
February/March Farm & Market Report

2/17/22

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CLASSIFIED

COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Greetings, Mass. Agriculture and all its friends,

I write to you from Arlington, Virginia where Deputy Commissioner Ashley Randle and I are attending the annual National Association of State Departments of Agriculture ([NASDA](#)) Winter Policy Conference (WPC). We last attended WPC in person at the very end of February in 2019, just before the world changed. Last year's conference was held virtually.

I must admit that it's both exhilarating and a little terrifying to be attending a large indoor in-person event, particularly at a time where guidance and mandates about masks and the need to provide proof of vaccine in certain situations are rapidly evolving. I've made some very strong relationships with my peers from across the country over the last seven years, and it is a treat to see many of them in person again. We are certainly observing multiple attitudes relative to how society should be behaving at this hopeful time. Fingers crossed...

This event traditionally has a very full agenda, and this year was no exception. We heard a fascinating and extra timely panel discussion on the Agricultural Supply Chain from individuals representing major ports (FL and GA), the trucking industry, and the railroad industry. NASDA's eight policy committees (Food Systems & Nutrition, Rural Development & Financial Security, Animal Agriculture, Natural Resources & Environment, Marketing and International Trade, and Plant Agriculture & Pesticide Regulations) also met, developing policy positions and action items to be brought to the full body. All fifty-four NASDA members (the fifty states and four territories) are members of each committee, so Ashley and I ran the gauntlet, attending and participating in as many as we could.

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, FDA Deputy Commissioner for Food Policy and Response Frank Yiannis, US Senate Agriculture Committee leaders Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI, by pre-recorded video) and John Boozman (R-AR) attended our plenary session. These individuals and their organizations have tremendous influence on US (and MA) agriculture. To have the opportunity to engage with them directly is a tremendous opportunity to let these leaders hear directly from state leaders about how we feel about pressing issues.

Later in the day NASDA members and staff met in a closed session with USDA Under Secretaries Robert Bonnie (Farm Production and Conservation), Jenny Lester Moffitt (Marketing and Regulatory Programs), and Xochitl Torres Small (Rural Development) in which NASDA members were encouraged to freely articulate our questions and concerns. It was a terrific session that NASDA members greatly appreciated.

NASDA works in a bipartisan manner to advance its mission to "Grow and enhance American agriculture through policy, partnerships and public engagement" and fortunately for MA Ag, it does so very well.

Two organizations routinely piggyback on WPC and NASDA's September Annual Meeting. NEASDA is the ten state northeast regional organization under the NASDA umbrella. Somewhat similar to a county farm bureau within a state organization, NEASDA presents its policy and action item suggestions to the national body. I had the opportunity to serve as NEASDA Chair in 2019, when MA hosted NEASDA's successful annual meeting in Brewster.

The second organization meeting concurrently with WPC is Food Export USA-Northeast (Food Export-Northeast), a non-profit organization created in 1973 as a cooperative effort between ten northeastern state agricultural promotion agencies and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). Its purpose is to provide a wide range of services to facilitate trade between northeastern food suppliers and importers around the world, by assisting U.S. companies looking to start or expand export sales. I sit on Food Export's board of directors and have been its Secretary-Treasurer the last three years.

MDAR's participation in Food Export puts us in the business of supporting export market development throughout the world for food, seafood, and agricultural products from MA-based companies.

MA value-added food manufacturers, aquaculturists and seafood fishers, and farmers have taken advantage of this support which also has significant cost-sharing opportunities for international market promotion in addition to education and connecting producers to international buyers. Those cost-sharing opportunities are not

insignificant. Over the last three years, eighty-seven MA businesses (including small and large MA businesses, aquaculturists, fishers, and farms) have received over \$3.8M in support. Bonita Oehlke manages MDAR's Export Development program and can provide more details.

I particularly want to note the recent [important positive development](#) in which MA along with Washington state are now in a pilot program allowing shellfish to be traded with the European Union after a ten year trade disruption, which is a great boost to MA Aquaculture!

It's tax time so I want to remind everyone that the [MA Animal Fund](#) derives much of its funding through voluntary donations made on Line 33f on the state Resident Income Tax form. Created by statute seeking to end animal homelessness and support local animals in need, the Fund provides free spay/neuter/vaccination resources to Commonwealth cats and dogs in need, and provides free training to Animal Control Officers.

In 2021, in spite of the pandemic, the Mass Animal Fund collected its highest annual amount in taxpayer donations through the tax checkoff, which was the highest dollar amount in annual donations since its inception in 2012. In 2021, the Fund provided no-cost spay/neuter and vaccination options for close to 2,000 homeless cats and dogs and animals owned by low-income residents. One out of every six of the animals assisted needed urgent services for life-threatening medical conditions or relinquishment prevention so that they could stay with their families.

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 \$3.4M in donations and state support for its efforts. This tremendous backing has allowed the Fund to help over fifteen thousand local Commonwealth animals in need and provide animal law and welfare training to over six hundred fifty Municipal Animal Control Officers so that they can better assist animals in the communities they serve.

As demonstrated by the facts noted above, the Fund is very ably managed by Sheri Gustafson who has also shown this old dog some new tricks about visual communications!

I know it's still February, but pitchers and catchers were supposed to report to Spring Training today. Though there's a lockout currently at the major league level, that doesn't apply to minor leagues, so I want to advise all that MDAR is organizing a "**Massachusetts Agriculture Day at the Ballpark**" on the evening of August 19th, 2022, to see the Triple A Worcester Red Sox (the WooSox) take on the Rochester Red Wings at [Polar Park](#) in Worcester.

All the details are still under development, but we are planning that some representatives from MA agriculture associations will join in the pregame ceremonies. Come join us in our own reserved hospitality section which seats up to 200 and includes a ballpark food buffet and cash bar!

Soon (not exactly sure when) we will post a link where one can buy tickets. Price for admission to ballpark and the dedicated area (not the stands, it's an area where folks can sit, walk around, and mingle), the buffet, the pregame recognition for ag, and fireworks after the game I am advised will be in the \$40-\$50 range.

I have learned that some rural residents may have "big city anxiety" about Worcester-please don't have that! There is [public transportation and many nearby parking areas](#), and even just before or after game, there is no dramatic traffic. The Park seats a little less than 10,000.

MDAR had a small delegation attend a game last September. We sat in the stands then, and it was a lot of fun, but this should be so much better!

I hope all are aware about the **Farmland Action Plan** process. Supported by a line item in the budget, MDAR, working with the Donahue Institute, American Farmland Trust, and the MA Food Systems Collaborative is developing this plan to lay out a pathway for future protection of MA farmland.

In the 1970's, in a response to shrinking farmland acreage, the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program was created under the leadership of MA Department of Food and Agriculture (MDAR's previous name) Commissioner Fred Winthrop, and it was the very first state ag preservation program in the nation. It's been very successful, protecting over seventy thousand acres at more than nine hundred locations.

But as we see new pressures that often lead to unprotected ag land being permanently converted to something else, what else should the Commonwealth be doing?

Earlier this week MDAR hosted two very well attended virtual public listening sessions at which commenters were encouraged to be bold and not self-censor and offer their thoughts and ideas. We had a great turnout, almost one hundred and fifty public participants. There will be further opportunity for input as this stakeholder driven process moves forward. Stay tuned for more information.

Last but not least, we are only a few weeks away from another season for MDAR to be on the road visiting various ag related events and venues. I can't wait for the annual Maple Kickoff event, and the tapping of the ceremonial first tree. This year the [MA Maple Producers Association](#) is hosting the event on March 4, at Grand Maple Farms in New Braintree. It seems when I tap the tree it's so cold that we're lucky to get a few drops, but when it's someone else, the flow is strong. At least they tell me it's the cold!

Regardless, I'm looking forward to seeing our friends in the Maple industry as we kickoff March MA Maple Month and celebrating our first seasonal ag product of the year!

Things much be getting a little back to normal as again, Rick is patiently waiting on me. It's getting late, I have to pack for a morning flight home tomorrow, so I'm going to sign off now.



John Lebeaux

FOREFRONT

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Update

February 17, 2022: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has been detected in wild birds in multiple east coast states, and in commercial and backyard flocks in IN, KY, and VA. Of most concern is the detection of HPAI in wild ducks in Rockingham County, New Hampshire (NH), which borders coastal Massachusetts (MA). **HPAI may already be present in wild birds in Massachusetts.** HPAI surveillance of domestic and wild birds in MA is ongoing.

Wild water birds may be infected with HPAI without looking sick. Once exposed domestic poultry including chickens, turkeys, pheasants, and guinea fowl rapidly get sick or die suddenly. Domestic birds are exposed to HPAI through contact with infected birds, their droppings, or feathers. Pastures, yards, ponds, and pathways

become contaminated, and your equipment, clothing and footwear, and vehicle tires can inadvertently move contaminated material into contact with your birds.

Once HPAI is detected in a domestic flock (backyard or commercial), state and federal emergency actions to contain the disease place movement restrictions on all poultry and poultry products nearby. This may have a significant business and financial impact on those neighboring flocks and businesses.

Protect your flock, and your neighbors' flocks! Prevent the introduction of HPAI through good biosecurity procedures. Eliminate contact between wild birds and your flock. Use a disinfectant foot bath at the entrance to your poultry area. Wear dedicated clothes and shoes when tending to your flock. Avoid contact with other domestic or wild birds, do not allow any visitors to your flock, and do not share equipment with other flocks.

Resources:

1. [Biosecurity: Defend the Flock- USDA](#)
2. [Biosecurity: Iowa State University](#)
3. [Recent HPAI Detections: USDA](#)
4. [USDA HPAI Response Policy](#)

USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA)

MDAR will be submitting an application to USDA to implement the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) for Massachusetts. Applications are due by April 5, 2022 to USDA, and should our application be successful, it is anticipated that the state will receive \$7.5M. The Department is currently engaging with stakeholders and using that critical feedback to develop an equitable, impactful, and strong proposal to USDA.

The LFPA's goal is to increase access to local domestic food and improve and maintain supply chain resiliency by building supplier partnerships with local and regional farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and underserved communities. States will purchase domestic food from local and regional producers, target purchases from socially disadvantaged farmers/producers, and distribute the food to underserved communities. In addition to increasing local food consumption, funds will help build and expand economic opportunity for local and socially disadvantaged producers.

Target participants for this listening session:

- Socially disadvantaged farmers, including but not limited to, Environmental Justice communities, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), traditionally underserved communities
- Previous participants of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program
- Farmers, distributors, processors, food banks, and members of the MA food system supply chain

To access the recording from the listening session which was held February 3rd, or to learn more about this opportunity, please [click here](#). For further questions about the program, please contact Ashley Randle at Ashley.Randle@mass.gov.

USDA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network Grant Update

Massachusetts farmers pride themselves on their ability to produce healthy, high-quality crops and livestock, but they often overlook their mental health and wellness. To effectively meet the mental health and wellness needs of our farmers, MDAR has launched the *Strengthening and Enhancing the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network in Massachusetts* project.

The project's goal is to provide language, context and resources to enhance mental health conversations, with a focus on furthering the efforts of ending the stigma associated with discussion and treatment for the Commonwealth's farm and agricultural community stakeholders.

Planning and outreach are underway for the first two phases of the program, including a series of training seminars focused on helping Commonwealth farmers and producers, and those who work with and support Massachusetts farms (e.g., MDAR staff, subcontractors, and other agricultural service providers) to be more well equipped to address mental health and wellness in their workplaces and communities.

The training is designed to increase the knowledge, understanding and ability to act on mental health concerns including how to recognize stress and signs of need, listen and communicate effectively, identify the resources that are available, and how to refer to and access assistance.

Phase Two of the project includes the development of a Mental Health and Wellness Toolkit. The Toolkit will include social media campaigns, printed materials, a web site, and online webinars. An important step in the information content development will be survey work done online, and in-person if Covid protocols allow. The survey will seek to reach all stakeholders in the Massachusetts farming community to determine the level of awareness surrounding mental health and wellness and identify the most common concerns within the community. The survey will also seek to better understand the community's apprehensions toward discussing mental health and accessing assistance.

In the early summer season, MDAR will partner with key agricultural organizations to provide mental health education and create awareness for farmers through their current networks. Through the funding provided by MDAR, state and regional service providers and stakeholder organizations will develop/host a designated webpage on their websites with resources, such as the Mental Health and Wellness toolkit. In addition, MDAR partners will work with us to develop a Public Relations campaign to promote resources within the region they serve.

Funding for staff training and integrating educational materials into current literature and communications will serve as another tool for informing farmers of services. The intention is to not only provide services and referrals, but also to normalize the idea within the farming community that it is okay to ask for and receive help for mental health needs.

We welcome your feedback and participation in this important program. Please contact Ashley Randle at Ashley.Randle@mass.gov with any questions or feedback you may have on this project or topic. Thank you.

SEMAP Agriculture & Food Conference Mental Health Panel: Maximizing On-Farm Mental Health: Resources, Strategies, & Policy Recommendations

Sunday, February 27, 2:45-3:45 pm - The last two years have been stressful for all of us, especially frontline essential farmers and farmworkers. What are existing resources, barriers to accessing those resources, and long-

term solutions for on-farm mental wellness? Moderated by MDAR Deputy Commissioner Ashley Randle, this panel will discuss existing resources, individual strategies, and policy suggestions for improving farmer mental health and access to resources. Speakers: Rachel Van Boven, [FarmAid](#); Polly Shyka, [Maine Farmer Resource Network](#) and [Villageside Farm](#). To register for the Conference and attend the panel discussion, [click here](#).

File Taxes - Help Animals!



MDAR is encouraging taxpayers to help animals in need by donating to the Massachusetts Animal Fund for homeless animal prevention and care on [Line 33f](#) of their Massachusetts income tax returns.

Since the Fund's inception in 2014, the Mass Animal Fund has spent over two million dollars to sterilize and vaccinate over 15,600 local animals in over 315 Massachusetts cities and towns. This year the Fund could really use your support, as many families across the Commonwealth are still struggling financially during the ongoing pandemic, making basic veterinary care for their pets unattainable. In 2021, one out of every 6 of the animals the Fund assisted needed urgent medical care for life-threatening conditions or other services to ensure they could stay with their families. Your donations will help us provide that emergency care when needed, but will also improve access to basic care which significantly decreases the likelihood that emergencies will occur at all.

The Fund's Voucher Program turns donations into a resource that local animal control officers (ACO) utilize to get assistance for animals in their community. The Mass Animal Fund also provides free training opportunities and support to Massachusetts ACOs so they can effectively enforce animal control laws. Follow the Fund on [Facebook](#) and visit our [webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information about ending animal homelessness in the Commonwealth.

Energy News

MDAR's MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP) - Energy Audits - Technical Assistance – Be Prepared For the Upcoming Grant Programs!

Remember, MDAR's [Farm Energy Program](#) 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. 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.

Apiary Program

Do You Have a Dead-Out or Unexpected Hive Death? Get an Inspection: The Apiary Program Team offers health inspections and sampling if warranted of hives through the Winter months. To schedule an inspection for these hives, please submit the [electronic form](#).

Submit a Sample: Request FREE kits from MDAR and submit samples from your own hives. These FREE kits are easy to use by following the provided instructions and materials. Samples are analyzed and results provided directly to the beekeeper from the [USDA-ARS Bee Research Laboratory](#) in Beltsville, MD within a few weeks after receipt. There is no fee to process samples so you only need to pay for postage to mail each kit. These kits are great to use on hives that die during winter and throughout the season to aid in troubleshooting health issues.

Note that each kit contains materials to sample 1 hive so request multiple kits if your apiary contains multiple hives. To request simply send your name, mailing address and quantity requested via email to bees@mass.gov with the subject line "Bee Kits".

To find out more about the lab and sample processing visit their [website](#). Apiary [Spring Newsletter](#).

Three new fliers and schedules updated:

- **2022 Honey Bee Education Days at State Apiaries** – In person only - [Flyer here](#).
- **2022 State of the State: Update on Honey Bee Health in the Commonwealth** – Virtual only - [Flyer here](#).
- **2022 New England Honey Bee Update, Lunch and Learn Series** - Virtual only - [Flyer here](#).

[Complete details here](#).

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 Buzz About Honeybee Keeping on Martha's Vineyard – [May 5th](#)!

The Markets Corner

While Spring officially begins in four and a half weeks, the Division of Agricultural Markets staff are confident that you have started your plans of planting schedules as well as your promotion plans of marketing your farm and products to the consumers. We suggest you to take a few minute to review the programs offered within the [Markets' Division](#). Take a look at the programs and services offered which many can assist you in preparing for the upcoming season.



Through its award-winning [Massachusetts grown and fresher](#) initiative, the Division continues to cultivate new opportunities for consumers to gain greater access to local agricultural crops, farms, and farmers

markets. We encourage you to order posters, stickers and price cards featuring the *Massachusetts grown...and fresher* logo. Details and order form [here](#). Use these at farms and at farmers' markets. Any connections with schools? Feel free to give them out as well. The variety of colorful posters identify and promote crops and products grown in Massachusetts including Massachusetts Maple Syrup!



2022 Applications Now Open to Exhibit at the Massachusetts Building This Fall During the Big E

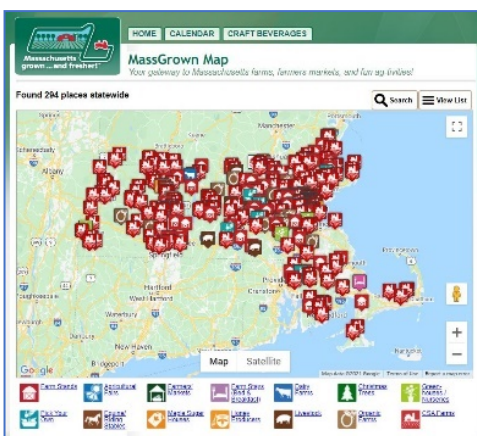


Each year, MDAR invites Massachusetts businesses and organizations to apply for the opportunity to exhibit in the Massachusetts State Exposition Building during [The Big E, September 16 – October 2, 2022](#). The mission of the Massachusetts State Exposition Building is to showcase Massachusetts agriculture, culture, commerce and tourism through informational, educational, promotional and retail exhibits. It is an opportunity to showcase and sell to over a million attendees that come through the Massachusetts Building.

Interested applicants are encouraged to review the exhibitor guidelines and application, and submit a completed application **by 4 pm on Friday, March 11, 2022**. Choose participation from: 17 day indoor, 17 day outdoor, or up to 10 day porch space.

[Guidelines and application here](#). Questions, contact Fran Pearson, Building Manager at Frances.Pearson@mass.gov, or 617-655-3511.

The MassGrown Map



As we come into March soon, a reminder for maple syrup producers to update their farm information. [Are you listed on the map?](#) Be sure your website and description are up to date. 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 phone mobile-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!

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



Reminder the Exchange includes many types of listings: Recent ones include “Looking For” - Manure spreading services by [Fern Hill Farm](#); “Job Posting” - On Site Farm Agricultural Manager by [Smolak Farms LLC](#); “Providing a Service” - Beekeeping Consulting & Educational Services by [Musante Farm](#), and more. All products and services can be found and [here](#).

CSA Farms looking to add crops or products to your offerings for 2022? Do a [Search](#), or [Register](#), and add a “Looking For” Listing.

Feel free to [register](#) and post today! Quick and easy registration. Even if nothing to post today, you can register and create “Alerts” for yourself. **Buyers** - Be notified automatically for crops or products of interest are posted. Over 370 businesses have registered to date.

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

MA Pavilion at the Summer Fancy Food Show, June 12 - 14, 2022

Everyone's ready to meet buyers and get back to business, live and in-person! Consider exhibiting in the Massachusetts Pavilion at the [Summer Fancy Food Show](#), June 12 - 14, New York City. USDA supported cost share can offset 50% of eligible costs including the booth space for products with at least 50% US grown content. For more information, contact Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov.

EU/US Shellfish Trade to Open - Opportunities for Massachusetts

The trade of molluscan shellfish between the European Union and the United States is set to resume following a 10-year break after the two sides resolved regulatory disputes. Sales of mussels, clams, oysters, and scallops will resume at the end of February, as announced on February 2, 2022, by the European Commission. Two EU member states, Spain and Netherlands, will be allowed to resume export of shellfish to the U.S., while two American states, Massachusetts and Washington, can do the same to the EU.

To take advantage of the EU market opening for shellfish trade, consider exhibiting at [Seafood Global Expo](#), April 26-28, 2022, Barcelona. The USDA funding “Branded Program” can offset 50% of eligible expenses.

Also consider exhibiting at [Seafood Expo North America](#), Boston, March 13 - 15 in the Massachusetts Avenue, organized by MDAR and DMF. Meet with In Country Marketing Representatives (no cost and no requirement to exhibit) to discuss international seafood market opportunities, facilitated through MDAR's membership in Food Export USA Northeast. [Details here](#).

Dairy Co-Packing Program

On February 16th, MDAR launched the [Dairy Co-Packing Program webpage](#) where dairy farmers can learn about how to work with a co-packer to manufacture and sell value-added products, like cheese, butter, ice cream or bottled milk. The webpage includes:

- Resources, slides, and information presented during the webinar
- Complete worksheets and use Co-Packing Calculator
- Find potential co-packers and their contact information
- [Navigate Grant Opportunities for Dairy Farmers](#)
- Explore [Cost Savings and Energy Technologies for Dairy Farms](#)
- Sign up for Dairy Co-Packing Technical Assistance Program – more details coming Spring 2022

To watch the workshop on dairy co-packing, please follow [this link](#) and use this code “x6rSCy^?” You can access slides and worksheets [here](#).

We also recommend that dairy farmers explore opportunities through the [Northeast-Dairy Business Innovation Center](#) (NE-DBIC). The NE-DBIC, hosted by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, provides support to dairy businesses through projects that promote the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products. Be sure to [subscribe to their newsletter](#) to stay up to date on all grant offerings! If you have any questions, or would like a one-on-one follow-up, please email Rebecca.Davidson@mass.gov or call 857-202-7699.

MDAR Seeks Responses for Three Grants

APR Owners - Stewardship and Restoration Assistance (SARA) Grant Program

MDAR’s SARA Program helps improve the status and condition of farmland that has been protected by an agricultural preservation restriction (APR). The goal of SARA is to improve the overall utilization of APR land resources for commercial agriculture.

SARA provides funding to help address stewardship issues and restore active commercial farming on APR land. Funds must be used for projects to restore inactive farmland back into active commercial agricultural use or to restore resources for increased agricultural production on existing APR farmland. Responder must not have been the original owner of the property when the land was placed under the APR unless the proposed restoration is in response to damage caused by a natural disaster or third party.

Grant funds of up to \$35,000 are available on a cost reimbursement basis with a 15% match of total project costs required by the farm participant.

Responses must be received by 4 pm, Friday, April 1, 2022. [Details and application information here.](#)

Questions, contact Julie Weiss at Julie.Weiss@mass.gov or 617-913-5317.

Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)

The [FSMIP](#) is a USDA grant program that funds 3-year projects that improve the efficiency and success of the U.S. agriculture marketing system. Every year, Congress decides on the appropriation amount, which generally falls between \$1.1 and 1.3 million. The maximum project award is \$250,000.

Eligible projects range from: Determining best methods for processing, distributing, or marketing agricultural products; Eliminating barriers to movement of agricultural products in various channels; Exploring new uses or markets for certain commodities.

Responses must be received by April 15, 2022. [Click here](#) to access the RFR and for more information on FSMIP. A webinar is scheduled on March 8, 2022 at 10:30 am and March 24, 2022 at 2:00 pm. To sign up to learn

information about this opportunity, [register here](#). Questions, contact Rebecca Davidson, FSMIP Coordinator, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Rebecca.Davidson@mass.gov.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

The purpose of the SCBGP is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).” Additional specialty crop categories and details [here](#).

Responses must be received by April 8, 2022. For details and how to apply, [click here](#). Three informational webinars will be provided, where questions may be asked will be held for interested applicants: Wednesday, February 23rd at 12:00 pm, Tuesday, March 8th at 10:30 am, Thursday, March 24th at 2:00 pm. Please complete [this form](#) to join a webinar. Note, webinars will be recorded. Questions, contact Rebecca.Davidson@mass.gov.

Considering Preserving Your Farmland?

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program preserves agricultural land by offering to pay farmland owners the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farms in exchange for a permanent deed restriction, which prevents uses of the property that will negatively impact its future agricultural viability. This voluntary opportunity can help farmers who are faced with a decision regarding the future of their farm legacy. The main objective of the APR Program is to protect productive farmland and revitalize the agricultural industry by making land more affordable to future farmers and keep current farmers operations more financially secure. The Program accepts applications on a rolling basis. In order to be considered a priority for the next funding cycle applications should be submitted [by June 30, 2022](#).

For more information on the APR Program, please [click here](#). Feel free to contact our regional planners to answer and clarify any questions you might have.

Current APR Owners: The Stewardship division of the APR Program helps farmers who have an Agricultural Preservation Restriction on their land navigate permitting for various improvements and infrastructure on their land, provides resource support in the form of survey cost-sharing, land mapping, and can help farmers find outside programs and financial opportunities to support their agricultural operation.

Regional Stewardship Planner Contacts:

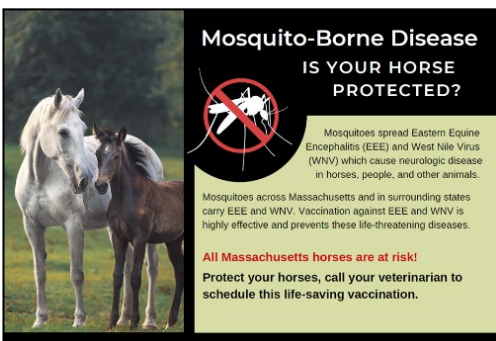
Christine Chisholm, Northeast Planner, Chris.Chisholm@mass.gov

Delia Delongchamp, Southeast Planner, Delia.Delongchamp@mass.gov

Kristina Smith, West Planner, Kristina.Smith@mass.gov

Caroline Raisler, North Central Planner, Caroline.Raisler@mass.gov

Is Your Horse Protected Against Mosquito-borne Disease?



Mosquito-Borne Disease
IS YOUR HORSE PROTECTED?

Mosquitoes spread Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile Virus (WNV) which cause neurologic disease in horses, people, and other animals.

Mosquitoes across Massachusetts and in surrounding states carry EEE and WNV. Vaccination against EEE and WNV is highly effective and prevents these life-threatening diseases.

All Massachusetts horses are at risk!
Protect your horses, call your veterinarian to schedule this life-saving vaccination.

[Eastern Equine Encephalitis \(EEE\)](#) and [West Nile Virus \(WNV\)](#) are spread by mosquitos and can cause fatal neurologic disease in horses and other animals. Horses across Massachusetts and in surrounding states are at risk.

There is an effective vaccine. Call your veterinarian to schedule this life-saving vaccination. Can't afford this life-saving vaccine? MDAR is partnering with local veterinarians to offer discounted EEE and WNV

vaccination for equine owners with financial need. Ask your veterinarian for more information.

[Click here](#) for video. For updates and to learn more, [click here](#). Protect your horse!

It's Pesticide License Renewal Time

Please be reminded that your Massachusetts Pesticide Licenses expires each calendar year. The MDAR uses the publicly accessible online system known as the EEA ePLACE Portal and no longer sends the hardcopy renewal forms via U.S. Mail. If you have not done already, please renew your license online using this system. The system sends repeated email reminders asking you to renew your pesticide license. If you have not renewed yet, please visit the EEA ePLACE Portal, log into your account, and complete your online renewal. If you forgot your password or security questions or otherwise need help logging into your account, please contact the ePLACE Help Desk at (844) 733-7522. As we may be working remotely, if you have questions or issues renewing your pesticide license, please send email to pestexamlicense@mass.gov. You may also leave a voice message at on the Pesticide Examination and License Hotline at (508) 281-6787.

EEA ePLACE Portal - eplace.eea.mass.gov

UMass-MDAR Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Remote Grower Training

Produce Safety Training (FSMA-PSR) - MDAR and UMass Extension will be providing PSA Grower Training Courses that offer FSMA Produce Safety Rule compliance as outlined in § 112.22(c) and 330 CMR 34.04 (3) that requires, in part, that "At least one supervisor or responsible party for your farm must have successfully completed food safety training at least equivalent to that received under standardized curriculum recognized as adequate by the Food and Drug Administration." This course will also cover and satisfy the training requirement of the Massachusetts Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP), a voluntary 3rd-party audit program.

Who Should Attend: Fruit and vegetable growers required to attend training as indicated in C.F.R. 21 part 112.22 (c), 330 CMR 34.04 (3) as well as others interested in learning about produce safety, the Food Safety Modernization Acts' (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule, farm food safety best practices, and co-management of natural resources and food safety.

Trainers: Lisa McKeag, UMASS Extension Vegetable Program; Michael Botelho, MDAR, Steven Pilis, MDAR

2 options - Note: These programs are grant-funded and limited to Massachusetts residents only.

- [March 9 & 10](#) - Registration deadline February 21st – [Register here.](#)

OR

- [March 22 & 23](#) - Registration deadline March 7th – [Register here.](#)

There is NO CHARGE for this course. The required training manual (~\$60 value) and certificate of completion (\$35 value) are included for FREE.

No more than two people from the same company should register for the course. Because space is limited and manuals are shipped to participants ahead of time, please be mindful that your registration indicates a commitment to attend. Certificates of attendance will only be issued to those who are present for all modules on both days.

MA Food License Plate

Show your support for local Massachusetts farmers by ordering a [MA Food Plate](#) for your car, *Choose Fresh & Local*. Support new and beginning farmers, local farmers' markets, and your local food system with a beautiful license plate that shows you value health, nutrition, and quality local food grown by local farms. Proceeds benefit the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Mass Farmers' Markets, and the Beginning Farmer Network of Massachusetts. Low number plates (<99) are also available for an additional donation, [details here](#).



Here is how it works: (1) Go to the RMV Website page for Special Plates (click order a special plate/vanity plate); (2) Select Choose Fresh & Local (MA Food Plate); (3) Pay a 1-Time Plate Changeover Fee (\$20) + Special Plate Fee (\$40) + your standard General Registration* (\$60); (4) Receive your MA Food Plate in the mail (no visit to the RMV needed).

What do I need when I order my plates online? Have ready your current Massachusetts Registration (or you can register a new car) and a Massachusetts Driver's License. The special plates are for passenger vehicles only (not available for commercial plates). Your registration should be in good standing. Visit mafoodplate.org for more information.

UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

February

- **February 16-18 - Invasive Insect Webinar Series** - 9:00 - 11:45 am. Free series of webinars focusing on the impact, monitoring, and management of invasive insects in Massachusetts and the nation. [Details here.](#)
- **February 22 - Flower Growers Winter Meeting and Education Program** - 8:00 am - 2:00 pm at Northeast Nursery and Greenhouse Supplies, Peabody. [Details here.](#)
- **February 23 - Register for MDAR Grants: An Introduction to Financial Opportunities for Your Farm** - 7 pm, Virtual. Join the MDAR and the Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation for an informative webinar on the scope of grant programs available to farmers. The MDAR team will provide an overview of grant and training programs that are available to farms in the Commonwealth and be available to answer questions as you navigate the grant writing process. [Register here.](#)
- **February 23 - Labeling Your Food Product** - 12:00 - 1:00 pm - free - virtual - Presenter: Rachel Gartner, Faegre, Drinker Biddle and Reath. Small food businesses and farms with value-added processing often sell their products locally, but understanding the Food and Drug Administration's rules for labeling those products can be challenging. This webinar will prepare you to feel confident creating a food label and selling your product. [Register here.](#)
- **February 24 - MNLA's Practical Tips for Tree and Shrub ID—Seed, Leaf, Bud & Bark** - 11:30 am - 1 pm. Success in the landscape, nursery and garden center industry begins with a comprehensive knowledge of plant material available. Speaker: Kelly Perry, Swan Point Cemetery. 1 MCH credit available. [Details here.](#)

- **February 27 - SEMAP's 2022 Agriculture & Food Conference** - 15th Annual Agriculture & Food Conference! Farmers, foodies, and agricultural advocates alike are all welcome. [Details here](#)

March

- **March 1 - Making Food More Accessible: Welcoming SNAP, WIC/Senior Coupons, and all who use them. CISA Workshop Series** - Session 1: How to accept SNAP and WIC/Senior Coupons; Session 2: Best Practices: SNAP and welcoming low-income customers at your farm. Learn how to accept SNAP and WIC & Senior Coupons, what it takes to effectively implement these programs at your business, and how to be welcoming to low-income customers. [Details here.](#)
- **March 2-3 - MNLA's Dreams & Solutions Winter Forum**— Where professionals meet for business, job opportunities, education and networking. [Updates here.](#)
- **March 2 - Elements of a Farmland Lease: What Farmers Need to Know** - Legal Services Food Hub - Free - 12:00 - 1:00 pm - Presenter: Jeff Polubinski, Gravel & Shea. When a farmer works with a landowner to put together a farmland lease, there are many important considerations. This webinar will inform farmers and nonprofit farm organizations about the key elements that should be in a farmland lease. [Register here.](#)
- **March 3 - 43rd Annual Community Tree Conference** - 8:45 am - 3:45 pm - virtual - Full day of topics designed for tree care professionals, volunteers, and enthusiasts including arborists, tree wardens, urban foresters, foresters, landscape architects, landscape contractors, and shade tree committee members. [Details here.](#)
- **March 8 - School Garden Food Safety** - 3:00 – 4:00 pm. Students who grow food in a school garden should have the opportunity to eat and celebrate the end results of their labor, but many schools and cafeterias have questions around garden food safety. What are best practices around garden food safety that can minimize risks associated with serving food from school gardens? This workshop will explore garden food safety and review materials that MA Farm to School and MDAR created that establish a standard framework and assessment for maintaining food safety in the school garden aligned with MDAR’s Commonwealth Quality Program for farms. [Register here.](#)
- **March 9 – 10 - UMass-MDAR Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Remote Grower Training** – [Details here.](#)
- **March 15 - State of the State: Update on Honey Bee Health in the Commonwealth** - Virtual Only - Beekeeping Laws and Regulations; Spring into Beekeeping. [Flyer here.](#)
- **March 15 - Building Capacity for Collaboration - Maintaining a Strong Farm Team** - 5:00 - 7:00 pm. w/Claudia and Willy Denner, Little Seed Gardens, Chatham, NY. Understanding what motivates human action and how to communicate effectively unleashes the potential for creative collaboration. This workshop will introduce ideas and skills to help transform human challenges into opportunities that fulfill the purpose of your farm. We will focus on simple, learnable skills that will help build capacity to understand yourself and others, and how to use that understanding to clarify the values and purpose of your farm business. [Details here.](#)
- **March 16 - Your Legal Toolkit for Starting a Farm** - Legal Services Food Hub - Free - 12:00 - 1:00 pm Presenter: Amy Manzelli, BCM Environmental & Land Law. When you’re starting a farm business, there are lots of important legal issues to consider, from what type of business entity you’ll form to how to

protect yourself from liability and plan for the future. This comprehensive webinar will equip farmers with the legal know-how to tackle these key decisions and start off on a strong legal footing. [Register here.](#)

- **March 22 - State of the State: Update on Honey Bee Health in the Commonwealth** - Virtual Only - MA Be Aware Honey Bee Health Survey; USDA-APHIS Honey Bee Health Survey. [Flyer here.](#)
- **March 22 & 23 - UMass-MDAR Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Remote Grower Training** – [Details here.](#)
- **March 29 - 11th Annual Local Food Trade Show of New England** - The Show provides premier networking opportunities and aims to strengthen the business-to-business relationships that are essential to meeting the New England Feeding New England 30%-by-'30 goal. This convention-style event does this by facilitating connections between producers and wholesale buyers in our regional food system. Small-to-medium sized businesses have the chance to participate in workshops, panels, sales meetings, and meetings with consultants. These offerings are orchestrated by both strategically pairing business based on their needs and facilitating environments for contemporaneous connections. [Updates here.](#)
- **March 29 - Good Grazing Practices** - 5:00 - 6:30 pm - Virtual - Will cover the basic principles of good grazing management systems, first from the perspective of the plants, and then from the perspective of the livestock. We will discuss how to monitor pastures and animals in order to maximize dry matter intake from pasture and use grazing to improve pasture quality and productivity. We will discuss how to use different stocking densities, pre and post grazing heights, length of rest periods, different plant species to improve pasture and strategies to maximize dry matter intake from pasture. With the use photos of pastures, sheep, goats and cows to talk about how to observe and monitor pastures and cattle to better understand if grazing systems are working the way they should. [Details here.](#)
- **March 31 - Best Practices in the School Garden** - 4:00 – 5:00 pm. Establishing and maintaining a successful school garden involves coordinating many moving parts. From student safety and engagement, educator and volunteer coordination, to funding for materials and seasonal maintenance, there is so much to think about. In this one hour virtual workshop you will learn best practices from garden coordinators with years of experience to make your school garden a success. Presenters: Hope Guardenier (Executive Director, [School Sprouts](#)) Eliza Lawrence (School Gardens Coordinator, [Regional Environmental Council](#)) Dinah Mack (Education Program Specialist, Mass. Farm to School). [Register Here](#)

[MDAR Calendar](#)

Classified

- **Farmers Markets Seek Vendors** - MDAR keeps an updated list of farmers markets looking for vendors and has begun collecting information for the 2022 summer season. You can find the list [here](#). Contact information for all farmers markets is posted [here](#). Questions, contact David.Webber@mass.gov.

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 April. Please send news, events, or classified information by April 8th 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.

