
December/January Farm & Market Report

12/17/20

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CLASSIFIED

COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Greetings, Mass. Agriculture and all its friends,

Last columns of the year usually lend themselves to some type of reflection back along with a look forward. Well, there's no denying there's a lot of material; the challenge is what to include. Here goes...

First, the recent past:

I've always enjoyed the [Green Friday event](#) on the day after Thanksgiving. It reminds me of decades selling Christmas trees and holiday products, and how the day after Thanksgiving the season just takes off.

This year it just didn't take off, it exploded! Honestly, the morning after Thanksgiving generally is the last calm before the storm, but that's not at all what Deputy Commissioner Ashley Randle and I encountered this year at Arrowhead Acres in Uxbridge.

Our hosts, Vicki and Dave Morin, have created a destination that has become part of the annual tradition for many. Cars were pouring in the whole time we were there, full of families anxious to enjoy the experience of walking the land, selecting a tree from the expansive collection, cutting it (or having it cut), getting it in or on the car, and taking it home.

By all reports, that's what has happened everywhere in the live tree marketplace. Many have experienced a very strong initial demand, to the point many sold out the earliest they ever have. The holiday sales in MA Ag in 2020 followed the trend we've seen all year of increased sales in many sectors, including agri-tourism activities.

Each year I work one or more Friday nights selling trees with a good friend whose church sells trees as a fundraiser. I joke that I maintain my "professional status" by continuing to sell trees each season. It's a good thing I made a point to be there the first Friday night to sell, as they completely sold out their first weekend open!

I do admit that the trees do seem to be a little heavier every year, and the vehicles just get taller and taller! Though I love the Christmas Tree season, taking off your gloves on a freezing night to tie a tree to the roof of a giant SUV that doesn't have a roof rack is not the most pleasant part of the job.

Also recently, the [MA Food Policy Council \(FPC\)](#) celebrated two very significant events at its November meeting: the 10th anniversary of the council, and the 5th anniversary of the FPC's acceptance of the [MA Local Food Action Plan](#), the first comprehensive statewide plan since 1974.

Normally the November meeting is held at the State House as part of the FPC's regional rotation of meetings, in an effort to attract members of the administration along with legislators and their staff to attend and key in on food system issues. Though we weren't able to meet physically, we had an excellent turnout of state house guests along with stakeholders from across the state.

Interest in the food system was expanding rapidly over past years; the legislature formed the [MA Food System Caucus](#) in 2019 with present FPC members Senator Jo Comerford, Representative Hannah Kane, and Representative Dan Donahue as co-chairs of the Caucus, along with former FPC member Senator Anne Gobi, Senator Eric Lesser, and Rep. Paul Schmid. Under their bipartisan, bicameral leadership, the Caucus has quickly grown to second largest in the General Court with one hundred thirty-six members out of the two hundred total legislators.

Interest in the food system rapidly became part of the global conversation with the onset of disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, and several FPC members became very active in the Commonwealth's food security work.

The council was delighted that Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Kathleen Theoharides attended the meeting and offered introductory remarks. Secretary Theoharides spoke about the work of the Food

Security Task Force, of which she is a co-chair and its recommendations and actions relative to the food system.

That led right into Ashley's summary of the [Food Security Infrastructure Grant program](#), grant project reports from multiple sectors, updates from the Caucus and the MA Food System Collaborative, and conversation on food waste.

It was a great meeting. Hope I've interested you to attend our next meeting which will be held virtually January 29, 2021.

As I write this MDAR has just begun offering [Pesticide Licensing exams](#) online rather than how it's always been done: in person, with those taking the exam providing answers on paper. Starting with the exams most widely taken, applicants may now take an exam online 24/7/365! There are some basic requirements about necessary equipment (nothing out of the ordinary) and procedure as we move the exams from a twentieth century format into that of the present and future.

The traditional process was expensive with hall rentals, etc. and also required Pesticide Program personnel to physically proctor the exams, and for staff to correct the exams with an ancient processing system. In 2020, tests were provided in parking lot scenarios to address social distancing issues. Much of that goes away with the new system, letting staff concentrate more on their primary duties.

We have made a big push at MDAR during the Baker-Polito Administration to similarly improve several other pesticide program registration actions by moving them to an online process. Stakeholders have been very pleased providing information in an easier, more efficient methods.

This successful systematic migration to more online opportunities is due to the leadership of the MDAR's Crop & Pest Services Director, Taryn LaScola-Miner, and the great work of the entire Pesticide Program team, especially Pesticide Operations Coordinator Steve Antunes-Kenyon and Chief Pesticide Inspector Mike McClean.

On Monday of this week Ashley, Apiary Inspectors Ken Warchol and Paul Tessier, and I visited the [Worcester County Food Bank](#) and donated almost four hundred pounds of honey produced by MDAR's two State Apiaries, one in Amherst in collaboration with the UMass Stockbridge School of Agriculture, and the other in Hathorne, where we work with the Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School.

Under the direction of Chief Apiary Inspector/Apiary Program Coordinator Dr. Kim Skyrms, MDAR's [Apiary Program](#) established the State Apiaries to serve as vessels for education, outreach demonstrations and research related to agricultural sustainability, pollination, honey bee health and hive management.

And hard workers that they are, those bees produce a lot of honey each year! Last year Ashley and Kim made our donation at the Food Bank of Western MA. I haven't been able to attend any of the program's end of season honey extraction and jarring sessions yet, but I'm determined to! [Photos here.](#)

So, let's talk a little about 2020 from an MDAR perspective. There have been many notable achievements. Here are a few that caught my eye as I read many end of year reviews.

- In 2020, the [Mass Animal Fund](#) reached a milestone of over \$350,000 in taxpayer donations through line 33f on the Resident Income Tax Form, which was the highest annual donation since its inception in 2012. In a year of uncertainty and economic challenges, these record donations provided 13,000

homeless cats and dogs and animals owned by low-income residents no-cost spay/neuter and vaccination services. The Mass Animal Fund works to prevent animal homelessness through support from Massachusetts taxpayers for the responsible care of animals and the prevention of animal homelessness. To date, the fund has collected over \$2.7 million in donations and state support for its efforts.

- To mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and food insecurity on agriculture and the food industry, MDAR launched the [MassGrown Exchange](#) platform in August to provide a business-to-business platform for farmers, fishers, food buyers and ag-related businesses to connect, exchange, and find products and services. The platform is a tool for businesses looking to sell, donate or purchase Massachusetts crops, seafood, products, and services. The MassGrown Exchange expands business opportunities and access to new markets for the Commonwealth's agricultural and seafood industries and improves food security for the people of Massachusetts. Currently, over two hundred businesses are registered, over two hundred fifty products listed, and there have been over twenty thousand views of the site in four months since launch.
- You may recall in July that "mystery seeds" from China began arriving in US mailboxes. MDAR received and catalogued hundreds and hundreds of reports from recipients.
- In 2020, the [Agricultural Preservation Restriction](#) (APR) program permanently preserved almost four hundred acres of the best MA farmland at a cost of almost \$3 million.
- One hundred hemp farms were licensed in 2020.

I thought I also might quickly scan my 2020 calendar for a few highlights (and to remind myself of the few days this year I could get out into the field!).

January

- Ashley and/or I attended all five APR Program Updates in Amherst, N. Grafton, Pittsfield, Dighton, and Hathorne.

February

- Attended American Farmland Trust's *Food, Farms, Fisheries, and Forests: Diet, Climate, Conservation, and a Healthy Future for New England* event in Boston

March

- Provided testimony at the Joint Ways and Means Committee FY21 budget hearing in Pittsfield
- Attended MDAR's last pre-pandemic public event on March 6th-the 2020 Maple Kickoff at Sunrise Maple Farm in Colrain
- March 13th was our last day in the office as we pivoted to a remote model.

April

- Prior to legislation allowing remote notarization, MDAR APR Counsel Christine Smith and I would regularly meet at a Framingham parking lot so I could sign documents for her to notarize.
- Food Security Task Force commences, MDAR leads workgroup that recommends creation of the Food Security Infrastructure Grant, the MassGrown Exchange, and onboarding additional farms authorized and enabled to process Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) transactions.

May

- First MDAR public event since pandemic began - [Farmers Feeding Families](#) at BC High, Dorchester

June

- Taped welcome at Amherst State Apiary for 2021 [Eastern Apiculture Society](#) conference at UMass
- Attended virtual Northeast Association of State Departments of Agriculture annual meeting

July

- Berkshire Grown farm tours
- Attended Farmers Market week event in Shrewsbury

August

- Attended Farmers Market week event in Newton
- SEMAP farm tours
- Congressman McGovern tours
- Attended virtual National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Annual Meeting

September

- Taped *Chronicle* interview, [UMass Cranberry Station](#), Wareham
- Senator Comerford dairy farm tours
- Climate Week/Central Mass Grown farm tours

October

- CISA farm tours
- Presented Governor Baker's Cranberry Month Proclamation to industry, Williams Bog, Carver

November

- Joined Lt. Governor Polito for Cranberry Harvest event, Colchester Bog, Plympton
- Green Friday

December

- Honey donation at Worcester County Food Bank

Of course, I've barely touched on the elephant that's in the room for everyone-the pandemic. We've all heard plenty from a lot of people much smarter than me, so I don't think there's a whole lot for me to say, other than that I am very proud of all the fabulous accomplishments of MA Agriculture in 2020. You've handled this tremendous challenge as I knew you would: adapting on the fly to create new and different models to effectively serve those who depend on you.

Similarly, the teams at MDAR and the Mosquito Control Projects rapidly pivoted to new work models to provide necessary services with as minimal disruption as possible. It's an honor to work with this group of dedicated public servants who rapidly developed vital guidance that allowed you to do what you do in the pandemic, and maintained normal business functions in this very different work model.

Let's say farewell to 2020 on a hopeful note. Just before Thanksgiving I sent a note to staff about what I was thankful for despite everything that's happened this year. One item I'd like to repeat is, "For this year I'm thankful that we have so many brilliant, caring, incredibly hardworking and dedicated people throughout the medical and public health worlds. I have no insight into what frontline medical workers are dealing with beyond what we all see on the news, but it's obvious how critically important and tremendously difficult their work is."

And right now, the first vaccine is being distributed! As reported in the 12/13 Boston Globe, David Twitchell, the chief pharmacy officer of the Boston Medical Center Health System said, "We're going to go from defense to offense here."

That's the best news I've heard in a long time.

All of us at MDAR and the Mosquito Control Projects wish you and yours a very happy, healthy, safe, and likely very different holiday season, and look forward to all of us soon standing in that light we are starting to see at the end of this long, miserable tunnel.

Stay safe and be well everyone,



John Lebeaux

Deputy's Dialogue

Despite Challenges, 2020 Offered Opportunities, Lessons, and Memories for Massachusetts Agriculture

While Merriam-Webster declared “pandemic” as the word of the year, “grateful” is the word that has truly epitomized 2020 for me. It has certainly not been an easy year for any of us with the several lifestyle, work, and personal changes that we have had to make. We have witnessed the value and need for rural broadband firsthand, with Zoom meetings and the phrase “___You’re muted” a constant in our daily lives. We have had spouses, kids, pets, and Zoom “bombers” join us for what would otherwise be routine meetings. We have also felt the disconnect of not being able to meet in person or walk down the hall to talk to a coworker. Yet, after nine months of working remotely, we continue to find many things to be grateful for and in some respects, a deep appreciation for things we once took for granted.

I’m grateful for weekly trips to Western MA to work alongside my parents on our family’s dairy farm. I’m grateful for the ability to work from anywhere in the state, on a computer or making phone calls, and gaining a few extra hours saved from commuting. I’m grateful for the weekly check-in calls and texts from farmers to just say “hi” and see how I’m doing; On many occasions, they have helped lift me up and reaffirmed the power of our relationships in making it through these difficult times. I’m grateful for the days spent in the field and on tours with farmers, legislators, industry members, and friends, where an elbow bump has sufficed until we can shake hands or hug one another again. I’m grateful for the ingenuity and creative adaptations that farmers, food producers, and food banks/pantries have developed to meet the critical food security needs of consumers and residents. I’m grateful for the Baker-Polito administration recognizing early on that food and ag workers are indeed essential, and most recently, prioritizing them in Phase 2 of the vaccine distribution plan. I’m grateful for my colleagues at MDAR who have provided levity during calls and meetings, while at the same time continuing, and in many instances going above and beyond, in serving our agricultural constituents.

Above all, I’m grateful and thankful for your friendship, collaboration, and resiliency in meeting the demands of 2020. We’ve learned to lean in and find comfort in discomfort (as Liz Wills-O’Gilvie recently stated on a call). The pandemic has reinforced our shared humanity — and fragility. It’s also highlighted the inequities that exist in our food system and provided us all with an opportunity to work together to address social, racial, and economic justice matters in a meaningful manner. We’ve learned that while we may still have our differences, we’re stronger when we unite around a shared mission and goals.

The COVID-19 Response Command Center’s Food Security Task Force continues to meet and provide status updates on recommendations of the three workgroups, as well as reassess the needs of the food system as we enter the winter months. The Food Security Infrastructure Grant program team is meeting to review the 1,353 applications received and make award determinations. Through the program, the Administration supports initiatives that will positively impact the Massachusetts food system. To date, there have been five rounds of awards, with several more rounds of grant announcements to come. Through five rounds, the

Administration has awarded \$22.4 million to support 191 projects, and plans to award a total of \$36 million to address food insecurity in the Commonwealth.

Food security will remain a focus of not only the Task Force but also our efforts at MDAR as we approach the start of the new year. We appreciate the support of the administration and legislators with the recent passage of the FY21 budget, that included \$30M for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP), which MDAR administers, and \$13M for the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). These funds will not only position our four food banks and over 900 food pantries they serve to meet the increasing demands of food insecure individuals, but also benefit farmers that source local produce and participate as HIP vendors. DTA and MDAR have worked to onboard several new HIP vendors in recent months and provide more opportunities to food access points across the state. The need is greater than ever this year and if you are considering ways in which you can help, consider donating a gift card to your local food bank or pantry.

Looking ahead to the new year, MDAR will continue to operate in a remote model through at least March 2021. We're anxious to welcome you to our new office location in Southborough when it is safe to do so, and until then, we will continue to host board meetings, events, and hearings in a virtual setting. We will also be focusing on new initiatives, such as updating and expanding our Environmental Justice programming/policy, climate change offerings, and marketing and promotional campaigns, while continuing to host ag stakeholder calls and outreach to hear firsthand from industry about what is most important and instrumental to the success of your businesses.

We are also preparing for a transition at both the state and federal level as the new administration begins to form their team and set policy priorities. As President-elect Biden has started to nominate his Cabinet leadership, a familiar name has resurfaced to lead USDA: Former Iowa Governor and Secretary of Ag, and most recently President and CEO of the US Dairy Export Council, Tom Vilsack. Mr. Vilsack previously served during the Obama administration, notably as the only Cabinet leader to serve all eight years. Many agricultural stakeholders have responded positively, as Former Secretary Vilsack offers a moderate, bipartisan approach and will be able to hit the ground running on day one. It is anticipated that climate change, rural broadband, nutrition, trade, and immigration reform will be key priority areas. We have appreciated Secretary Perdue's leadership over the past four years, and look forward to working with senior leadership, staff, and new members of the team at USDA in 2021.

While the holidays might be different for you this year, one thing remains the same – the need to continue to support our local farms, producers, and businesses. Buying local this year means more than ever to small business owners and members of the food system. You are not only supporting the local economy, but the livelihood of family, friends, neighbors, and independent business owners. Several local businesses have developed online sales platforms and offer curbside/socially distant pick-up options. During the month of December, our Ag Markets team is highlighting local Massachusetts products that make meaningful holiday gifts. Follow along on [Instagram](#) at @massgrown for daily features, as well as visit our [MassGrown Map](#) to find local agricultural retailers near you.

I'd like to end my column with an excerpt from the Northeast Dairy Farmers Cooperatives newsletter, written by Bob Gray. "The darkest days of the calendar year have come to be known as "advent." The shortest, therefore, darkest day of all is December 21st. Advent means preparing, that something is coming, is about to change, preferably for the better. In our current circumstances, the hope is that an effective vaccine will soon be made available, and the virus will thus be defeated. Hoping may be the hardest thing any human can do between now and the use of the vaccine. To shore up the ability to hope, it's a good thing to remember that after the shortest day of the year, the days automatically do get a little longer and even brighter."

Wishing you and your loved ones a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season. Cheers to a brighter 2021!

Locally grown and proud,

Ashley

FOREFRONT

Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program Update

To address urgent food insecurity needs and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Commonwealth's local food system, the Baker-Polito Administration launched the new \$36 million [Food Security Infrastructure Program](#) in May. Through the program, the Administration supports initiatives that will positively impact Massachusetts' food system. To date, there have been five rounds of the Food Security Infrastructure Program, with several more rounds of grant announcements to come. Through five rounds, the Administration has awarded \$22.4 million to support 191 projects, and plans to award a total of \$36 million to address food insecurity in the Commonwealth. Updates [here](#).

Energy News

MDAR's MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP) - Energy Audits - Technical Assistance – Be Prepared: Energy Grant Season A-Coming

Remember, MDAR's [Massachusetts Farm Energy Program \(MFEP\)](#) has funds to help farms cover audits, energy efficient projects, and select renewable energy projects. We are still providing these services remotely.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Now is the time to have a technical assessment completed for any energy project you are considering in preparation for upcoming energy grants! You will need a technical assessment to file an energy grant application whether with MDAR or USDA. So start planning now; if you wait until applications come out you may not be able to have one scheduled in time! Remember MFEP pays 75% of the technical assessment, first come, first served. Our MFEP is providing tele-assessments during this trying time.

Contact MFEP now for more information through the Center for EcoTechnology (CET), our partner carrying out the MFEP. 413-727-3090, info@massfarmenergy.com, or visit www.massfarmenergy.com, submit a *Request Form*, and then you will be contacted.

FY2021 ACRE AgEnergy Grants

MDAR is pleased to announce the awarding of twenty-seven (27) grants that were recommended for funding as part of the FY2021 ACRE Part II: [AgEnergy Program](#). More details to come in a forthcoming Press Release. The ACRE Part II AgEnergy section received a total of thirty-eight (38) proposals with requests totaling \$1,387,613. MDAR was pleased to be able to fund over 70% of the projects.

Apiary Program

Get to Zoomin' Virtually in 2021 with the New England Honey Bee Update

Due to the popularity and interest from the 1,279 attendees at the 8 virtual meetings filled with a total of 16 hours of education, community and dialogue offered in 2020, we are planning to continue these Zoom sessions with regional apiary inspectors in 2021! To receive updates about these events and others, join the Apiary Program mailing list of currently 504 subscribers by submitting your email address using the link: www.mass.gov/forms/join-the-apiary-program-mailing-list.

Voluntarily Register Your Apiary Now!

A total of 601 beekeepers have voluntarily registered their apiaries with MDAR since April, 2017 by using the [new online form](#). Please consider taking a quick second to register your apiary today so that we can best communicate with beekeepers and investigate honey bee health issues in your area.

Do You Have a Dead-Out or Hive Death? Want to Submit Samples of Your Honey Bees to the Lab? Looking for Registered Pesticides for Honey Bee Hives? These and more updates in the [December 2020 Newsletter](#).

Note the NEW Apiary Program Message Line phone number: **508-281-6784**. This will replace the existing message line number: 617-626-1801. [Apiary Program here](#). Questions, send to bees@mass.gov.

The Markets Corner

Mary Jordan, Director – [Division of Agricultural Markets](#), Mary.Jordan@mass.gov.

As we say good-bye to 2020 and prepare our calendars for 2021, there is an opportunity to reflect on this past year as well as direct our thoughts to gearing up for the new!

Despite the obstacles faced early on with the COVID 19 pandemic, the Division of Agricultural Markets strengthened our goals through collaborations with the agricultural sector in providing relevant initiatives to assist with market access.

The focus for this segment of the Market Corner is to help you with market access for last minute product needs even for your own shopping and to provide information to ring in the 2021 year with new market opportunities!

The MassGrown Exchange

If you are stocking your supplies for last minute shoppers this holiday season or looking ahead in sourcing more local product for the New Year, check out the business to business platform [MassGrown Exchange](#).



If you are new to the Exchange, we encourage you to explore the Exchange and watch the [demonstration video](#) for a tour of the platform.

Have a product or service to offer? Register to start using the Exchange today! For more information or questions, contact Richard LeBlanc at MDAR: Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov

Massachusetts Building Marketplace

Still looking for something special for the holiday season or new products for your retail store in 2021? Shop your favorite Massachusetts Building Exhibitor by clicking on each individual link [here](#).



MyLocalMA Campaign



This year, the [Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism \(MOTT\)](#) has been focusing their promotional efforts on Buy Local and in August, launched their [My Local MA](#) ad campaign encouraging Massachusetts residents to support local businesses. As longtime partners, MDAR is excited to help spread the word and make sure farm businesses know about this program and take advantage of the available resources.

There are links to download electronic badges for your social media that are customizable under the “Make It Your Own” header (scroll down the webpage to find it) and other downloadable content that you can use to promote your business. To help spread the word and bring awareness to the campaign, please consider using the hashtag #mylocalma in your social media posts when promoting your business. More information can be found [here](#).



Winter Farmers Markets

Those planning winter farmers’ markets, should follow the current documents for the upcoming season.

- MDAR guidance document and DPH Order (updated 9/17) found [here](#).
- Retail guidance (includes capacity limits for indoor retail locations) [here](#).

While some provisions will need to be adapted due to the nature of winter markets, the overarching guidance remains the same. Note, capacity limits for indoor retail locations in the retail guidance. Winter farmers’ markets should be proactively working with their local Boards of Health (if they have not done so already) to determine location, resource requirements/needs, and rules to operate the market safely and successfully this upcoming season.

Looking to participate in a winter farmers market? A list of winter markets seeking vendors can be found [here](#).

Agricultural Event Certification – If any Massachusetts farm wineries plan on attending any winter markets, be sure to complete your Agricultural Events Certification [application](#) and send to Katie at: Katelyn.Rozenas@mass.gov.

No Experience Needed: Connecting Small Food Businesses with Export Market Development Resources



Why should you consider export opportunities while you're working to increase your local and regional sales? Programs to help you meet international buyers can also support your US agenda when you exhibit at trade events such as Natural Products Expo, NRA, the Fancy Food and ingredient trade shows. And it helps to know about programs and services before you need them!

Save the date: New England & Delaware Go Global: How Small Food Companies Can Gain International Success. Jan 27, 2021, 10 – 11:30 AM. Join

Food Export-Northeast, MDAR and regional agencies at a virtual seminar to learn about resources for small food, value-added ag, beverage, and seafood companies to enter the international marketplace. No experience is necessary!

You'll hear from Food Export's Helpline Counselor about why you should consider export market development. You'll also hear from Shire City Herbals in western MA about their success from using USDA resources to gain access to international markets.

The fee for the seminar has been waived, however registration is required. [Register here](#). For more information, contact Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov.

Massachusetts Building 2021 Application Update



Due to the current state of the pandemic, the 2021 Massachusetts Building Exhibitor Application will have a delayed release.

Please check [website](#) for updates.

Upcoming Culinary and Agricultural Events for 2021

Did you know that MDAR maintains an [online calendar](#) geared towards consumers that lists upcoming culinary and agricultural events throughout Massachusetts? We are always happy to help spread the word on your event and welcome your submissions. Please include any virtual events as well. You can send your event listing to Phu Mai at Phu.Mai@mass.gov. Please be sure to include the name of the event, location, date and time, a brief description with any details such as cost to attend, etc. and a link to the event itself or your event page if applicable.

MA Pavilion Planned at 2021 Summer Fancy Food Show, June 27 – 29, 2021

If all goes well, we'll be back at trade shows next year, to meet customers in person, check out the competition and observe the latest trends. A MA Pavilion is planned for the Specialty Food Association's Summer Fancy Food Show, June 27 – 29, in New York City. The USDA Branded Program can offset half of

eligible costs including the booth and display if ingredients are at least 50% US grown. For information on exhibiting [click here](#), and for more information on the Branded Program, contact Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov.

The Biennial Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show Returns and will be Virtual in 2021



Save the Dates: [February 24 and 25, 2021](#)

We'll miss seeing you in person, but we are excited to bring you the 2021 Harvest New England Conference with our new on-line format. This unique marketing conference sponsored by your New England State Departments of Agriculture is for the food and farming industries interested in learning new marketing ideas or fine-tuning strategies for business success. Attended by hundreds from across the region, this will be the eighth biennial conference. In times prior to the pandemic, the conference hosted nearly 30 workshops, with about 800 people in attendance, and a trade show of almost 100 exhibitors. For 2021, we hope to bring you the same engaging, valuable and educational conference with six workshops. This is New England's largest agricultural conference solely dedicated to agricultural marketing.

Updates, details, including keynote speakers and agenda at www.harvestnewengland.org. Sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities [here](#).

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MDAR Seeks Input from Farming Community on Impacts of COVID-19 on Massachusetts Agriculture



The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) is conducting a survey to gain insights from the farming community on the impact of COVID-19 on Massachusetts agriculture. Your response will help the Commonwealth understand the effects of COVID-19 on the agricultural economy, and may result in future programs and funding to help serve your local community as we enter the 2021 production season. Please rest assured that results will be aggregated, so individual responses will not be identifiable

to protect your data.

Please only respond once per farm operation. Thank you for your time!

Estimated survey time: 5-10 minutes for 12 questions. Take Survey here: www.surveymonkey.com/r/MDARWinter2020Survey

Massachusetts Introduced Pests Outreach Blog

Follow our [Massachusetts Introduced Pests Outreach Blog](#) for updates on invasive insects in the state and suggestions for at-home activities to stay connected to nature.



Are Christmas trees a risk for spreading spotted lanternfly? SLF egg masses have been found on a Christmas tree, in an isolated incident in Warren County, NJ in 2018. While there is little evidence to suggest SLF feeds on conifers or evergreen trees like fir or pine and that Christmas trees are not a common route for the spread of SLF, they can lay their eggs on nearly any flat surface, so the possibility does exist. [More here.](#)

Pest ID Tools: Spotted Lanternfly Egg Masses - Female spotted lanternflies will lay eggs on nearly any flat surface, which makes them a challenge to survey for, and means there is a big risk of them being accidentally introduced into our state from vehicles or goods that come here from infested states. [More here.](#)

State Agricultural Officials Urge Residents to Report Signs of Invasive Spotted Lanternfly

MDAR recently identified two dead specimens of the spotted lanternfly (SLF) in Massachusetts communities, and is urging residents to report any sign of the invasive pest. The specimens were recovered in the towns of Milford and Norwood, and were brought into Massachusetts on materials shipped from Pennsylvania counties currently under a spotted lanternfly quarantine. [More here.](#) Looking to identify, visit [Is that a Spotted Lanternfly or a Stink Bug?](#)

Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center Offers Support for MA Dairy Farmers and Businesses

\$6.59 million was awarded by the USDA for the creation of the Vermont-based Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (DBIC) for projects extending through 2023. Half of the federal funding awarded for the Northeast DBIC will be granted to dairy farmers and value-added processors. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets manages the DBIC, one of three [USDA Dairy Business Innovation Centers](#) (DBIC) in the U.S. The Northeast DBIC provides support to dairy businesses through projects that promote the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products. Projects target dairy farms and processors while providing additional support through market research and technical assistance. The Center's investment and project strategy promotes innovation and resiliency for regional production of Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center dairy products. Sign up for the newsletter [here.](#)

2021 Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar Makes a Great Holiday Gift



Give the gift that's viewed all year long! ["Celebrating the Seasons of Massachusetts Agriculture"](#) calendar features winning beautiful photographs from our annual photo contest which spotlights farms and the diversity of Massachusetts agriculture across the Commonwealth! It's also a great learning tool for teachers and educators, as each month includes "Fun Facts" and "Teaching Tips."



The annual calendar is produced in collaboration with [Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom \(MAC\)](#), the [MA State Grange](#), and the MDAR, along with the many great sponsoring associations: MA Farm Bureau, MA Maple Association, MA Flower Growers Association, MA Fruit

Growers, MA Fairs Association, Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, MA Dairy Promotion Board, and the MA Christmas Tree Association. Proceeds go to the great work MAC does for Massachusetts teachers and educators across the Commonwealth.

[Details and ordering information here.](#) If you are a farm or retail business, and would like to offer calendars to your customers, there is a bulk price offered. Contact [Bobbie Oles](#) for more information.

We also encourage everyone to submit photographs for the [2021 Photo Contest](#) - We're always looking to highlight agriculture, aquaculture, and horticulture related photos throughout the seasons of Massachusetts!

UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

- **December 17 - [Massachusetts Nutrient Management Regulations & Record Keeping Webinar](#)** - 12:00 - 2pm. Does it seem like it's been a while since you've heard about the Nutrient Management Regulations in MA? Do you have questions about what the current rules are and what records you need to keep in case questions of compliance come up? This workshop has you covered. Hotze Wijnja of MDAR will start the workshop with a review of the current state regulations - an excellent refresher for both farmers and ASPs. [Details here.](#)
- **December 17 : [Mass. Local Food System - A Discussion Series: Challenges facing Massachusetts farms: land, education, regulation, and economic and financial sustainability](#)** - 2 - 4pm. Farmers in Mass. struggle to compete in larger markets, due in part to higher costs of land, energy and other inputs. Programs that address farmland protection and access are not proving sufficient to meet the need, educational and technical assistance resources are limited, and regulations often challenge farmers' ability to function sustainably. Join farmers, other practitioners, and policy experts to discuss these challenges and the need for policies and investments to address them. Speakers: Jeff Cole, MA Food System Collaborative, Joy Gary, Greater Ashmont Main Streets & Effloresce Culture & Design, Andre Tougas, Tougas Farm. [Register here.](#)

2021

- **January 4 - [Mass. Local Food System - A Discussion Series - Panel 2 - Local food system supply chain: balancing safety, efficiency, and sustainability](#)** - 2 - 4pm. Food supply chains were interrupted this spring as stay at home orders took effect, but local supply chains proved more resilient and adaptable than national and global ones. That adaptation was costly, though, requiring expensive infrastructure, labor-intensive practices, and navigating through complex regulatory systems. Policy experts and practitioners will discuss how they've adapted their practices to ensure food can be safely produced and consumed in their communities, and will consider possible policy solutions to overcome the obstacles to sustainability. Speakers: Dr. Sam Wong, Framingham DPH, Julia Coffey, Mass Food Delivery & Sunderland Farm Collaborative, Chuck Currie, Freedom Food Farm, Cheryl Straughter, Soleil Boston. [Register here.](#)
- **January 6 and 8 - [Workshop "What is Good Data" kicks off CISA's Winter 2021 business assistance for farmers](#)** - 1:30 - 3pm. Presented by Julia Shanks, Julia Shanks Food Consulting CISA's Winter Workshops for Farmers begins with a basic financial management and analysis class that will set the stage for more in-depth program opportunities from January through March to make important decisions about your business. [Learn more here.](#)
- **January 8 - 10 - [NOFA Winter Conference](#)** - *Food Security for our Common Wealth* - Keynote speakers include Greg Watson and Eric Toensmeier. Online via Zoom - [Complete details here.](#)

- **January 12th - March 2nd : Winter Farm Business Planning Course** - [Register here](#) for this program to help you develop a start-up farm business plan.
- **January 14 - Mass. Local Food System - A Discussion Series - Panel 3: Strengthening food security and increasing local food access for all** - 2 - 4pm. Hunger has increased dramatically in Massachusetts this year as a result of job losses due to the COVID-19 state of emergency - currently around one million people do not have adequate access to food. Emergency food services are stretched thin and access to public benefits programs has been challenging for many who need help affording basic needs for themselves and their families. Policy experts and practitioners will discuss advocacy and on-the-ground work being done to make sure our neighbors are fed, and we will strategize together on potential new equitable solutions. Speakers: Leran Minc, Project Bread, Laura Sylvester, Food Bank of Western Mass, Casey Burns, Coalition for Healthy Greater Worcester & Worcester Food Policy Council, Norris Guscott, Lynn Food and Fitness Alliance. [Register here.](#)
- **January 29 - Massachusetts Food Policy Council Meeting** - 9:30 - 11:30am - Massachusetts food system organizations have been very successful in receiving national grant awards for food system technical assistance. The meeting will focus on these projects, how resources are interconnected, and the MA Local Food Action Plan. An update on the Food Security Infrastructure Grant is also on the agenda – [meeting updates and links here.](#) To be added to the Council distribution list, email Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov. [MA Food Policy Council.](#)
- **February 4 - 6: NAFDMA International Agritourism Association's 2021 Virtual Summit** - offers three days of engaging programming including fourteen educational sessions, five immersive farm tours, a virtual trade show, and many opportunities such as a live chat and private Facebook group to keep attendees connected with one another throughout the experience. Learn more about the event and register at www.nafdmasummit.com.
- **February 12 - Virtual Grant Workshop for Dairy Farmers** - 10:00am - 11:00am. MDAR hosting virtual grant workshop specifically for MA dairy farmers as part of a USDA-funded project on increasing profits for MA dairy farmers. The goal of the workshop is to raise awareness of MDAR and USDA grant programs that can help dairy farmers lower their production costs. Dairy farmers will be able to ask questions and interact with each presenter at the end of each presentation and via the chat feature. RSVP by emailing Katie Rozenas at Katelyn.Rozenas@mass.gov. NOTE: The workshop will be focused on dairy projects, however, anyone is welcome to attend.
- **February 24 and 25, 2021 - Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference** – New England’s premier agricultural marketing conference. Sponsored by the six New England State Departments of Agriculture, this biennial conference began in 2007. This will be the eighth conference. The conference hosted nearly 30 workshops, with about 800 people in attendance, and a trade show of almost 100 exhibitors. For 2021, we virtually hope to bring you the same engaging, valuable and educational conference with six workshops. This is New England’s largest agricultural conference solely dedicated to agricultural marketing. Details and updates [here.](#)

Save The Date - The Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference – March 5, 6, 9, and 11th - The 7th Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference (UFC), hosted by the [Urban Farming Institute](#) and supported by MDAR, is designed to advance opportunities and address barriers involved in cultivating a resilient and thriving urban farming sector. We look forward to presenting a virtual forum designed to provide resources, information, and technical assistance specifically for urban farmers. For more information, contact Rose.Arruda@mass.gov. For sponsorship opportunities, contact Pat Spence, pspence.ufi@gmail.com.

[MDAR Calendar](#)

USDA News

USDA to Conduct 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will conduct the 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey, beginning this December. First conducted in 2015, this Census of Agriculture special study will look at local and regional food systems and provide new data on how locally grown food in the United States are marketed and sold. The results will be available in November 2021.

The 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey is part of the Census of Agriculture Program and as such is required and protected by law (Title 7 USC 2204(g) Public Law 105-113). These federal laws require producers to respond and USDA to keep identities and answers confidential. Farmers and ranchers who receive the survey may complete it securely and conveniently online at www.agcounts.usda.gov or by mail. The deadline for response is February 16, 2021. [Complete release here.](#)

USDA Announces 2021 Application Ranking Dates for Conservation Programs

[January 15, 2021 is next ranking cut-off date](#)

Do you own or manage farmland or forest land in Massachusetts? Could you use some technical and financial help in managing it more effectively? The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) encourages you to sign up for conservation assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Management Assistance program. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year; however, the next ranking batching date will be January 15, 2021.

The January 15 batching period will fund Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) through EQIP, with future batching periods offering assistance in other funding pools for both programs. A funding pool is an amount of money that NRCS has set aside for special categories of applications. Each funding pool has its own ranking criteria and applicants will compete only with other applicants in that specific pool.

Farmers and forest landowners can use CAPs to address specific natural resource objectives such as nutrient and pest management, forestry, energy conservation, or transitioning to organic agriculture. EQIP participants who receive financial assistance for a CAP will work with a technical service provider (TSP) to develop the plan. The participant chooses a TSP from an NRCS-approved list at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/tsp/.

Contact your local field office for the latest information. For more information on available programs, the application process, and natural resource priorities, visit the Massachusetts NRCS website at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov. Other ranking dates and complete press release [here](#).

Classified

- **Job Posting** - MDAR is accepting resumes and applications for a Beginning Farmer Specialist to join the Farm Viability & Business Training Programs team. This contract employee position is responsible for coordination and support of the MDAR's Farm Viability and Agricultural Business Training programs

that work directly with beginning farmers to provide them with technical assistance and training, business planning, and grant funding to increase the viability of these farms. This position will coordinate the Matching Enterprise Grant for Agriculture (MEGA) program and the Exploring the Small Farm Dream course. The ideal candidate will have a good understanding of agriculture and small business assistance as well as strong communication skills to develop relationships with farmers to understand and respond to their needs. The position will start out entirely remote, due to COVID, and then be based out of the West Springfield office. [Details here.](#)

- **Farmers Markets Seek Vendors** - MDAR posts an updated list of farmers markets looking for vendors [here](#). The contacts for markets are posted [here](#). *MassGrown* statewide map of farmers markets [here](#). Questions, contact David.Webber@mass.gov.
- **High Tech Hydroponic Greenhouse for sale** - three year old high tech hydroponic greenhouse in Chelmsford. Land is leased from the town at a very reasonable price. A hydroponic Nutrient Film Technique is used to produce a capacity of approximately 2400 plants a week. Currently, Basil, Arugula, Kale, and several types of lettuces are grown and supplied to local farm stands, grocery stores, restaurants, and school lunch programs. The greenhouse contains automated temperature and humidity controllers, automated nutrient dosing system, and artificial LED lighting. The greenhouse is made of sturdy polycarbonate walls with automatically controlled side vent and a roof vent. The greenhouse dimensions are 30 feet by 96 feet. The greenhouse is supported by having an 8' x 10' container refrigerator, a well, and a trailer that has a bathroom, an office and a lunch area. If interested in a tour or additional information, please call Bill at 978-852-1456. Price is negotiable.

About the *Farm & Market Report*

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Complete staff directory [here](#). Next issue to be published in February. Please send news, events, or classified information by February 1st to Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov. To unsubscribe, or change your email address, contact Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov.

[COVID-19 Resources for Agriculture](#)
[MassGrown: COVID-19: How & Where to Buy Local](#)

MDAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – MDAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit MDAR's website at www.mass.gov/agr.

