
August/September Farm & Market Report

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CLASSIFIED

COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Greetings, Mass. Agriculture and all its friends,

There's been a few things I've wanted to mention sooner or later in these columns. The fact of the matter is all I know and expect is that the next administration will make its own decisions on who it wishes to serve in many leadership positions. That's how it should be. It also means I likely only have a few column opportunities left, so it's now or never and I'm going to deviate somewhat from my prior patterns as we round third and head for home.

I know I also used that baseball analogy last time, but I couldn't resist using it again particularly because it lets me make a smooth transition to this:

Tickets still available! Join us this Friday to celebrate Massachusetts agriculture at the WooSox game Friday, August 19th. Catch up with old friends, meet new friends as we gather together to provide an opportunity to call the public's attention to Massachusetts' vibrant agriculture and local food system sector, recall its efforts through the pandemic, and simply socialize with friends and acquaintances.

A reserved hospitality section (up to 175 people) includes a buffet and cash bar at the park, which is a mix of seats, high chairs and an area to mingle. The tickets are non-assigned seats. For those that can stay after the game, you will have an opportunity to enjoy the Friday fireworks display.

As of this writing, the weather forecast for Friday evening is excellent-in the 70's with an extremely low likelihood of rain, so I hope to see you there.

For details and tickets, visit [MDAR WooSox custom group ticket link](#).

Please note there is no financial cost or benefit to MDAR in the organization of this event.

As we reflect on the past two years and the effect the COVID-19 pandemic placed on the Massachusetts food system, now, more than ever, is an important time for the agricultural industry of Massachusetts to share stories of the vibrant/diverse agricultural and food sectors with the consuming public.

Farm Flavor Media Publication Company located in Tennessee has recently entered into a partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to develop and implement a print and digital communications program to tell the story of Massachusetts agriculture. If you are not familiar with Farm Flavor Media – State Agricultural publications, I encourage you to check out various copies at www.farmflavormedia.com/#services.

The custom content program will showcase the contributions of agriculture to the state of Massachusetts through engaging articles, photography, and design. This publication, with accompanying online material which include a website, infographics and social media posts will make it easy to share the importance of Massachusetts agriculture with key influencers. We would like your assistance in telling the story of Massachusetts agriculture!

Your organization may be hearing from Heather Foust from Farm Flavor Media re: the first edition of the Magazine. Please feel free to reach out to me or any staff in my office including Mary Jordan, Director of the Division of Agricultural Markets and project lead at 617-459-8746 or Mary.Jordan@mass.gov.

One question I've received many times over the years from stakeholders, friends, family, and others is, "John, exactly what **do** you do?" Here's a quick (well, maybe not so quick) look at what this MDAR Commissioner does.

If I had to sum it up in a word (well, two) it's that of decision maker; the Commissioner, with a lot of consultation, decides on how the agency conducts itself. Sometimes the decision is obvious and easy, but that's generally not the case. Often there are multiple considerations to take into account, and sometimes there just isn't as good an available solution as any of us would like, despite best efforts.

I also attend a lot of meetings, and I mean a lot! In addition to meetings of public bodies, I meet routinely with MDAR staff, other government agencies, and stakeholders. Staff may propose changes to existing policies and procedures or new initiatives. We may receive a legislative directive. Stakeholders may request we take or not take a particular action. Often what we do may affect other government agencies, or their work may affect us. Deputy Commissioners Alisha Bouchard, Ashley Sears Randle and I try to talk those questions through in great detail with appropriate managers and staff to determine the value of the issue under discussion: who will benefit, will any be adversely affected, and do we have the resources to make it happen and sustain it?

There were a lot of meetings in the pre-Covid world, but since Covid, it's increased exponentially! When we were in the office, people walked down the hall, poked their head into someone's workspace, and if the party was available, discussed some matter under consideration. Since March of 2020, that model isn't really available to us. Now we have to formally schedule a call or virtual meeting about most business. Fortunately, we have those tools.

As we were rebuilding the plane in mid-flight so we could continue to maintain operations, just like every organization we had to consider the health and welfare of the people who make it happen, our team, so we could continue to deliver our services. In either March or April of 2020, Alisha, Ashley and I began to meet every morning with our EEA Deputy HR Director Johanna Zabriskie to review the status of that most critical resource, the MDAR and Mosquito Control teams, and figure out the solutions and workarounds to the seemingly never-ending new questions or challenges facing them. We quickly expanded that meeting to include MDAR General Counsel Margaret Callanan and MDAR Chief Fiscal Officer Cullen Roberts.

These morning meetings of our Division of Administration have proved to be enormously helpful. We continue to hold them every morning unless there is a major scheduling conflict.

As far as public meetings, I serve on a variety of public bodies pursuant to legislation or executive order. I'm probably forgetting some but here's most of them in which I routinely attend and participate:

- Agritourism Commission (I serve as chair)
- Agricultural Land Preservation Committee (chair)
- Board of Public Overseers of UMass Extension (member)
- Cannabis Advisory Board (member)
- Cranberry Station Board of Oversight (member)
- Food Policy Council (chair)
- Glyphosate Commission (member)
- Public Market Commission (chair)
- Pesticide Board (chair)
- State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board (chair)

Often enabling legislation provides that the Commissioner or their designee may sit on these bodies. Maybe it is a result of my municipal service, but unless there are particular reasons for me not to do so, I prefer to sit on the bodies myself so I can hear the issues firsthand. As she is a fourth-generation dairy farmer, I designated Deputy Commissioner Randle to represent me as chair of the Dairy Promotion Board soon after she joined us in 2018. Agricultural Economist Myron Inglis represents me on the Farmland Valuation Advisory Commission. Produce Safety Director Michael Botelho and Environmental Chemist Hotze Wijnja are my designees to the Drought Management Task Force. Aquaculture Coordinator Sean Bowen represents me on the Shellfish Advisory Council. Hotze Wijnja also represents MDAR on the Water Resources Commission. Additionally,

MDAR Director of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance Gerard Kennedy lends his expertise as MDAR designee to several technical bodies.

During my tenure I have also served on the following bodies that have sun-setted, are in hiatus, or have been legislated but are not yet in operation:

- Cranberry Revitalization Task Force (co-chair)
- Food Security Task Force (Workgroup lead)
- Mosquito Control Task Force (member)
- PFAS Task Force (member)
- Special Commission on the 21st Century Needs of Agriculture in the Commonwealth (member)

Like I said, I go to a lot of meetings!

As I frequently recount to you, I think it's critically important to get out in the field as much as I can. We all know that sometimes there are things concerning one that may not rise to the level of a formal communication but might be raised in a conversation. So often that's vitally important for me to hear!

And I hear plenty! I'm pleased to say much of it is complimentary to our programs and teams, but not always, and it's very important for me to hear that as well. It's always nice to hear kind remarks, but the critical ones cause me to go back and ask the team if we are doing something in the best possible manner, or if we need to adjust.

My responsibilities also require overseeing the internal workings of the agency. We are very lucky to have excellent, highly skilled, thoughtful professionals who manage their areas very well, but as agency head, I routinely am consulted on Human Resources, Fiscal, Legal, Information Technology and overall agency operations.

I couldn't do any of this without the MDAR/SRB team, and we have a great one!

I work most closely with our two deputy commissioners. Let me pull back the curtain a little bit on how that works. Though I've never worked in a restaurant, I think the "front of house/back of house" organizational model found in that industry can be applied to us.

I'm definitely mostly a front of house guy. Like the maître d' in a restaurant, I'm out there interacting with our "customers." I do that through formal and informal meetings, speaking engagements, press releases, social media, getting out into the field at a variety of farms, farmers markets and fairs, etc.

While that is going on, Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Operations Alisha Bouchard is in the back of the house making sure the "kitchen" has all the tools it needs to deliver what our customers need. We may be a relatively small agency, but you'd be shocked at the thousands and thousands of items Alisha has overseen with largely extremely positive results since she became Chief of Staff in 2015. Alisha tries to stay out of the front of house to some degree, but we drag her in when necessary. I want you all to know that if you have been pleased with just about any part of our work since 2015, Alisha has quietly had a tremendous impact in making that so.

Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Legislative Affairs Ashley Sears Randle is essentially constantly running back and forth as needed from front of house to back of house. Policy development is in the back, and

Legislative Affairs is in the front. Though all three of us bounce back and forth to some degree, Ashley does so the most of us. (Good thing she's a runner!)

There are very few decisions I make without careful consultation with our highly skilled division directors and staff. There are even fewer I make without consulting with our two deputies, and I think that model has resulted in a pretty successful run for almost eight years.

I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge Ashley's predecessor, Jason Wentworth, who also was a very trusted member of the Commissioner's Office team from 2015 to 2018.

Enough of all that-I hope it was interesting.

So with all those administrative obligations, it's always nice to get back out in the field. Since last time I've visited:

- Copley Sq Farmers Market, Boston
- Nourse Farm 300th Anniversary Celebration, Westborough
- Pollinator Week, State Apiary, Amherst
- MNLA Summer Meeting, Hopkinton
- Westport Fair
- Sandwich Farmers Mkt
- Barnstable Fair, Falmouth
- Berkshire Grown farm tours at Holiday Brook Farm, Dalton; Robinson Farm, Becket; Woven Roots Farm, Tyringham
- World Farmers/Flats Mentor Farm, Lancaster
- MA and National Farmers Market Week events at Framingham, Northampton, Holyoke, Truro, Central Sq (Cambridge) , Wayland, Watertown, and Brighton Farmers Markets

There's a lot going on: the drought certainly is on a lot of peoples' minds and rightfully so. Additionally, we are following up on reports of Spotted Lanternfly sightings in various locations. Sadly, this was anticipated, but we continue to make best effort to stop or slow the spread. Please learn more about this pest and how to report a possible sighting [here](#).

Lastly, I want to note that MA Farm Bureau Executive Director Brad Mitchell is leaving his position after serving the organization and its members since 2010. Brad has been a strong advocate for MA Ag; I've appreciated working with him over the years. As our positions have been aligned more often than not, it's been very helpful working through issues with him. Occasionally, when our positions diverged, he's been a strong and respectful advocate for MFB's position. Best wishes for what comes next, Brad, and thank you for all the excellent work!

Some things never change-Rick wanted this column last week, so we are going to quit here. We may have another slightly different Commissioner's Column again next time.

We all know how difficult the weather of 2021 and now 2022 has been on everybody. Fingers crossed that patterns are about to change, and we return to less extreme situations. In spite of it all, what I see on my visits is that the quality of what you produce and bring to market remains excellent, but we all know how much resources are necessary to achieve that.

I hope to see many of you Friday at Polar Park!



John Lebeaux

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DEPUTY'S DIALOGUE

When last I wrote, I was getting ready to board a plane to the United Kingdom for my first USDA Foreign Ag Service Trade Mission. After a week spent across the pond, I returned to the states with a new appreciation for the inner workings of foreign ag trade policy and the regulatory framework that businesses must navigate in order to export goods and services. It was also a great opportunity to connect with my colleagues from eleven other state departments of ag and share ideas about topics where our work aligns. Some of the best conversations are had during the bus rides between tour stops and afternoon coffee breaks. We were also fortunate to be joined by USDA Deputy Secretary Dr. Jewel Bronaugh, as she led her first trade mission in her role as Deputy Secretary.

A highlight of the trip included the rare opportunity to see the Rt Hon George Eustice MP, UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, answer parliament questions in the House of Commons and announce the UK government joining the USDA-led Sustainable Productivity Growth Coalition. The week also included briefings on the UK consumer marketplace at the US Embassy, tours to Mondo Brewing, Partridges of Sloane Square, and Rothamsted facility, an early Independence Day celebration hosted at US Ambassador Jane Hartley's Winfield House (the second largest private garden in London behind Buckingham Palace), and a meeting with Rt Hon Penny Mordant MP, UK Minister of State for Trade Policy, to discuss continued collaboration opportunities between our countries.

The delegation ultimately was seeking to reduce tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers to create equitable access to the UK marketplace, as well as encourage science-based decision making in terms of agricultural and food policies. The briefings helped to inform US exporters in attendance about how to navigate the UK market and connect them with potential trade partners.

The trade mission was a unique opportunity to promote and educate about Massachusetts agriculture and further fueled my passion for policy work. A sincere thank you to USDA for this opportunity, the US Embassy team led by Cynthia Guven for their kindness and support, and my state dept. of ag colleagues for a week of friendship and laughs.

After the trade mission, fair season kicked off with the Hampshire County 4-H Fair on July 9th at the Cummington fairgrounds. It was so great to see how excited the youth were to return to the fairs and exhibiting their livestock and 4-H projects in the youth hall. I was also able to connect with the UMass 4-H Extension team at the event and met a fellow MA 4-H Foundation Trustee, Va Shon Wallace-Hiltbold, for the first time since serving together on the board. As this was the first show of the season for many youth, it was a good opportunity for them to hone in on their showmanship skills and practice with their animals in preparation for the fall shows. Best of luck to the youth as they continue to compete at shows the rest of the season!

The following week I attended the MA Fruit Growers Summer Meeting at UMass Cold Spring Orchard in Belchertown, along with Rick LeBlanc from our Ag Markets team. We appreciated the time to connect with growers and hear about the latest technologies, IPM strategies, and industry updates. It served as the perfect venue to honor and celebrate the contributions of Wes Autio (37 years) and Jim Krupa (31 years) to UMass and the fruit grower community, who both recently retired. Extension Educator Jon Clements was also honored by the MFG Association for his immeasurable contributions to the industry. Several legislators also attended the meeting and I'd like to thank them for their support of the sector, including Speaker Pro Tempore Rep. Kate Hogan, Rep. Natalie Blais, and Rep. Jake Oliveira. We enjoyed delicious ripe peaches from the orchard and had a "sweet" day on all accounts.

Finally, I'd like to provide an update on the USDA FR SAN mental health and wellness grant. MDAR has successfully contracted with three providers to assist with the development of training programs, a resource toolkit and community outreach. As you may remember from the last F&M report, "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."

To help ensure that our mental health and wellness program addresses the specific needs of the Commonwealth's agricultural community, a comprehensive web-based survey is under development and expected to begin collecting data in early September. The survey will look to identify the most pressing concerns facing members of the agriculture community, how these factors are affecting mental health and wellbeing, and what resources the community would find most helpful to address these concerns. The survey is being developed by our contractor, Carroll Communications Group.

A key result of the survey will be to understand if and how people are accessing existing mental health resources, and if not, the reasons they may be resisting outreach to the providers.

This direct communication with the Commonwealth's agricultural community will help inform the development of a wide range of mental health and resources for farmers, our partner organizations and our own state staff and federal stakeholders.

An important part of the mental health and wellness program will be the training of farmers, stakeholders and MDAR staff. The goal of the training program is to empower the trainees to engage with those they interact with in the agricultural community, recognize potential signs of concern, validate those concerns, have the resources to recommend and understand how to offer the resources in a way they might be accepted.

We are working with one of our FR SAN colleagues, FarmFirst VT to develop the training programs. FarmFirst VT has been working on mental health and wellness training programs for several years and bring a great deal of insight, experience and expertise to our training programs, which will be offered in-person and online.

The development work on the training programs is underway and are scheduled to begin in early 2023.

Our outreach and engagement efforts will be supported by a recently awarded contractor, Elevate Communications. Elevate has a great deal of experience working with various departments of Massachusetts state government and has a wide range of media and influencer connections throughout the state. This phase will also identify the important events and observations during the year where MDAR can share information on the program directly with the community.

The outreach and engagement phase of the mental health and wellness program will include working with partner organizations and media outlets to inform the community, raise awareness of resources, and grow the conversation around mental health and wellness in agriculture statewide.

Please watch your inbox in the coming weeks for an invitation to participate in our survey. We would value and appreciate the time you invest responding to the survey, which will take approximately 5-7 minutes.

I look forward to seeing you at fairs, farmers markets, meetings/events, and the WooSox game in the coming months. I'll also be assisting Fran and Mary with management of the MA Building at The Big E again this year so please stop by and say hello.

Wishing for a few rainy days ahead and a successful fall harvest for all.

Locally grown and proud,

Ashley

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FOREFRONT

State Agricultural Officials Ask Residents to Report Sightings of the Invasive Spotted Lanternfly

Hampden County Find Indicates Species Is Continuing to be Found in New Areas



Photo: Spotted lanternfly adult (left) and late-stage nymph (right) (Credit: USDA)

MDAR recently announced that an infestation of the invasive insect known as spotted lanternfly (SLF) was found in the City of Springfield last week.

Agricultural inspectors are in the middle of performing surveys in the area in order to determine the extent of the infestation. While MDAR has not been able to determine the origin of this new find, cities like Springfield with large industrial areas are at especially high risk for spotted lanternfly introductions, since this pest can hitchhike on trucks and other methods of transportation that come from infested states. Urban and industrial areas often harbor large populations of the spotted lanternfly's preferred host plant, tree-of-heaven.

[Complete release here.](#)

MDAR Seeks Proposals for New Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA)

MDAR is soliciting proposals for projects that specifically address the goals of the United States Department of Agriculture ("USDA") Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program ("LFPA"). The purpose of this program is to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency. To access the RFR visit [COMMBUYS - Bid Solicitation](#).

MDAR is seeking projects to purchase domestic food from local and regional producers, target purchases from Socially Disadvantaged farmers/producers, and distribute food to underserved communities. MDAR encourages applications that benefit Socially Disadvantaged farmers/producers and that provide food distribution to underserved communities, especially those not part of the traditional food distribution network. Preference will be given to applications that demonstrate how relationships and distribution channels will continue past the conclusion of this program.

MDAR intends to fund approximately \$7,200,000 in projects through this competitive RFR process, and the suggested dollar value of projects is between \$50,000 and \$750,000. This program does not have a Federal cost sharing or matching requirement.

Applications are due by 2:00 pm on September 16, 2022, and must be submitted to LFPAGrant@mass.gov. Applicants may submit questions regarding the RFR and application process. Please submit questions by email to: LFPAGrant@mass.gov.

***An informational webinar where questions may be asked will be held for interested applicants on Thursday, August 18, 2022, 6:00pm.** The webinar will be 1 to 1.5 hour(s) in length, and cover the LFPA Grant Program and provide information on accessing the [MassGrown Exchange](#) platform. Follow [this link](#) to register for the webinar.

Please visit [our webpage](#) to learn more about the LFPA Program.

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Over 100 New Healthy Incentives Program Farm Vendors

Baker-Polito Administration recently announced new vendors for the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). One hundred and seven new vendors and fifteen current vendors expanding access points were selected based on their ability to respond to the needs of prioritized populations and communities. This includes serving areas where food insecurity and rates of chronic disease have historically been disproportionately high, serving areas designated as food deserts or low-access areas, and demonstrating an ability to reach SNAP clients with disabilities and/or Black SNAP clients, who have historically accessed fewer HIP locations compared to other client populations. [Complete release here.](#)

Energy News

FY2023 MDAR CSAP Energy Grants

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) Climate Smart Agriculture Program (CSAP) was pleased to have received 52 applications relevant to the AgEnergy component of FY2023 CSAP. This included over \$1.794 million in total funding requests. MDAR is currently reviewing the applications. _

MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP) - Energy Audits

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.

You will need a technical assessment to file an energy grant application whether with MDAR or USDA. 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.

SMART ASTGU Annual Report Posted on DOER Website

The Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Unit (ASTGU) Annual Report form is now posted ([here](#)) on the DOER SMART website [Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target \(SMART\) Program | Mass.gov](#). This form is required to be completed and submitted annually for all projects with the MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER) which received qualification as an Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Unit (ASTGU) under the SMART program. The form is provided to demonstrate conformance with the general provisions required for ASTGUs in 225 CMR 20.00; in particular pertaining to Section 20.06(1)(d) therein as well as associated ASTGU Guidelines; and specifically pertaining to annual reporting requirements.

The completed form will be reviewed by DOER and the MA Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to determine that the farm is in conformance with all ASTGU provisions in general under the SMART Program, although more specifically to the ASTGU annual production requirements.

The MA Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) 2022 Gap III Energy Grant Program will provide \$7.5 Million and offer up to \$200,000 of grant assistance for eligible entities. The grant program has been expanded to serve new sectors!

Under the leadership of MassDEP, the Clean Energy Results Program (CERP) is an integrated energy and environmental partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) and the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) that reduces regulatory or other barriers to clean and energy efficient development across the state. The Gap Grant is a cornerstone of this partnership and is a streamlined energy grant funding model that has helped municipal water utilities reduce their energy usage, operating costs, and improve the environment. The grant is designed to fill the last “gap” in project financing, enabling and encouraging facilities to use energy utility incentives as well as funding from other sources to install selected energy efficiency and clean energy generation projects.

For the GAP III, you are eligible if you are:

- Nonprofit affordable housing
- Nonprofit agricultural /food distribution
- Small Business -Food Distribution and Processing
- Water and wastewater utility owned by a municipal, district or authority

Please visit [Massachusetts' Gap Energy Grant Program | Mass.gov](#) for more information.

The Markets Corner

Massachusetts Tomato Contest to be held on August 23rd



The 37th [Massachusetts Tomato Contest](#) will be held at the Boston Public Market on Tuesday, August 23rd. Tomatoes will be judged by a panel of experts on flavor, firmness/slicing quality, exterior color and shape. Always a lively and fun event, the day is designed to increase awareness of locally grown produce.

Open to commercial farmers in Massachusetts, growers can bring tomatoes to the market between 8:45 am and 10:45 am on August 23rd or drop their entries off with a registration form to one of the regional drop off locations on Monday, August 22nd. For those that can't attend in Boston on Tuesday, farmers can drop off their tomatoes Monday at regional locations: Great Barrington, South Deerfield, Worcester, Dighton and West Newbury. These tomatoes will be brought to Boston on Tuesday.

For complete details, including drop off locations, contest criteria, and a registration form, [click here](#). Be sure to include the [registration form](#) with all entries.

The 37th Tomato Contest is sponsored by MDAR, [New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Association](#) and [Mass Farmers Markets](#) in cooperation with the [Boston Public Market](#).

Questions, contact David Webber, David.Webber@mass.gov.

The MassGrown Map



Agritourism farms – Are you listed on the [MassGrown 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 \(.doc\)](#).

Looking to add “Massachusetts grown and fresher” posters and price cards to your farmstand or farmers market display, [order form here](#).

Hosting special events or music this Summer at your farm? Send web link or details to Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov, and we'll add to our [Culinary and Events Calendar](#).



The MassGrown Exchange - Connecting fruit and vegetable farms, flower growers, fisheries, food suppliers and buyers.



The Exchange includes many types of businesses: Recent listings include tomatoes, melons, and peaches by [Red Fire Farm](#), fresh filleted fish by [F/V Isabel and Lilee Scallops](#), Cajun, Creole, garlic seasonings by [Alicia's Spice Co.](#), sweet corn by [Whittier Farms](#), and more! All current products and services can be found and [here](#).

Farmers - Looking for new buyers? [Register](#) and post today! Quick and easy registration. Over 400 businesses have registered to date.

Buyers - Be notified automatically for crops or products of interest when posted. [Register](#) and create auto “Alerts”.

Questions, or 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.

MDAR Seeks Technical Assistance Providers to Serve as Independent Contractors to Provide Business and Technical Assistance to Farmers

MDAR is seeking responses from experienced service providers interested in providing business and technical assistance services to farmers. MDAR contracts with individuals to provide services to farmers participating in Farm Viability, Agricultural Business Training, and other programs as needed. Responders should have demonstrated expertise or background in one of the following general categories: Agricultural Operations, Agricultural Business Management, or Agricultural Resource Management.

Specific areas of expertise expected to be needed include:

- Marketing – plan, website or logo development
- Business Planning - plan development and financial management
- Succession Planning - consultations or plan development
- Technical Assistance - consultations in area of expertise
- Course Instruction – for established courses for farmers
- Trainings, Presentations, Designs, Reviews, Research

For more details about this opportunity, go to: [COMMBUYS - Bid Solicitation](#) and review RFR Document AGR-TAP-FY23~1. If interested in responding to get on contract with the Department to receive notices of farms needing assistance, follow Response Submission Instructions on page 7 of the RFR document and refer to the How to submit an RFR Quote via CommBuys document posted at the COMMBUYS link above. Responses can be submitted anytime, through CommBuys, but are recommended to be received by Sept 16, 2022 in order to be considered for technical assistance needs identified in the upcoming round of the programs in Fiscal Year 2023.

Contact Melissa Adams, Farm Viability Programs Manager at Melissa.L.Adams@mass.gov or 413-726-2001 with questions about these programs or the types of services needed. If, after reading through the CommBuys instructions, you have questions about how to submit a response, contact Robert.Monahan@mass.gov.

MDAR's Agricultural Business Training Courses – Spots Still Available for Fall

Growing Your Farm Business Planning Course

October 11 – November 29, 2022, Tuesday evenings 5:30 – 8:30pm

MDAR office in Southborough, MA

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 a professional business planner with years of experience working with Massachusetts farms and guest speakers on topics such as succession planning and online marketing. 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 in person in Southborough on Tuesday evenings starting October 11 and ending November 29. The course fee, subsidized by MDAR, is \$150 per farm. The Growing Your Farm business planning course has been approved as a certified USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrower training for financial management.

If interested, please complete the brief [course application](#) and email it to Diego.Irizarry-Gerould@mass.gov, or mail a hard copy to: MDAR, Attn: Diego Irizarry-Gerould, 138 Memorial Ave, Suite 42, West Springfield, MA

01089. For more information about this course, see the ABTP [program webpage](#) or contact Diego Irizarry-Gerould at 857-248-1671.

Exploring the Small Farm Dream Course

October 5 to November 2, 2022, Wednesday evenings 6:00pm – 9:00pm

Western Mass location (tentatively MDAR office in West Springfield)

[This 5-session course](#) provides guidance to aspiring farmers through the decision-making process of whether to start a farm business. Participants will learn about the many aspects of starting a farm business, assess their own skills and knowledge, and get help finding resources for support, including marketing, financing, and regulations. The Exploring the Small Farm Dream course utilizes the curriculum and workbook developed by the New England Small Farm Institute. Through four guided group sessions and a farmer panel session, participants will analyze the feasibility of their small farm dream and clarify their vision together with other class participants. This course is sponsored and financially supported by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and is intended for new agricultural entrepreneurs planning to start their farm business in Massachusetts. The course fee is \$100 for up to two participants per enterprise, as space allows.

*Plans are for an in-person class with the location to be determined based on interest from those who submit an application and are added to the waiting list. If interested, please complete the brief application found here: [Exploring the Small Farm Dream](#) and email it to Jessica.Camp@mass.gov, or mail a hard copy to: MDAR, Attn: Jessica Camp, 138 Memorial Ave, Suite 42, West Springfield, MA 01089. For more information about this course, see the ABTP [program webpage](#) or contact Jess Camp at 617-823-0871.

Beginning Farmers and APR Farmers Benefit from Business Assistance and Grants

MDAR recently awarded Fiscal Year 2022 grants to Massachusetts farms through the APR Improvement Program (AIP) and the Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture (MEGA) program. The APR Improvement Program (AIP) helps sustain active commercial farming on land that has been protected by Department funds through the APR Program. The program offers business planning assistance and grants to farmers operating APR farms that have proven success in producing and selling agricultural products. AIP's goal is to help improve the productivity and profitability of participating farms to enhance the significance of APR farm operations and their contribution to the state's agricultural industry.

In FY2022, AIP grants totaling \$400,000 are being awarded to the following APR farms:

- Foxcroft Farm in Amherst for a hay & equipment storage building (\$40,000)
- Long Plain Farm in Whately for a multi-use storage building (\$40,000)
- Orr's Farm in Westport for a multi-use storage building (\$40,000)
- Mountain View Farms in Easthampton for infrastructure improvements to a storage building (\$40,000)
- D.A. Smiarowski Farms in Sunderland for a produce washing/packing facility (\$120,000)
- Wolf Tree Farm in Plainfield for a produce washing/packing facility (\$120,000)

For more information, please visit the [AIP website](#).

In FY2022, MEGA grants totaling \$63,788 are being awarded to the following beginning farms:

- Small Farm Inc in Stow for farm and high tunnel equipment (\$6,238)
- Bell Brook Farm LLC in West Brookfield for a walk-in cooler (\$7,550)

- Dintino Farms in Oxford for haying equipment (\$10,000)
- Hannan Agro Farms in Lincoln for a greenhouse, fencing, and equipment (\$10,000)
- Many Graces LLC in Hadley for a tractor and implements (\$10,000)
- Maplebrook Farmstead in Sterling for chicken housing and an egg processing room (\$10,000)
- Nantucket Sound Shellfish Company in Falmouth for a tumbler grading system (\$10,000)

For more information, please visit the [MEGA website](#).

Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP)

MDAR is now accepting applications for the Ag Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP). The goal of the AFSIP grant is to support **produce and aquaculture** operations that are looking to upgrade their food safety practices that work towards minimizing the risk of microbial contamination and food-borne illnesses, meet regulatory requirements, and improve market access.

AFSIP is a competitive, reimbursement grant program that funds 80% of total project costs up to \$50,000. **Applications are due by 4:00PM on Friday, September 30, 2022.**

Please refer to the [AFSIP website](#) for more information and a copy of the application.

\$1.7 Million for On-Farm Milk Storage & Handling

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) recently announced the availability of funds for the On-Farm Milk Storage & Handling Grant program, which will support dairy farmers in purchasing equipment and other materials that will improve milk storage, handling, and energy efficiencies. The focus of this grant is on the purchase of specialized equipment. Applicants will be able to select from a pre-approved list of eligible equipment which includes milk storage tanks, milk pipeline, glycol chillers, milk loading systems, reclaim systems for water, cooling equipment, plate coolers/heat exchangers, and equipment installation costs. Projects must show that they will address inefficiencies around labor, energy, and product waste as it relates to the movement of milk to processing.

Projects should focus on increased storage capacity and improved handling to:

- Ensure farmers can move from once-a-day pick up to every-other-day pick up of milk
- Reduce costs related to fuel, hauling charges, and energy use to farmer and processor
- Reduce the risk of farmer needing to dump milk
- Decrease the amount of time and labor to move milk
- Make milk pick up easier for a processor
- Reduce trips between farm and processing facility
- Reduce milk handling by increasing milk transfer efficiencies
- Increase farm storage to allow for larger batch sizes.

Grants will range from \$15,000- \$50,000 with a 25% match commitment. Match waivers are available. FSA low-interest loans and other grants are encouraged to supplement the project.

The application period is from August 25th - October 6, 2022. [Learn more and apply here.](#)

Bears and Chickens - How to Protect Your Chickens and Bees

Bears Live Closer Than You Think - The state's bear population is estimated at over 4,500 animals. Common in central and western Massachusetts,

Bear-chicken interactions are by far the number one sources of conflict with black bears in Massachusetts. MassWildlife and the Environmental Police receive calls daily about bears breaking into chicken coops. Almost every bear in Massachusetts has learned this behavior. As back yard chicken farming has increased in popularity conflict with black bears has greatly increased. Please help us prevent this type of conflict and protect your chickens by using electric fencing. Electric fencing is the only way to prevent bears from learning this behavior and to adequately protect your chickens. Electric fencing is easy to set up and safe around kids and pets. Please see link below for a complete electric fencing guide, that provides recommendations of how to build and maintain the most effective fencing to protect your chickens, including baiting the wires. As always, please to do not feed bears. Remove bird feeders and secure other potential food sources around your homes.

[Protect your Chickens from Black Bears](#) (PDF)
[Electric Fence Guide to Prevent Bear Damage](#) (PDF)

Updates and additional guides to protect your chickens and bees from bears [here](#). For more information contact Dave Wattles, Black Bear and Furbearer Biologist at MA Wildlife, 508-389-6359, Dave.Wattles@mass.gov.

UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

August

- **August 17 - Spotted Lanternfly in Massachusetts: Quarterly Update** - 10am. [Details here.](#)
- **August 19 - Celebrate Massachusetts Agriculture at the WooSox game** – [Details here.](#)
- **August 20 - MA Christmas Tree Annual Mtg** - Ioka Valley Farm, Hancock. Open to all. [Details here.](#)
- **August 23 - The 37th Massachusetts Tomato Contest** - Save the Date! Updates will be posted [here](#).
- **August 24 - Twilight Meeting at Harvest Farm of Whately** - S. Deerfield - 4pm - free - In-person twilight meeting covering several post-harvest topics, including the vacuum cooler Harvest Farm recently purchased with a MA Food Security Infrastructure Grant. [Details here.](#)
- **August 27 - Honey Bee Education Day at State Apiary** – Topic: Honey Extraction, Danvers location only. [Details here.](#)
- **August 30 - Sept. 1 - 2022 International Workshop on Agritourism** - Burlington, Vermont. Presentations include nuts and bolts sessions on managing opportunities and risks; creating programs that elevate local culture, diversity, and inclusion; agritourism as a farm viability and rural development strategy; marketing; collaboration; and, half-day field trips to local agritourism programs. [Details here.](#)

September

- **September 10 - Honey Bee Education Days at State Apiaries** – In person, Amherst and Danvers - Topic: Fall Management & Winter Prep. [Details here.](#)

- **September 13-14 - New England Made - Giftware and Specialty Food Show** - Boxboro, MA. Juried shows present the finest New England made giftware, specialty food and home furnishings for wholesalers. [Details here.](#)
- **September 22 - MA Specialty Foods Association Annual Gathering** - Pemberton Farms, Cambridge. Contact Carol Coutrier, ccoutrier@aol.com.
- **September 22 - "Massachusetts Day" at the Big E** - [Updates here.](#)
- **September 30 - "Harvest NE Day" at the Big E** - [Updates here.](#)

October

- **October 8 - Honey Bee Education Days at State Apiaries** – In person, Amherst and Danvers - Topic: Winter Management. [Details here.](#)
- **October 12 - 2022 MA Food System Forum** - Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center, 8:30am - 4pm. MA Food System Collaborative hosts Forum. Join hundreds of advocates, farmers, and other food system stakeholders in celebrating the innovative work and positive changes in the Massachusetts food system since the completion of the MA Local Food Action Plan in 2015, and in planning our next steps as we continue to work together toward an equitable, sustainable, and resilient local food system. [Details here.](#)
- **October 30 - Rich and Healthy: No-till for Successful Farms** - Orange, 10-5pm. Are you a farmer or market gardener seeking to start or transition to no-till methods that use simple tools, build healthy soil, reduce labor and cost inputs, promote climate resilience and increase your connection to the land? You'll learn several no-till, climate resilience techniques in this experiential, day-long workshop with seasoned farmer Ricky Baruc and no-till soil science researchers. [Details here.](#)

[MDAR Calendar](#)

Classified

- **Farmers Markets Seek Vendors** - MDAR keeps an updated list of farmers markets looking for vendors. You can find the list [here](#). Contact information for all farmers markets is posted [here](#). Questions, contact David.Webber@mass.gov.
- **Job Posting: Executive Director** for Mass. Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) - To manage the business of the Federation including the staff and coordinate volunteer leaders to aggressively promote Farm Bureau programs and implement policy. [Complete details here.](#)

Looking to buy or sell, and job postings? Visit and register on the [MassGrown Exchange!](#)

About the *Farm & Market Report*

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Complete staff directory [here](#). Next issue to be published in August. Please send news and events by October 14th 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.

