachusetts 4-H clubs served more than 1,577 youth, ages 5-19, with the help of more than 828 adult volunteers.

Additionally, Massachusetts 4-H served 2,230 youth, aged 5-19, involved in 4-H programs through school and community-based programs run by 4-H staff. The Massachusetts FFA Convention was held in April 2024, hosted at the Sheraton Framingham. Representatives of the Massachusetts FFA represented the state at the National FFA Convention and Expo, in Indianapolis and brought home multiple awards. The Massachusetts 4-H Chapters hosted their annual fairs, along with managing the Massachusetts 4-H Milk Booth at 2024 Big E, on the grounds of the Eastern State Exposition.

With growing interest in agricultural literacy, MDAR continues to support integrating ag literacy in schools throughout the Commonwealth. To further these efforts, MDAR provides an annual Agricultural Education Grant. In 2024, MDAR entered into a contract with Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom (MAC) for \$10,000 to provide workshops and grants for teachers and to produce the annual Massachusetts Agriculture calendar. The mission of MAC is to promote agricultural literacy among educators and to provide them with the skills and support to integrate agriculture into their classroom. Over the past 24 years, MDAR has partnered with MAC in producing a hard copy calendar filled with Massachusetts farming landscape photos selected through an annual public photography contest. The annual calendar, which is an excellent resource that serves as an educational tool for teachers and the public, includes monthly educational/teaching tips, fun facts, and special ag-related days and events. Each month is sponsored by a Massachusetts agricultural organization including the MA Grange, MA Farm Bureau, MA Flowers Growers Association, MA Maple Producers Association, MA Agricultural Fairs Association, Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, MA Fruit Growers, and MA Christmas Tree Growers Association. For 2024, 2,500 calendars were produced and distributed to teachers and the general public.



MDAR also partnered with MAC to purchase 3,680 copies of the book “Eva’s Green Garden Life.” This book is about a farmer in southeastern Massachusetts. During the months of October and November, MAC distributed books to 150 classrooms across the Commonwealth. We connected readers and classrooms and worked with MDAR staff to establish days that worked best for state officials. Commissioner Randle read to classrooms all across the state. Each box of

books came with a flyer pointing them in the direction of where to find appropriate lessons to use with the book on MAC's website and each book had a label in it designating that the book was provided by MAC with grant support from MDAR.



New in 2024, MDAR launched the inaugural Massachusetts Agriculture Youth Council. This Council was created to cultivate and foster the next generation of leaders in the agriculture industry. The Council is comprised of high school students in their senior year and meets monthly to discuss agricultural issues, hear from guest speakers from the agriculture industry, learn about the legislative procedures and workforce development opportunities, attend special events and tours, and enhance professional skills. Participating in the Council provides students with an opportunity to learn about the varied agricultural sectors in Massachusetts and emerging trends and innovation in farming, and to deepen understanding of other states' agricultural issues through connections with youth councils across the United States. Members of the Council also have the opportunity to share ideas, which may be used to help in the further development of MDAR programs and support of agriculture in Massachusetts. The 2024-2025 council class consisted of 12 students from all over the state.

Other educational partners include the Massachusetts Envirothon, Massachusetts Farm to School, the Massachusetts State Grange, Hawlemont Regional Elementary School, Growing Places, the state's regional Buy Local organizations and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). In 2024, MDAR staff once again participated as volunteers and members of the advisory committee for the annual Massachusetts Envirothon competition. The Envirothon is a statewide competition where high school teams are tested on their knowledge of wildlife conservation, aquatic ecology, soils, and forestry. The 2024 Massachusetts Envirothon winner, Lexington High School, sent teens who went on to compete at the International Envirothon competition in New York.



Agricultural Event Certification Program

Sale and sample of farm-winery products have been eligible for sale at agricultural events for many years. In early 2024, MDAR updated its application process by moving the program into an online only submission system. Utilizing website technologies, we improved the efficiency of our capability to review applications and determine if an event qualifies as agricultural. 187 certificates were issued to farm-wineries in 2024. In November, Governor Healey signed into law a statutory change allowing for an expansion in the program. Farm-brewers, pub-brewers and farm-distilleries are now eligible to sell and sample their products at certified agricultural events in Massachusetts. MDAR updated the program’s application, public resources and outreach materials to raise awareness of the opportunity for brewers and distilleries to participate in agricultural events.

Retail Coupon for Fluid Milk Program

This program was established to allow for the use of fluid milk coupons in promotional and marketing campaigns to benefit businesses and consumers. The goal of the program is to increase fluid milk consumption, and promotional coupons provide consumers discounts of milk. The program ensures compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 94A, which seeks to create and protect a competitive milk market in the Commonwealth. To be compliant with Massachusetts law, milk coupon promotions must not result in a sale of milk that is below the cost of production, nor appear to be predatory towards any Massachusetts dairy farm that directly markets and sells its own fluid milk to consumers. In 2024, MDAR received and approved 7 applications.

2024 Massachusetts Agricultural Fairs



From the Berkshires to Cape Cod, Massachusetts boasts over 30 agricultural fairs that offer something for everyone. See, taste, and experience local products, farm animal exhibits, horse shows, artisan crafts, fruit and vegetable displays, 4H competitions, and fun for the whole family!

Commissioner Randle, Deputy Commissioner Pitcoff, and department staff traveled throughout the Commonwealth to visit approximately 87% of the state’s agricultural fairs in 2024. MDAR staff worked closely with the officers of the Massachusetts Agricultural Fairs Association (MAFA) by attending board meetings and the organization’s annual conference as well as assisting with program ideas.

MDAR Marketing staff published a comprehensive list of agricultural fairs which was promoted on the Massachusetts Grown & Fresher website (mass.gov/massgrown).

State rosettes were given to fairs upon request to recognize excellence for “Best in Show.” When funding is available, MDAR allots monies to agricultural fairs which supports national competitions.

MDAR staff contracted with an independent marketing firm to host three social, digital and media training webinars which explored the fundamentals of best practices for social media for fair use.

MDAR provided each agricultural fair with a banner to promote farms, fairs and farmers markets. The banners were displayed in prominent spaces and well received by fairgoers.

Staff also hosted a Judging class which covered jam, jellies, relishes, fresh fruit, and fresh vegetables during which 12 participants received their Level 1 Judging certification.

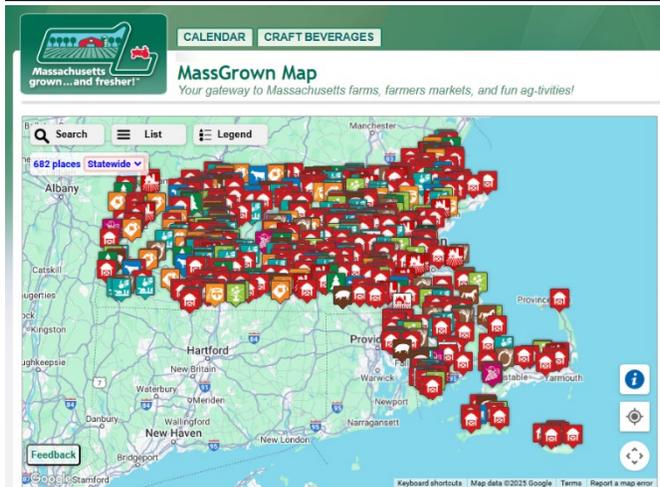
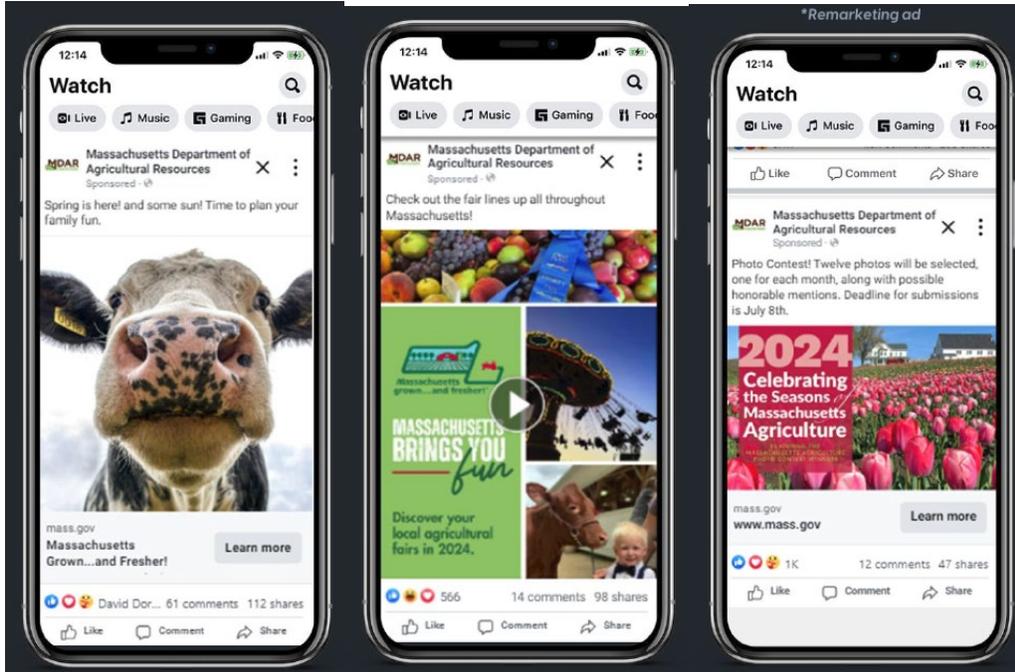
“Massachusetts Grown and Fresher“ Marketing Campaign

In an effort to increase market awareness and branding, the Markets staff worked with a marketing company to promote farms, farmers markets and agricultural fairs. Through the use of social media ads on platforms such as weather apps, YouTube, Pinterest, Facebook, and Google. We reached more than five million Massachusetts residents, with over 1.8 million engagements. Other notable numbers included:

- MDAR’s Facebook followers went from 6,000 (April 2024) to 20,000 followers (July

2024) - a 233% increase.

- Our Consumer e-list went from 3,100 to 5,100 emails in the same time period.
- MassGrown Map views increased from 213,217 views in 2023 to 253,300 in 2024.



Massachusetts Building

The Eastern States Exposition (The Big E) is an annual event that takes place in West Springfield, MA for 17 days and draws more than 1.6 million people. The Massachusetts Building located on the Avenue of States, provides Massachusetts businesses, non-profits, and other entities an opportunity to showcase their products and services through an annual application process.

In 2024, there were 36 Exhibitors:

- 6 Informational Government Agencies and 1 Non-food Government Agency (Lottery)
- 4 Food Non-profit/Commodity Groups
- 15 Food Vendors
- 12 Non-Food Vendors

2024 Total Fair Attendance: 1,633,935

The Massachusetts Building participated in three special annual event days: Military Appreciation Day, Massachusetts Day, and Harvest New England Day. Highlights included:

Military Day: West Springfield Fire Department suspended a large American Flag over the Building lawn. Jon Santiago, Secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Veterans' Services spoke to the crowd on the lawn of the Building in celebration of Massachusetts' veterans

Nine new exhibitors were welcomed to the Building, all of whom were well received by fairgoers. Although many exhibitors return annually and are fairgoer favorites, introducing new exhibitors every year keeps the Building relevant and exciting.



Massachusetts Day:

The Massachusetts Building celebrated Massachusetts Day on September 19, 2024. Jim Anspach, a dedicated Smith Vocational agriculture teacher for over 35 years who has been working with the MA Building since 2002, was added to the MA Building Wall of Fame. The weather was perfect, sunny and warm, the lawn was filled with families who enjoyed a DJ, simulated downhill skiing with Mt. Wachusett, a cranberry bog, engaged with games and displays from Old Sturbridge Village, met Smoky the Bear and enjoyed free milk

shakes from New England Dairy and more!

Harvest New England Day

Massachusetts celebrated Harvest New England Day, allowing Bay State businesses promoting or selling local food and fibers to sample and sell their products on the front lawn. Participating companies included Baker's Lane [Biscotti](#), [Little Man](#), [Lucky Me Farm and Kitchen](#), [Sweet Babus](#), and [Tempest Temptations!](#) Fairgoers could earn a Harvest New England tote bag by visiting each state and grange building and answering a series of agriculture related quiz questions through the Harvest New England Passport Program.



The Massachusetts Building at the Big E fair continues to be an excellent venue to showcase Massachusetts heritage, agriculture, industry, education, and family entertainment.
[Agricultural & Culinary Tourism](#)

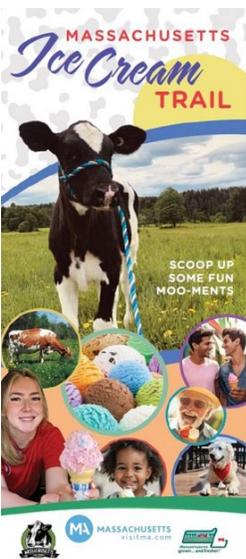


2024 saw continued public interest and engagement at agritourism farms in Massachusetts. MDAR continues to support agritourism with specialty months, proclamations and farm tours.

These include March Maple Month, June Dairy Month, October Cranberry Month, and Green Friday (Christmas trees), the last Friday in November.



MDAR continues to benefit from longstanding relationships with statewide agencies including the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT). By meeting quarterly, both agencies are able to streamline messaging on agritourism and produce digital and printed collateral, including a reprint of the [Massachusetts Wine & Cheese Trail](#).



New this year, MDAR, MOTT and the Massachusetts Dairy Promotion Board created and published the first [Massachusetts Ice Cream Trail](#). This brochure featured 105 destinations where participants can find locally produced ice cream, made with Massachusetts dairy. Of the 105 destinations, 16 dairy farms and 89 ice cream businesses were featured. Approximately 10,000 brochures were published and distributed to participating locations throughout the state including tourism centers, regional tourism centers, buy local organizations, and more. A launch event was held at Richardson's Dairy Farm in Middleton on July 25, 2024, with Lt Governor Kim Driscoll, MDAR Commissioner Ashley Randle, Executive Office of Economic Development Undersecretary of Economic Development Sarah Stanton, MOTT Executive Director Kate Fox, members of the Massachusetts Dairy Promotion Board, MDAR staff, and members of the MDAR Ag Youth Council.



As always, MDAR will continue to be supportive of agritourism initiatives and programming and recognizes its economic benefit to Massachusetts farmers.

Boston Public Market Commission



The Public Market Commission is chaired by MDAR Commissioner Ashley Randle with additional members from Executive Office for Administration and Finance; Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; Department of Transportation; State Senate; House of Representatives; Boston Planning and Development Agency; The Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy and the City of Boston.

In 2024, the Commission met on June 17 and November 18. Commission members received updates regarding the Market’s continued recovery from the effects of the COVID- 19 pandemic, including marketing and programing. Two of the market’s vendors gave presentations about their business: George Howell Coffee and Crescent Ridge Dairy.

The Boston Public Market officially opened to the public on July 30, 2015. Located at 100 Hanover Street in Boston, in a building owned by the Department of Transportation, the

market includes permanent and seasonal vendors which feature foods grown and produced in Massachusetts and New England.

- The Public Market's Commission's role is to: Define the mission and vision of a public market in downtown Boston; Confer with participants and parties from the public and private sector involved with the planning, financing, design, and construction of said public market; Work with relevant public and private sector parties to write guidelines for an eventual market operator; Work with the appropriate state agencies to advertise for, and select, a market operator; Define the terms of a lease between the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the operator, subject to approval of MassDOT; and Receive and review quarterly updates from the operator on the financial health of the market, its adherence to the mission and other issues as necessary.

Annual Tomato Contest



The 39th Massachusetts Tomato Contest was held on the Blackstone Street Plaza outside the Boston Public Market on Tuesday, August 20, 2024. The friendly contest, open to commercial tomato growers, is coordinated by MDAR and sponsored by the New England Vegetable and Berry Growers

Association and hosted by the Boston Public Market. It is designed to increase awareness of local agriculture.

The tomatoes were judged on flavor, firmness/slicing quality, exterior color, and shape by a panel of judges, including media, chefs, and government officials. Eighty-four entries were received. First, second, and third place tomato trophies were awarded in all four categories: heaviest, slicing, cherry, and heirloom. The top five winners in each category were given certificates. Coverage of the event included media representing radio, newspaper, and television news.

Export Market Development

Developing and expanding international sales of Massachusetts products is foundational for the Commonwealth's food and agriculture businesses to access more customers and to diversify their market opportunities. Agricultural, food and seafood exports provide significant support to Massachusetts rural and coastal communities, generating jobs, driving innovation, and

connecting local producers to global markets.

Massachusetts farmers, fishers and related agricultural businesses play an important role in feeding the globe, being among the most productive in the world, and playing a vital role in food security both here and abroad. Exports are an important driver of the Massachusetts economy, with the state ranking third among top producers of seafood in the U.S based on value, and second in the U.S. in cranberry production.

The Massachusetts total export value of Ag & Related Products (including seafood) was valued at \$773.4 million. The value of Processed Food totaled \$518.9 million. Separately, seafood totaled \$304 million. Of note is cranberries which totaled \$84 million. (*Source: USDA/FAS/GATS*)

Spotlight on seafood and cranberries:

Massachusetts seafood products were shipped to 57 international markets in 2023, totaling \$304, sixth in the nation of seafood export products, reflecting the high-value sea scallop and lobster fisheries, among other species. The top market was Canada, followed by China. Lobster from Massachusetts was exported to 37 countries, including China, Italy, Canada, Spain, and France. Sea scallops were exported to 27 countries including Canada, Netherlands, S. Korea, and Brazil. (*Source: USDA/FAS/GATS*) New Bedford, Massachusetts, is the number one port in the U.S. based on the value of seafood landed. MDAR has been supporting seafood export marketing since 2004, accessing USDA funds to support export sales.



Massachusetts' 13,000 acres of cranberry bogs represent the largest food commodity produced in the state, responsible for some 6,400 local jobs and generating more than \$1.7 billion in economic activity. (*Source: Farm Credit East*) Cranberries export value totaled some \$84 million, with product shipped to 40 different countries. The top market was Netherlands, followed by Canada, and the U.K. Other important markets included China, Mexico and Columbia. (*Source: USDA/FAS/GATS*) Establishing new markets is critical. Recent USDA funding awards support exploring and establishing new markets in India, South America, and Southeast Asia. (*Source: Cranberry Marketing Institute*)

MDAR Commissioner Randle is a board member of Food Export USA Northeast, a USDA Cooperator, leveraging access to funding programs and services for Massachusetts food, seafood,

and agricultural businesses. She serves as the board's treasurer. Funding is available through the USDA Farm Bill's Market Access Program, administered by Food Export. Small- and medium-size businesses can receive 50% cost-share reimbursement through the "Branded Program" for eligible expenses including international marketing and promotion support, trade events and label modification. Branded Fund awards in 2024 totaled \$786,500 to 24 Massachusetts food businesses.



Commissioner Randle with Food Export Executive Director Brendan Wilson at the 2024 "Summer in the Cities Buyer Mission," July 31, Boston.

A wide array of export programs and services are available for Massachusetts agricultural, seafood and food businesses, including exporter education, in-country market research, support at domestic and international trade shows. In addition to support at trade shows outside of the country, major US trade events that host international buyers are also eligible for the Branded cost-share program. To participate, products promoted must have at least 50% ingredients that are grown in the US. Buyers missions offer a low-cost, low-risk opportunity to meet one-on-one with international buyers.

VISIT MASS AVENUE
Summer Fancy Food Show June 23-25, NYC
Booths 6343 - 6350 plus 30 other MA Businesses



#6350



#6346



#6349



#6345

Nantucket Crisps #6438

THE Seasoned Pantry #6343



Massachusetts companies participated in buyer missions connected with trade shows including the Global Pet Expo, Fancy Food Show, National Restaurant Association, Natural Products Expo, Private Label Trade Show, Seafood Expo Global, Seafood Expo North America, and a first time “Summer in the Cities” stand alone event.

2024 featured the 6th Massachusetts Avenue at Seafood Expo North America in Boston, organized in partnership with the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF). Six companies were featured including Boston Smoked Fish Company, Boston: Channel Fish Processing, Braintree; Cindy’s Kitchen, Brockton; John Nagle, Boston; North Atlantic Pacific Seafood, Gloucester; and Superior Lobster, Marshfield.

The USDA funded Branded Program offset 50% of eligible costs for these exhibitors, as well as other Massachusetts exhibitors at the trade event. DMF’s Marketing Program coordinated and paid for signage and merchandising.

To help promote Massachusetts agriculture and gain knowledge about international agriculture trade policy work that companies must navigate, USDA coordinates programs to connect agricultural leadership with their counterparts in other countries. Commissioner Randle joined a National Association of Departments of Agriculture Emerging Markets Program, supported by USDA Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) Agricultural Trade to Morocco January 8-12, 2024. The program aims to boost exports of US agricultural product and expand diplomatic relationships with developing countries with strong growth potential to increase purchased of U.S agricultural products. The delegation met with government officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Institute for Agricultural Research, and other agencies, importers, agricultural associations, and producers.



Commissioner Randle in Morocco with representatives from state departments of agriculture, Industry officials, and NASDA CEO Ted McKinney.

Farm & Market Report

MDAR's bimonthly e-newsletter, [The Farm and Market Report](#), continues to be the MDAR's most important tool to disseminate departmental information and updates throughout the year. It includes the Commissioner's Column, program and grant updates, workshop and educational updates, USDA News, along with calendar. It is distributed via email to the agricultural community in Massachusetts and has more than 8,800 email subscribers. The Report, as well as timely eblasts, keep the Massachusetts ag industry informed with up-to-date grant information and resources.

Farmers Market Program

There were 223 farmers markets in Massachusetts in 2024. Fifty-two winter farmers markets were open during the 2024 winter season.

In the late summer of 2024 MDAR issued a Request for Response for the 2nd year of the Farmers Market Sustainability Grant Program. This program funds strategic planning, marketing, promotion, consumer education, planning, and infrastructure needs of farmers markets. Applications were due in October and MDAR received 33 applications. Of those, 18 were awarded grants, with one awardee declining, for a total of \$137,170.83. Grantees

have until June 2025 to complete their projects.

Massachusetts Farmers Market Week was held the first week of August in conjunction with National Farmers Market Week. In celebration, Governor Maura Healey issued a proclamation and MDAR Commissioner Ashley Randle, along with federal, state, local officials and partners, visited farmers markets to recognize their contributions to local communities and Massachusetts agriculture.

MDAR visited farmers markets in Belmont, Brockton, Northampton, and Truro.

Belmont



Brockton



Northampton



Truro



Farmers Market Numbers

Year	Number of Markets	Percent Growth	Number of Winter Markets	Percent Growth
2020	195	-14%	36	-22%
2021	212	9%	41	14%
2022	217	2%	49	20%
2023	220	1%	49	0%
2024	222	1%	52	6%

Farmers Market Resources

MDAR maintains a comprehensive library of farmers market resources on its website for market managers and farmers, including development, regulatory and promotional materials. A list of farmers markets seeking vendors is maintained for growers and local food producers who are looking for markets to participate in. Days, times, and locations for all markets can be found along with a crop availability guide, shopping and produce storage tips, healthy recipes, and nutrition information on the Department's consumer website, mass.gov/massgrown.

Farmers Market Nutrition Program

In 2024, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) awarded Massachusetts \$484,727 in federal food dollars to distribute to low-income elders along with \$53,859 to use to administer the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) statewide. In 2023 MDAR applied for and received a \$1.4 million grant to serve more eligible older adults and increase the benefit from \$25 to \$50. This grant award through the American Rescue Plan covered the 2023 and 2024 seasons. In 2024, 24,617 Massachusetts older adults and disabled individuals participated in the coupon program. Participating elders received a benefit of \$50 per person for the 2024 growing season. 76% of issued coupons were redeemed at Massachusetts farmers markets and farmstands. This figure is slightly higher than the 75.5% redemption rate in 2023. In 2024, the program utilized 100% of the USDA 2024 Food Allocation.

The Senior FMNP home bound delivery program served 3,545 seniors in 2024 throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Twenty-three Elder Nutrition Programs distributed coupons and produce to older adults and disabled individuals across the state of Massachusetts. MDAR distributed a nutrition education flyer and a regional list of farmers' markets and farmstands that each program participant received.

In 2024, the USDA FNS awarded Massachusetts with \$726,203 in federal food dollars to distribute to participants in the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program. The 2024 WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) served 34,488 women, children, and infants older than four months with coupons to buy fresh produce at farmers markets, which is an increase of from the 28,666 served in 2023. 51% of WIC FMNP coupons were spent at farmers markets and farmstand vendors in 2024 which was down compared to 63% the prior season. Participants received a benefit of \$30 per person for the 2024 growing season.

The program had 437 certified growers, 148 certified farmstands and 183 certified farmers markets across the state to serve the recipients of the Senior and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Programs.

SNAP/EBT at Farmers Markets/Direct Marketing Farmers – Healthy Incentives Program (HIP)



MDAR maintains information on its website regarding how farmers and farmers markets can apply for, and receive, SNAP retailer authorization. Information on subsidized SNAP equipment options is also included.

MDAR continues to collaborate with the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) on the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). HIP matches the purchase of fruits and vegetables when SNAP recipients shop with participating vendors at farmers markets, farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture Programs (CSAs), and mobile markets. A credit is instantly applied on participants' EBT cards, up to a monthly cap. MDAR assists DTA with training and technical assistance to farmers and farmers markets for HIP.

In 2024 there were approximately 300 HIP vendors at 600 locations across Massachusetts. HIP incentives earned in 2024 totaled \$19,189,088.74, an increase of more than \$2.4 million from 2023.

[Farm to School Program](#)



The Massachusetts Farm to School Project, (MFTS) of which MDAR is a primary sponsor through a budgetary earmark of \$120,000, provides technical assistance to Massachusetts farmers and schools and helps to connect Massachusetts farmers with school districts looking for locally grown foods. Interest in Farm to School activities is strong in Massachusetts. Of the respondents in the latest USDA Farm to School Census, 68.4% of the state’s school food authorities serve local food, 24.9% have edible gardens and 15.1% host student field trips to local farms. Farm to School activities in Massachusetts reach over 526,000 students.

In 2024, MDAR continued to support the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and MFTS on the MA FRESH and the Local Foods for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program (LFS). MA FRESH funds support schools’ purchases of kitchen equipment to prepare food for school meals and snacks including, but not limited to, local, fresh produce, meats, seafood and dairy items; training for school kitchen staff in preparing fresh meals using local ingredients and in procuring such ingredients; training educators and other school staff in adding or integrating food system lessons to their curriculum; and infrastructure and programming for curricular and extracurricular activities, such as school gardens, for students to learn about agriculture and the food system. LFS provided funding from USDA to support schools’ ability to purchase local unprocessed or lightly processed foods.

The Massachusetts Grown & Fresher Program



We continue to brand and offer the “Massachusetts Grown & Fresher“ logo to farms, and offer posters, stickers, and price cards, with [order form here](#). The logo identifies and promotes crops and products grown in Massachusetts.

The “MassGrown & Fresher” homepage (www.Mass.gov/Massgrown) continues to be a great source of seasonal information for the public to learn more about local agriculture,

and where to find farms, farmers markets, and fairs in Massachusetts. It includes timely links, updates, and a Culinary and Ag-tivities [Calendar](#).

The featured [MassGrown Map](#) continues to be the most visited MDAR webpage, with more than 213,000 pageviews in 2024. It maps over 1,500 locations of farms, farmers markets, agricultural fairs, and more. Through an awarded USDA Specialty Crop Block grant, MDAR created and placed Facebook/Instagram ads for the first time.

From May-December, we produced seasonal ads which included links to the MassGrown Map. MDAR also sent monthly emails to our consumer e-list spotlighting specialty crops throughout the year and recorded more than 4.2 million social media impressions, with a reach of 967,000 and over 80,000 clicks, with 3,774 post likes. Our Facebook followers increased from 2,525 to 5,651 and Instagram followers went from 1,714 to 2,432. MDAR expects to continue our consumer eblasts efforts in 2024.

In the fall, we produced new displays and promotional materials that were featured and shared at the MDAR/MassGrown booth during the Big E in the Massachusetts Building.

The MassGrown Exchange

This online platform was developed in 2020 in response to the impacts of COVID shutdowns, which caused interruptions of food supply chains, but now continues as a platform to connect businesses with other businesses. It allows Massachusetts businesses to post available crops, value added products, and services to connect with potential buyers in the region. It connects a range of businesses, including farms, fisheries, food buyers, service providers, schools, supermarkets, and food banks. In 2024, 96 new businesses registered, for a total of 495 businesses by year end on the Exchange. There were also 144 products and services listed, with 16,200 email notifications sent, and 18,168 pageviews to the site.

Agricultural Resource Fairs



MDAR hosted our first annual Agricultural Resource Fair at MassWildlife's headquarters in Westborough on April 12, 2024. The event brought together 20 agricultural stakeholders who

offer services and programs to the farming community of Massachusetts. State, federal and non-profit organizations in attendance were able to have one-on-one conversations with attendees about the issues and opportunities specific to each farmers' situation. During the event, a series of seminars also took place. Each division in MDAR was represented. Eleven organizations hosted 30-minute workshops where they were able to speak to a specific program or topical issue to the farmers in attendance. Invasive crops and pests, farm to school relations, and environmental justice priorities are just a few of the seminars attended by participating farmers.

The event was well-attended, with nearly 100 farmers, farmers market managers and agricultural stakeholders in attendance throughout the day. Members of the Markets Division assisted MarketLink in signing up new farms and market manager to become authorized SNAP vendors during the event. Attendees reported this component of the fair was highly favored. While MDAR hosted our first Resource Fair in 2024, it is an event we will continue into the future.

[Agricultural Stakeholder Organizational Support](#)

MDAR recognizes the importance of non-profit organizations who provide technical assistance, promotions, marketing opportunities and additional programs which support the agricultural systems of Massachusetts. In 2024 MDAR awarded \$750,000 in grant funding to 10 regional "Buy Local" organizations. Funding regional organizations to execute these promotional projects allows for the marketing campaigns to reflect the diversity of Massachusetts' agricultural landscapes and communities. Throughout the year we work closely with the Buy Local groups to collaborate on relevant projects while reducing duplicative efforts.

Commodity groups are non-profit or trade organizations that convene producers of like products to share industry updates, growing conditions, marketing strategies and more. A sample of such groups include cranberry growers, dairy producers, aquaculture farmers, and others. In 2024 we undertook an initiative to develop programming to support the operational sustainability of the commodity groups. We began by surveying the boards to determine what they perceived to be their strengths and weaknesses, as well as what facets of their programming they'd like to develop to better serve their respective industries. MDAR is using the data collected to develop workshops tailored to the needs of Massachusetts commodity groups.

Throughout 2024 MDAR staff including Division of Markets staff attended many industry events coordinated by agricultural stakeholder organizations. Farm tours in the summer, coordinated by various organizations brought members of the MDAR team to 32 farms across the state. We attended their annual meetings to provide updates and discuss the trends and challenges facing farmers. Another positive outcome from MDAR's support of regional stakeholders is the opportunity they present to host us at consumer facing events in Massachusetts. Examples include the Local Food Trade Show in Boston, Cranberry Bog tours, Local Food Festival and more. MDAR's continued support of and relationships with stakeholder agricultural organizations serve to deepen our impacts in each region and industry across the Commonwealth.

Division of Animal Health

The Division of Animal Health's focus is preventing the introduction and spread of infectious and contagious diseases of domestic animals. This is accomplished through the imposition of health certification, testing and vaccination requirements for animals being imported, transferred within, or simply residing in Massachusetts. Ensuring owners provide proper care for their animals reduces the animals' stress levels. Increased stress can weaken an animal's immune system and has a direct impact on their susceptibility to illness. Considering this, animal welfare becomes an integral component of disease prevention.

By partnering with federal, state, and municipal agencies, the Division of Animal Health works to promote and safeguard animal health and welfare in the Commonwealth. The Division regulates certain animal-related agricultural activities, which may include the inspection, examination, and licensing of both food-producing and companion animal businesses. These efforts provide additional oversight where there may be increased risk to animal or human health. The Division has programs that require the licensing and inspection of dairy farms (both raw milk and pasteurized milk producers); commercial cattle, poultry, and swine dealing operations; thoroughbred and standardbred racehorse breeding; horseback riding stables; pet shops; and animal rescue organizations. Additionally, the Division prepares emergency response plans for disease outbreaks in livestock or poultry, and emergency sheltering plans for companion animals affected by natural disasters or other emergencies. The Division is also responsible for providing training to municipal animal inspectors and animal control officers, on these and other related matters.

On September 20, 2024, Governor Healey signed Ollie's Law, an Act to Increase Kennel Safety. Among the provisions of this new law was the requirement that the Department of Agricultural Resources promulgate regulations for the operation of boarding and training kennels. To assist the Department in developing the regulations, the legislation formed an advisory committee made up of kennel owners, animal control officers, a licensing authority, and other related professionals. The regulations are required to be filed by July 2026. The Commissioner has designated the Division of Animal Health to assume responsibility for complying with these directives.

The Division of Animal Health ended 2024 with 20 full-time employees, including two veterinarians, program coordinators, inspectors, and administrative support staff. Staff deal with issues related to all domestic animals, from cats to cattle. The Division of Animal Health works with officers from the MSPCA, Animal Rescue League of Boston, and local police departments to address matters involving suspected animal cruelty, as those are criminal offenses that require attention from law enforcement. Additionally, the Division receives some funding through cooperative agreements with the United States Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration to address animal health and food production issues that are important locally, nationally, and even internationally (see chart below). Disease surveillance and response efforts,

including Avian Influenza, African Swine Fever, and other foreign animal diseases have the potential to be catastrophic to Massachusetts agriculture and could also impact interstate and international trade. Cooperating with the USDA to mitigate the risk of these diseases and sharing responsibility for response should they be detected here ensures the least impact to animal owners and their businesses.

The 2024 Animal Disease Traceability Cooperative Agreement funding through USDA APHIS Veterinary Services was reduced by 16% compared to the 2023 amount. The Assistant State Veterinarian attended the US Animal Health Association and National Association of State Animal Health Officials annual conference and MDAR paid a portion of traceability software subscriptions using these funds. MDAR did not enter a Cooperative Agreement with APHIS for Animal Health and Surveillance programs in 2024 due to decreased funding amounts and increased administrative requirements. The 2024 federal cooperative agreement funding received included the following:

Cooperative Agreement	2023 Funding	2024 Funding
Animal Disease Traceability	\$55,461.99	\$46,759.00
Dairy Program Training and Equipment	\$22,637.53	\$17,928.08
Active and Passive Surveillance for the Avian Program (formerly Notifiable Avian Influenza) and Annual Livestock Inventory (Barn Book) Data Entry	\$62,879.54	\$0
Foreign Animal Disease Prevention (including Scrapie Prevention Program)	\$19,572.96	\$0
Swine Garbage Feeding Surveillance	\$27,454.37	\$0
All non-Avian Foreign Animal Disease (including Small Ruminant, Bovine, Swine, and One Health)	\$17,825.16	\$0

Division of Animal Health Programs

- Animal Disease Traceability Program
- Animal Imports and Livestock Markets
- Animal Shelter and Rescue Program
- Dairy Program
- Equine Program
- Homeless Animal Prevention and Care Fund Program (Mass Animal Fund)
- Municipal Animal Inspection Program
- Pet Shop Licensing and Inspection Program
- Poultry Program
- Rabies Control Program
- Reportable Disease Program
- Swine Program

[Animal Imports and Livestock Markets / Animal Disease Traceability](#)

All livestock, horses, poultry, waterfowl, and other animals, including cats, dogs and other pets entering Massachusetts from other states must comply with Commonwealth regulations that require an official Certificate of Veterinary Inspection stating the animal is healthy prior to travel, plus official, individual identification for livestock. Additionally, some species may require certain testing to ensure negative status for diseases of concern depending on their state of origin. Exhibition animals shown in Massachusetts also must comply with health certificate and identification rules, ensuring the health of animals coming together for fairs and shows. These measures significantly reduce the possibility of introducing contagious disease to the Commonwealth's domestic animal population.

As part of the Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) program, the Division distributed 600 swine tags and 6,323 electronic bovine tags to producers and veterinarians in 2024. In addition, 425 Scrapie prevention program tags for sheep and goats were distributed and 15 flocks were referred to USDA APHIS for flock identification numbers and tags. Education and outreach efforts focused on H5N1 in birds and dairy cattle, biosecurity, and transitioning to the use of electronic (RFID) livestock tags. An additional 56 premises identification numbers (PINs) were created for Massachusetts livestock owners and producers allowing them to purchase and utilize electronic ID.

The Division also provides technical assistance to Massachusetts accredited veterinarians upgrading to electronic certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs), resulting in more than 75% of MA-origin certificates now being completed using an electronic CVI service. RFID readers/wands were purchased for Department use to support the move to electronic animal identification tags. MDAR continued the customization and implementation of a state-owned

instances of CoreOne and CVICentral software, improving animal disease traceability efficiency and record-keeping. ADT information was included in the veterinary accreditation materials for 70 Massachusetts veterinarians and for 231 municipal animal inspectors who attended the fall 2024 in-person and live-streamed training sessions.

In addition, livestock and poultry dealers and transporters are licensed and their equipment and facilities are inspected. In 2024, there were 23 licensed livestock dealers in Massachusetts.

DAIRY PROGRAM

The Dairy Program ensures a healthy environment for livestock and a safe, high-quality supply of milk at fair prices for consumers, processors, and dairy farmers. This requires careful inspection and monitoring to enforce the relevant federal and state laws and regulations. The Program monitors milk production, hauling, distribution, and inspection of dairy farms to assure a safe and healthy supply of milk to processors, and ultimately consumers. The Program also provides assistance and guidance to farmers looking to begin dairying operations. Many factors influence the quality and quantity of milk produced by a dairy farm. Bacteriological counts measured through testing of milk samples helps determine the quality of milk. When the counts exceed regulatory standards, a dairy farmer is required to return to compliance within a timely fashion.

2024 marked the beginning of HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) monitoring in dairy cows. With the disease making the leap from birds to dairy cattle in other states, the program began a regimen of milk testing specifically for HPAI to keep abreast of the spread of the disease and ensure the quality and safety of milk in the Commonwealth. Beginning in August, monthly samples were collected from each bovine dairy, separate from the samples taken for bacteriological sampling. The samples are tested for HPAI at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard under an agreement with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Thus far, there have been no positive samples from any dairy in Massachusetts.

At the end of 2023 there were 103 bovine (cow) dairy farms and 9 caprine (goat) dairy farms. At the end of 2024 there were 95 bovine dairy farms and 9 caprine farms registered in Massachusetts.

Enforcement Actions

The Division utilizes a progressive enforcement protocol consisting of a Letter of Warning for violations required to be corrected within the following 10 days; a Letter of Warning for test results indicating two of the last four samples were out of compliance with standards; a Shut-Off Order for test results indicating three of the last five samples were out of compliance with the standards; and an immediate Cease and Desist order for any test results that were excessively beyond the range of accepted standard. This last step is an especially important tool for

regulating farms selling raw milk retail at the farm premises directly to consumers without the benefit of pasteurization, which kills most of the harmful bacteria that is found in raw milk.

ENFORCEMENT ACTION	2024
10-day Letter of Warning	3
2 out of 4 Letters of Warning	12
3 out of 5 Shut-Off Orders	3
Cease and Desist (Immediate Shut-Off)	21
Antibiotic Residue Shut-Offs	3

Equine Licensing Programs

The Division of Animal Health administers licensing programs involving horses and other equine species. Licenses are issued to horseback riding instructors, the riding schools/stables where they operate, and equine dealers and transporters engaged in significant levels of activity. Riding stable licenses are issued to any business where horse-drawn hayrides, horse-drawn sleigh rides, carriage rides, pony rides, and trail rides are offered to the public for a fee. As noted above, the Division also requires a license for anyone engaged in the business of dealing, auctioning, or transporting equine animals. This licensing includes record keeping requirements that seek to bolster other programmatic disease control efforts.

In 2024, the Program administered 146 Riding Instructor Licensing exams. Of those taking the exam, 114 passed all sections and 9 failed the exam. Differences occur because of exams being spread across two years with many taking only one part in 2024, and incompletes. All those taking the exam participate in a Safety Training Program as part of the testing process. The safety trainings cover managing risk in horseback rides, understanding concussions, and responding to rider falloffs. Twenty-seven (27) group safety trainings were provided reaching 145 people. This includes one safety training exclusively provided to Stable Operators who requested to take a joint Safety Training/Manure Management program we hosted with the Composter Licensing program. These Equine Safety trainings were developed in-house and provided by program staff with no additional cost to the Commonwealth. This is the 4th year of offering these trainings and they are a valuable tool for ensuring all new and reinstated instructors come in with a higher level of safety than in the past. Feedback from participants continues to be overwhelmingly positive.

In 2024 we partnered with Dr. Helen Sabolek, a licensed riding instructor who is also a Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Regis College in Weston, MA. We held five workshops focused on understanding our horses better and reached over 150 instructors in this pilot program

where we brought in other experts and peer reviewed science-based articles whose concepts were then discussed in online group meetings. We continue to build innovative programs to deepen the understandings of equines and safety among our licensees.

In 2024, there were a total of 2,242 licensed riding instructors. MDAR licensed 498 riding stables in 2024, representing a slight increase and a full return to pre-COVID numbers. In 2024, there were six licensed Equine Dealer/Transporters in the state. We issued one cease and desist order to a stable, and that case was resolved with the stable coming into compliance by taking all required actions.

[Standardbred and Thoroughbred Racehorse Breeding Program](#)

The Division of Animal Health is charged with promoting, developing, and encouraging Standardbred and Thoroughbred horse breeding and racing in Massachusetts. The programs are intended to improve the quality of Massachusetts-bred equine athletes. The mares and stallions present in Massachusetts for the programs offer sustainability to our breeding farms, encourage the protection of open space, and provide economic benefit to all the allied agricultural industries. Participants in the breeding programs are eligible to earn additional purse monies by participating in designated races. One Massachusetts racetrack hosts Standardbred racing. There are currently no Thoroughbred racetracks in the state.

Broodmares must be registered with MDAR by the program deadlines outlined in the statute and are required to remain in Massachusetts until foaling. Stallions must be registered with MDAR and must stand in Massachusetts for the entire breeding season, as defined by the statute and breed registries. Broodmares, stallions, and foals are subject to inspection by Animal Health staff at any time during their residency to confirm their location.

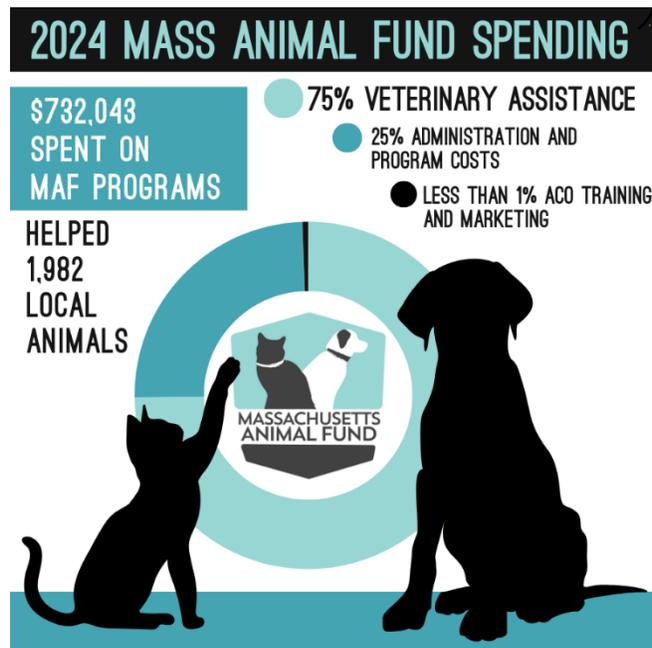
In 2024, there were 142 Standardbred foals born on 31 Massachusetts farms. No Standardbred stallions stood in Massachusetts for the 2024 breeding season. There were 146 Standardbred mares registered with MDAR by the December 1, 2024, deadline, due to foal in 2025. These mares are located on 28 Massachusetts farms. MDAR received 109 Standardbred yearling registration forms in 2024.

In 2024, there were 10 Thoroughbred foals born on four Massachusetts farms. Four Thoroughbred stallions stood in Massachusetts for the 2024 breeding season. Fifty Thoroughbred mares were registered with MDAR by the December 15, 2024, deadline, due to foal in 2025. These mares are located on eight Massachusetts farms. MDAR received five Thoroughbred yearling registration forms in 2024.

[Homeless Animal Prevention and Care Fund Program](#)

The Homeless Animal Prevention and Care Fund (Mass Animal Fund), administered by the Division of Animal Health, seeks to respond to the Commonwealth’s ongoing problem of animal homelessness by providing no-cost spay/neuter/vaccination resources for homeless dogs and cats in municipal animal control facilities, for dogs and cats owned by low-income Massachusetts residents, and for feral cats. The Fund also provides free training opportunities and support to Massachusetts Animal Control Officers (ACO) so they can better serve their communities and provide uniform enforcement of animal control laws.

Since its inception in 2012, the Fund has received \$5,117,049 to help address the needs of cats and dogs in the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Animal Fund relies on donations from Massachusetts taxpayers, who have contributed 85% of this revenue through voluntary donations on Line 33f of the Massachusetts Income Tax Return and online giving. In 2024, the Fund received \$380,218 in public donations and \$75,000 in grant funding from The Stanton Foundation. Additional funding was provided through a Commonwealth of Massachusetts Budget Line Item of \$100,000.



The Mass Animal Fund Spay/Neuter/Vaccination Voucher Program sent its first voucher in July 2014. Since then, the program has provided no-cost assistance to 21,900 animals through 75 veterinary providers/municipal partners across the state. The Fund’s veterinary network completed 1,982 voucher surgeries in 2024. The largest population served was dogs and cats from low-income households (67%), followed by animals in municipal care (32%) and feral cats (1%). The most surgeries completed were on female cats (29%), followed by male cats (25%), female dogs (26%), and male dogs (20%). The average cost of surgery is currently \$265 for

standard surgeries and \$390 for emergency surgeries. In 2024, the Fund distributed spay/neuter/vaccination assistance to local animals in need totaling \$547,679 of which \$115,310 was spent on animals in emergency situations.

The Fund rolled out the Animal Control Officer Core Competencies Training Program in the March of 2016. Since the training program began more than 900 commonwealth ACOs have been trained in the areas of animal laws in Massachusetts, emergency preparedness, animal behavior/safe handling, communication/officer safety, and report writing/record keeping. Continuing education course options were rolled out beginning in August 2016 and since then

the Fund has approved over 450 courses for continuing education credit. ACOs in Massachusetts submitted 8,951 hours of education credits to the Mass Animal Fund's training program in 2024.

Municipal Animal Inspector Program

The Division of Animal Health is responsible for appointing municipal animal inspectors for every city and town in the Commonwealth. These inspectors act as agents of the Division of Animal Health in the communities they serve. The primary duty of the municipal inspector involves issuing quarantines to owners of animals that have been exposed to or are potentially spreading the rabies virus. The other major role the inspectors fulfill for the Division is conducting the annual inspections of all domestic livestock and poultry housed on properties in their respective towns. These inspections are a part of MDAR's disease surveillance system and assist in ensuring animal owners provide basic necessities for the animals in their care. Additionally, the information the Division receives through these inspections assists in the development of emergency response plans for disease outbreaks or other disaster situations. Municipal Animal Inspectors may be called upon to serve as first responders in implementing these plans at the local level. At the end of 2024 there were 543 municipal animal inspectors appointed to fulfill the above duties for cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

Pet Shop Program

The Division of Animal Health has the statutory responsibility to license any entity engaging in the business of selling mammals, birds, or reptiles that are not the offspring of their personally owned animals. In 2024, the number of licensed pet shops dropped by four, to a total of 124. The Division conducts inspections of pet shops for initial licensure and for annual license renewals, as well as in the process of investigating any complaints received. Each establishment must meet strict facility requirements designed to promote sanitary conditions and improve animal health. These efforts protect the health of the animals, as well as that of the visiting public and the employees who work in the shop.

There were 38 entities that received 10-day compliance letters in 2024, due to failures of their facility to meet compliance with the regulations. These violations are frequently related to matters like chipped paint, cracked tiles, or rusted metal, making it impossible to fully clean and disinfect and thus creating a risk of harboring harmful pathogens. These 10-day "warning" letters grant the licensee 10 days to correct the violation before fines may be issued. Fines were issued on six occasions in 2024, either for a failure to fix a violation noted on a 10-day letter, or for violations of animal care standards such as a failure to provide fresh food and water or failing to maintain a sanitary environment.

Poultry Program

The Poultry Program provides producers, consumers and municipal and state officials with educational materials, information on safe egg handling, best management practices, production/grading support and flock inspections and testing. The local food movement and growth in consumer awareness of how food is produced have contributed to an expansion of backyard and commercial poultry production in Massachusetts. The Division of Animal Health strives to educate residents in order to reduce the potential for conflicts between abutting neighbors, regulatory officials, and poultry enthusiasts. The Division of Animal Health supports the keeping of poultry when it is done responsibly. Responsible poultry ownership benefits the birds, the owners, and the communities in which those flocks are located.

Massachusetts law requires live poultry and hatching eggs moving into and within the Commonwealth to originate from flocks tested for and confirmed free of *Salmonella pullorum*. A percentage of the birds from these flocks are also screened for Avian Influenza as part of the program. Annual testing for participating flocks is performed by the Division of Animal Health staff. Inspections, advice, testing, and possible necropsy services are some of the tools staff use to assist farmers to mitigate problems and improve production.

In 2024, Animal Health staff collected 7,173 serology samples for *Salmonella pullorum*. The serology samples were collected from 241 poultry flocks. Screening tests for salmonella pullorum identified three flocks with non-negative birds. Flock owners from two of the three flocks opted to submit the non-negative birds (a total of six) for necropsy. No salmonella was isolated from the six birds. The remaining flock owner opted to retest the non-negative bird 21 days after the initial test following National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) protocol and it was negative.

In addition to Avian Influenza (AI) screening of *Salmonella pullorum* samples, MDAR also provides AI screening for participants in the NPIP AI Clean programs. NPIP requirements dictate the frequency of testing for these participants. The total number of serology samples screened for AI in 2024 was 2,907. Cooperative agreements with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) support these efforts.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) continues to be detected in wild and domestic birds across the country. Education and outreach efforts are ongoing to prevent the spread of HPAI to the commercial poultry industry and backyard flock owners. MDAR uses social media and email notifications to stress the importance of increased biosecurity for poultry flock owners.

An online reporting form, mass.gov/reportpoultry, expedites sick or deceased bird reports from poultry owners and veterinarians. Increased public awareness of HPAI in poultry in 2024 generated 55 calls/online submissions. Reports were triaged and calls made to further investigate

flocks with perceived HPAI risk. Further screening and testing of sick/deceased birds identified three flocks infected with HPAI in Barnstable and Essex counties. All three flocks exhibited high mortality rates and were humanely depopulated to prevent further suffering of the remaining sick birds.

One of the infected flocks in Essex County was classified as a World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) “poultry flock.” The WOAH definition of poultry is “birds reared or kept in captivity for the production of any commercial animal products or for breeding for this purpose, fighting cocks used for any purpose, and all birds used for restocking supplies of game or for breeding for this purpose, until they are released from captivity.”

Once classified as WOAH Poultry, USDA’s HPAI response plan requires the establishment of a control area around infected flocks. Permits must be issued for movement of poultry products into or out of the control area. Poultry staff manage these permit requests using USDA’s Emergency Management Response System (EMRS). Permit requirements for the control area and permit application forms were posted on the Poultry Program website. Additionally, surveillance calls were made to poultry flock owners in the control area over a two-week period. No additional infected flocks were identified, and the control area was released once it was determined that the virus had not spread to nearby flocks.

In 2024, 109 domestic stray ducks and geese found by humane agencies and animal control officers were tested for avian influenza and confirmed negative for the virus.

Mycoplasma Gallisepticum, Marek’s disease, Coccidiosis, flock management and predation were among the other issues found to be causing morbidity and mortality in flocks reported to MDAR with illness. Animal Health staff worked with owners to correct these problems through education, ensuring an increased awareness of animal health and welfare.

The NPIP Program has maintained steady participation. In 2024 there were a total of 26 active participants in the NPIP program. Participants using the electronic 9-3 forms when selling poultry, increased from ten to nineteen in 2024. This feature has benefited MDAR by eliminating the use of paper forms.

The NPIP 9-3 database is searchable, and import/export reports are easily generated. For instance, there were a total of 54,359 broiler chicks imported into MA in 2024. This number does not include the poultry imports recorded on paper forms.

In 2024, Massachusetts producers using electronic 9-3 forms produced 45,008 poultry and 14,235 hatching eggs for export. During 2024 MA producers hatched 14,472 poultry and produced 83 hatching eggs that were sold within the Commonwealth.

The Poultry staff continues to use available digital technology to streamline record collection and data entry.

Rabies Program

Rabies is a viral disease that can affect all mammals, including humans. The virus attacks the central nervous system and can be secreted in saliva. Because rabies affects people as well as animals, control of this disease is a top priority for the Division of Animal Health. With the cooperation of the Department of Public Health, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, and municipal animal inspectors, every aspect of potential rabies exposures is addressed in order to prevent further spread of the virus.

In 2023 there were 1,621 reported bite incidents involving domestic animals and humans. That number increased to 2,162 in 2024. In 2024, 1,044 domestic animals had possible exposures to rabies through contact with wildlife or received wounds of unknown origin that appeared to be from a fight with another animal. Some of the wildlife involved in those exposure cases were submitted for rabies testing at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Rabies Laboratory. A total of 111 animals tested positive in 2024.

To enhance the numbers of vaccinated domestic animals in Massachusetts, the Rabies Program has implemented a user-friendly registration system for municipalities and entities holding rabies vaccination clinics. Registered clinics are posted on the MDAR website at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/animal-health/rabies-control-program/>. There was a significant drop-off in participation due to the COVID pandemic, but the numbers have bounced back. In 2023, there were 32 rabies vaccination clinics promoted through this service. In 2024, that number increased to 63.

Reportable Disease Program

Reportable diseases include foreign animal diseases that are not currently affecting the state, diseases that have serious consequences to public or animal health, and diseases that MDAR has either previously eradicated from Massachusetts or is very close to eradicating.

Veterinary practitioners are required to report suspected or positive cases of these diseases promptly to the Division of Animal Health. The Division seeks early detection in order to mount a rapid response in an effort to reduce the number of animals and animal owners affected by a disease outbreak.

In addition to the rabies cases mentioned previously, there were 190 suspected or confirmed cases of reportable diseases in 2024, including the following:

2024 CASES	DISEASE	ANIMAL(S) IMPACTED
79	Canine Parvovirus	dog
45	Leptospirosis	dog
30	Panleukopenia	cat
0	Canine Distemper	dog

14	Strep equi (Strangles)	horse
8	Feline Calicivirus	cat
0	Eastern Herpes Virus-1	horse
0	Brucellosis	dog, goat
0	Erysipelas	swine
0	Babesia	dog
8	Equine Coronavirus	horse
3	Tularemia	cat

Shelter and Rescue Program

The Division of Animal Health’s Animal Shelter and Rescue Program ensures the health and safety of companion animals being offered for adoption to the public. The Division of Animal Health licenses individual animal shelters and rescue groups that operate within Massachusetts and those that import and adopt animals into Massachusetts from other states. The Division responds to reports of infectious or contagious disease found in imported animals, or disease outbreaks occurring at local shelters. MDAR also fields complaints from adopters who receive animals with concerning physical or behavioral health issues.

Since many animals that wind up in shelter and rescue channels have had little or no veterinary care, this disadvantaged portion of the domestic animal population requires greater attention. In March of 2020, the Division of Animal Health promulgated 330 CMR 30.00, regulations for operating animal shelters and rescue organizations in Massachusetts. These regulations replaced the outdated Animal Health Order issued in 2005. The new rules added several requirements for shelters and rescues, including vaccination and testing for certain diseases; behavioral observations and disclosure of any concerning behaviors noted; a requirement that all animals must be examined by a veterinarian prior to adopting them out; required spay and neuter surgeries for healthy animals; and maintenance of records for all the animals handled. The rules are in place to protect the Commonwealth’s resident animal population, the animals being

handled within the shelter and rescue community, and the humans who seek to help them through adoption. For more information, see <https://www.mass.gov/animal-shelter-and-rescue-program>.

The Department witnessed a huge spike in pet adoptions during the pandemic. During lockdown, many families felt it was an ideal time to bring a pet into their home. The increase in demand for pets was met by start-up rescue groups translocating animals across the country. While the demand for pets slowed in 2022, rescues are seeing an increase in surrendered pets requiring homes. This trend continued into 2024 and shelter populations have remained high through the year. This has begun to cause problems for municipalities who rely on organizations to take stays when no owner is found. Many of those organizations are at capacity and can no longer accept animals from municipal animal control programs.

Enforcement Actions:

As of December 31, 2024, the Shelter and Rescue Program issued licenses to operate to 189 shelters and rescues. The Division issued eleven Orders to Cease and Desist to unlicensed organizations in 2024. Six organizations were issued fines for failure to comply with regulations.

Swine Program

The Swine Program includes permitted garbage feeders, licensed swine dealers, as well as Classical Swine Fever, Brucellosis and Pseudorabies testing. The word “garbage” is defined as any food waste containing meat scraps. With the required permit, swine farmers can collect garbage from restaurants, schools and other food establishments and use those materials to feed their herds, so long as it is re-cooked before serving to the animals. This can serve as a viable nutrition source for swine herds. Farmers can sometimes be paid to haul off or receive for free this feed for their animals, and it is an environmentally friendly means of recycling food waste. Such activities require a permit from both the Division of Animal Health and USDA/APHIS Veterinary Services. The issuance of this permit requires a facility inspection and garbage cooker temperature check. All garbage, regardless of previous processing, must be heated to 212 degrees Fahrenheit for a minimum of 30 minutes prior to being fed to swine. These strict regulations were implemented to mitigate the risk of disease transmission associated with feeding meat scraps to swine herds. In 2024, 10 permits to feed garbage were issued to swine operations in the Commonwealth.

Division of Crop and Pest Services

The Division of Crop and Pest Services manages five programs:

1. Farm Products and Plant Industries: oversees the inspection and licensing of certain farm products and plant industries, under M.G.L. c. 128 and its accompanying regulations at 330 CMR.
2. Pesticides: regulates all pesticide use within the Commonwealth under state and federal law, including the registration and licensing of pesticide products, commercial applicators, and certain pesticide uses.
3. Apiary: ensures the health of the Massachusetts honey bee population through inspections.
4. Hemp Program: oversees matters related to hemp, including the inspection and licensing of the production and processing of hemp under state and federal law.
5. Invasive Pest Program: monitors the introduction of and oversees the response to invasive pests into the Commonwealth.

Farm Products and Plant Industries

The Farm Products and Plant Industries (FPPI) Program staff support multiple programs based upon seasonal or workload needs, including nursery inspections/licenses and fertilizer programs. In many cases, inspectional staff members provide coverage for other cross-over programs like the Invasive Pest Program. During the spring of 2024, the staff was reduced from three to two due to a retirement. The position was not backfilled for the remainder of 2024 due to a hiring freeze.

Fertilizer Program

Plant food products that are not limited to agricultural use are required to be registered as specialty products, while companies that produce agricultural use plant food products are required to hold an umbrella license and submit information on the products intended to be manufactured, sold, and/or distributed under this license.

Inspectors perform the administrative work with licensing and conduct marketplace inspections where they ensure that products are registered. As part of the inspection, samples of products may be collected to ensure that the nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (NPK) values of the product are as stated on the label. In 2024, 410 companies registered a total of 6,000 fertilizer products, and 152 companies held a license to manufacture and distribute agricultural use products. 291 fertilizer samples were collected and there were no fines issued from inaccurate NPK values on the label.

At the end of October 2024, MDAR announced the transition of the Fertilizer program to the EEA ePlace portal streamlining payments and submissions of Tonnage forms, Renewals, and Registrations and improving the accessibility for companies to manage their accounts. The transition is planned for the 2025 season.

Nursery Inspections

The Nursery Inspection Program requires the inspection and certification of nurseries and greenhouses in the state. All growers and agents are required to be licensed if they sell nursery stock, and must renew annually. A grower's certificate is required to sell, exchange, give, deliver, or ship within the Commonwealth any tree, shrub, or plant commonly known as nursery stock. An agent's license is issued to those who buy and sell nursery stock from certified nurseries throughout the country. Inspectors conduct the administrative duties relative to licensing/certification along with conducting inspections. As part of the inspections, inspectors look for invasive pests, plants, and other issues that may prohibit the movement of the plant.

In 2024, there were 135 Growers licenses, and 996 Agent licenses issued, and 144 nursery inspections were conducted. The following were common issues found during nursery inspections

- Anthracnose
- Black Spot
- Black Vine Weevil
- Cedar Apple Rust
- Daylily Rust
- Lily Leaf Beetle
- Willow Leaf Beetle
- Scorch, Tar Spot
- Viburnum Leaf Beetle
- Winter Damage
- Leaf spot
- Galls
- Tent caterpillars
- Aphids
- Leaf miner damage
- Daylily Streak
- Leaf curling (symptom of disease or pest)
- Japanese Beetle
- Rose Rosette Disease,
- Sun scorch
- Chlorosis
- Tip Blight
- Rust Fungus
- Powdery Mildew - large increase in fungal pathogens likely due to all the wet weather over the summer.
- Beach Leaf Disease – found at several nurseries in Bristol, Plymouth, and Barnstable counties.

26 stop sales were issued on 340 plants in Massachusetts. All the stop sales were issued because the plants are on the MA Prohibited Plant List or a permit is required to grow the

plants in Massachusetts (ie. *Ribes sp.*) Stop Sales were issued for the following plants:

Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*)

- Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)
- Sycamore Maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)
- Gooseberries
- Black Currants Red
- Currants, Jostaberries (*Ribes sp.*)
- Barberry (*Berberis thunbergia*)
-

Federal and State Phytosanitary Inspections

Growers in Massachusetts who export plant material and/or seed require inspections prior to shipping. State and federal phytosanitary certificates are issued by the inspectors for shipment of plants and plant materials to other states or countries, certifying the shipment as being free from insects and plant diseases. In cooperation with USDA-APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine, MDAR conducts phytosanitary inspections and issues federal and state certificates.

MDAR issued 453 federal phytosanitary certificates. More than a third of all federal phytosanitary certificates issued by MDAR inspectors during the 2024 season were for orders going to Canada (188 out of 453). The remaining federal phytosanitary certificates were issued for shipments going to: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Bermuda, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, The Islamic Republic of Iran, The Republic of Korea, The Republic of Turkey, and United Kingdom.

The department issued 1,536 state phytosanitary certificates for shipments to: California, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Texas, Utah, and Washington. The majority of the phytosanitary certificates were for shipments going to California, Washington, and Oregon.

Invasive Species Reports

In addition to MDAR's survey/monitoring, MDAR receives reports of potential invasive species through several ways. This includes utilizing the online reporting system and surveys that USDA conducts. Designated staff for survey/monitoring and staff from the Farm Products and Plant Industries program follow up on reports.

Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF)



Invasive Plant Site Visits

Massachusetts is home to many invasive species of plants. If certain invasive plants are identified at a site, inspectors visit the site to determine the severity of the invasion. In some instances, inspectors will perform control measures such as pulling out the plant and/or treating the area. Currently there are three invasive plants which MDAR monitors.

Giant Hogweed, *Heracleum mantegazzianum* (“GHW”)

Eight site visits were conducted throughout the year. Management of cutting and pulling plants was also conducted at several sites. Several GHW reports were received by the Department throughout the summer. No new GHW sites were found in 2024. The majority of the known GHW sites in the state are being controlled and slowly eradicated.

Mile-a-minute vine, *Polygonum perfoliatum* (“MWM”)

Five site visits took place throughout the year by nursery inspectors. These site visits included hand pulling of MAM plants and looking for signs of weevil biocontrol damage.

Kudzu Vine, *Pueraria montana*

Seven site visits were conducted. Herbicide spray treatment was conducted by MDAR staff at a Kudzu site in Kingston, MA.

Country Of Origin Labelling (“COOL”) Inspections

Since 2006, MDAR has been working under a Cooperative agreement with the USDA to perform audits relative to COOL requirements. COOL is a labeling law that requires

retailers, such as full-line grocery stores, supermarkets, and club warehouse stores, to notify their customers with information regarding the source of certain foods. Food products (covered commodities) contained in the law include muscle cut and ground meats (beef, veal, pork, lamb, goat, and chicken), wild and farm-raised fish and shellfish, fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, peanuts, pecans, macadamia nuts, and ginseng. MDAR had one staff member that works on the COOL program. USDA assigned and MDAR completed 32 inspections/reviews.

Invasive Pest Program

Invasive pests are non-native species (insects, plants, or plant diseases) that cause harm to the natural environment or to economic resources. The risk of invasive species entering the country has risen over the years due to increased trade, travel, and online commerce. Invasive species may harm native species, alter ecosystem processes, transport disease, or interfere with crop production. A 2021 study estimated that invasive species have cost North America over \$26 billion per year since 2010 (Crystal-Ornela, R. et al., 2021). Massachusetts can be considered at higher risk than other New England states because Boston is a major port of entry from other countries.

MDAR works closely with USDA as that agency has federal authority over invasive pests. The program has two designated field staff members that work within the program and seasonal contractors (number is dependent on the survey findings each year).

USDA Invasive Survey Grants

Each year MDAR submits suggestions to USDA relative to surveys that it would like to conduct for the year. The federal funding mechanism is PPA7721 (Farm Bill). Additionally, MDAR participates in the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (“CAPS”). Both the PPA7721 grants and CAPS funding allow MDAR to survey the state for invasive species. It should be noted that this is the only way that MDAR is able to conduct this work as there is no additional funding for surveying pests. MDAR received Farm Bill/CAPS funding for the following surveys:

Orchard Survey (Farm Bill): This is a survey focusing on pests that could have serious impacts on the orchard industry. Staff worked with orchards in the state to set up lures that were routinely checked and conduct visual surveys for the following pests of which none were found:

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Adoxophyes orana</i>	Summer fruit Tortrix moth
<i>Cryptoblabes gnidiella</i>	Christmas berry webworm
<i>Grapholita funebrana</i>	Plum fruit moth
<i>Lobesia botrana</i>	European grapevine moth
<i>Lycorma delicatula</i>	Spotted lanternfly

Scientific Name	Common Name
Anoplophora chinensis	Citrus longhorned beetle
Anoplophora glabripennis	Asian longhorned beetle
Autographa gamma	Silver Y moth
Cydalima perspectalis	Box tree moth
Helicoverpa armigera	Old World bollworm
Phytophthora ramorum	Ramorum blight; Sudden oak death

Nursery and Ornamental Survey (Farm Bill): This survey focused on pests that have serious effects on the nursery industry. MDAR staff worked with nurseries to set up lures/traps that were checked regularly and conducted visual surveys for the following pests, of which none were found

CAPS: In 2024, the MDAR CAPS program focused on Forest pests, specifically:

- Pests that attack conifers. Coniferous trees are important in Massachusetts, where they are used as nursery stock, Christmas trees, logs, lumber and other forest products. They are also a significant component of the landscape, with eastern white pine the most common tree species by total volume and the second most common tree species by total number of trees in the state.
- Pests that attack hardwood trees. Hardwoods are also used in Massachusetts as nursery stock, logs, lumber and other forest products, and are a significant component of the landscape.

The following pests were surveyed for in nurseries stock, of which none were detected:

Scientific Name	Common Name
Lymantria mathura	Rosy moth
Platypus quercivorus	Oak Ambrosia beetle
Thaumetopoea processionea	Oak processionary moth
Dendrolimus punctatus	Masson pine moth
Lymantria monacha	Nun moth
Thaumetopoea pityocampa	Pine processionary moth

Invasive Pest Detections and Response

There are currently two known established invasive pests in Massachusetts, Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF) and Box Tree Moth (BTM). SLF is not a pest that is regulated by USDA. While USDA is assisting MDAR with mitigation efforts by providing resources, these resources are not guaranteed in future years. SLF was first discovered in Massachusetts in 2021 and the population/spread continues to grow. BTM was found in 2023.

Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF)

MDAR continued to receive and follow up on reports of SLF. This includes visiting and surveying known infestations, as well as following up on possible SLF finds throughout the state. Additionally, nursery inspectors assisted the SLF Team with surveying, outreach, removal (egg masses) and trapping.

During January-August 2024, MDAR staff continued survey and delimitation of the infestations that had been confirmed during previous years in Fitchburg, Shrewsbury, Springfield, Worcester, Holyoke, Agawam, West Springfield, Southborough, Weston, Wellesley, Chelmsford, and Ashland. MDAR survey was aided by new SLF staff from USDA, hired specifically to help the programs in MA and RI.

Between January and April staff located and manually destroyed egg masses on known positive parcels, to help mitigate populations before eggs started to hatch in spring. In April and May, Bug Barrier Tree Band™ traps were installed in all known infestations on parcels with previously high-density adult populations, so that hatch could be monitored, estimates made about population size and as an additional way to lessen numbers. First hatch was officially recorded in Springfield, on May 14, 2024.

Population counts and delimitation surveys continued from May through November, during which time the populations in Springfield, Worcester, Shrewsbury, Holyoke, and Southborough appeared to have spread, while the populations in Fitchburg, Chelmsford, Ashland, Agawam, and West Springfield remained close to the same. In mid-July, traps in these municipalities were changed from Bug Barrier™ to circle traps, in anticipation of adult emergence. All traps were checked on a bi-weekly basis, as time and staff allowed, to determine population estimates and mitigate population size. Adults generally begin to emerge in late July or early August.

In 2024, 883 Notice of Abatements (NOAs) were issued to infested properties and their abutters. During the entire year, public reports were monitored and recorded, and MDAR or USDA staff were sent to investigate those reports determined to be highest risk by the program, based on the SLF Response Plan Priority Matrix.

Via these public reports, from May to October 2024, 32 more municipalities were found to have SLF infestations, bringing the total to 43.

Box Tree Moth (BTM)

BTM was detected in the summer of 2023 in Barnstable County. As a result of this detection in the southeastern part of the state, USDA issued a quarantine on the entire state of Massachusetts on May 22, 2024. The quarantine prohibits the movement of boxwoods out of the state unless the entity had a NOA with MDAR. To date, no one had reached out to MDAR to obtain an NOA.

Phytophthora Ramorum (“P.Ram“)

Visual and sampling survey of Phytophthora Ramorum was conducted at 15 nurseries throughout the Commonwealth, resulting in a total of 145 samples taken for initial survey. Out of this survey, two samples came back as positive for P. Ramorum, triggering the USDA’s quarantine protocol at two nurseries. This was the first time that P. Ram has been detected in the state. The areas where the original samples were found were cordoned off, and additional samples were

taken and sent to the lab for testing. None of these secondary samples came back positive, and both nurseries were visited twice more to check and sample for symptomatic tissue. All tertiary samples also came back as negative.

Education and Outreach

MDAR provides educational outreach about invasive insect pests through the Forest Pest Outreach Program, run by the Forest Pest Outreach Coordinator and the Environmental Biologist. Staff participated in 21 presentations and 31 tabling events in 2024, and distributed materials to an additional 73 events/programs, with the majority of outreach focused on spotted lanternfly (SLF). We continued our successful quarterly series of free online webinars about SLF, hosted by MDAR and offering free pesticide license and other educational credits to encourage participation. We reached well over one million people through our in-person 2024 program efforts, including our display at the MDAR booth at the Big E.

The program also responded to more than 1,300 pest reports that came in through the reporting website or via phone or email, including suspected sightings of SLF, box tree moth, emerald ash borer (EAB), Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), Northern giant hornet, and jumping worms. While the majority of these reports were negative, they did lead to the discovery of several new infestations of SLF and EAB.

The program distributed more than 39,000 pieces of pest outreach materials in 2024, for SLF, EAB, and ALB, including an SLF poster campaign that placed posters at cafes, bookstores, and libraries in and around SLF-infested communities. The poster campaign was coordinated by our SLF Outreach intern who participated in the EEA internship program over the summer. Staff also worked with a contractor to develop a series of three public service announcements focused on recognizing and managing spotted lanternfly – these animated video are available along with our other outreach materials via our pest website (<https://massnrc.org/pests/slf/>).

Staff continued to conduct outreach online through our pest blog (28 posts - <https://massnrc.org/pests/blog/>) and amplified these and other pest-themed messages through the MDAR Facebook account as well as LinkedIn. The program's monthly pest newsletter also continued to grow its readership, and currently reaches more than 3,400 subscribers (<https://massnrc.org/pests/signup.aspx>).

Apiary Program

The Program is charged with regulating beekeeping and honey bee health through the enforcement of statute (MGL 128 32-36B, 38) and regulations (330 CMR 8.00). Honey bee health inspections are conducted by the Team as visits by Inspectors to apiaries containing honey bees and used equipment located in the Commonwealth.

The Apiary Program Team has a staff of four full time employees consisting of three Apiary Inspectors and a Chief Inspector. The Program also partnered with the University of

Massachusetts Amherst to train an undergraduate intern on beekeeping and honey bee health. The intern assisted the team with managing colonies at the State Apiary, conducting educational demonstrations to elementary school students and sampling colonies that were part of the USDA-APHIS National Honey Bee Survey.

It is estimated that approximately 6-6,500 resident and migratory honey beekeepers currently maintain more than 40-45,000 colonies in Massachusetts throughout the year. These numbers vary annually due to winter mortality rates, and fluctuations in the numbers of hobby beekeepers given the continued interest and challenges of honey bee keeping and crop pollination needs. While the largest volume of colonies belongs to commercial beekeepers, most keepers are hobby and sideliner beekeepers who maintain fewer than 100 colonies each. A total of 249 apiaries were voluntarily registered with the Apiary Program in 2024 bringing the grand total presently to 1,823 registered apiaries with 4,347 colonies. On average, the 2024 newly registered apiaries consisted of only two colonies each.

In 2024, a total of 460 inspection requests were received from beekeepers of which 33 were for emergency inspections, 13 for pesticide related bee kills, and 20 for suspected American Foulbrood (AFB) cases. The team visited 14 counties, 230 cities/towns, 495 apiaries/beekeepers, and inspected 5,730 honey bee colonies. Of these, 514 colonies were from dead-outs and used equipment. The main cause of death for dead-outs was determined to be related to either starvation or Varroa Mites and associated viruses. Inspectors also conducted import inspections of 24 shipments of package bees (13 suppliers, 9,487 imported packages total), 13 shipments of nucleus colonies (nucs) (6 suppliers, 1,589 inspected from 3,960 imported nucs total), and approximately 13,000 colonies imported for cranberry pollination of which 1,302 colonies were inspected (five commercial beekeepers, 14 growers and 22 bogs). A total of 462 inspection reports for routine health inspections and 41 health certificates were issued for interstate movement.

Samples consisting of adult bees, brood, honey, pollen and comb were taken as part of health inspections, research projects, or submitted by beekeepers using MDAR-issued sampling kits. A total of 536 samples were collected and submitted to analytical labs for analysis. The results of these samples along with visual inspections are as follows:

Honey Bee Health Issues		Total Colonies with Health Issue
Type	Common Name	
Bacteria	American Foulbrood (AFB)	10 (7 apiaries)
	European Foulbrood (EFB)	212
Fungi/Microsporidia	Chalkbrood	38
	<i>Nosema</i> spp.	149
	<i>Crithidia mellificae</i>	0
	<i>Lotmaria passim</i>	17
Viruses	Parasitic Mite Syndrome (PMS)/Idiopathic Brood Disease Syndrome (IBDS)/Snot Brood/Varroosis	183
	Sacbrood Virus (SBV)	190
	Deformed Wing Viruses A-C (DWV A-C)	499

	Black Queen Cell Virus (BQCV)	77
	Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV)	3
	Acute Bee Paralysis Virus (ABPV)	6
	Lake Sinai Virus 1 (LSV1)	36
	Lake Sinai Virus 2 (LSV2)	4
	Israeli Acute Bee Paralysis Virus (IABPV)	44
	Slow Bee Paralysis Virus (SBPV)	0
	Kashmir Bee Virus (KBV)	1
Pests/Predators/Parasites	Small Hive Beetle (SHB)	123
	Wax Moth	18
	Mice	25
	Bear Damage	3
	Africanized Honey Bees (AHB)	4
	Tracheal mite	27
	<i>Tropilaelaps</i> mite	0
Management	Queen Issues	130
Pesticides	Bee Kills	0
Total		1,745

Massachusetts Honey Bee Health Survey

The 2023-2024 Massachusetts Bee Aware Honey Bee Health Survey had 307 beekeeper responses managing 1,791 colonies. Since 2015-2016, this health survey has had a total of 3,690 beekeeper responses providing an important tool to gather local data on honey bee health and vital feedback regarding beekeeper needs and programmatic focus. The 2023-2024 survey respondents reported 25% overall total loss and 34% average loss of honey bee colonies in the Commonwealth. Survey results indicate that beekeepers attributed the top causes of colony losses this year to queen loss/failure (23%), Varroa mites (22%), small adult bee colony population prior to winter (21%), starvation (14%), environmental factors/climate change (13%), beekeeper mismanagement (7%) and pesticides (4%). Beekeepers also reported that the greatest problem affecting beekeepers in the Commonwealth were Varroa mites (82%), pesticides (41%), environmental factors/climate change (36%), beekeeper mismanagement (35%), queen loss/failure (26%), viruses (23%), starvation (16%), floral resource availability (14%), genetics (13%), and American Foulbrood (13%).

Pesticide Program

MDAR is the lead state agency for pesticide regulation in the Commonwealth under the Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) as well as the Massachusetts Pesticide Control Act, M.G.L. c. 132B, and the regulations promulgated at 333 CMR 2.00 through 14.00. The Pesticide Program carries out the day-to-day responsibilities of regulating pesticides in the Commonwealth, including the licensing of pesticide applicators, the registration of pesticide products, and the enforcement of the statute and

regulations. In addition, the Pesticide Program carries out other pesticide related activities in support of the regulatory mandate, such as education, outreach, and water monitoring. The Pesticide Program also acts as support staff for the Pesticide Board, Pesticide Board Subcommittee and two Advisory Councils. A total of 12 staff members work in this program.

Enforcement

The Enforcement Program is charged with enforcing the provisions of the FIFRA, M.G.L. c. 132B, and the regulations promulgated thereunder at 333 CMR 2.00 through 14.00. The Enforcement Program conducts routine inspections of pesticide users' establishments and the producers from which they acquire the products. The Enforcement Program also investigates complaints regarding the misuse of pesticides in addition to providing education and outreach about MDAR's pesticide programs.

Inspections

A total of 237 pesticide inspections of which 45 were investigations relative to pesticide complaints were conducted. The rest were relative to routine inspections with entities including, but not limited to, lawn care, tree/shrub care, structural pest control, golf courses, agriculture, and municipalities. These inspections cover items such as record keeping, storage, notification, worker protection, and use observations.

The inspection/investigation numbers reported are for the 2024 federal fiscal year and do not include the pending enforcement actions on open investigations during that time.

Education/Outreach

While the Pesticide Program does not run trainings for licensed applicators, it often responds to requests to make presentation relative to rules/regulations, toxicology, pollinators, and related topics. In 2024, pesticide program staff presented at 33 events. Additionally, inspectors use routine inspections to educate the licensee of the requirements as well.

Pesticide Applicator and Licensing Program

Approximately 2,324 individuals signed up for and completed MDAR's online pesticide examinations. This total includes Pesticide (core) Applicator, Pesticide Dealer, and both Commercial and Private Certification exams. Of these 2,324 exams taken, 1,632 received a passing score and were offered the opportunity to apply for a license or certification to be issued by MDAR.

There were approximately 656 programs approved for Massachusetts Pesticide Applicator Continuing Education (PACE) Credit Hours. This includes 298 on-demand

PACE trainings approved and/or re-approved, and 358 livestreaming, Virtual or Traditional Classroom PACE trainings approved.

Pesticide Product Registration

Any person who has obtained a pesticide product registration from the EPA must then apply for a registration with MDAR. The registrant, or an agent acting on behalf of the registrant, is required to submit an Application for New Pesticide Registration, a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), and a product label. New products are usually registered on a monthly basis. Every product label is thoroughly reviewed for compliance with state and federal laws and then brought to the Pesticide Board Subcommittee for consideration pursuant to M.G.L. c. 132B. A registration is valid for a period beginning with the initial date of approval by the Pesticide Board Subcommittee and ending on the next June 30th. There were 507 new products registered and 8,350 products renewed.

ITEMS OF NOTE

Compliance with the Federal Certification and Training Rule: MDAR continues to work with the University of Massachusetts to review and update its pesticide exams. During FY24 the following exams were completed:

- Cranberries (Cat. 30)
- Small Fruit (Cat. 27)
Tree Fruit (Cat. 25)
- Turf (Cat. 37)
- Greenhouse (Cat. 26)

Additionally, MDAR had to update 333 CMR 9.00 to come into compliance with the federal rule. The regulations were promulgated along with changes made to 333 CMR 14.00 in October of 2024.

Glyphosate Commission: The [Glyphosate Commission](#) was established by the legislature in 2021. The Commission was allotted \$50,000 (via MDAR) to conduct a scientific review of Glyphosate. The review was to be sent to the legislature and Subcommittee where it would conduct a larger individual review and determine if products containing Glyphosate should remain registered or altered. The [scientific review](#) was completed in September of 2024.

Rodenticide Scientific Review: As a result of a request to the Pesticide Subcommittee to conduct an individual review of anti-coagulant rodenticides, the Subcommittee voted to allow MDAR to hire a contractor to conduct a scientific review of rodenticides which would then be used in the larger individual review

Industrial Hemp Program

The MDAR Hemp Program provides oversight and regulation of hemp under M.G.L. c. 128 Section 116-123 and 7 CFR 990. The Hemp Program oversees all licensing for hemp production

and processing and enforcement of laws and regulations pertaining to hemp in the Commonwealth.

A total of 53 licenses were issued (two Producer, 32 Processor, and 19 Dual Producer/Processor).

There are currently three accepted categories for hemp cultivation: seed/grain production, fiber production, and cannabinoid production. Massachusetts hemp is grown 100% for cannabinoid production.

A license is required for any location in which hemp will be grown, stored, and/or processed. Not all areas licensed for production are put into cultivation.

All hemp grown in Massachusetts is subject to regulatory testing prior to harvest for certification. Hemp produced in Massachusetts must be certified before it can enter the stream of commerce and must contain less than 0.3% total THC, inclusive of a measurement of uncertainty, to be certified. A total of 37 individual hemp crops were grown and tested in 2024 from 14 different licensed producers. Of those 37 crops, all were certified after the first round of testing for an overall certification rate of 100%.

2024 Licensed Hemp Production and Actual Cultivated Area by County

County	Licensed Acres (Outdoor)	Cultivated Acres (Outdoor)	Licensed ft ² (Indoor)	Cultivated ft ² (Indoor)
Berkshire	5	1.2	2400	0
Bristol	0	0	700	0
Essex	0.05	0.05	750	200
Hampden	11	2.5	11900	0
Hampshire	8.2	2	4400	600
Middlesex	5	3.5	127950	2000
Nantucket	4	0	40000	0
Plymouth	0.6	0.5	0	0
Worcester	7	0.25	14542	4342
Total	40.85	10	202,642	7,142

Division of Agricultural Food Safety

Division of Agricultural Food Safety Responsibilities

The Division Agricultural Food Safety assists in the prevention of food-borne illness in Massachusetts while increasing market opportunities for agricultural producers in the Commonwealth. The Agricultural Food Safety Divisions duties include:

- 1. Regulatory Oversight: Unprocessed Produce for Human/Animal Consumption-** Developing and enforcing regulations and standards for produce production, storage, and distribution to ensure compliance with CFR 21 Part 112. (M.G.L. Chapter 128 Section 124; 330 CMR 34.

Animal Feed, Pet Food, Pet Treats - Developing and enforcing Regulations and standards for animal feed and pet food production, storage and distribution to ensure compliance with 330 CMR 13.00: Pet Food and 330 CMR 14.00 - Manufacture, sale, and distribution of commercial feed other than pet food.
- 2. Inspections and Monitoring:** Conducting regular inspections of farms, manufacturing sites/processing facilities, and holding and distribution centers to assess adherence to food safety regulations, protocols, and standards.
- 3. Risk Assessment:** Identifying potential risks to food safety within the agricultural supply chain for those products under divisional authority, including issues related to contamination, and microbial, physical, or chemical adulteration.
- 4. Education and Outreach:** Providing educational resources and training programs to farmers, food processors, and other stakeholders on best practices for maintaining food safety throughout the production process and for conformance with existing federal, state, and local laws.
- 5. Response to Incidents:** Supporting and investigating foodborne illness outbreaks both nationally and within the jurisdiction and support/staffing of MEMA HQ for emergency/disaster response operations in the Commonwealth.
- 6. Collaboration:** Collaborating with other government agencies, research institutions, and industry associations to develop strategies for improving agricultural food safety practices and compliance with federal and state laws.
- 7. Public Awareness:** Communicating with the public about food safety issues, risks, and precautions through various channels such as public notices, educational campaigns, and media outreach.

Overall, the Agricultural Food Safety Division plays a critical role in safeguarding the food supply chain and protecting public health by ensuring that raw agricultural products meet established safety standards. In 2024, this work was supported by a \$615,000 cooperative

agreement with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the implementation and maintenance of a Produce Safety Inspection Program in Massachusetts

Division staff consists of four Food and Drug Inspectors, and one Division Director. All staff are fully trained to conduct their assigned responsibilities and have successfully completed FDA coursework and curriculums.

OVERVIEW

Food regulation is of paramount importance for several reasons:

1. **Public Health Protection:** Regulations ensure that food products, including raw agricultural commodities (RACs) such as produce, meet specific safety standards, reducing the risk of foodborne illnesses caused by pathogens, toxins, or contaminants. By establishing guidelines for food handling, growing, harvesting, storage and distribution, regulations help safeguard public health by minimizing the occurrence of foodborne illness in the Commonwealth.
2. **Consumer Confidence:** Food regulations instill confidence in consumers by assuring them that the food they purchase and consume is safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. Transparent labeling and regulatory oversight build trust between consumers and food producers, manufacturers, and retailers.
3. **Fair Trade Practices:** Regulations promote fair trade practices by setting standards for food labeling, packaging, and advertising. This helps prevent deceptive marketing tactics and ensures that consumers have access to accurate information about the agricultural products they purchase in the Commonwealth.
4. **Environmental Protection:** Food regulations also aim to mitigate the environmental impact of food production and processing activities. This includes regulations related to sustainable agriculture, waste management, water quality and pollution control, which contribute to environmental conservation efforts.
5. **Economic Stability:** Regulations provide a framework for farms and manufacturers, fostering economic stability by promoting fair competition, preventing market monopolies, and ensuring that businesses operate within ethical and legal boundaries. Compliance with regulations also reduces the risk of costly recalls, litigation, and reputational damage for farms and other operations that support the agricultural sector in Massachusetts.
6. **International Trade:** Harmonized food regulations facilitate international trade by establishing common standards and regulations that promote the seamless exchange of food products across borders. Consistent regulations help prevent trade barriers and promote global food security.
7. **Innovation and Research:** Food regulations encourage innovation and research in food science and technology by setting guidelines for product development and safety

assessments. This creates opportunities for the development of new processes, and technologies that enhance food safety, quality, and nutritional value.

PROGRAM LISTING

- A. Produce Safety Inspection Program (PSIP)
- B. Animal Feed/Pet Food Inspection Program (AFSIP)
- C. Emergency and Foodborne Illness Response
- D. Commonwealth Quality Program
- E. Technical Assistance Program
- F. Education and Outreach Program
- G. Agricultural Food Safety Grant Program

Produce Safety Inspection Program (PSIP)

Produce safety inspections are a crucial component of ensuring the safety of fruits and vegetables throughout the agricultural supply chain. These inspections typically involve assessing various factors that could affect the safety of produce, including:

1. **Hygiene Practices:** Inspectors may evaluate the hygiene practices employed by farm workers, such as handwashing facilities and sanitation measures, to prevent contamination of produce.
2. **Water Quality:** Assessing the quality of water used for irrigation, washing, and other purposes to ensure it meets safety standards and does not pose a risk of contaminating produce with pathogens.
3. **Soil Amendments:** Monitoring the use of soil amendments such as compost and manure to ensure they are applied safely and do not introduce harmful pathogens to the growing environment.
4. **Pesticide Use:** Checking for compliance with regulations regarding the use of pesticides and other agricultural chemicals, including proper application rates and adherence to pre-harvest intervals.
5. **Harvesting Practices:** Observing harvesting practices to minimize the risk of contamination, such as using clean harvesting equipment and avoiding contact with animals or other potential sources of contamination.
6. **Post-Harvest Handling:** Inspecting facilities and equipment used for washing, packing, and storing produce to ensure they are clean and properly maintained to prevent contamination during handling.
7. **Temperature Control:** Monitoring temperature controls during transportation and storage to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria and maintain the quality and safety of produce.

- 8. **Record-Keeping:** Reviewing records related to farm practices, water testing, pesticide applications, and other relevant activities to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

Inspections conducted by MDAR’s PSIP utilize an “educate before and while we regulate” approach, incorporating rule and practice clarification during the inspection process. The focus of any interaction on-farm is educational in nature and is designed to foster a clear understanding of regulations and requirements between program staff and the farm.

Inspections are assigned by federal compliance dates for farms covered by the produce safety rule (PSR) that started in June 2019 for farms that are classified as Large Produce Farms with an average annual value of produce sold of \$500,000 or more during the previous three years. Farms falling into different categories will receive inspections in consequent years, with all categories inspected by 2025.

During the 2024 Calendar year the PSIP conducted the following interactions:

2024 PSR Inspection Statistics				
Inspections by Type				
Total	Initial	Routine	Follow-Up	For-Cause
100	15	79	5	1
Other Inspection Data				
Total Farms Inspected		# of Observations Recorded	Enforcement Actions	
90		409	4	
Sprout Inspection Data				
Sprout Facilities Inspected		Sprout Inspections	Compliance Activities	
1		4	4	
Farm Inventory Data (Registry) 2024				
Total Validated Farms	Covered Farms Under the PSR	Qualified Exempt	Exempt	Sprout Facilities
620	128	201	291	3

[Animal Feed/Pet Food Inspection Program \(AFSIP\)](#)

The AFSIP program is responsible for the safe manufacture, storage and distribution of commercial animal feed, pet food and pet treats in the Commonwealth to ensure that these

products are safe, nutritious and accurately labeled for consumer use in conformance with both federal and state laws. The program supports the following activities.

1. **Registration and Licensing:** Manufacturers, distributors, and sellers of animal feed and pet food often need to register with state regulatory agencies and obtain the necessary licenses to operate within the state.
2. **Labeling Requirements:** Massachusetts enforces strict labeling standards to ensure that consumers receive accurate information about the nutritional content, ingredients, and intended use of the product. Labels must comply with both state and federal guidelines.
3. **Product Testing and Safety:** AFSIP conducts routine testing of animal feed and pet food products to ensure they meet safety standards. This includes checking for contaminants like mycotoxins, heavy metals, and pathogens.
4. **Inspections:** AFSIP performs inspections of manufacturing facilities, warehouses, and retail locations to ensure compliance with state laws and regulations and conducts random sampling to support the verification of label ingredients and the overall safety of product(s) on the market.
5. **Enforcement Actions:** If products are found to be non-compliant with regulations, states can take enforcement actions, such as issuing fines, mandating recalls, or revoking licenses.
6. **Consumer Complaints and Investigations:** States also manage consumer complaints related to animal feed and pet food. Investigations can lead to further testing, enforcement actions, or public warnings.
7. **Coordination with Federal Agencies:** State programs often work in conjunction with federal agencies like the FDA’s Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) and the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) to ensure consistency in regulation and enforcement across the country.

The Animal Feed/Pet Food Inspection Program is essential for maintaining the integrity of the animal feed and pet food supply chain, protecting both animal and human health in the Commonwealth.

Animal Feed/Pet Food Registrations-Inspections-Sampling 2024				
Total Registrants	Registered Products	Samples Collected for Analysis	Inspections Conducted	Enforcement Actions
711	11,481	06	2	1

Emergency and Foodborne Illness Response

The Agricultural Food Safety Division’s Emergency and Foodborne Illness Response is a critical component of public health efforts to manage and mitigate the impact of foodborne illnesses and other emergencies related to the food supply, including produce, pet food and animal feed. The Division supports the following activities:

1. **Surveillance and Detection:** Monitoring Systems: The Division monitors the incidence of foodborne illnesses through partnerships with Mass DPH, Working Group for Foodborne Illness Control (WGFIC), and FDA who utilize surveillance systems like the Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet) and PulseNet as well as MAVEN at the state level.
2. **Outbreak Investigation:** The Division is integrated with the Mass DPH Rapid Response Teams (RRT) that responds to foodborne illness outbreaks. The RRT includes state and federal public health officials, epidemiologists, and food safety experts.
3. **Traceback Investigations:** In the event of an outbreak, division investigators trace the source of contamination by tracking the distribution of food products from farm to table, identifying the point of contamination.
4. **Public Communication:** When a foodborne illness outbreak is detected that impacts the Commonwealth the Division, working with its state and local public health partners, issues public health alerts to inform consumers about potentially contaminated produce, animal feed or pet food.
5. **Recall Notices:** If contaminated products are identified, the Division works with farmers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers to issue recalls, ensuring that the products are removed from the market in a timely fashion to limit public health impact.
6. **Containment and Control:** If a product under the Division’s authority is found to be contaminated, it may be recalled by the farm or manufacturer, often in coordination with the Division as well as federal partners like the FDA or USDA.
7. **Coordination with Federal Agencies: FDA Involvement:** The Division collaborates with the FDA’s Coordinated Outbreak Response and Evaluation (CORE) Network to handle large-scale outbreaks and coordinate response efforts both inside and outside the jurisdiction.
8. **MEMA Support:** Divisional staff are trained in outbreak detection, emergency response, and management to ensure readiness for incidents that affect the public in Massachusetts and is fully integrated into MEMA operations when requested.

Emergency Response Activities 2024				
Foodborne Illness Response actions in Massachusetts	Samples Collected to support Investigations	Enforcement and Compliance Actions Related to Emergency Response Activities	MEMA Support Interactions	Embargoes, Stop Sale Orders (VAI)
3	15	3	0	0



The Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP) is a third-party audit program aimed at promoting and supporting locally produced agricultural products that meet specific standards for safety, quality, and environmental stewardship. This program serves as a certification and branding effort, helping consumers identify products that are grown or produced in ways that are sustainable and safe and offering market access to farmers in Massachusetts.

Key components of the Commonwealth Quality Program:

1. Certification Standards:

- a. **Agricultural Practices:** The program sets standards for agricultural practices, ensuring that participating farms and producers follow best practices in areas like pest management, water conservation, and soil health.
 - b. **Food Safety:** Producers must adhere to rigorous food safety protocols, including proper handling, storage, and processing of agricultural products.
 - c. **Environmental Stewardship:** CQP emphasizes environmentally responsible practices, encouraging producers to minimize their environmental footprint through sustainable farming methods.
2. **Product Categories:** The program covers a wide range of products, including fruits, vegetables, maple syrup, and cranberries.
 3. **Local Focus:** Products certified under CQP are typically locally sourced within Massachusetts, supporting the local economy and reducing the carbon footprint associated with long-distance transportation.
 4. **Branding and Marketing:** Commonwealth Quality Seal: Certified products are allowed to display the Commonwealth Quality Seal, a recognizable logo that assures consumers of the product's adherence to the program's high standards.
 5. **Technical Assistance:** The program offers resources and technical support to help producers meet the certification standards, including guidance on sustainable farming practices and compliance with food safety regulations.
 6. **Market Access:** By participating in CQP, producers gain access to new markets and can differentiate their products in a competitive marketplace, potentially increasing their profitability.
 7. **Collaboration with Other Programs:** Alignment with State and Federal Programs: The Commonwealth Quality Program often works in collaboration with other state and federal initiatives, such as the USDA's Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification, to ensure consistency in standards and to help producers navigate multiple certification

processes. The program also supports regulatory certainty for those farms covered by federal, state or local regulations.

8. **Support for Local Food Systems:** The program aligns with broader state efforts to strengthen local food systems, including farm-to-school initiatives and local food purchasing by institutions.

2024 CQP Audits By Category		
Produce	Cranberry	Maple
67	2	1

Technical Assistance Program

Technical assistance is provided by the division and includes the following services:

- Produce Safety Rule Walk-Throughs (on-site)
- Animal Feed/Pet Food Walk-Throughs (on-site)
- Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP) Pre-Audits
- On-Farm Training Support
- Grant Support

Program staff provide one-to-one on-farm technical support to assist farmers in understanding food safety requirements and regulations, finding grant funding options for upgrading practices and infrastructure, providing support tools for farm staff training, and providing direction for the implementation of best management practices for improving on-farm food safety.

Technical Service Interventions (2024)		
Produce	Cranberry	Maple
64	1	0

Education and Outreach Program

The division offers educational opportunities to farms to help them prepare for inspections and compliance with the statutory authorities as well as general farm food safety training.

Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Training: The Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower Training Course is the foundation that teaches the clear understanding of practices and regulations contained in the Produce Safety Rule (PSR). It is the first step growers in Massachusetts should complete on their path to compliance. The PSA Grower Training Course is a critical requirement of the PSR for those farms covered under the rule, however, the training is offered to all growers, independent of coverage.

The Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training Course is offered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), in partnership with the University of Massachusetts Agricultural Extension. The training is offered multiple times per year in locations across Massachusetts.

This training satisfies the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement for covered farms that “at least one supervisor or responsible party” completes “food safety training ... recognized as adequate“ by FDA (21 C.F.R. §112.22(c).

Workshops, Trainings, & Educational Opportunities: To assist Massachusetts growers in preparing for inspections and compliance, as well as general farm food safety training, the Division, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts Agricultural Extension, offers educational workshops, twilight meetings, and trainings across Massachusetts.

Educational Initiatives (2024)		
Farmers attending PSA Courses	Twilight Meetings	Presentations
67	2	2

[Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Grant Program \(AFSIP\)](#)

The Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP) is a reimbursement grant program that supports produce and aquaculture operations that are looking to improve their food safety practices that work towards minimizing the risks of microbial contamination and food-borne illnesses while increasing market access.

Example projects are listed below.

Produce Operations Sector Projects • Water systems, delivery, treatment devices, processing, and washing equipment • Portable restrooms and/or hand washing sinks (mobile or stationary) • Harvest & storage equipment (bins, totes, bin storage, racks) • Washing/Packing shed walls, ceilings, lighting fixtures, and upgrades • Drainage systems for coolers and washing & packing areas • Wildlife fencing • Pest deterrent • Refrigeration/Cooling Equipment • Pesticide storage

Aquaculture Operations Sector Projects • Ice machines • Insulated containers • Walk-in refrigeration units • Processing equipment such as tumblers/graders to improve time to temperature control and process efficiency • Facility upgrades necessary to obtain a Massachusetts Department of Public Health license • Equipment • Pesticide storage

Maximum funding per applicant for projects is \$50,000.