

Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan

About the Implementation Matrix

Last amended 1/21/2025

In December 2023 the Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan was released and implementation has started.

This document gives a short introduction to the implementation matrix for the Plan.

For more context about the Farmland Action Plan, please visit the plan website, including the 2024 Progress Report at www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

For more information

www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

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About the Implementation matrix

The MFAP implementation matrix contains all the goals, strategies, actions, implementation objectives, and tasks from the 2023 Plan.

The matrix represents a review of the items from the Plan in an effort to:

- Identify a potential timeline for implementation
- Identify lead and other potential implementers
- Clarify language to ensure clear understanding of item
- Check whether additional tasks are needed to assist with implementation of actions

We anticipate additional refinements in 2025. From 2026 onwards the matrix will continue to evolve to reflect implementation progress but at a slower pace. The matrix is a living document that tracks what partners have done and what partners plan to do.

Tips for exploring the matrix spreadsheet

The matrix is a searchable spreadsheet.

Where possible we have included keywords to help find areas which are similar. This includes 2-3 word summaries for all strategies and actions. It also includes the partners listed by function so, for example, if you are interested in policy related things, you may want to search for “Policy” in the “Lead implementer” and “Potential other implementers” columns.

You can either use the “Find” function for the document as a whole, or click on the down arrow at the top of a column to open the “Filter” and then look for the topic or “search” for a word.

What types of items are in the matrix?

As of January 2025 there are more than 440 items in the matrix, representing items from the Farmland Action Plan. The matrix has four types of items:

- **Goal** – Broad statements of what the Plan hopes to achieve. There are three goals. Some items address multiple goals.
- **Strategy** – Clarify what aspects of each goal will be addressed. There are 12 strategies and one related to implementation.
- **Action** – Direct how each strategy will be implemented. There are over 60 actions.
- **Task** – Specific activities that are proposed to implement the action. There are more than 340 tasks. (This is a combination of the implementation objectives and tasks from the MFAP.)

How are items identified?

What is the MFAP ID number?

Within the Plan every item had an ID number that was derived from where it was nested. For example I.A.7.g.a (see “Original Plan ID” column).

Every item within the implementation matrix has been assigned a unique 4-digit ID number (“MFAP ID” column – ie the Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan ID). This number is unique to each item so that implementation can be tracked over time.

Like the Plan, the matrix continues to reference Goals, Strategies, and Actions by ID numbers. Tasks are only referenced by their 4-digit ID. There is a column that preserves the Plan ID for reference.

- In some cases an item may be divided into more than one task – whereupon a new ID is assigned to one of them and a note is added about how the two items are related. This may occur if the original item contained more than one task that have distinct implementation steps.
- In some cases two or more items may be combined into one, whereupon one of the IDs is discontinued and a note is added.
- Over time new items may be added (especially tasks!) as implementation proceeds and new tasks are identified. They are assigned a new ID number.

How are items sorted?

There are two sets of columns that explain how items are nested.

The “Goal”, “Strategy” and “Action” columns give the alpha-numeric explanation about how the item is nested into action, strategy and goal. In most cases this corresponds with the nesting used within the plan.

The “Goal Text”, “Strategy Text” and “Action Text” columns give 1-3 word summaries that describe how the item is nested into action, strategy and goal. This is a useful way to look for sections of the plan on a particular topic/ keyword. It is also a useful way to get quick context on an item to clarify intent. For example a task that is nested within the “Protection”, “Agricultural Restrictions” and “Federal funding” section may not specifically mention protecting land or using federal funding, but any activity listed in the task should be interpreted within that lens.

Who is implementing?

This is a Plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is being implemented through the collective action of many partners.

Within the implementation matrix and other parts of this report, we refer to the following people or groups:

- **Partner** – This is any person or group who is helping with implementation of the Plan.
- **Lead implementer** – The partner who is the energy behind and champion for leading implementation of an action or task. They often have expertise in the subject area.
- **Other potential implementer** – Other partners who could be key for implementing an action or task. This list does not include everyone who may get involved but focuses on key partners who have expertise or insights that may shape implementation.
- **Other interested entities and individuals** who may have useful information to share to inform the task, may be part of the solution, or are interested in the task outcome. (Not included in January 2025 version.)

To simplify the matrix, unless a specific organization is involved as a partner, the matrix identifies partners by the function they provide – such as land trust, regional planning agency, incubator organization, Buy Local organization, ag policy organization, etc. See [Appendix A \(Abbreviations\)](#) and [Appendix B \(Definitions\)](#) for more information.

For the January 2025 version many tasks have “**unassigned**” for the lead implementer – ie the lead partner has not yet been identified or confirmed. This is an opportunity to potential partners to step up and volunteer to lead!

What is the timeframe and status?

The **potential timeframe for implementation** refers to when activity on the action or task may start:

- **Short term** – Starting within the next year or two
- **Medium term** – Starting within the next 3-5 years
- **Long term** – Starting at least 5 years from now
- **Ongoing** – Item that is already in action and needs to keep going every year – eg capacity building, seeking additional funding
- **Completed** – Item has been completed and there is no need for ongoing activity
- **No action** – The item as written is not implementable. Refinement may be needed so it can be actionable.

The **status** gives additional details for ongoing, short term and ongoing items:

- **Completed** – Item has been completed and there is no need for ongoing activity
- **Substantially complete** – Most of the work has been done, but it may take time to tie down the loose ends
- **In progress** – Item is being implemented
- **Starting soon** – starting within the next year or so
- **No action** – The item as written is not implementable. Refinement may be needed so it can be actionable.

Edits to the matrix

The matrix is a living document that tracks what partners have done and what partners plan to do.

Revised versions of the matrix will be posted online as they become available, likely every 3-6 months. We recommend checking www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan before you do any notable work to see if there is a new version.

You can propose edits for the matrix by filling out the **Matrix Feedback Portal form** which is available at www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

Abbreviations

A&F	Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration and Finance	FSA	US Department Agriculture Farm Services Agency
ACEP	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program	HUF	Historically Underserved Farmer
AFT FIC	American Farmland Trust Farmland Information Center	MDAR	Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
AFT	American Farmland Trust	MEPA	Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act
ALE	Agricultural Land Easements (part of ACEP)	MFAP	Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan
ALPC	Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee	MiM	Mass in Motion program, including the communities awarded grants
APR	Agricultural Preservation Restriction	MLTC Ag	Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition - Ag Lands Working Group (formerly a committee)
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color	MLTC	Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition
CDC	Community Development Corporation	MLTC CR	Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition Conservation Restriction Working Group
CDFI	Community Development Financial Institution	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
CLT	Community Land Trust	NWL	Natural and Working Lands
CPA	Community Preservation Act	Org	Organization or entity
CR	Conservation Restriction	OPAV	Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value
DCAMM	Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance	RLI	Resilient Lands Initiative
DCR	Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation	ROFR	Right of First Refusal
DFG	Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game	RPA	Regional Planning Agency
DOR	Massachusetts Department of Revenue	SCAC21	Special Commission on Agriculture in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century
DPH	Department of Public Health	UMass	University of Massachusetts
EEA DCS	Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services	UMass CAFE	University of Massachusetts Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment, which includes UMass Extension (including urban ag) and Clean Energy Extension
EEA	Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	TA	Technical assistance
EJ	Environmental Justice	USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
EOED	Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development	WRE	Wetland Reserve Easements (part of ACEP)
EOHLC	Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities		
FLI	Farm soils of Local Importance		

Full names for other entities referenced in matrix

- ACEP-ALE Program Sub-Committee of the NRCS State Technical Committee
- NRCS State Technical Committee

MDAR Teams/ Functions

- Ag Edu – Staff working on agricultural education and careers
- Ag Markets – Division for Agricultural Markets
- Acquisition – APR Acquisition team
- Commissioner – Commissioner’s Office
- DACTA – Director for Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance
- EJ – Environmental Justice team
- Energy and Climate – Staff working on energy and climate initiatives
- FAPC – Farmland Action Plan Coordinator
- Fiscal – Fiscal team
- Food Security – Food security team
- GIS – GIS team
- Licensing – State lands licensing team
- Outreach – Part of Ag Markets Division
- Policy – Legislative and Policy Director
- Stewardship – APR Stewardship team
- Urban Ag – Urban agriculture coordinator
- Viability – Farm Viability and Agricultural Business Training Programs team

Definitions

For more definitions, see the Farmland Action Plan.

Ag energy org – Entity that works on agriculture energy projects which could include technical assistance to farmers, research on best practices and/or support for others in the agricultural industry related to energy resources and usage. This does not include for-profit developer groups.

Ag mediation org – Entity that provides mediation services for farmers to help resolve disputes.

Ag policy organization – Entity that is involved with advocacy and policy work related to agriculture and/or food systems.

Ag service org – Entity that provides farm-oriented technical assistance and services not otherwise specified in other categories in the matrix (eg farm financing orgs, incubator orgs, Buy Locals and others).

Beginning Farmers¹ - Individuals who have operated a farm or ranch for ten years or less.

Collective effort – where there is unlikely to be one clear lead implementer. For example the task is accomplished by efforts of various partners at various stages at the same time.

Community Land Trust – Community based entity who holds land in a way that is rooted in providing access to land for community/collective benefit and in an affordable way. They are often associated with affordable housing, but also work with urban

agriculture, open space and economic development. This could also include food system and food justice organizations that include access to land in their work (buy, sell or lease). There can be overlap with the function of land trusts.

Farm financing org – Entity that provides funding or loans to farmers, whether non-profit, public or for-profit.

Farmer membership organization – Entity that focuses on serving farmers who are members of the organization. This could include commodity groups.

Food systems org – Entity that is involved in food system work.

Historically Underserved Farmers² include the following groups according to the USDA:

- Beginning Farmers
- Limited Resource Farmers
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
- Veteran Farmers

HUF Organization – Entity or group that is led by and/or represents Historically Underserved Farmers.

Incubator organization – Entity that supports beginning farmers through access to land and a training program.

Land conservation membership org – Entity that serves conservation organizations such as land trusts that are a member of the organization.

¹ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers. 6/19/2024 www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers

² USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers. 6/19/2024 www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers

Land transfer org – Entity that works on land transfer and/or success for agricultural lands.

Land trust – Entity that actively works to permanently conserve and/or preserve land. This may include Community Land Trusts performing the same function.

Legal org – Entity who provides legal assistance to farmers.

Limited Resource Farmers³ - Individuals who have limited financial resources and face challenges in accessing land, capital, and other resources necessary for farming.

Socially Disadvantaged Farmers⁴ - Individuals who belong to groups that have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice. This includes African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asians, Hispanics, and Pacific Islanders.

Statewide non-profit – Non-profit entity that works across Massachusetts and interacts with agricultural partners and/or farmers.

Unassigned – A lead implementer has not yet been identified or confirmed for this task.

Urban ag org – Entity involved with serving farmers involved with urban agriculture.

Veteran Farmers⁵ - Individuals who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and have not operated a farm for more than ten years.

Whole farm planning and protection is the inclusion of forestland, housing, infrastructure, and other resources that support long-term viability of farming operations.

Young farmer org – Entity that serves youth and/or young farmers.

³ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers. 6/19/2024 www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers

⁴ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers. 6/19/2024 www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers

⁵ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers. 6/19/2024 www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers