

Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan

Board of Agriculture Meeting
Wednesday, November 5, 2025 at 10am
MDAR office in Southborough

Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator



Agenda

- ❖ Context for the Farmland Action Plan
- ❖ About the Farmland Action Plan
- ❖ Implementing the Farmland Action Plan
 - ❖ New Farmland Partnership Program
- ❖ Questions and Discussion

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

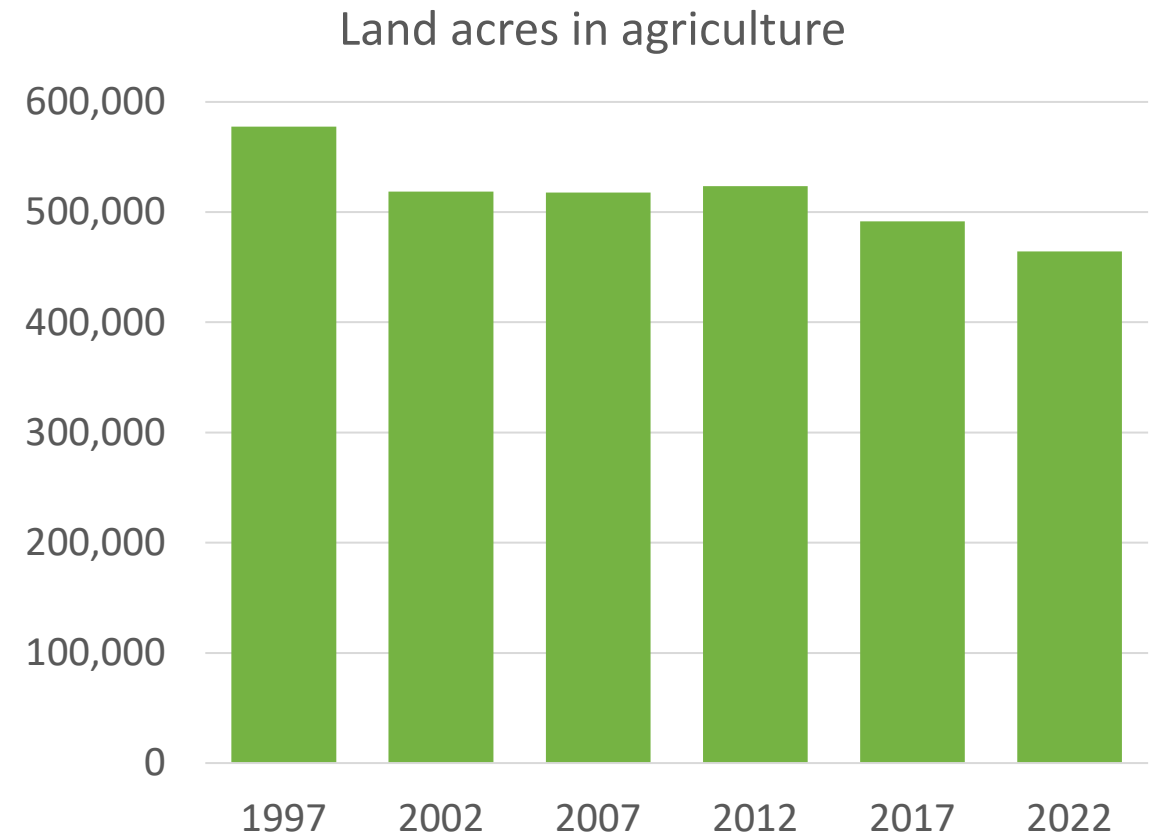
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Why is the Farmland Action Plan important?

We are losing agricultural land fast!

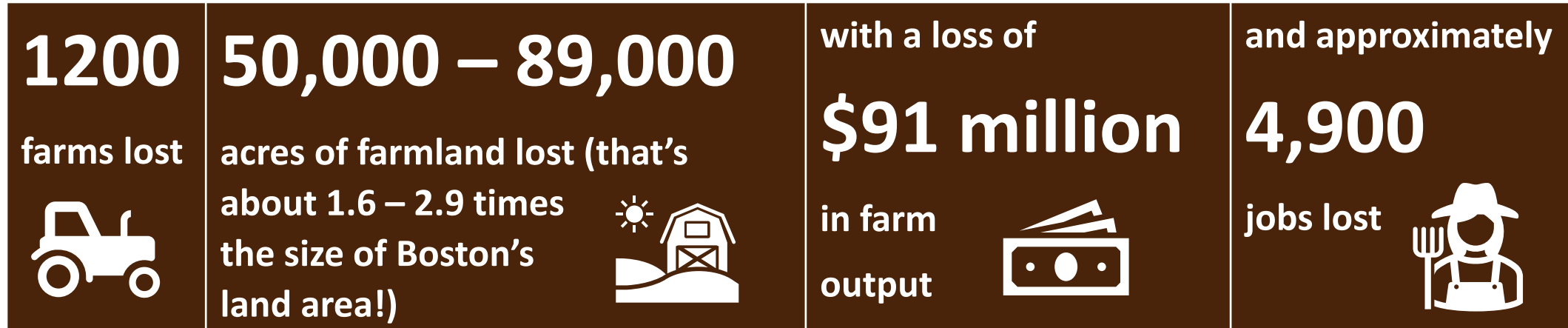
**Between 1997 and 2022
Massachusetts lost 113,000 acres**

- 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

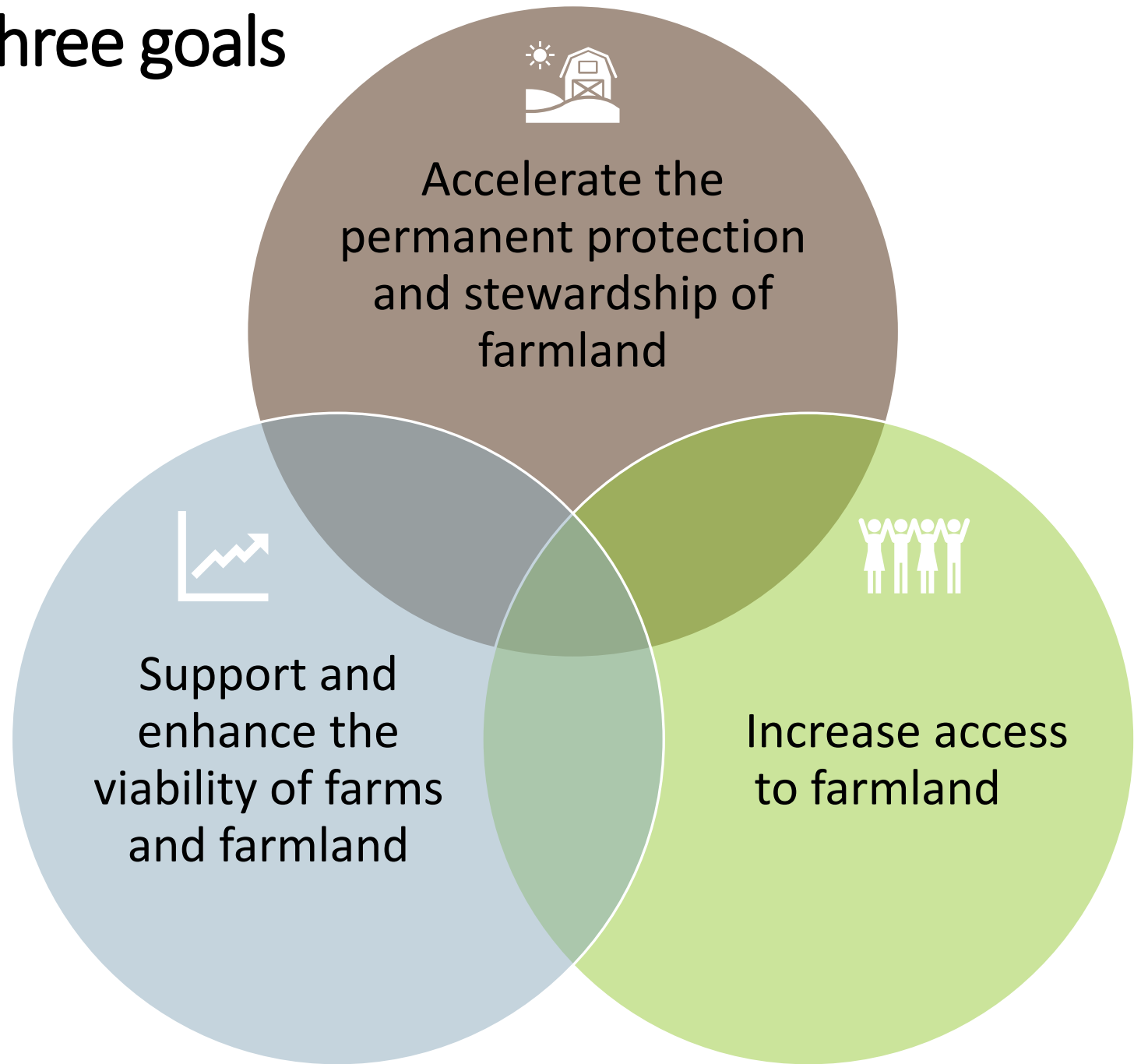


Farmland Action Plan

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

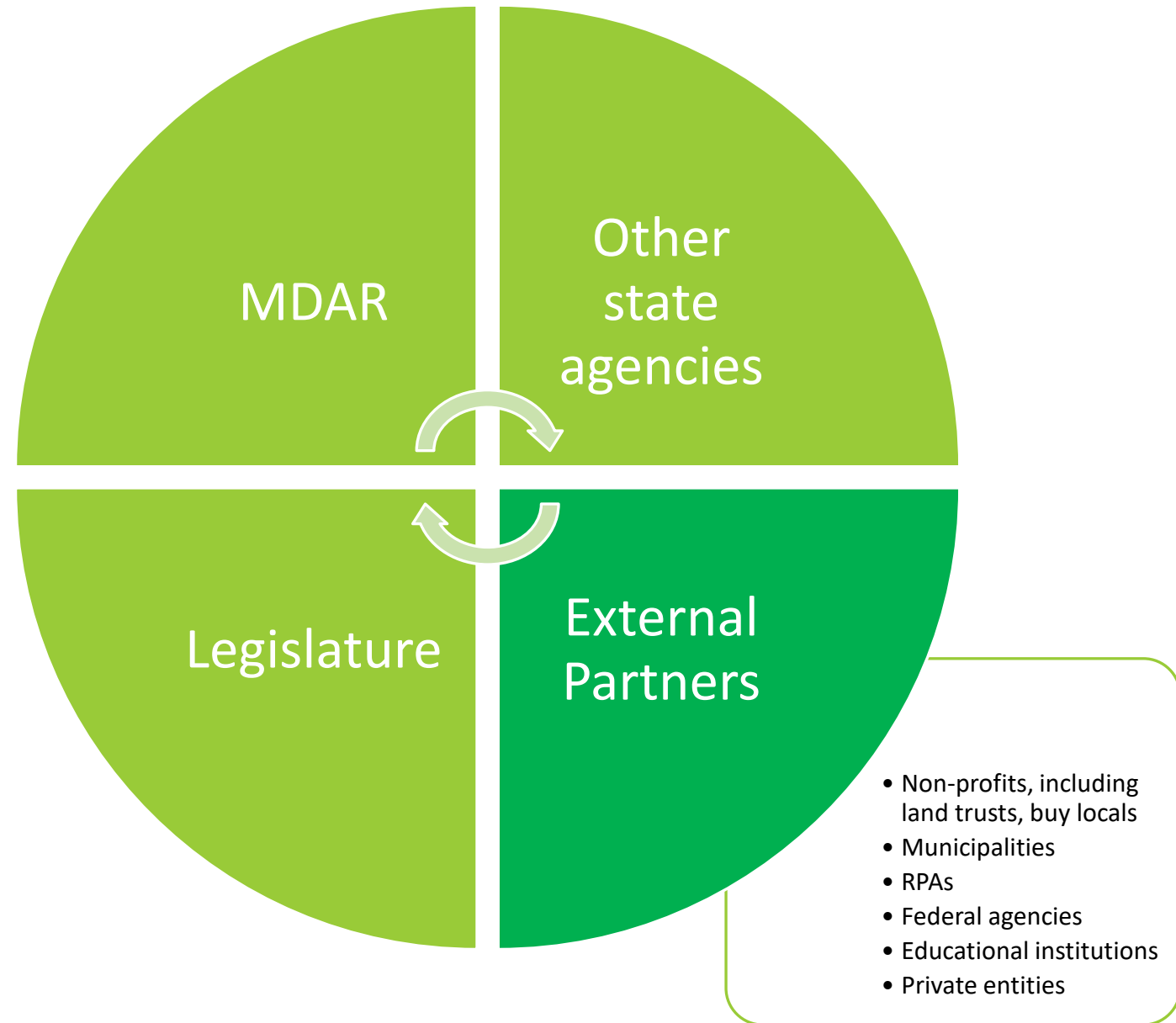
Three goals



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

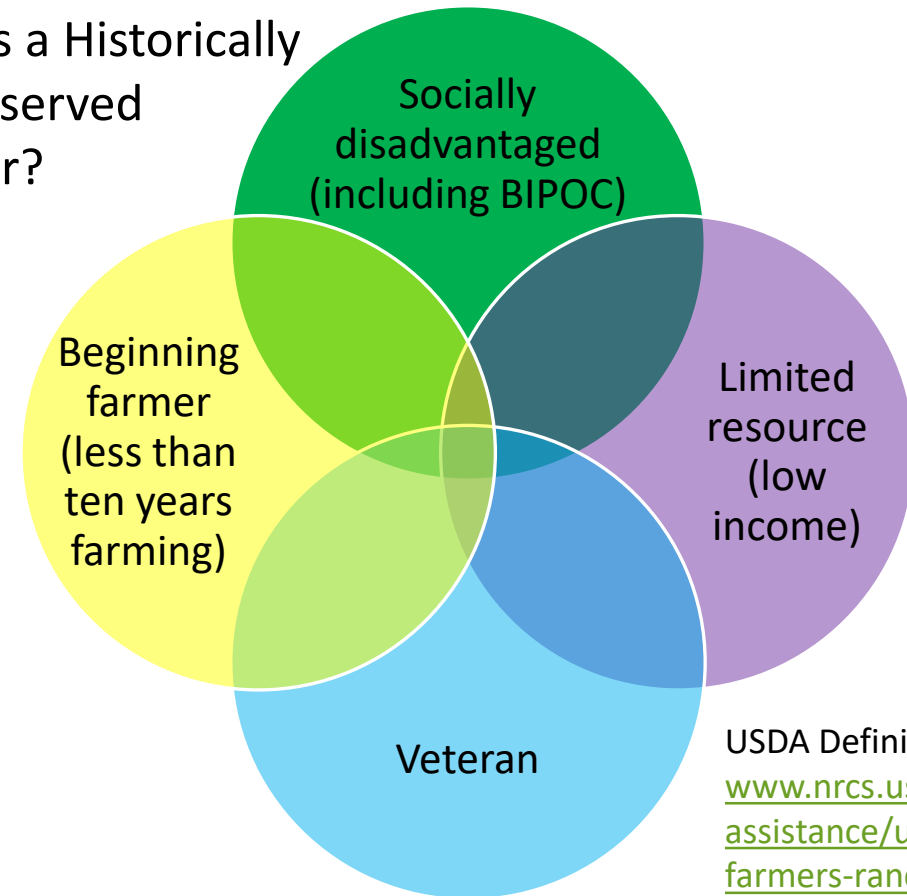
Other
interested
individuals

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

Important features for implementation

Building partnerships and collaboration

Reducing silos and building shared understanding

Farmland Partnership Program

Evolving approach

Look to the future while learning from the past and other programs

Implementation Matrix - rooted in the Plan, but adjusts as needed

Engagement

MFAP newsletter

Drop-In Sessions

Events and meetings focus on specific tasks

Webpage resources

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
“food”, “municipality”, “policy”

4-digit unique ID number



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

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

- Implement tasks from MFAP Implementation Matrix
- Two year grants
- Applications due May 2025
- Expect to start work early 2026

First round of grants

Applications received (May 2025)

- 14 applications
- Requesting \$7.4 million
- Proposed 393 projects to implement specific tasks in the MFAP matrix.

Awards to be announced soon.

Get updates via the MFAP Newsletter!

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



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

