



## *Exploring The Small Farm Dream*

**Are you considering starting an agricultural enterprise in Massachusetts?**

In this course you will:

- Test the feasibility of your idea before you invest
- Evaluate self employment and the suitability of an agricultural lifestyle
- Investigate markets for your proposed product or service
- Identify regulations that will impact your planned enterprises
- Understand the unique risks associated with agriculture
- Determine your financial break even date
- Evaluate the realistic contribution you can expect from this piece of your livelihood
- Test whether others share your vision and want to join/support you in this pursuit
- Anticipate threats to your success
- Decide what's next in order to a) get going now, b) do more preparation, or c) avoid a big mistake!

The “*Explorer*” courses are intended for those who are considering farming as a commercial business. Its purpose is to help pre-venture, aspiring farmers learn what it will take to start and manage their own agricultural enterprise. *Explorer* makes use of four, guided group sessions and a farmer panel of those who have already done what you are contemplating. It is based on an acclaimed workbook and is presented by an instructor experienced in starting a farm business. *Explorer* was created to help you articulate the clear vision and goals you will need to guide a new agricultural venture.

**Participant Quotes:**

- **"It makes you very aware of all the components that make up an ag business. I was forced to develop a realistic plan which was very beneficial."**
- **"It will teach you new stuff, increase your network, confirm your intentions, etc."**
- **"Absolutely the best money I have spent in a long time – really helped dispell myths and the ‘romance’ of farming, which needs to happen if an ag business is going to succeed."**
- **"Makes you think about all the things that we never even considered when we were dreaming about our farm."**

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- “The people in the class have loads of experience to share and the structure of weekly assignments gets things done.”
- “Very grounding and lots of resources – good reality check.”

### **Course Structure and Requirements:**

This course is offered by the **Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources**, using a workbook created by the **New England Small Farm Institute**. Meetings are once per week over 5 weeks, typically in the evening. The registration fee of \$100 includes instruction, materials, guest speakers and networking.

Class size is typically limited to 12 prospective farms to maximize group time, with the opportunity to bring another person from your enterprise for no additional fee as space permits. If you are interested, submit an application and upon approval you will be added to a waiting list so courses can be scheduled in locations that work best participants (no payment is due until a course location and dates are confirmed).

You must have email, basic word processing and spreadsheet software as well as internet access to take this course! You must also agree to attend all 5 sessions. This course is sponsored and financially supported by a Massachusetts state agency and is intended for new Massachusetts agricultural entrepreneurs.

### **How to apply:**

For a course application form, please visit Agricultural Business Training Program (ABTP) on the MDAR website <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/agricultural-business-training-program-abtp>

Send completed applications to [Jessica.Camp@mass.gov](mailto:Jessica.Camp@mass.gov) or mail to:

**Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources**  
**Attn: Jessica Camp**  
**138 Memorial Ave, Suite 42**  
**West Springfield, MA 01089**

Course applications are accepted on a rolling basis until a course is filled. Locations and dates for next course to be determined based on interest. It is important to us that course fees do not create a barrier to participation. If the fee would prevent you from participating, please call or email Jessica Camp at 617-823-0871 or [Jessica.Camp@mass.gov](mailto:Jessica.Camp@mass.gov), and we can discuss waiving the fee.