

Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan

Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee (ALPC)

Wednesday, October 15, 2025 at 10am. Online

Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator



Agenda and Today's Goals

Agenda

- ❖ Context for the Farmland Action Plan
- ❖ About the Farmland Action Plan
- ❖ Implementing the Farmland Action Plan
 - ❖ Overview
 - ❖ ALPC specific
 - ❖ Farmland Partnership Program
- ❖ Questions and Discussion

Goals

- ❖ Understand how the Farmland Action Plan applies to the work of the ALPC and other partners across the state

Context

Farming in Massachusetts today

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Massachusetts has:

**7,083 farms on
464,451 acres**



of farmland (about 9% of MA land) with
land and buildings worth

\$6.4 billion

13,896 producers* and
14,032 hired farm workers

with a payroll of

\$204 million



**\$607
million**

of agricultural
products
sold



* A “producer” is a person who is involved in making decisions for the farm operation

Why are farms
and farmland
important to you?

Feeds
community

????

Contributes
to local
economy

Preserves
rural
heritage

????

Grow
foods from
my cultural
heritage

????

Helps
address
climate
change and
mitigate its
impacts

Sustains
family
businesses

Protects
vital
natural
resources

Contributes
to soil
health

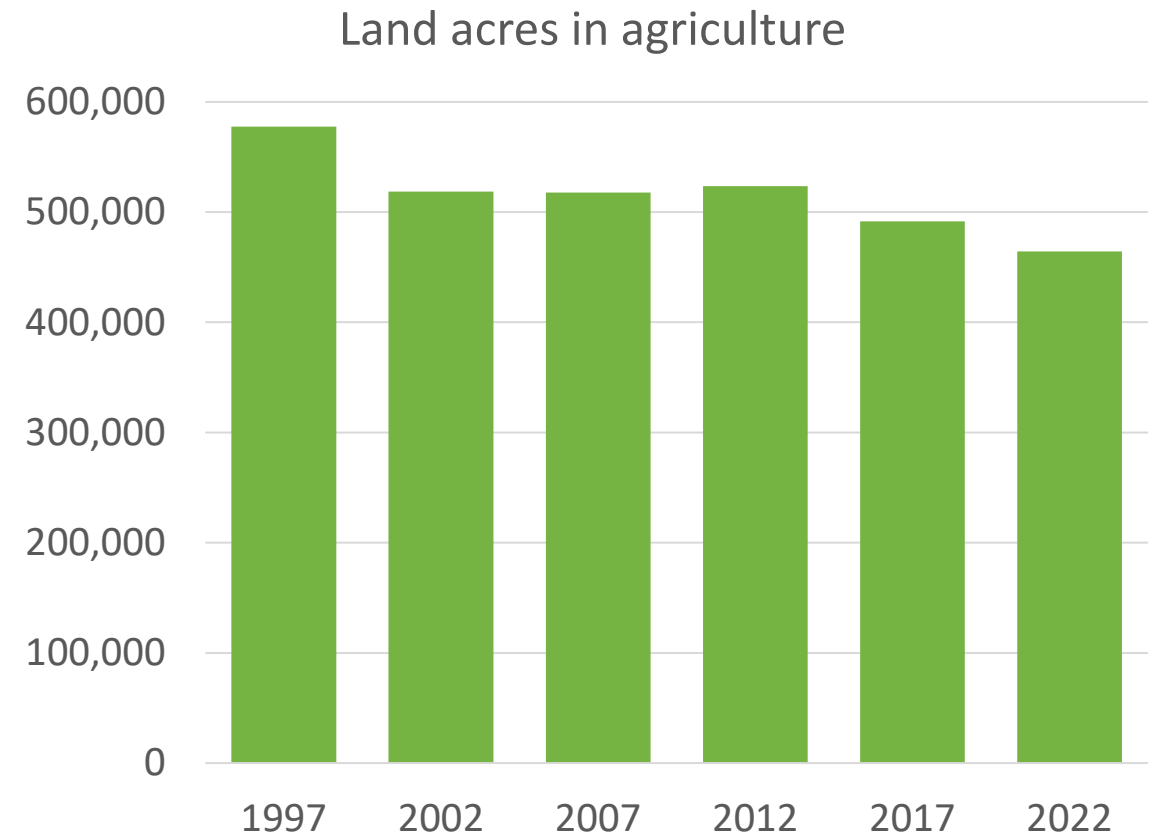
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Why is the Farmland Action Plan important?

We are losing agricultural land fast!

**Between 1997 and 2022
Massachusetts lost 113,000 acres**

- 3.7 times the size of the land area of Boston
- 1.8 times the size of Martha's Vineyard
- 12.4 acres per day



Farms Under Threat

American Farmland Trust's "Farms Under Threat 2040" Report, between 2016 and 2040 Massachusetts, without additional investment and policy changes, is projected to lose

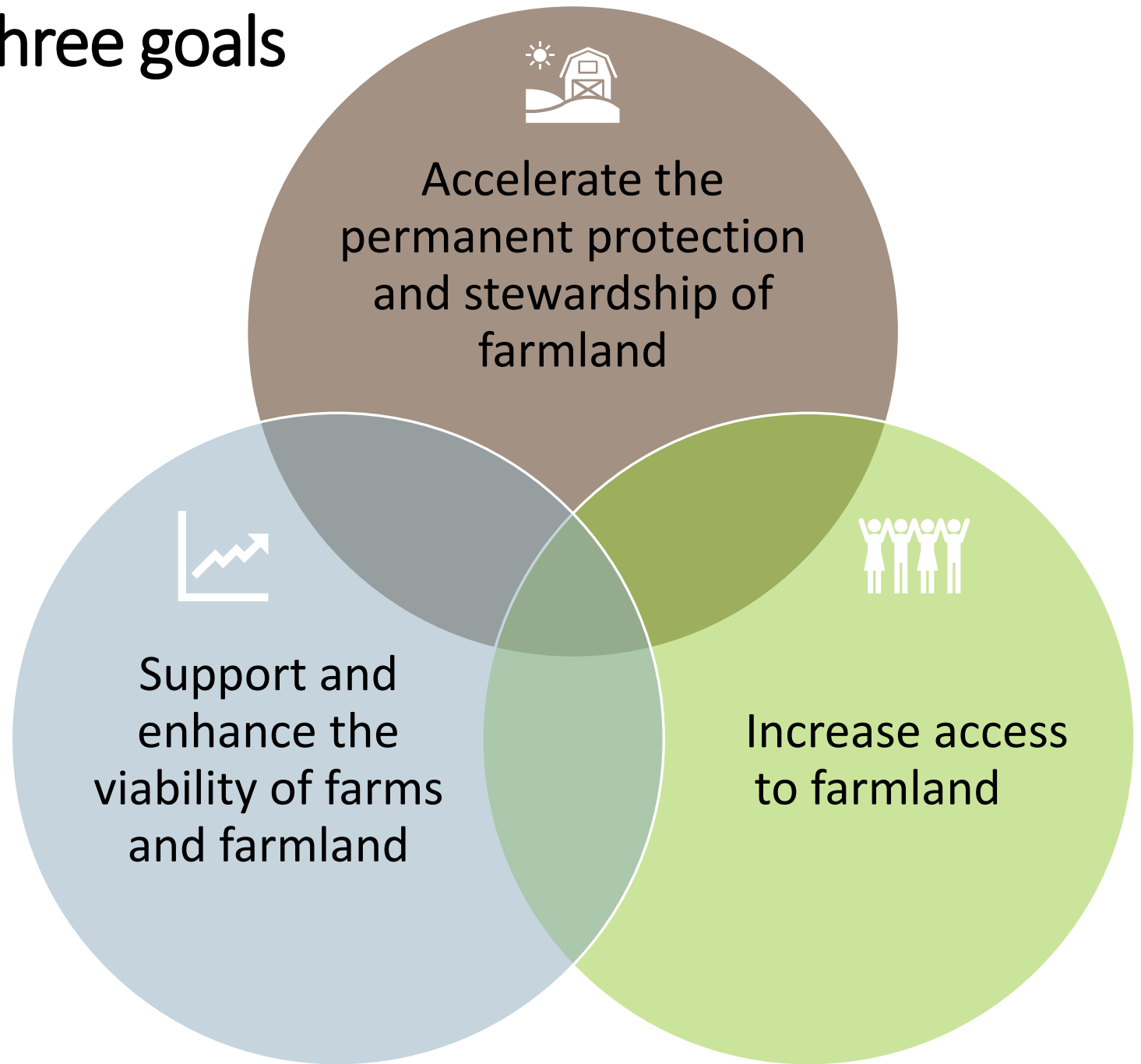


Farmland Action Plan

What is the Farmland Action Plan?

- State funded
- State coordinated
- Long range strategic initiative
- Statewide, not just for state government
- www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

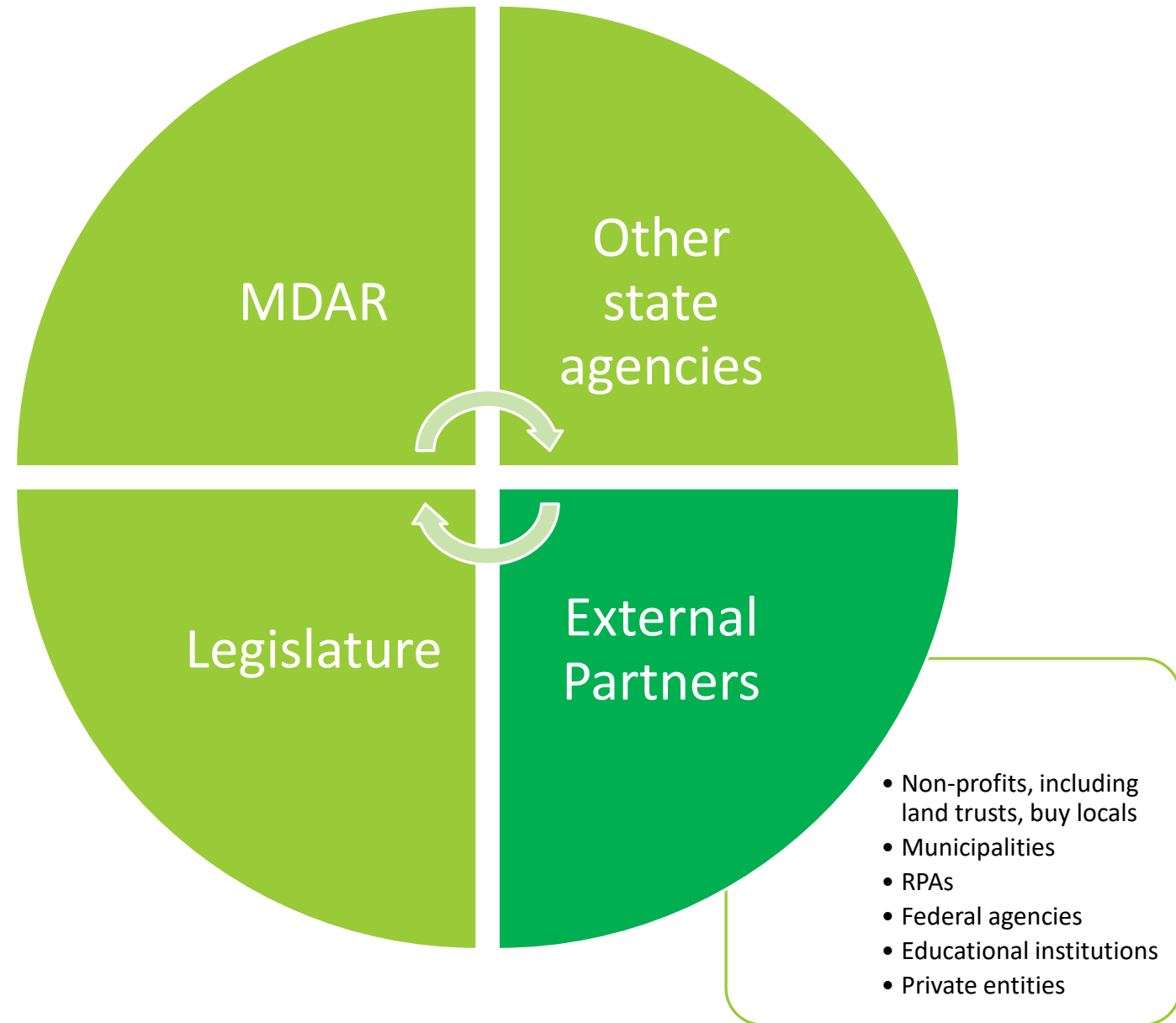
Three goals



Who will implement the Plan?

This is a plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

MDAR is promoting, monitoring and facilitating implementation of the Plan, building momentum from existing programs and initiatives.



How is it organized?

Plan is organized into:

- Goals
- Strategies
- Actions
- Tasks

For each task we are looking for a lead implementer and other potential implementers. When work starts on a task, that group will then reach out to other interested individuals.

Lead implementer

Other
potential
implementer

Other
potential
implementer

Other
potential
implementer

Other
interested
individuals

Other
interested
individuals

Other
interested
individuals

Other
interested
individuals

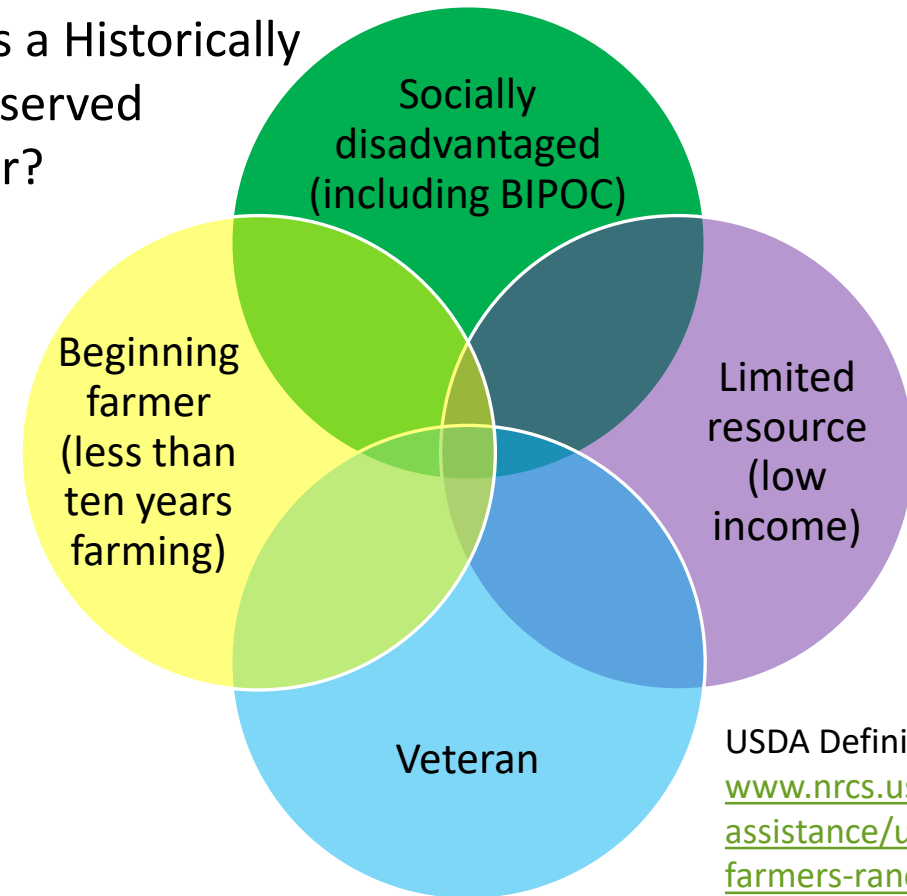
Other
interested
individuals

Other
interested
individuals

Implementing for all farmers

- All stages of farmer – beginning through retiring
- All areas of the state
- Variety of farm types – dairy, fruit, vegetables, nurseries, maple, etc.
- Urban and rural farming
- Historically Underserved Farmers (see graphic)
- Many other characteristics

Who is a Historically Underserved Farmer?



USDA Definition 2024
www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers

Implementation

Key features for implementation

Already started

- Regular communication via newsletter and meetings
- Foster partnerships and collaboration
- Learn from feedback on previous processes, including plan creation
- Encourage wider engagement and implementation
- Refine the implementation matrix
- Drop In Sessions for questions and comments – approximately monthly

Going forwards

- Focus on topics or specific tasks not the entire plan
- Better understanding of equitable engagement and feedback mechanisms
- Build trusted relationships
- Capacity building, including funding for partners to help with implementation

Sign up for the newsletter at www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

Refining the implementation matrix

The matrix is a living document that tracks

- what partners have done, and
- what partners plan to do.

Published online at

www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

with updates published as needed

Sort, filter and search for keywords – eg
“ALPC”, “municipality”, “policy”

4-digit unique ID number



Strategies for each goal



Protection

- A. Permanently protect farmland through purchases of agricultural restrictions
- B. Further develop and implement additional tools to avoid farmland loss and retain farmland
- C. Prioritize protection of whole farms
- D. Formalize and integrate decision-making processes regarding farmland protection



Access

- A. Make more land available for agriculture
- B. Support farm transfer and succession in ways that enhance access to farmland
- C. Prioritize increased access for BIPOC and historically underserved farmers in all farmland access programs and policies
- D. Support and expand service-provider networks to meet the needs of all farmers and potential farmers.



Viability

- A. Ensure that laws, regulations, programs, and investments support farm viability
- B. Grow resilience and sustainability practices on farms
- C. Increase use of services, programs, and other resources by farmers



All goals

- A. Implement the Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan
- B. Build public support for agriculture and for farmland protection, access and viability

Tasks where the ALPC is mentioned

Tasks from the matrix

Action I.A.6 - Build capacity of state agencies, land trusts, municipalities, and other entities to protect agricultural land.

1052	Develop standard training for all Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee (ALPC) members, regular professional development opportunities for members to ensure effective participation, and written materials to guide members' work.
1053	Ensure that the Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee (ALPC) has adequate diversity to support all farmers and potential farmers, including BIPOC and historically underserved communities.

ALPC as “Other potential implementers”

- Current version (2/5/2025) has 11 tasks. Filter for “ALPC”. At least one due to be added in next version
- Suggest places to add “ALPC” using the [matrix portal](#)!

Protection tasks - Implementation with ALPC

Task	Action	Task language	Status	Lead Implementer
1071	I.A.7	Continue to regularly review and adjust the APR per-acre purchase price cap, which could include elimination if evidence suggests it poses a significant hinderance to participation.	Ongoing	MDAR Acquisition team
1447	I.A.7	Revise the APR scoring and review sheet to continue to align with NRCS ranking, community land protection priorities, recognize farmland of local importance soils and include broader criteria for evaluation, such as infrastructure, succession planning, and farmland viability program involvement.	Completed	MDAR Acquisition team
1419	I.A.7	Formalize a process for including FLI soils in the ranking criteria for APR projects-	Completed	MDAR Acquisition team

Access and Viability tasks - Implementation with ALPC

Task	Action	Task language	Status	Lead
1215	II.B.2	Encourage protection of projects through the APR Program that result in the transfer of farmland to a next-generation farmer.	Medium term	MDAR Acquisition Team
1254	III.A.1	Enhance consideration of viability in the APR ranking process.	In progress	MDAR Acquisition Team

Learn more at

www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

MFAP Newsletter

- Approximately monthly
- Celebrate work done and share opportunities to get involved
- Sign up on webpage

Drop In Sessions

- Approximately monthly.
- Ask questions, share comments and make suggestions
- Dates and registration in MFAP newsletter and on webpage

Progress Reports

- First released December 2024
- Second anticipated December 2025
- Shares more about what has happened so far
- Highlights – Work in progress or starting soon

Other Resources by Topic

- Created for meetings with potential partners in 2024 – Presentations, meeting notes and other resources
- Short video introductions added in May 2025

New Farmland Partnership Program

Grant program to help implement the Farmland Action Plan at the local, regional or statewide level.

The goal of the Program is to **build networks of Partners who work together collaboratively and in coordination** to protect farmland, enhance farm viability, and ensure access to farmland.

Learn more at www.mass.gov/info-details/farmland-partnership-program

- Two year grants to implement tasks from MFAP Implementation Matrix
- First round
 - Applications were due May 2025
 - Expect to start work around late fall 2025
 - 14 applications, requesting \$7.4 million, proposed 393 projects to implement specific tasks in the MFAP matrix



Questions and discussion

Farmland Action Plan Webpage www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

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Join an upcoming Drop In Session! Upcoming dates in MFAP newsletter and on website



Reference slides

Strategies for each goal



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Many actions for each strategy



Protection

- Funding mechanisms
- Build capacity and coordinate
- Long term protection
- Short term covenants
- Stewardship
- Education and engagement
- No net loss of farmland
- Chapter 61A
- Solar development
- Zoning & Smart Growth
- Whole farm approach – Housing, infrastructure and other land
- And more!



Access

- Agricultural suitability
- State land licensing
- Urban agriculture
- Private leases
- Tribal lands
- Farmland Restoration
- Farm Incubators
- Education and technical assistance
- Diversification
- DEI training
- Resource toolbox
- Land search
- And more!



Viability

- Right to Farm Bylaws and Ag Comms
- Grants and financing
- Local taxation, policy and regulations
- Urban agriculture
- Farm infrastructure
- Service providers
- Climate change technical assistance
- Soils on public lands
- Non-market contributions
- Technical assistance and education
- And more!



All goals

- Partners and partnerships for implementation
- Historically underserved farmer involvement.
- Map, track monitor and report
- Build public support
- And more!

Highlights from 2024 Progress Report



Protect and steward land

- Leverage federal funding
- Build capacity of entities to protect land
- Increase applications to protection programs
- Prioritize protection of whole farms



Access to farmland

- State and municipal land licensing programs
- Expand farmland transfer and succession education and technical assistance
- Increase use of public lands by Historically Underserved Farmers



Viability of farms and farmland

- Farmer access to grants and financing



General

- Hire Farmland Action Plan Coordinator
- Elevate BIPOC and other historically underserved farmer voices in implementation