

# Mass Ready Act – Investing in Farms and Local Economies



*Healey-Driscoll Administration*

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The Commonwealth's land, water, and food systems are integral to our well-being and economic vitality. The Mass Ready Act aligns environmental protection with agricultural sustainability and climate adaptation. With targeted investments in food security, climate-smart agriculture, land and water conservation, and resilience projects, Massachusetts is preparing its communities—not only to withstand environmental pressures—but to continue to thrive despite them.

Additionally, the Act implements regulatory reforms to enhance animal health oversight, establish commercial feed standards, and modernize the state land payment in lieu of taxes system signaling a commitment to modern, efficient governance. In addition, support for milk producers, and a fund for transferring development rights reflect both fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability.

## **Climate Readiness and Conservation**

Massachusetts cities and towns need support to protect their business centers, roads, transportation, and neighborhoods from extreme weather. These investments ensure local economies – from rural farmlands to dense downtowns – are prepared to weather any storm. The Mass Ready Act includes authorizations that will support municipal climate adaption, including \$315 million, for EEA's flagship program, the **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant Program (MVP)**. And **\$30 million** for **forestry and tree planting** programs. The Act also includes **\$340.5 million** for investments in **land, soil, water, and natural resource** conservation and open space preservation. Other strategic investment policies include:

- **Creating a new Resilience Revolving Fund** at the Clean Water Trust to provide low-interest loans for resilience projects that protect communities and prevent future damages. Eligible recipients include municipalities, water and wastewater utilities, and tribal governments; and eligible projects include stormwater management, floodplain protection, and nature-based solutions, among others.

- Capitalizing on the existing **Transfer of Development Rights Fund** to provide local communities with an additional tool for strategic land protection and development, supporting housing, coastal resilience, and conservation goals.

## Food Security and Farms

Massachusetts food producers – our fishers and farmers – are vital pillars of both our state’s economy and culture. The Mass Ready Act authorizes **\$125 million** for the **Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG)** program, which offers funding to ensure that farmers, fishermen, and other local food producers are better connected to a strong food system. These investments make sure residents have access to healthy, local food. Additionally, the **Food Policy Council** will evolve to expand its membership to include the Division of Marine Fisheries, representing the interests of the fishing industry, and the UMass Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment. The Act also includes **\$68 million** for the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture (MDAR) to **protect farmland, foster food security, and sustain agricultural economic viability**.

Further, the Act includes farm-related policies such as:

- Granting **MDAR the authority to issue enforcement fines** for animal health violations.
- Enabling the **Milk Producers Security Fund** to be used to support dairy farmers through existing MDAR grant programs.
- Aligning MDAR with regional and national state partners to effectively respond to foodborne illnesses associated with **Animal Commercial Feed**.
- Promoting **animal welfare and fairness in horse drawing competitions** by enabling MDAR to enforce against the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

## Environmental Protection

With the Mass Ready Act, Massachusetts will continue its leadership in protecting the environment from threats to our air, water, and soil. The Mass Ready Act supports the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with **\$42 million** to manage and mitigate hazardous threats to public safety. In addition, it empowers DEP to better support community concerns regarding **properties with illegally disposed waste** by granting authority for the agency to investigate disposal mismanagement issues.

These measures are proactive steps toward a more resilient, equitable, and self-reliant Massachusetts. Now is the time to act—because protecting our resources today is the surest way to secure our future tomorrow.

- **The Commonwealth Port Sustainability Commission** will produce a statewide, community-supported strategic vision for the designated port areas of Massachusetts.
- **Transfer selected DCR roadways to MassDOT and municipalities** to advance 2011 Parkway Study recommendations aimed at increasing government efficiency.