

**AGRICULTURAL EVENT CERTIFICATION  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

UPDATED DECEMBER 2024

**1. Who is the applicant?**

The licensed farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery seeking to participate in the agricultural event is the applicant and must submit the agricultural event certification application to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

**2. What is MDAR's role in allowing a farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery to sell alcohol at an agricultural event?**

MDAR's role is to approve events such as agricultural fairs, farmers' markets or other event as agricultural events in accordance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 138, Section 15F.

**3. Are other permits needed to sell alcohol at an agricultural event once it has been certified by MDAR?**

After the application is approved by MDAR and the agricultural event is certified, the farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery will need to make an application with the local liquor/license control board that has jurisdiction over the event's location to obtain a license to allow the sale of alcohol.

**4. Can another entity that is not licensed as a farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery sell Massachusetts wine at an approved agricultural event, (i.e. local wine shop)**

The legislation allows the holders of farmer-winey, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery licenses to sell at an agricultural event. It does not apply to any other entity.

**5. Can an out-of-state winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery sell at an approved agricultural event?**

Any farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery that holds a license from Massachusetts or any other state may apply for a special license to sell at an approved Massachusetts agricultural event.

**8. How long is the MDAR approval good for?**

MDAR approval of the event is good for the dates listed in the application. If there are any substantial changes to the event (i.e. dates, times, location), the applicant shall notify MDAR immediately. Additionally, the application must be submitted annually for each event in which the farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery seeks to participate.

**9. Is the sampling of alcohol allowed?**

A farm-winery farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery may provide, without charge, samples of wine to prospective customers who are at least twenty-one (21) years of age. All samples of wine shall be served by an agent, representative, or solicitor of the farm-winery and shall be consumed in the presence of such agent, representative or solicitor. Wine shall not exceed 1 ounce; a distilled product shall not exceed 0.25 ounce; and a malt beverage shall not exceed 2 ounces; and provided further, that not more than 5 samples of wine or malt beverages and not more than 4 samples of distilled products shall be served to an individual prospective customer.

**10. What are the specific steps to follow to request a permit to sell wine, beer or distilled products at an agricultural event?**

The farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery should first obtain approval from the event manager of the agricultural event in which it would like to participate. Once this approval is obtained, the applicant submits a completed agricultural event certification application to MDAR. Upon certification of an agricultural event by MDAR, the applicant must comply with the local licensing requirements for requesting and obtaining a special license. Upon issuance of a special license, the farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery should ensure that a copy of the special license has been submitted by the local licensing authority to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) at least seven (7) days prior to the event.

**11. How long does it take to get MDAR certification of an agricultural event?**

It generally takes ten (10) business days for MDAR to review a completed application and issue its decision on certification. The farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery must keep in mind that the local licensing authority is the entity issuing the special license and each city and town has its own time frame for such licenses. Upon issuance of a special license, the applica should ensure that a copy of the special license has been submitted by the local licensing authority to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) at least seven (7) days prior to the event. Therefore, MDAR recommends that the farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery be aware of all the time constraints when determining the events in which it will participate.

**12. Must a separate application be submitted for a winter and summer farmers market if they are sponsored by the same organization?**

Yes. You will need to fill out a separate application for each of the farmers markets because they are different "agricultural events" under the statute. Although they are sponsored by the same organization, the locations may be different and dates on which the events are held are different.

**13. What is meant by competitive agriculture?**

The competitive agriculture question is related to fairs. In order to be a fair that can be deemed an agricultural event, there must be competitive agriculture, i.e. there are prizes awarded for competitions involving things such as animals and/or produce. The competitive agriculture question does not relate to all agricultural events (i.e. farmers markets). If the event is not a fair and the competitive agriculture question is not applicable, you would simply check the N/A box on the application.

**14. Is there a fee for the special license and, if so, how much is it and what does it cover?**

A city or town can charge a fee for the special license but it cannot exceed \$50.00. The fee is for the special license that would be issued to the farm-winery, farm-brewery, pub-brewery or farm-distillery for the "agricultural event", which can be held on multiple dates/times but is still considered a single "event" for the purposes of the statute. It would be up to the licensing board as to whether they want to issue the special license for all of the dates and times requested but each date/time should not be considered a separate "event" for the purposes of the statute.