

# Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan

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Video Briefs

Last updated May 2025

Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator



# Video briefs

Click on the links below to go to the slides for that section

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2	<a href="#"><u>Farmland Protection – What does the Plan say?</u></a>	April 2025
3	<a href="#"><u>Farmland Access – What does the Plan say?</u></a>	April 2025
4	<a href="#"><u>Farm and Farmland Viability – What does the Plan say?</u></a>	April 2025
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6	<a href="#"><u>Next steps and getting involved</u></a>	April 2025

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# MA Farmland Action Plan – What is it and why should I care?

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Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan  
April 2025 – Video Brief

Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator  
[www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan](http://www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan)



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

???

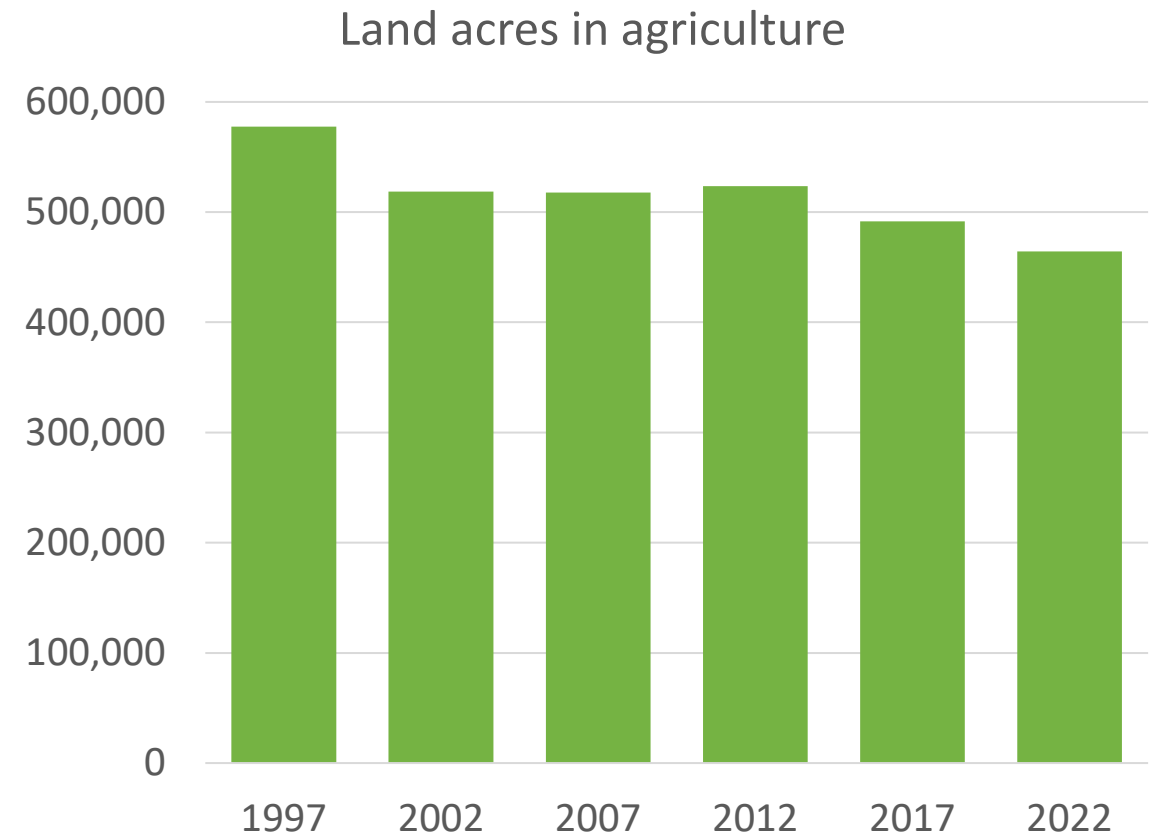
# Why is the Farmland Action Plan important?

**We are losing agricultural land fast!**

**Between 1997 and 2022**

**Massachusetts lost 113,000 acres**

Additional 50,000 – 89,000 acres projected to be lost by 2040

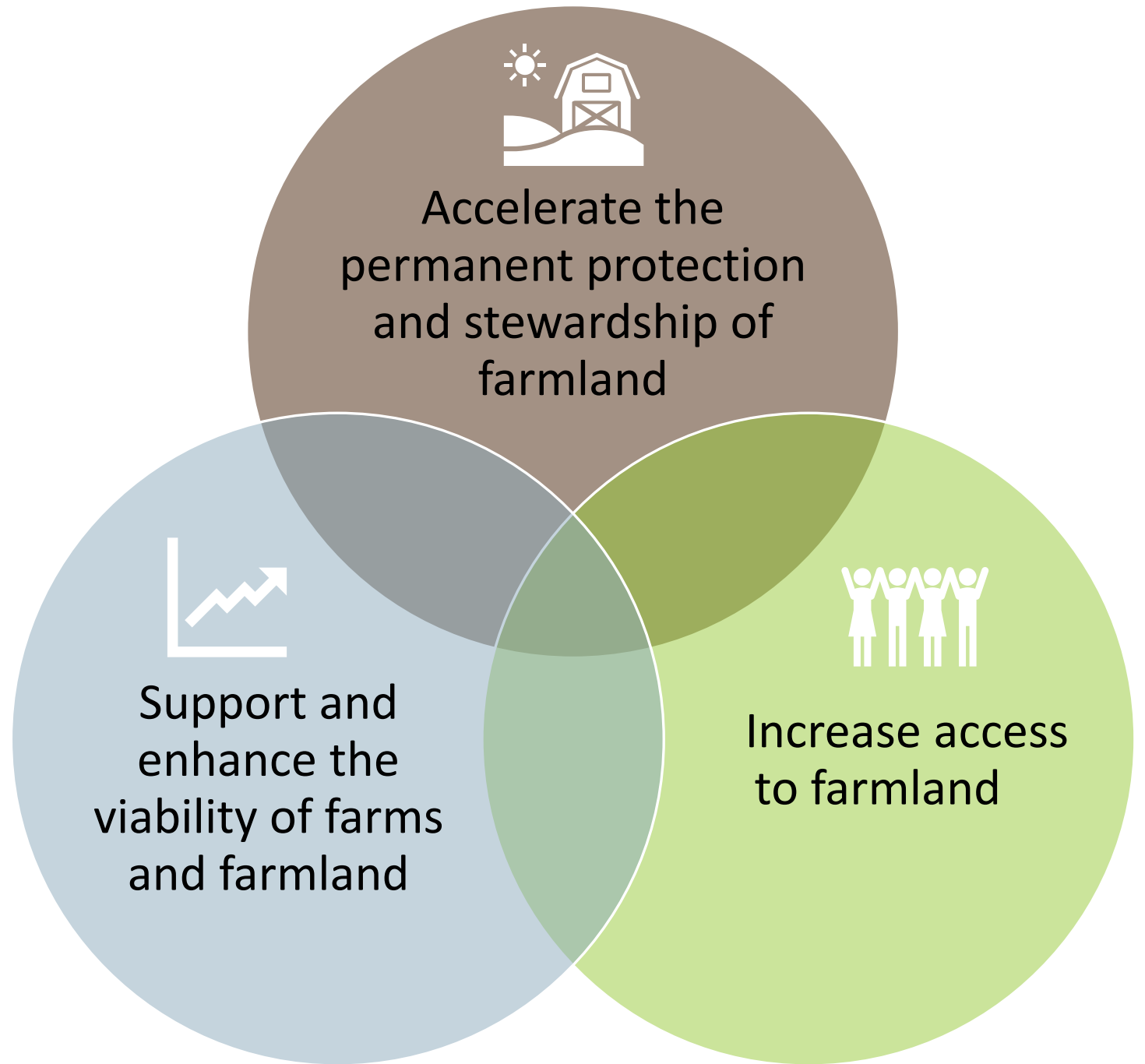


Sources: Census of Agriculture 2022 and earlier. Table 1

[www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full\\_Report/Volume\\_1,\\_Chapter\\_1\\_State\\_Level/Massachusetts/](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Massachusetts/)

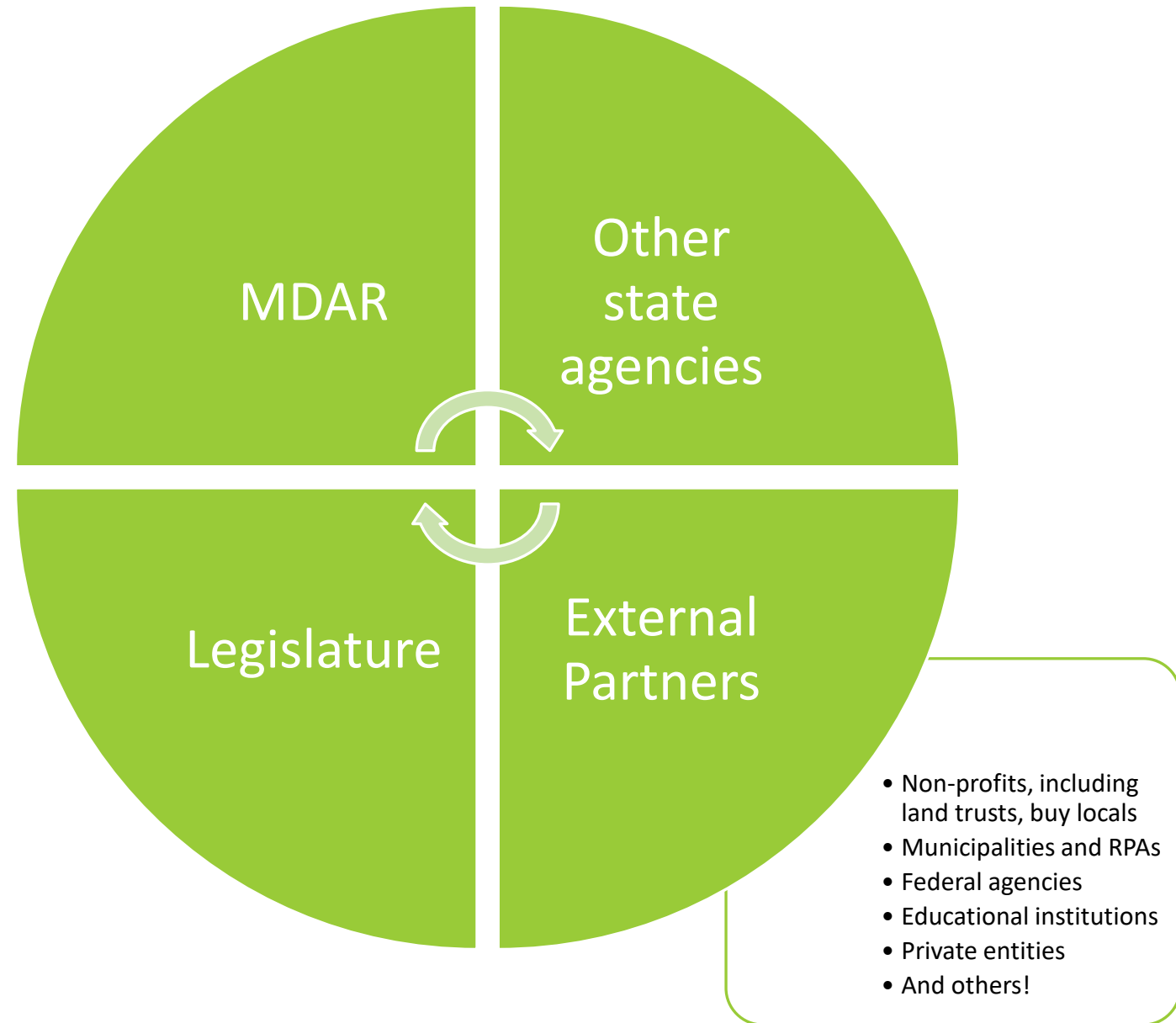
# What is the Farmland Action Plan?

- State funded
- State coordinated
- Long range strategic initiative
- Statewide, not just for state government
- [www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan](http://www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan)



# Who will implement the Plan?

This is a plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, not just MDAR

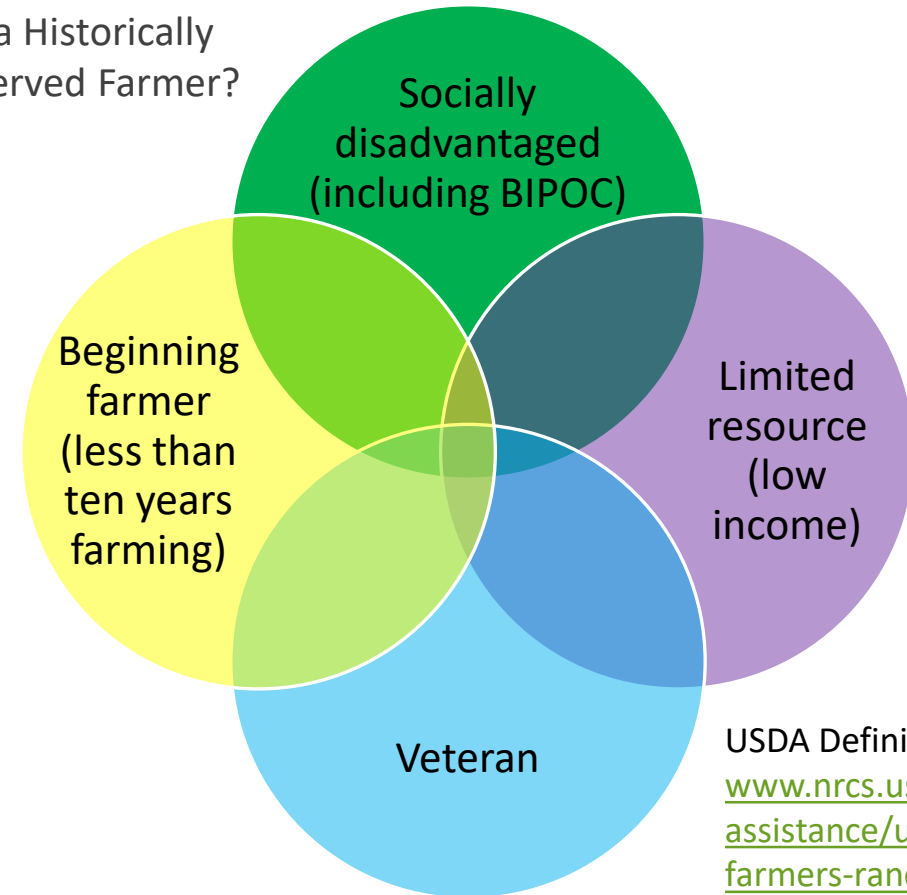


# Implementing for all farmers

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- 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](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers)



How can I get involved?

Email  
[Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov](mailto:Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov)

Lead implementer

Other  
potential  
implementer

Other  
potential  
implementer

Other  
potential  
implementer

Other  
interested  
individuals

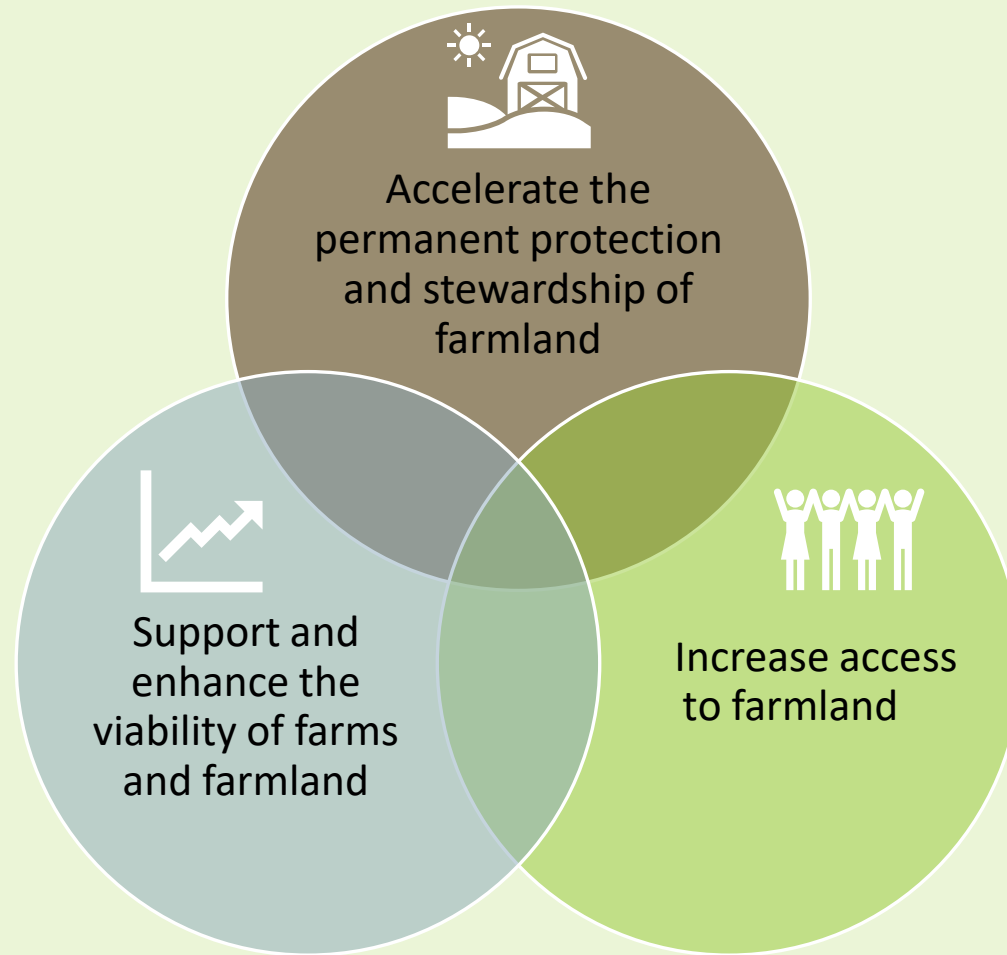
Other  
interested  
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Questions? Contact Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator. [Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov](mailto:Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov)

# Farmland Protection

## – What does the Plan say?

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# Overview of the matrix

**Goals** – what the plan hopes to achieve.

**Strategy** – clarify what aspects of each Goal will be addressed

**Action** – direct how each strategy will be advanced.

**Task** – details on how each action will be achieved

*4-digit unique ID number*

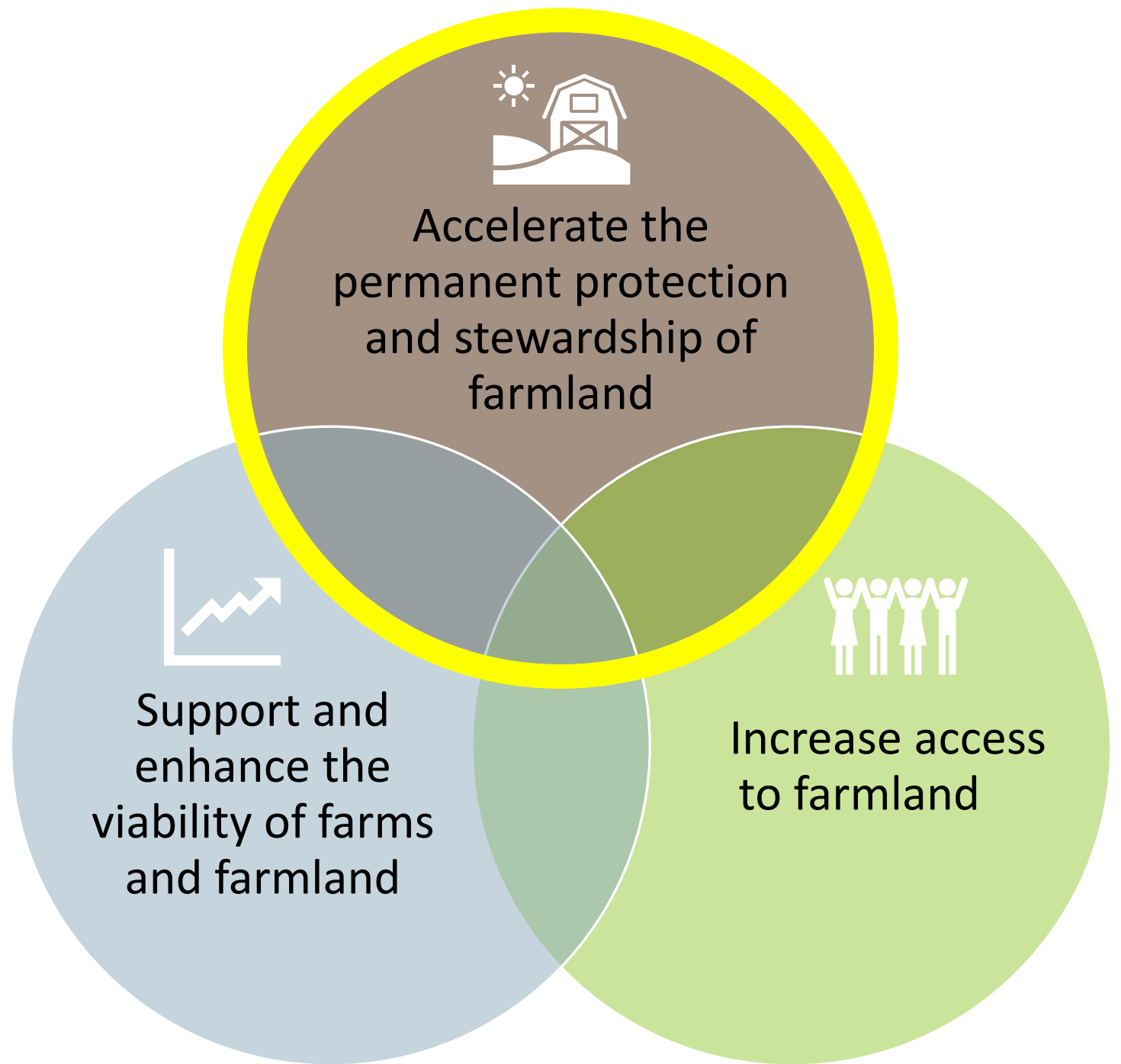


# Farmland Protection – What is the goal?

**Accelerate the  
permanent protection  
and stewardship of  
farmland**

**Why?**

Once farmland has been converted to other land uses, it will likely never return to agriculture.



# 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



# Actions within the four strategies

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## A. Permanently protect farmland through purchases of agricultural restrictions

- Creative financing mechanisms and strategies
- Federal funding
- Additional financial resources
- Prevent conversion
- Build capacity and coordinate
- Long term protection
- Short term covenants
- Stewardship
- Education and engagement

## B. Further develop and implement additional tools to avoid farmland loss and retain farmland

- No net loss of farmland
- Chapter 61A
- CPA
- Underserved farmer access
- State lands
- Solar development
- Zoning & Smart Growth

## C. Prioritize protection of whole farms

- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Other land
- Other tenure models
- Funding
- Ecosystem services

## D. Formalize and integrate decision-making processes regarding farmland protection

- Agricultural suitability

# 2024 Highlights

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- 1) Hire Farmland Action Plan Coordinator
- 2) Leverage federal funding
- 3) Build capacity of entities to protect land
- 4) Increase applications to protection programs
- 5) Prioritize protection of whole farms
- 6) State and municipal land licensing programs
- 7) Expand farmland transfer and succession education and technical assistance
- 8) Increase use of public lands by Historically Underserved Farmers
- 9) Farmer access to grants and financing
- 10) Elevate BIPOC and other historically underserved farmer voices in implementation

**More details in 2024 Progress Report!**

Online at [www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan](https://www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan)





# Farmland Protection at MDAR

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## **Action I.A.7**

**Increase the number of applications to APR, ALE and non-ALE protection programs**

### **APR Acquisition related changes**

- APR accepts applications at any time
- APR ranking now quarterly (previously annually)
- Updated the APR scoring sheet
- MDAR is now a certified ACEP ALE entity, so can close faster on ACEP projects
- MDAR release Private APR Guidance

### **Other changes**

- MDAR now has authority to buy and sell land (not just restrict)

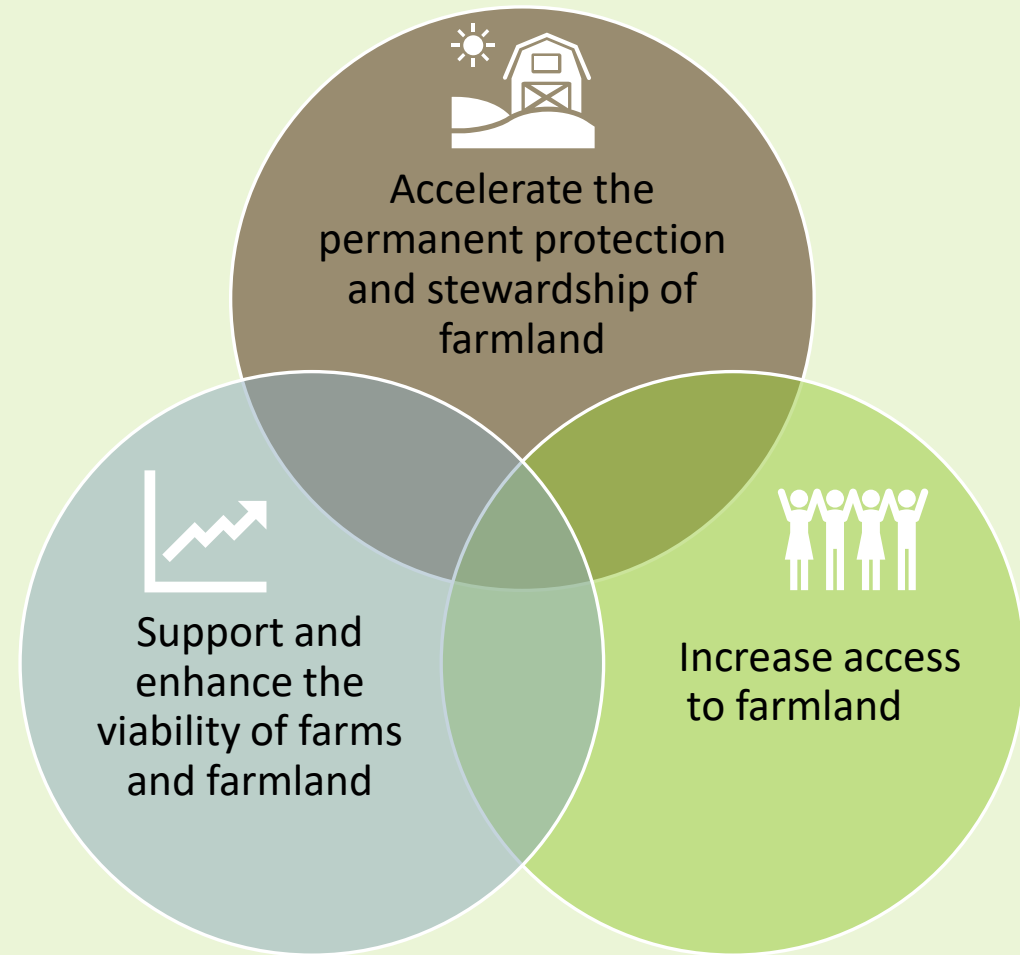
# Explore more!

The Implementation Matrix is a living document that lists all goals, strategies, actions and tasks.

It also tracks

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

Another brief will focus on this!



Visit the matrix and learn more at  
[www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan](http://www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan)

# Farmland Access

## – What does the Plan say?

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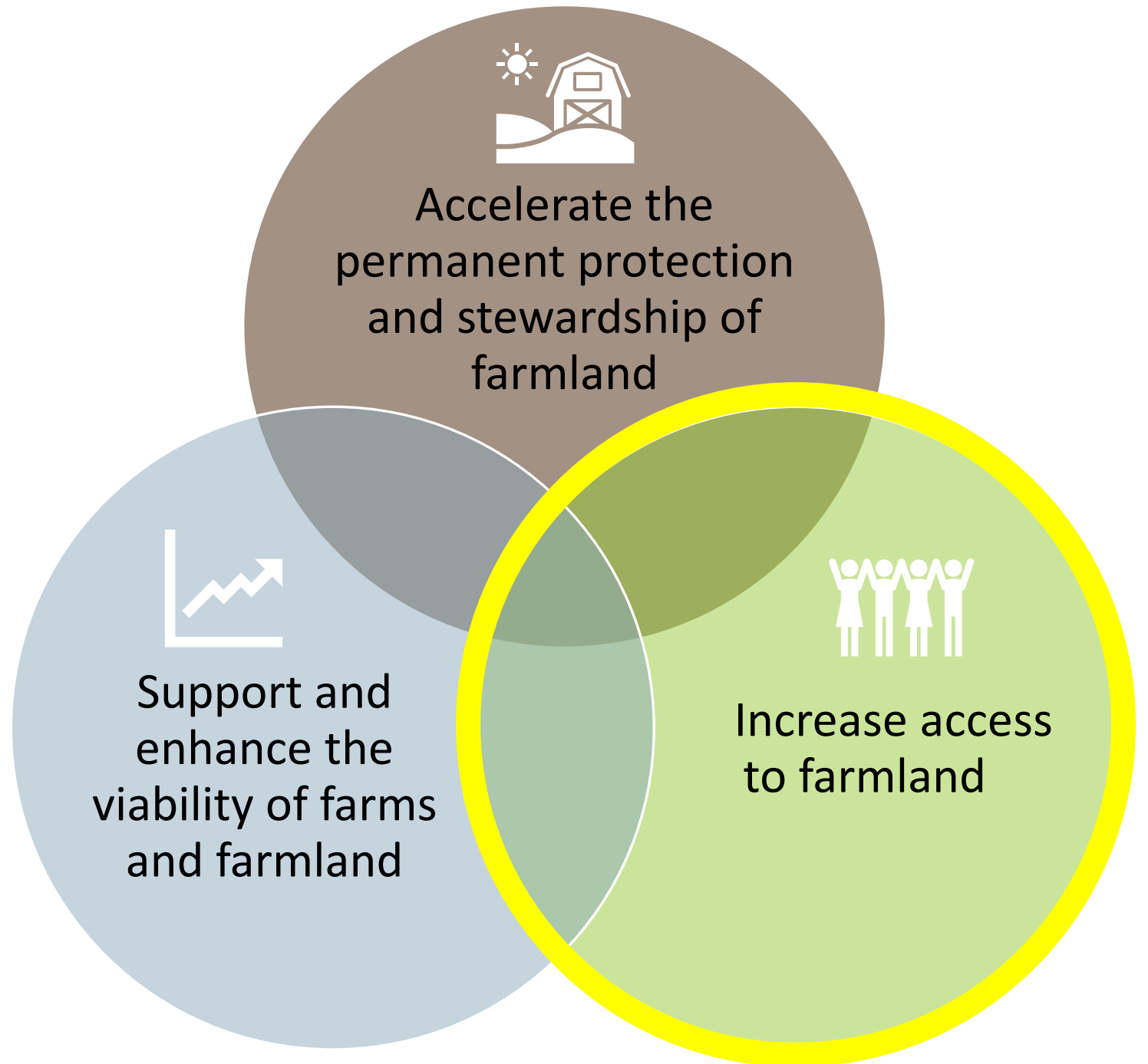


# Farmland Access – What is the goal?

## Increase access to farmland

### Why?

We need to ensure that people who want to farm can access farmland. They currently face many barriers including cost, size of parcels, proximity to market and legacies of discrimination.



# Strategies for each goal



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# Actions within the four strategies

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## A. Make more land available for agriculture

- Agricultural suitability
- State land licensing
- Urban agriculture
- Private leases
- Tribal lands
- Farmland Restoration
- Conservation Restrictions
- Farm Incubators

## B. Support farm transfer and succession in ways that enhance access to farmland

- Education and technical assistance
- Protected lands
- Registries

## C. Prioritize increased access for BIPOC and historically underserved farmers in all farmland access programs and policies

- Programs and policies
- Prioritization and accessibility

## D. Support and expand service-provider networks to meet the needs of all farmers and potential farmers.

- Diversification
- DEI training
- Business technical assistance
- Capacity building
- Resource toolbox
- Land search

# 2024 Highlights

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# Farmland Access

## What's being done now?

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### Action II.B.2

**Support and expand farmland transfer and farmland succession education and one-to-one technical assistance**

#### Where can I learn more?

- Farm-Pass/ Farm Transfer Planning Assistance - [www.mass.gov/info-details/agricultural-business-assistance](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/agricultural-business-assistance)
  - Applications accepted on rolling basis
- Farm Transfer Planning Resources <https://landforgood.org/resource/group/transferring-a-farm/>
- New England Farmland Finder <https://newenglandfarmlandfinder.org>
- Additional state lands licensed for agricultural uses - [www.mass.gov/farmlandlicensing](http://www.mass.gov/farmlandlicensing)
  - Land goes out to bid for farmers

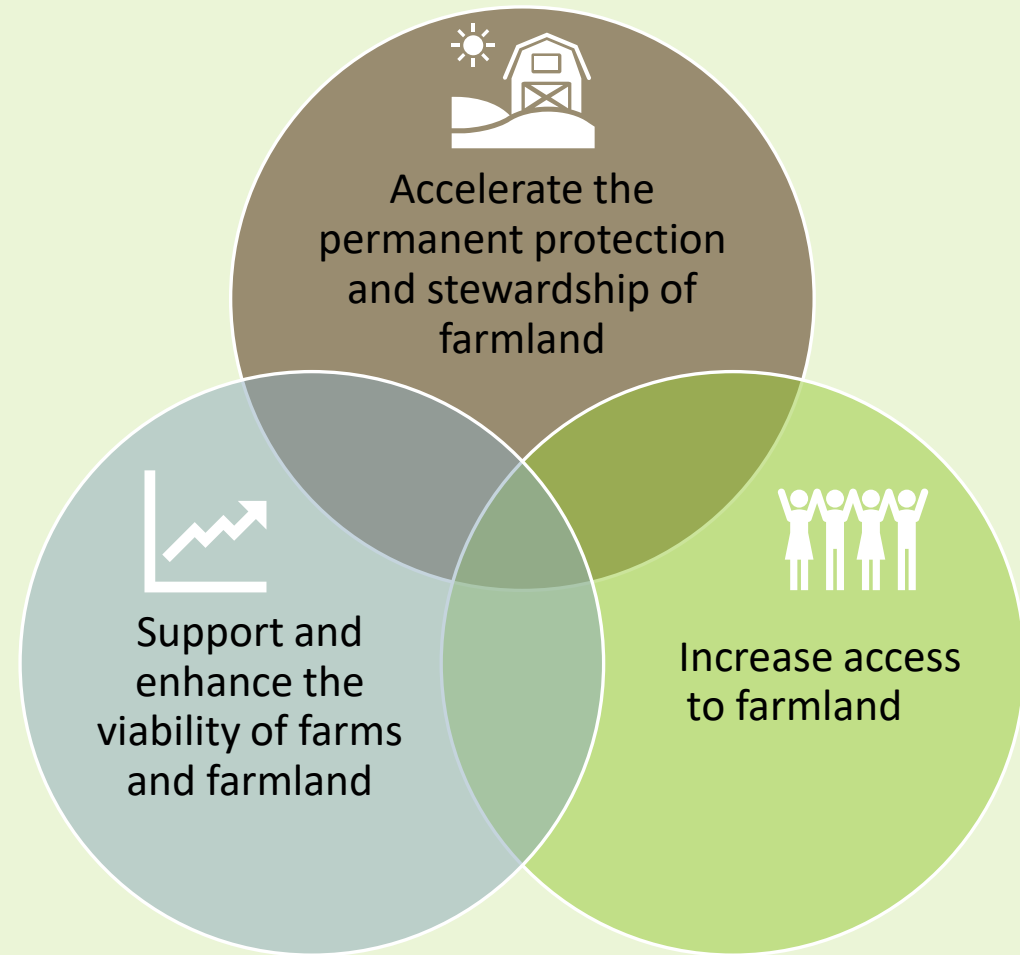
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# Farm and Farmland Viability – What does the Plan say?

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April 2025 – Video Brief

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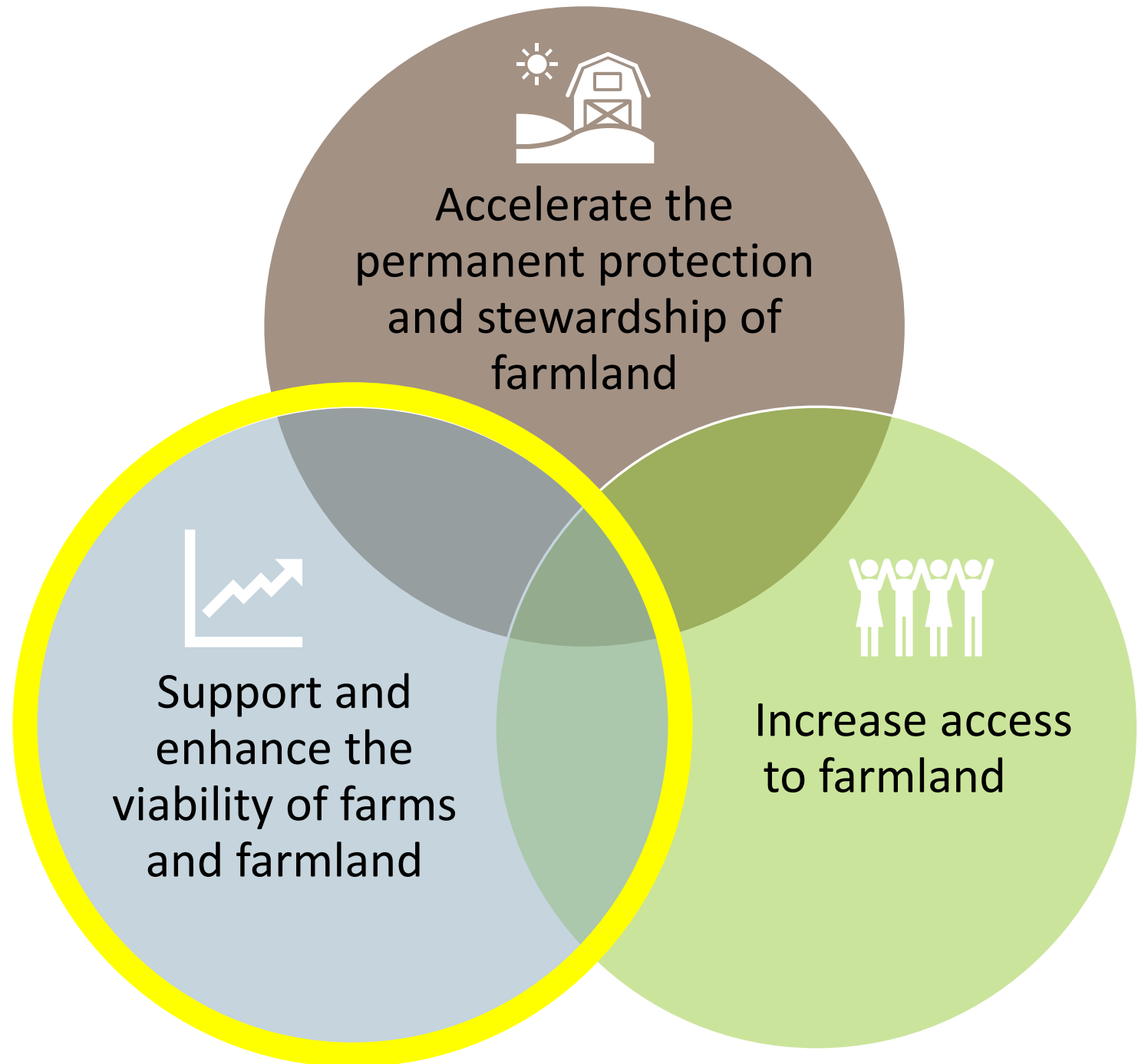


# Farm & farmland Viability – What is the goal?

**Support and enhance  
the viability of farms  
and farmland**

Why?

Successful farms are  
one of the best tools  
for protecting  
farmland



# Strategies for each goal



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# Actions within the three strategies

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## A. Ensure that laws, regulations, programs, and investments support farm viability

- APR Program flexibility
- Right to Farm Bylaws and Ag Comms
- Grants and financing
- Local taxation, policy and regulations
- Decision making
- Support industries
- Urban agriculture
- Farm infrastructure
- Service providers
- Financial facilitation

## B. Grow resilience and sustainability practices on farms

- Climate change technical assistance
- Soils on public lands
- Non-market contributions
- UMass Extension

## C. Increase use of services, programs, and other resources by farmers

- Strategic outreach
- Technical assistance
- MDAR programs
- Education

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# Farm Viability

## What's being done now?

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### Action III.A.3

**Make it easier for farmers to seek and obtain grants and financing**

#### Where can I learn more?

- Agricultural Business Assistance provided by MDAR ([www.mass.gov/info-details/agricultural-business-assistance](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/agricultural-business-assistance)) and other organizations
- MDAR Grants [www.mass.gov/guides/agricultural-grants-and-financial-assistance-programs](http://www.mass.gov/guides/agricultural-grants-and-financial-assistance-programs)
- MDAR Agricultural Grant Writing Assistance List- [www.mass.gov/info-details/agricultural-grant-writing-assistance-list](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/agricultural-grant-writing-assistance-list)
- Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Producers - [www.mass.gov/info-details/resources-for-historically-underserved-farmers-and-producers](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/resources-for-historically-underserved-farmers-and-producers)
- Many other partners also provide grants

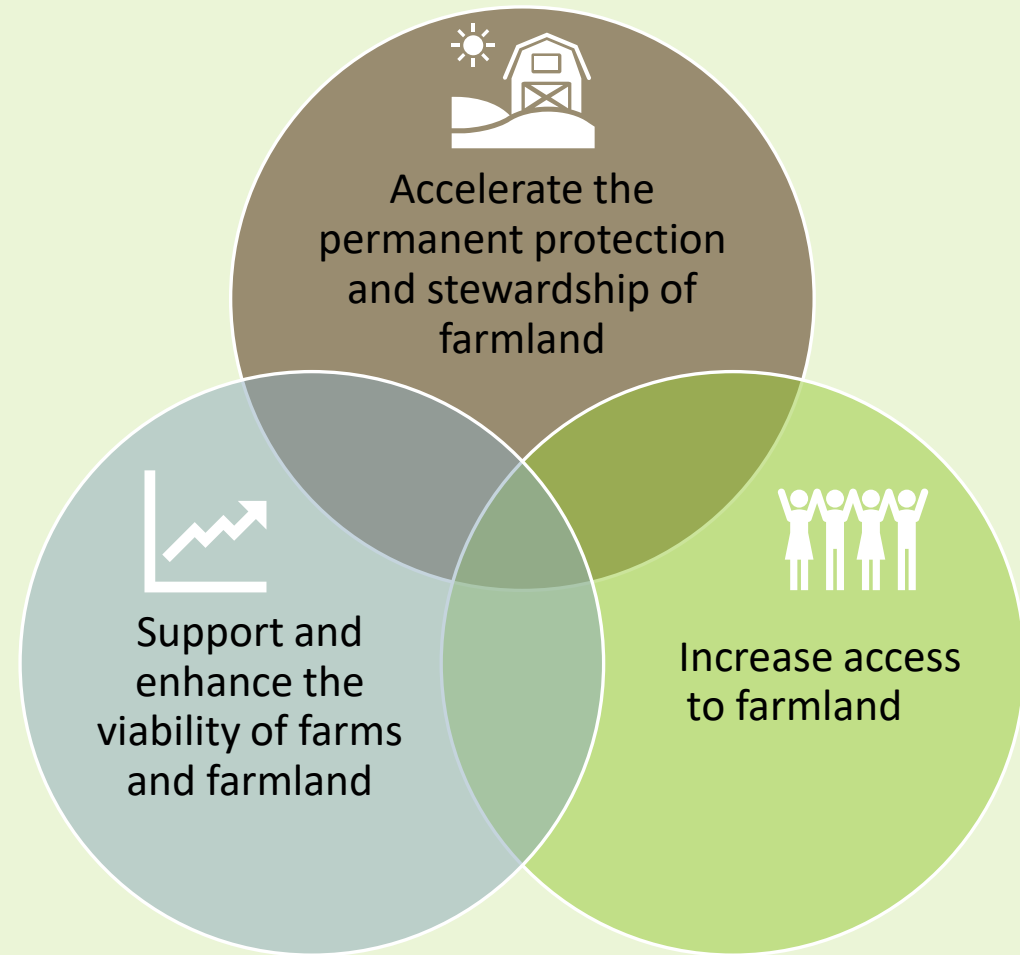
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# What's in the Plan?

## Digging into the implementation matrix

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Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan  
March 2025

Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator  
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# Implementation matrix

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The matrix is a living document that tracks

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

**Matrix is published online at**

[www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan](http://www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan)

New versions will be published online periodically with the next update anticipated summer 2025.

“About the Matrix” document explains how it works and gives definitions

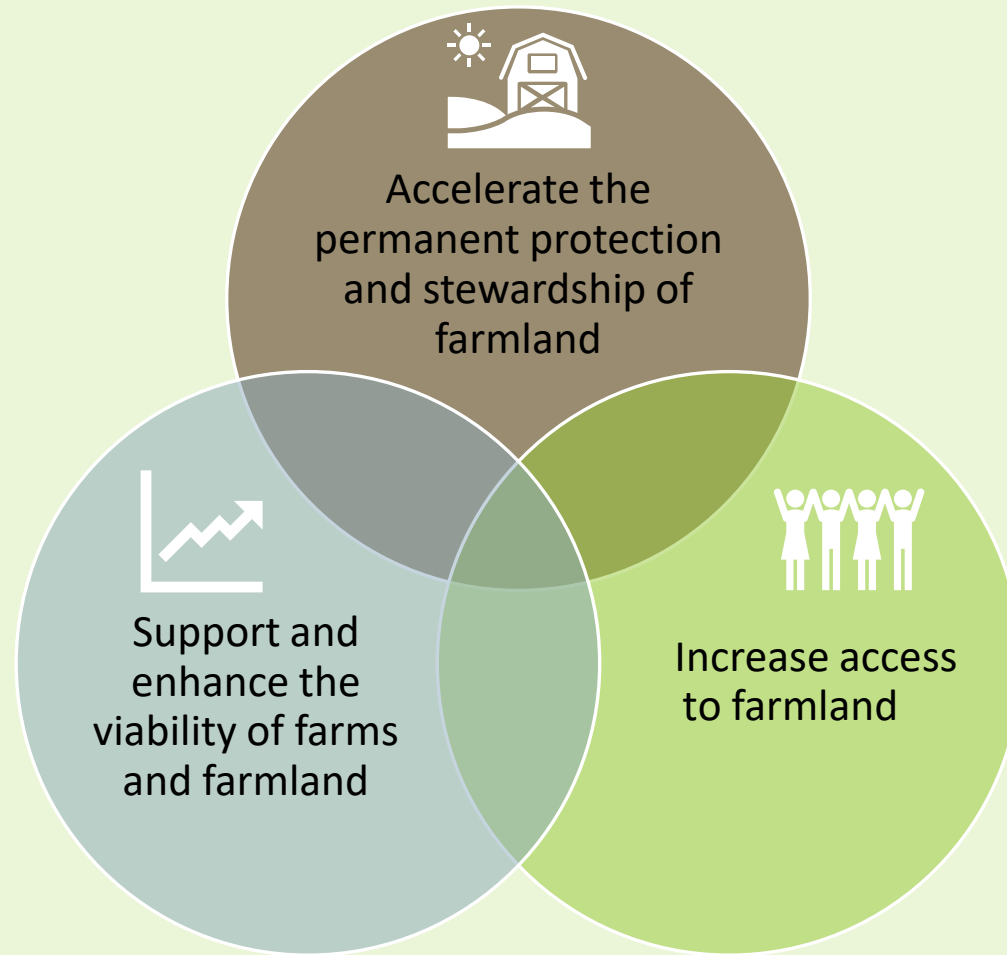
## **Tips and tricks**

- 4-digit ID number
- Search for keywords – eg “incubator”, “61A”, “policy”, “whole farm”
- Lead implementer and potential other implementers – search for a type of organization eg “land trust”, “ag policy”, “farm financing”
- Timeline and status

# Show example of navigating it

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Live demonstration in the video



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Questions? Contact Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator. [Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov](mailto:Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov)

# Next steps and getting involved

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# Supporting all the goals

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## Implement the Farmland Action Plan

- Encourage partners and partnerships that can implement the plan.
- Support BIPOC and other historically underserved farmers and organizations involvement.
- Monitor and report on the impact of farmland programs to demonstrate the success, inform changes, and identify needs.
- Map and track farmland (APRs, CRs, Chapter 61A, and more).
- Research and report on agricultural incentive models used in other states and countries.

## Build public support for agriculture and for farmland protection, access and viability

- Education and outreach for residents and elected officials
- Comprehensive plan

# Key features for implementation

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## Already started

- Regular newsletter to share information with partners and interested individuals
- Foster partnerships and collaboration
- Learn from feedback on previous processes, including plan creation
- Encourage wider engagement and implementation

## 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

# Learning about implementation so far

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## 2024 Progress Report

- Released December 2024
- [www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan](https://www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan)
- Explains how implementation is starting
- Shares more about what has happened so far
- 10 Highlights – Work in progress or starting soon

## Resources by topic

- Created for specific audiences for many meetings with potential partners in 2024
- Presentations, meeting notes and other resources [www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan](https://www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan)

How can I get involved?

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Lead implementer

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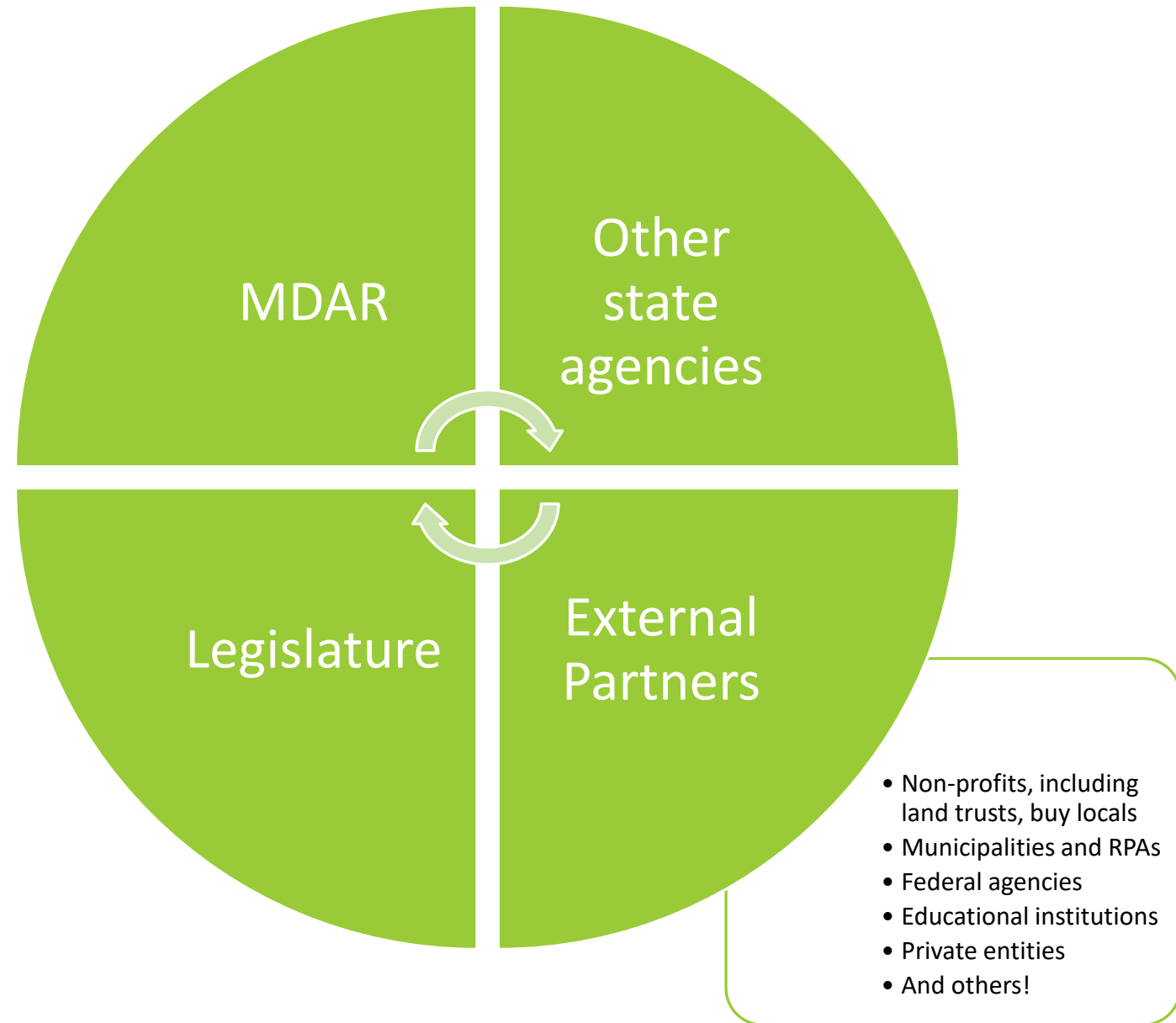
Other  
interested  
individuals

# What would you like to see worked on next?

- Municipal support
- Land protection
- Land Access
- Transfer and succession
- Farmer assistance
- Housing
- Other suggestions?

# Who can help?

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# New Farmland Partnership Program

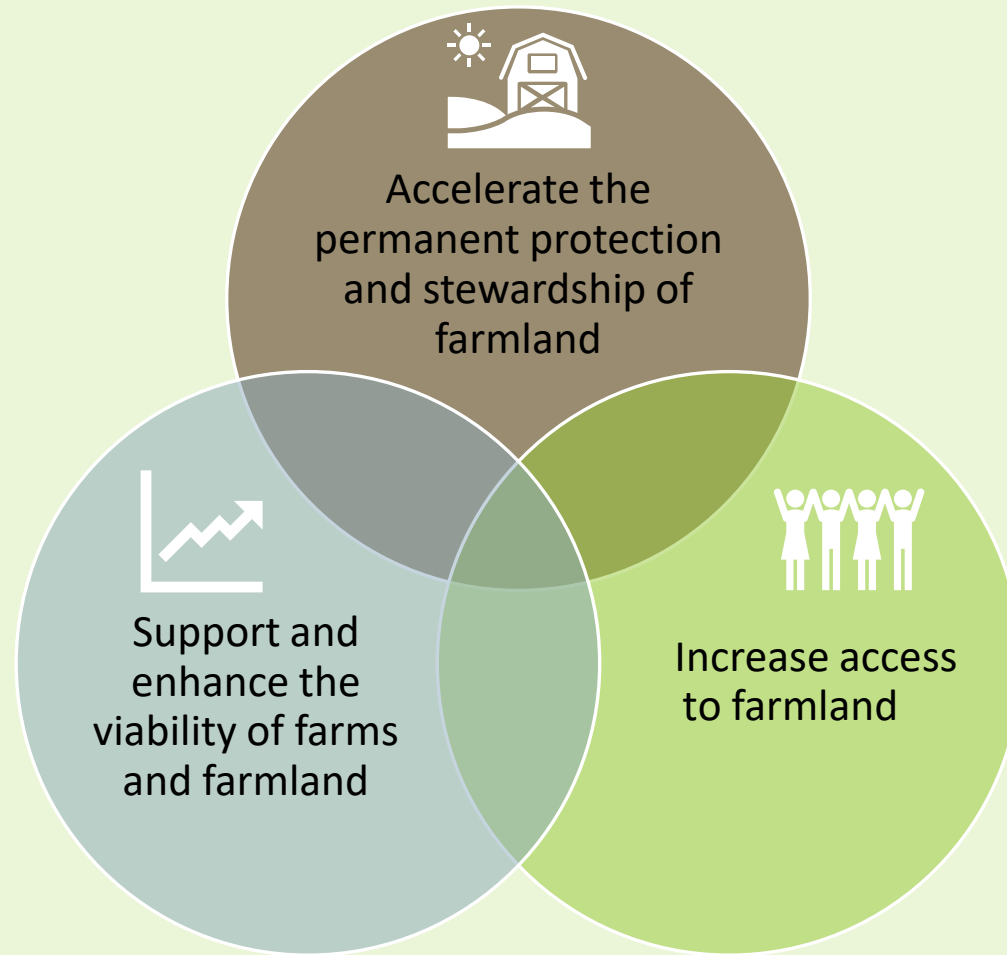
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**Grant program to help implement the Farmland Action Plan at the local, regional or statewide level.**

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](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/farmland-partnership-program)

- Two year grants
- Applications due May 2025
- Expect to start work around November 2025



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