
October/November Farm & Market Report

10/29/21

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UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

CLASSIFIED



COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN

Greetings, Mass. Agriculture and all its friends,

There's so much to talk about, I'm way late on writing this, Rick is politely checking in with me frequently on when I'll be done, so I'm just going to dive in and see where we go.

We don't get to say this too often in this column, but first...

Breaking News: Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) Program Deadline Extended

The [FSIG Program](#) deadline has been extended to Sunday, November 7, 2021

We've been busy, as I know all of you have been. After having so many events cancelled in 2020, we've been anxious to really get out there and see what's happening in the ag space. Admittedly, most of our government processes are pretty formal and that work needs to happen like that, but the formal part is only a portion of the overall equation so that we may best serve our stakeholders. The other side is the informal interactions, the learning experiences, and the random conversations in the field that often provide insight into matters about which we may have been unaware, or a thought or suggestion that may lead to development of new or better ways to assist you.

So, if you wonder why we're out there so much, it's to promote what you do, and to learn in order that we may ensure our work is synched as best it can be to the real-world issues many of you face. And to be completely honest, you just can't beat walking around with farmers on their farms or interacting with fair exhibitors and attendees!

Right after last column, we hosted the **36th Annual MA Tomato Contest at the Boston Public Market's Plaza**. The Contest, established by former MDAR Commissioner (later USDA Undersecretary) Gus Schumacher, couldn't be held last year, and we were very pleased to work with the New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Association, the Mass Farmers' Markets Association, and our host, the Boston Public Market Association, to get back at it in 2021. Details are [here](#).



In typical Gus fashion, it's a fun way to promote a key element of MA vegetable production, an item that drives customers to local farms. The awards are wonderfully cheesy—a very inexpensive trophy with a red plastic tomato at the top, but the friendly competition is fierce as all seek the coveted award. Our son Ben came up with the idea we should call them the **Tomy Awards** (like Broadway's Tony Awards). So far that name hasn't gained much (if any) traction beyond me, but I do very much enjoy saying, “And the Tomy Award goes to _____,” as we make the announcements.

MDAR staff puts a great deal of time and energy making the event work so smoothly, particularly the Tomato Master himself, David Webber!

Over the last few months there have been a couple very notable achievements within the [Agricultural Preservation Restriction \(APR\)](#) program. Multiple partners including MDAR, the Kestral Land Trust, the towns of Hadley and Amherst, the H.P. Kendall Foundation, the 1722 Foundation and private donors, conserved 193 acres of open space for agriculture and open space, 142 acres of which becoming perpetually preserved as agricultural land owned by the [Food Bank of Western MA](#). It's the second farm owned by the Food Bank which leases the land to local farmers and collects its rent in a portion of produce grown on the farm. Ownership of a farm by a food bank is very unique; these may be the only in the US.

The second APR related news is that we recently commemorated that 100 farms have benefitted from the program's [APR Improvement Program \(AIP\)](#) since its inception in 2010. AIP provides business planning and technical assistance to commercial farms with land that has already been protected through MDAR's

Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program. The program’s goal is to assist farmers with issues of financial viability, resource conservation, family succession, modernization of infrastructure and other issues that may enhance the long term continued use of the agricultural resource.

An MDAR team along with several legislators visited Cherry Hill Farm in Lunenburg and Carlson’s Orchards in Harvard to observe the results of AIP improvements and how they have positively affected those businesses.

I know that Fran Pearson, Building Manager of the [Massachusetts Exposition Building at the Big E](#), has a recap of this year’s Fair later on in this Report, but I want to touch on it as well. Running the MA Building is a labor of love, but this year there were additional challenges that needed to be addressed.

Improvements were made to make the building safer and more secure. Our efforts to install a large new ceiling fan to improve ventilation and comfort didn’t get finished in time for the Fair because of those pesky “supply chain issues” that are plaguing worldwide business.

The Town of West Springfield imposed an indoor mask mandate days before the Fair opened. In cooperation with our colleagues at the MA Emergency Management Agency, MDAR distributed almost 25 thousand masks to fairgoers.

Joined by DCR Commissioner Jim Montgomery, MA Office of Travel and Tourism Director Keiko Matsudo Orrall, Director of Department of Fire Services Director David DiGregorio, and state and local elected officials, once again we celebrated Massachusetts Day, during which we recognized the winners of the MA Agricultural Calendar Photo Contest and unveiled the new calendar for 2022.

We also announced the posthumous selection of Hancock farmer Judy Leab as this year’s MA Building Wall of Fame recipient. (More on Judy later in this column.)

Later that day, we hit the trifecta as Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, and EEA Secretary Kathleen Theoharides toured the building, interacting with exhibitors and attendees, while enjoying the wide range of for profits, non-profits, and state agencies in and on the Building’s grounds.



Lastly, were you at the Fair and now regret you didn’t buy something? Did you not get to the Fair this year and generally do some shopping in the Building? Do you want to buy high quality MA produced products for holiday gifts or personal use? Have no fear! Simply check out the [MA Building Marketplace](#), the online version of all the great products, services, and people the Building has to offer!

I want to offer my compliments and thanks, particularly to Fran, but also to our AG Markets team, and other MDAR volunteers for managing the Building so very well while needing to make real-time decisions to keep the Building operating at its very high standards!

Following last year's first **Gubernatorial Proclamation that October is Cranberry Month**, we once again visited a cranberry bog to make this year's announcement. Joined by Rep. Susan Williams Gifford and MA Office of Travel and Tourism Director Keiko Matsudo Orrall, we made the announcement at Matt Beaton's (no, not the former EEA Secretary) Eagle Holt Cranberry Co. Many thanks to Matt, CCCGA President Steve Ward, his dad, Dick, and son, Justin, who with Brian Wick and the rest of the CCCGA team made us welcome and smarter.



I'm not exactly known as a big interior decorator, but Dick made a suggestion that even I could handle. Pour fresh cranberries into a vase and display it like one would display fresh flowers. Don't wash the berries and don't put water in the vase. That's it. It's a nice long-lasting look for the holiday season! (The Comm-Mrs. was pretty impressed, but she still wants me to clean up my office!)

Also during Cranberry Month, we celebrated the **addition-renovation project at the UMass Cranberry Station in Wareham**. The facility is critical to keep our official state berry industry operating with the most up to date technical assistance. The [\\$7.75 million project was jointly funded by the Commonwealth and UMass](#).

UMass has a great video about the Station, the construction project and the event [here](#).

I want to mention a variety of other tours we took over the last couple months. Deputy Commissioner Ashley Randle joined Congressman Jim McGovern on his annual tour of farms in his district. Buy Local organizations [Buy Fresh Buy Local Cape Cod](#) and [Central Mass Grown](#) showed off farms in their regions to MDAR and legislators: Senator Jo Comerford, Representatives Natalie Blais, Dan Carey, and Mindy Domb, along with [CISA](#) and the [MA Food Systems Collaborative](#) organized a great tour of Connecticut River Valley farms, as did Rep. Paul Schmid in Westport! The MDAR led Agritourism Study Commission organized tours at the Barn at Bradstreet Farm in Rowley and Carlson's Orchard in Harvard. On the day this report is being distributed, the Commission plans to tour The Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield.

Maintaining close connections with our commodity groups, we attended the [MA Christmas Tree Growers Association](#) Summer Meeting at D.J. Hussey Farm in Townsend; [the MA Association of Dairy Farmers](#) Picnic at Rockwood Farm in Granville and the [MA Beekeepers Conference](#) in Sturbridge, at which MDAR Apiary Inspector Ken Warchol was honored upon his retirement after 45 years working at the Department. Known to many as "The Bee Whisperer", Ken has shared a wealth of knowledge with thousands of beekeepers and his colleagues at MDAR! Best wishes for a long, happy, and healthy retirement, Ken!

I was simply delighted to attend a surprise portion of an [MA Nursery and Landscape Association](#) event in Hopkinton at which my longtime friend, MNLA Executive Director Rena Sumner was honored for 25 years of service to the organization.

We can't forget the Fairs! I greatly enjoyed my visits to the Worcester County 4H, Cummington, Three County, Spencer, Topsfield, and Westport Fairs!

This column's outstanding landscape plant is **Ilex verticillata**, commonly known as **Winterberry**. It's an outstanding ornamental because of its long late autumn-early winter display of clusters of red berries on leafless stems. Though deciduous, it's a true Holly, meaning there are male plants and female plants. Only the female plants can produce berries, but there needs to be a male pollinator nearby. It's highly adaptable as far as soil, sun/shade. It actually prefers damp soils which is often a difficult spot to grow. As a native it has few serious pest problems. There are multiple varieties maturing to different sizes: there are also orange and yellow versions. It's a fantastic plant! A [MA Certified Horticulturist](#) (I've been one since [gulp] 1983!) can help you find the best variety for your situation.



As I close, I want to mention two members of the ag community who've left us. Long time farmer Judy Leab of Ioka Valley Farm in Hancock passed away in September. I first met Judy when I was appointed to the Board of Food and Agriculture in 2004 as she was already a longtime member. We worked closely on Ag Board matters, and she continued to serve after I left the Board. She later became chair, the position she was in when I became Commissioner. Judy was the best kind of friend: she'd tell me when she approved of what I was doing as Commissioner, and she'd also tell me when she didn't. We all need friends like that. Our sympathies to Don and the entire family.

Jack Angley, Carver cranberry farmer, also died in September. I first met Jack when I became Commissioner as we were both members of the UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers. I quickly found him to be devoted to MA Agriculture (particularly cranberries) and always willing to step up to the plate and serve for the common good. He took his work seriously, but not himself. Our sympathies to Jack's family.

I'm not sure if our next edition will be in late December or early January, so I want to take this opportunity not just to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, but also a very happy holiday season from all of us at MDAR.

This worldwide crisis is taking longer to resolve than I think many of us expected it would, but it is resolving! Stay strong, everyone, stay safe!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Lebeaux'. The signature is stylized and cursive.

John Lebeaux

FOREFRONT

Energy News

MDAR's MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP) - Energy Audits - Technical Assistance – Be Prepared!

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 too long you may not be able to have one scheduled in time! Remember our 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.

FY2022 CSAP Grant Awards Announced

The Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EEA) and the MDAR announced the FY2022 Climate Smart Agricultural Program (CSAP) grant awards during MA Climate Week the third week in September 2021. Grants were available to help agricultural operations make farm improvements that enhance their economic viability, help prevent negative impacts to environmental resources, adapt to and mitigate climate change, improve energy efficiency, and/or adopt renewable energy.

MDAR is pleased to report \$1,600,000 in grants to fifty-two (52) Massachusetts agricultural operations under CSAP. The goal of the CSAP grant is to help ensure the economic resiliency of the Commonwealth's agricultural sector in the face of a changing climate. This is done by addressing vulnerabilities to their operations to expected impacts from climate change. These impacts will result from more frequent and severe storm events, increased precipitation followed by periods of drought, higher overall temperature, and increased evaporation rates. The Program provide incentives to agricultural operations for practices that help farmers mitigate their impacts on climate change and adapt to changing climate conditions.

CSAP is divided into a combination of non-energy and energy related projects. Thirty-one (31) non-energy projects totaling \$850,000 in total funding and twenty-one (21) energy projects totaling \$750,000 were awarded. Energy projects supported and consisted of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects highlighted by: a new variable speed central chiller for a large greenhouse operation; a new energy efficient pasteurizer with electric heating for a cheese-making operation; a new energy efficient refrigerated bulk tank for a goat farm/cheese making operation; an innovative "ground-fridge" technology for an urban farm operation; an energy efficient electric irrigation pump system replacing a diesel system; an energy efficient outdoor commercial freezer for a diverse farm operation; and several solar photo-voltaic (PV) systems with battery storage.

For more information on these and other MDAR grants please see the link below:

[Baker-Polito Administration Awards Almost \\$3 Million in Grants to Help Farms Mitigate Impacts of Climate Change | Mass.gov](#)

SMART Program's Dual Use Solar (ASTGU) Revised Guidelines Issued for Public Comment

On October 6, 2021, the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) working with MDAR released a set of revised Guidelines for Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Units (ASTGUs), also known as dual use solar projects. As found and stated on DOER's webpage ([SMART Guideline Regarding the Definition of ASTGU | Mass.gov](#)) the revised Guidelines "Identifies goals, updates maximum rated capacity, provides additional information on eligible farmland, an agricultural plan, annual reporting, and clarity on the process for exceptions."

Written comments on these guidelines were being accepted until Wednesday, October 27, 2021.

Apiary Program



We thank MDAR Apiary Inspector Ken Warchol, who was honored and celebrated at the [Mass Bee Fall Mtg](#), as he will retire end of month after 45 years of service. Ken has been an enormous resource to the beekeeping community and to his colleagues at MDAR - [Facebook post](#) w/photos.

Beekeepers - If interested in an inspection in these counties or any other county in Massachusetts, simply go online and submit your Inspection Request [here](#). We appreciate your patience and understanding as we continue to work as a team to respond to as many of these requests as possible before the end of the season.

Voluntarily Register Your Apiary Now - Almost 1000 beekeepers have voluntarily registered their apiaries with MDAR since April, 2017 by using the [new online form](#). Please consider taking a moment to register your apiary today so that we can best communicate with beekeepers and investigate honey bee health issues in your area.

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

The MassGrown Exchange - Connecting farms, food suppliers and buyers.



Recent listings include: Garlic Scape Pesto and Red Serrano Hot Peppers by [Red Fire Farm](#); Roping mixed of laurel and wreaths, beef, compost, and lamb by [Breezy Hill Farm](#); and NestFresh Humaine, Sustainable Cage Free and Organic Omega-3: Retail packs by [The Country Hen](#). More products and services can be found and [here](#).

If you'd like one-on-one support with the MassGrown Exchange, contact Richard.LeBlanc@Mass.gov. You can also watch the [demonstration video](#) for a tour of the platform.

Farmers Markets - Winter and Holiday Markets coming soon!

Click [here](#) for a list of Winter farmers markets looking for vendors. If you are offering special Holiday Markets, let us know, and we'll add them to our [MassGrown Calendar](#), and spotlight them through our social media channels. Contact David.Webber@mass.gov.

The MassGrown Farm Map



Fall is here and Winter around the corner. Christmas Tree farmers - [Is your farm listed on the MassGrown map?](#) If so, be sure your website and description are up to date. Search yourself under the various query options. If you have updates or edits, please send to Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov. If you are not on the map and want to be included, please fill out our easy [two page survey \(.doc\)](#).

Did you know the "MassGrown" map is mobile phone friendly? On your phone, visit www.massnrc.org/massgrown, then "add to home screen", and you will see the MassGrown logo. Now whenever you are looking farms and farmers markets on the road, you will always find one nearest to you!



We also offer free "Massachusetts grown and fresher" marketing materials: price cards, stickers, and ten different designed posters to enhance your promotion of locally grown. [Take a look, and send in your order today!](#)

The Massachusetts Building at the Big E - Recap



[The Big E](#) was back this year, and it has certainly been a wild ride since 2019! Despite the 2020 cancellation due to the pandemic and a delayed announcement that the 2021 fair was on, we were able to pull together a wonderful representation of Massachusetts. A special thanks to the Exhibitors who helped to make 2021 a special year.

Visitors to the Massachusetts Building found a variety of exhibitors, from Amy's All-Natural goat soap, Andrew Gordon handmade jewelry, Patrick Zephyr Photography, to treats made by Koffee Kup Bakery, Maureen's Sweet Shoppe, My Main Squeeze, New England Apple, 141 Main Street Deli, Macken's Sliders, spirits from Hardwick Winery or Valley Malt (Big E Cream Puff Stout), and more. A complete list of our exhibitors is available on our Massachusetts Building

Marketplace [website located here.](#)

While we welcomed back past exhibitors, this year we also introduced several new exhibitors including Macken's Sliders from Southwick, Sub Zero Nitrogen Ice Cream from Worcester, Wagga Tail Boutique from South Hadley and the Worcester Woo Sox from Worcester.

Attendance was strong with 1,498,774 visitors over the 17 days. Three days in particular saw the highest single day attendance and an all-time historic attendance was recorded on Saturday, October 2 with more than 177,000 people!

We were thrilled to be named the 2021 [#1 building on the Avenue of States by Mass Live!](#) – Join us next year from September 16 - October 2, 2022!

The mission of the Building is to support Massachusetts agriculture, commerce, and tourism. This is achieved through a mixture of Massachusetts companies, non-profit organizations, and state agencies located inside and on the grounds of the building.

Stay Up to Date with MDAR's Pest Outreach Program



The MDAR is hosting a series of webinars to educate the green industry and environmental groups about Spotted Lanternfly. Organized as quarterly updates, these free webinars will provide attendees with the most

current information about this invasive pest. [Next webinar is November 16th](#) from 10 am to 11:10 am. This webinar series has been approved for pesticide credits.

[Can You Spot The Lanternfly? Take Our Quiz!](#) - There have been lots of stories about [spotted lanternfly](#) in the news lately, including the recent discovery of a [satellite population of this pest](#) here in Fitchburg, MA. States with large, well-established infestations of spotted lanternfly, overwhelmed with complaints from the public, are advising residents to kill the insects and no longer require reporting them in heavily infested areas. [More here.](#)

MDAR's Pest Outreach Program has rebooted their newsletter to give readers the info they need in a fast and easy to digest monthly alert. To make sure you get the latest info. and updates on introduced pests, [sign up here.](#)

MDAR Highlights Recent APR Acquisitions

MDAR closed and permanently protected farms in Bristol County totaling 85 acres through the Department's [Agricultural Preservation Restriction \(APR\) Program](#) in collaboration with the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#), the [Westport Land Conservation Trust](#) and the towns of Westport, Rehoboth, and Dighton. The APR program allows Massachusetts farmers to permanently protect their land from development.

The farms are:

[Stephen A. Pettey and Joyce P. Silvia, Westport](#) - This 35.5+/- acre property is comprised of 22+/- acres of crop and pastureland and is located on Sodom Road in Westport. approximately 51.5% of the 35.5 (+/-) acre property is comprised of Prime or Farmland of Statewide Important soils. Steve is currently leasing the property to a local beef operation, that is using the property for hay and pasture. The [Westport Land Conservation Trust](#) (WLCT) partnered on the acquisition of the property and the Town of Westport contributed Community Preservation Act funds.

This farm has been in my family for years," said owner Steve Pettey. "My goal was to ensure that it would remain that way and continue to be a part of Westport."

“WLCT was thrilled to assist with the protection of this critical farm on Sodom Road,” said Ross Moran, Executive Director of WLCT. “This farm is located in a block of over 400 acres of protected farmland and will be forever protected because of the community’s commitment to Westport’s farmers and farmland.”

"As a Right to Farm Community with a long history of agricultural endeavors, the Town of Westport has been a strong supporter of local and state government actions that can facilitate keeping the local farms in the community working and thriving." said Tim King, Town Administrator for the Town of Westport. "The recent Pettey APR is an example of what non-profits, MDAR, and the Town of Westport can achieve with inter-governmental cooperation to further that goal. "

"Westport and the entire South Coast has greatly benefited from the APR program, and I am thrilled to see that another important farm in the town will be protected," said Chair of Senate Ways & Means Michael J. Rodrigues (D-Westport). "Protecting and preserving these farms is critical to the industry and to our region's economy and food production."

“The APR Program has been a critical asset for Westport’s farming community,” says Representative Paul Schmid (D-Westport). “Twenty-seven farms in Westport have been protected with this program, and those farms will always be available for farming.”

Richard and Elanor Amaral, Rehoboth - Located on Davis Street, Rehoboth and totaling approximately 29.87 +/- acres, the Amaral property has a long history of active agriculture and is currently being used for corn, peppers, squash and pumpkins. The Town of Rehoboth Community Preservation Committee (CPC) worked with the APR Program to commit funding toward the project

Eleanor Amaral stated: “I am so happy that I worked with the APR Program to preserve the farmland that has been in my family for over 60 years. There has been so much development in Rehoboth lately, but it’s nice to know that this land is now preserved for future generations of farmers

Carol Williams, the Chair of the Community Preservation Committee in Rehoboth stated that “All the credit really goes to Eleanor Amaral who steadfastly worked to preserve her family's legacy. The Town will be forever grateful for this gift.”

Senator Paul R. Feeney (D-Foxborough) commented that "The APR program has been instrumental in permanently protecting agricultural land in the Commonwealth. The town of Rehoboth has a history steeped in farming and due to the collective commitment of the Amaral family, the town's CPC, and the Commonwealth, this farmland will remain viable for future generations while safeguarding active agricultural land in the community and our region."

"With numerous new housing developments springing up in Rehoboth, a right to farm community, saving open space helps to ensure that the rural character of Rehoboth continues into the future." said Representative Steven S. Howitt (R-Seekonk).

K.J. Araujo Farm, Dighton - The [K.J. Araujo farm](#) on Elm Street totals approximately 20.7 +/- acres. The property has a long history of active agriculture and is currently being used for squash and pumpkins. The Araujo family had rented this farmland for 20 years, growing a variety of mixed vegetables, before they purchased the property in March 2017, and now wish to protect it with an APR. The town of Dighton contributed to the acquisition.

Ken Araujo commented, “I first saw this property when I was a little boy and I decided back then that I wanted to own it one day. Fifty years later I ended up purchasing the property. I bought the land to farm it, but also to protect it. This is some of the best soil east of the Mississippi and land this good should always be farmed and never developed. The APR Program was a great tool to accomplish this goal.”

Tim Rhines, Chair of the Dighton Planning Board commented, “The Community Preservation Commission is very grateful that this APR project was a success and some excellent farmland in Dighton will be preserved in perpetuity. Town residents should be happy that no houses will be built on this beautiful piece of land that is not only agriculturally productive but also historically significant to Native American populations.”

“I am very pleased that the Araujo farm in Dighton has been approved for long-term agricultural preservation through the APR initiative,” said Dean of the Massachusetts Senate Marc R. Pacheco (D-Taunton). “Local agricultural operations are critical to our community preservation and environmental sustainability efforts here in Southeastern Massachusetts. Thanks to the Araujo family, the Town of Dighton, the Department of Agricultural Resources, and the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service for their hard work towards implementing these important local preservation measures.”

"The APR program is essential to keep the agricultural industry in Massachusetts thriving. Happy to see the Araujo family utilize this program to fulfil a lifelong dream to own farmland while protecting and preserving agriculture in Dighton for future generations," commented Representative Patricia Haddad (D-Somerset).

The APR Program preserves and protects agricultural soils from use for non-agricultural purposes or any activity detrimental to agriculture. The voluntary program helps pay farmers the difference between the fair market value and the agricultural land value of their land, in exchange for a permanent deed restriction. The program also works to revitalize the agricultural industry by making land more affordable to farmers and their operations more financially secure. Since the inception of the APR program 40 years ago, over 74,000 acres of farmland has been protected across the Commonwealth through more than 900 acquisitions. Through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. Eligible partners include Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have farmland or grassland protection programs. NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of an agricultural land easement.

The protection of farmland through the APR program would not be possible without the invaluable partnerships with municipalities and land trusts, such as those mentioned above. If you'd like to learn more about the APR program or would like to contact our field reps, visit the [APR Program webpage](#). More APR closings listed in the next Farm & Market Report.

State Agriculture Officials Celebrate APR Improvement Program's 100th Farm Milestone

Last Thursday, October 21st, Commissioner Lebeaux was joined by state officials and farmers to recognize the milestone of 100 farms participating in the Department's [APR Improvement Program \(AIP\)](#). Since AIP began in 2010, one hundred farms have participated in the program, receiving business planning, technical assistance, and infrastructure grants to support their farm's viability.

To celebrate, the officials toured two farms in Worcester County that recently participated in the Program – Cherry Hill Farm in Lunenburg and Carlson Orchards in Harvard. During these tours, the farmers shared

history about their farm businesses and explained how their participation in AIP supported their farms' long-term viability. ([photos here](#))

The APR Improvement Program provides business planning and technical assistance to commercial farms with land that has already been protected through MDAR's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program. The program's goal is to assist farmers with issues of financial viability, resource conservation, family succession, modernization of infrastructure and other issues that may enhance the long term continued use of the agricultural resource.

To begin the celebration, DAR Commissioner John Lebeaux recounted some of the program's benefits: "Farmers that participate in AIP report improved operational efficiency, continue to invest in needed infrastructure on their farms, and show a significant increase in gross income in subsequent years. These results are consistent with the purpose of AIP: to help improve the productivity and profitability of participating farms, and to enhance the significance of APR farm operations and their contribution to the state's agricultural industry."

Commissioner Lebeaux was joined at the event by DAR Deputy Commissioner Ashley Randle; Representative for the 37th Middlesex district, Danillo Sena; Representative for the 3rd Worcester district, Michael Kushmerek; Senator for Worcester and Middlesex district, John Cronin; and staff from the office of Jamie Eldridge, Senator for Middlesex and Worcester district.

Since it began in 2009, AIP has provided \$7 million in total grants and a total of \$560,000 in technical assistance services to 100 Massachusetts farms. For more information about AIP, [click here](#).

Growing Your Farm Business Planning Course

Tuesday evenings, January 11 to March 8, 2022 - Location to be determined.

Are you a Massachusetts farmer looking to expand your business or launch a new enterprise? Do you need to increase profitability, set business goals, or improve your quality of life? Growing Your Farm may be for you!

Growing Your Farm is a hands-on course to help established farmers develop a business plan and financial projections for their farm business. This course covers topics including resource assessment, marketing strategy, financial management, risk management, quality of life, and goal setting. The course is taught by professional business planners with years of experience working with Massachusetts farms and guest speakers on current topics such as succession planning and online marketing. The cost is \$200 per farm. Enrollment is open to farmers who have been operating a farm business in Massachusetts for at least the two prior years. Eight weekly classes will be held on Tuesday evenings starting January 11 and ending March 8 (with one vacation week).

We are planning on an in-person class. We will make a final decision in December based on current COVID conditions. Specific location of classes will be determined based on the geographic locations of the applicants.

The Growing Your Farm business planning course has been approved as a certified USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrower training for financial management.

[Growing Your Farm application](#) - Applications will be accepted until November 19 or until the course is full.

If interested, please complete an application and email it to Michael.Parker@mass.gov or mail it to: Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Attn: Michael Parker, 138 Memorial Avenue, Suite 42, West Springfield, MA 01089

For more information about the Growing Your Farm Business Planning course, contact Michael Parker at 857-895-0023.

Organic Certification Cost Share Program



Did you know this Program reimburses certified organic farmers and food processors up to 50% (\$500 maximum) of the total certification cost?

The 2021 Application period is open and deadline for application submission is December 1, 2021. [Complete details and application here](#).

If you are an organic grower and sell retail or mail order, be sure to be listed on the MassGrown Map as a "Certified Organic" farm. Map of [organic farms here](#).

Wholesale growers looking for buyers are encouraged to list crops/products on the [MassGrown Exchange](#). Questions, contact Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov.

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center Has Several New Opportunities

Dairy Business Viability & Technical Assistance Grant

This grant will fund dairy processors, producer associations, supply chain businesses, and technical assistance providers in order to enhance dairy farmer and processor business operations and strengthen market opportunities. Projects funded through this program will coordinate technical assistance to benefit multiple dairy producers and processors with the goal of increasing consumption, sales, jobs, and diverse markets for regionally produced dairy products. Technical assistance services could include enhancing business plans, facility operations, marketing, distribution, processing, and product offerings.

Grants available of \$10,000 - \$100,000. [RFA now available](#). **Application period: October 26 - December 7, 2021**

Dairy Food Safety & Certification Grant

This grant will provide dairy farmers, processors, and/or producer associations with funds needed to take actionable steps to improve the safety of dairy products. Projects funded through this program will support increased production safety standards with the goal of accessing new markets. Projects that increase marketability of dairy products will be prioritized. Activities covered by this grant include accessing technical assistance, audits, food safety plan development, training, testing fees, and certain infrastructure upgrades.

Grants available of \$10,000 - \$40,000. [RFA now available](#). **Application period: October 26, 2021 - February 3, 2022**

Contract Opportunity: Grazing Transition, Homegrown Forage Enhancement, & Alternative Farm Management Cohort Technical Assistance

Service providers across the Northeast are invited to submit proposals for contracts to offer localized cohort-based technical assistance for dairy farmers considering transitioning their farm to a grass-based production model, improving forage management, or other innovative on-farm practices.

Contracts available up to \$150,000. [Details here.](#) Question and comment period: October 1 - October 29, 2021 - **Deadline to submit proposals: November 29, 2021**

Northeast Dairy Processor Survey

The NE-DBIC invites dairy processors to complete a 10-minute survey by October 26 to help us better understand the landscape of Northeast processors' marketing and branding efforts. Contractor Metro Tribal will use the results to develop case studies and toolkit resources for Northeast dairy businesses to use to improve the effectiveness of their marketing and branding activities. Survey respondents will benefit from receiving the aggregated survey results directly and could be approached to be featured in a case study.

[Survey here.](#)

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2022 Celebrating the Season of Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar



Massachusetts Agricultural Calendar Photo Contest Winners Unveiled on Massachusetts Day at the Big E – The 2022 Ag Calendar Now Available!

Winners from the annual photo contest were invited to [Massachusetts Day at the Big E](#) last month to celebrate the unveiling of the new 2022 Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar. We congratulate the winners of the annual photo contest. We received over 185 photo submissions!

Each year the calendar, [Celebrating the Seasons of Massachusetts Agriculture](#), features winning photos from this year's public photo contest. Each photograph is selected that best spotlights crops and farms across the Commonwealth. The Calendar's goal is to showcase the beautiful diversity of crops grown in Massachusetts as well as be a 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 \(MAC\)](#), [MDAR](#) and the [Massachusetts State Grange](#), along with the many great sponsoring associations this year: [MA Farm Bureau](#), [MA Maple Producers Association](#), [MA Flower Growers Association](#), [MA Dairy Promotion Board](#), [MA Fruit Growers](#), [MA Fairs Association](#), [Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association](#), [Island Grown Initiative](#), and the [MA Christmas Tree Association](#). Thanks also to Susan Bergeron-West at [Sirius Design](#), who does excellent work each year producing the colorful Calendar.



Winning photographs featured in the Calendar include:

[January](#) - Roxanne Pin - Beehives at Rockhouse Ridge Farm, Huntington
[February and Calendar Cover](#) - Catherine Francis – The Grey Barn and Farm, Martha's Vineyard
[March](#) - Betsy Cranston - Cranston's Tree Farm Sugarhouse, Ashfield
[April](#) - Laurie Cuevas - Tommy the Ox w/Fred Balawender at Balawender Farm, Cheshire
[May](#) - Abbey Murphy – Flower bouquet at Crown & Roots Farm, Oxford
[June](#) - Shayna Stevens - Will and Harvest in the milking parlor, Carter and Stevens Farm, Barre
[July](#) - Janna Thompson – Blueberries at Nourse Farms, Whately
[August](#) - Abbey Murphy - Greenburst Sunflower, Crown & Roots Farm, Oxford
[September](#) - Diana Nydam – Apples taken at Brookfield Orchards
[October](#) - Bonnie Soule - Cranberries at Freetown Farm in Rochester
[November](#) - Glenn Fund - taken at Wilson Farm, Lexington
[December](#) - Roxanne Pin- Christmas trees at Rockhouse Ridge Farm, Huntington



Honorable Mentions:

January- Kristen Tool - Shades of seasonal raw honey at Olsen Farm, Lanesborough; February - Elizabeth Almeida - Blue Oyster Mushrooms taken at Fat Moon Farm, Westford; March - Jeanne Boyden - Boyden Bros. Maple, Conway; April - Alison Kidder – Smiling goat at Wards Berry Farm, Sharon; May - Susan Weeks - Celtic Bee, Greenfield Center; June - Shannon Largey - Monarch on Mexican Sunflower - Blossom Brook Farm, Raynham; July - Ellen Nylen - Community gardeners at Elm Park School Community Garden, Worcester; August - Jennifer Yankowski - Eric Galenski helping to pick sweet corn at Galenski Farm, S. Deerfield; September - John Kinchla/Kiely Kinchla - Chickens under blanket in preparation for the 4H virtual fair; October - Juliet Trofi – taken at The Walden Woods Project Farm, Concord; November - Jim Thomas - Indian corn at Thomas Farm, Sunderland; December - Jacquelyn Boyden - Full Moon over Wood pile at Poplar Mtn Maple Sugarhouse, Erving.

Learn more about MAC and ordering calendars [here](#). If you offer retail sales and would like to offer to your customers, [bulk pricing is offered](#).

Questions, contact Bobbie Oles at massaginclassroom@gmail.com. Start clicking your camera and submitting photos for [next years contest now!](#)

USDA NEWS

Application Period Opens for Pandemic Response and Safety Grant Program to Provide Relief to Small Producers, Processors, Distributors and Farmers Markets Impacted by COVID-19

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced a [Request for Applications \(RFA\)](#) for the new Pandemic Response and Safety (PRS) Grant program and encourages eligible entities to apply now for funds. Applications must be submitted electronically through the grant portal at usda-prs.grantsolutions.gov/usda by **11:59 pm on Monday, November 22, 2021**. Approximately \$650 million in

funding is available for the PRS grants, which are funded by the Pandemic Assistance provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

The PRS Grant program will assist small businesses in certain commodity areas, including specialty crop producers, shellfish farming, finfish farming, aquaculture, and apiculture; specialty crop, meat, and other processors; distributors; and farmers markets. Small businesses and nonprofits in these industries can apply for a grant to cover COVID-related expenses such as workplace safety measures (e.g., personal protective equipment (PPE), retrofitting facilities for worker and consumer safety, shifting to online sales platforms, transportation, worker housing, and medical costs. The minimum funding request is \$1,500 and the maximum funding request is \$20,000.

The RFA and the PRS Grant Portal provide more details about eligibility for the grant.

Application resources, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), tip sheets in English and Spanish on applying for a DUNS Number, videos on “How to Apply” and more, are available on the [PRS Grant Portal](#).

Farm to School Grant Request for Applications is Now Open

USDA awards competitive Farm to School grants that support planning, developing, and implementing farm to school programs. USDA's Farm to School grants are an important way to help state, regional, and local organizations as they initiate, expand, and institutionalize farm to school efforts. USDA expects to award approximately \$12 million in competitive grants to eligible entities through the Farm to School Grant Program in FY 2022. Each grant helps implement farm to school programs that increase access to local food in Child Nutrition Program (CNP) meals, connect children with agriculture for better health, and inspire youth to consider careers in agriculture. Since the program's inception in 2013, USDA has awarded nearly \$64 million through Farm to School Grants, funding 896 projects across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico, reaching over 22 million students in more than 54,000 schools.

A wide variety of entities are eligible to compete for funding through this grant opportunity. Eligible schools, State and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, small- to medium-sized agricultural producers or groups of small- to medium-sized agricultural producers, and non-profit organizations are eligible for Farm to School Grants. Institutions operating the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) at non-school based sites may also apply for funding. Please note that eligibility varies by grant track. Please see sections 3.0 through 3.4 of the RFA for specific eligibility requirements. A Frequently Asked Questions document will be available soon on the [Farm to School Grant Applicant Resources Page](#).

Webinars:

- [Getting Familiar with the FY2022 Farm to School RFA - Monday, November 8th - 2:30pm](#): In this webinar, the Farm to School Team will provide an overview of the FY2022 Farm to School Program RFA, including updates to eligibility, new turnkey programs and more. Get familiar with the requirements of the RFA and how to submit your completed application.
- [Getting Your Package Together - Tuesday, November 9th - 2:30pm](#): The Farm to School Team will explore the key characteristics of a competitive Farm to School Grant Application. Will review the required components and provide technical assistance on how to submit a complete application. Will review the required components and provide technical assistance on how to submit a complete application.

[Complete details on grants and how to apply here.](#)

Deadline Nears to Obtain Disaster Coverage on 2022 Perennial Crops

Agricultural producers are reminded that the deadlines to purchase Federal Crop Insurance coverage to protect their 2022 perennial insurable crops are upcoming soon. The same dates also apply to updating an existing policy as well as canceling an existing policy.

November 20: Apple, Cranberry (Barnstable, Bristol, Middlesex, Nantucket, Norfolk & Plymouth counties), Grape (Bristol County) & Peach Policies

December 1: Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) Policy & Apiculture Policy

Perennial crops not covered by an existing Federal Crop Insurance policy may be covered in one of the following 2 ways:

1. Written Agreement (a process completed by a licensed Federal Crop Insurance agent using existing actuarial data from neighboring counties) provided specific criteria are met.
2. The Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) available from the USDA - Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Office that serves your farming operation. Deadline for purchasing NAP coverage on noninsured perennial crops is **November 20th**.

Another option that growers of perennial crops may wish to explore is obtaining coverage through the Whole Farm Revenue Protection Program (WFRP). WFRP is a revenue based policy that provides varying coverage levels to your historical average revenues using your IRS Schedule F. **A new option in 2022 for producers whose average adjusted gross income falls below \$100,000 is available under the WFRP policy. The Micro Farm Policy reduces record keeping requirements for eligible producers and revenue from post-production costs, such as washing and packaging commodities and value-added products are considered allowable revenue.** Deadline to purchase a WFRP policy is March 15th but bear in mind that if you have an existing CAT policy on an insured crop, you must cancel that CAT coverage or upgrade to a "Buy-Up" policy by November 20th to purchase WFRP coverage. **Important Note:** While the deadline to purchase a WFRP policy is March 15th, protection does not begin on covered crops until the private crop insurance company accepts the WFRP policy. As an example, if you purchase a WFRP policy and it is accepted by the private insurance company on March 1st, you are covered for events after that date. Any weather-related events that caused damage to your perennial crops prior to that date would not be covered!

For more information on these and other related topics, you are encouraged to visit the RMA website at www.rma.usda.gov and the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov or contact UMass Extension Agricultural Risk Management Educators, Paul Russell at pmrussell@umass.edu or Tom Smiarowski at tsmiarowski@umass.edu.



UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

November

- **November 3 & 4 - The Biennial Northeast Greenhouse Conference & Expo** - Boxboro Regency Hotel in Boxborough, MA. Co-sponsored by New England Floriculture, a group of grower representatives from the Northeast, augmented by University and Cooperative Extension staff in each state who specialize in greenhouse crops and management. [Details here.](#)
- **November 3 - Livestock Institute of Southern New England's (TLI) Virtual Winter Livestock Conference** - Virtual. This one-day event will address the marketing and profitability of locally raised proteins by small and mid-size farms in Southern New England. Experts on pricing, sourcing, online marketing, institutional sales and retail sales will offer insights and experiences working with livestock farms. [Details here.](#)
- **November 5 - Massachusetts Food Policy Council Meeting** - 9:30 am - 11:30 am, virtual - With a focus on racial equity and climate change, the Southcoast Food Policy Council, a program of the Marion Institute, will present key takeaways from their newly released 2021 Food System Assessment of Southeastern Massachusetts including the economic impact the region has on the Massachusetts Food System. Elizabeth Wiley, Executive Director, Marion Institute. Updates and [details here.](#)
- **November 10 - Fall WasteWise Forum Webinar** - 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, virtual. This event is particularly relevant to all Massachusetts businesses and institutions that are subject to the existing Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) commercial organics disposal ban, as well as those that would become subject to the [proposed waste ban amendments.](#) [Details here.](#)
- **November 16 - Spotted Lanternfly Webinar** – 10:00 am - 11:10 am, virtual - MDAR hosting the 3rd of a series of webinars to educate the green industry and environmental groups about Spotted Lanternfly. Organized as quarterly updates, these free webinars will provide attendees with the most current information about this invasive pest. Credits available - [Details here.](#)

December

- **December 3 - 9 - Virtual MA Food System Forum 2021** - Virtual gathering to discuss some of the most pressing issues facing the food system in Massachusetts, and strategize about how to best address them together. [Details here.](#)

[MDAR Calendar](#)

Classified

- **Farmers Markets Seek Vendors** - MDAR posts an updated list of farmers markets looking for vendors [here.](#) The contacts for markets are posted [here.](#) Questions, contact David.Webber@mass.gov.
- **Job Postings: Conservation Administrator** - Find more or list them on the [MassGrown Exchange.](#)

Looking to buy or sell, visit the [MassGrown Exchange!](#)

About the *Farm & Market Report*

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

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.

