

Farmland Action Plan – Email Update – August 2024

First MA Farmland Action Plan Implementation Update.

Why is the plan important? How is it being implemented?

Hello!

Welcome to the first email update for implementation of the [Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan 2023-2050](#) (MFAP). The plan was released in December 2023 and implementation has started!

We added you to this email update due to your previous interest in the Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan while it was being created in 2022/2023, or you have been involved in initial conversations about its implementation in the last few months. To remove your email or add someone else to the email list, please email Katharine.S.Otto@mass.gov. And please share this email with your contacts and listservs as relevant!

Who is Katharine/ the Farmland Action Plan Coordinator?

In the winter, Katharine Otto joined MDAR staff as the Farmland Action Plan Coordinator. This is a new role to support coordination between all of the partners and to assist with implementation of tasks. Since her arrival she has been meeting with MDAR staff and partners across Massachusetts to start conversations about what implementing the plan could look like. Her contact information is Katharine.S.Otto@mass.gov and 413-544-2400.



Why is the Plan important?

We are losing agricultural land fast!

Between 1997 and 2022 Massachusetts lost 113,000 acres (2022 Census of Agriculture). That's about 3.7 times the size of the land area of Boston or 1.8 times the size of Martha's Vineyard.

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






Want to learn more?

- [American Farmland Trust “Farms Under Threat 2040. Choosing an Abundant Future”](#)
- [American Farmland Trust “Farms Under Threat. 2040 Future Scenarios. Massachusetts.”](#)

What are the goals of the Farmland Action Plan?

The Plan is a long-range strategic initiative intended to guide actions to ensure that farmland and farming are available and viable for current and future generations in Massachusetts.

The Plan is organized around three overlapping goals:

	Accelerate the permanent protection and stewardship of farmland. Once farmland has been converted to other land uses, it will never return to agriculture.
	Increase access to farmland. Enabling farmland accessibility requires equitable, affordable, and identifiable opportunities and options.
	Support and enhance the viability of farms and farmland. Successful farms are one of the best tools for protecting farmland.

How will the Plan be implemented?

This is a plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The **Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)** is promoting, monitoring, and facilitating implementation of the Plan, building momentum from existing programs and initiatives. It is an integral part of the Commonwealth’s climate and natural resources initiatives.

Partnerships and collaboration are essential. Nonprofits, municipalities, land trusts, other state agencies, educational institutions, businesses and other private entities, and many others have key resources, capacity, expertise and/or jurisdiction that will be needed for successful implementation.

The plan also identifies opportunities for the **legislature** to make policy and fiscal choices to support farmland goals.

In recognition of how much work is contained within the Plan, MDAR created a new staff position – **Farmland Action Plan Coordinator** – see above for details. Look out for emails and meeting invitations from Katharine over the coming months as momentum gets going!

The Farmland Action Plan incorporates equity principles and include several equity-related actions and tasks. Effective implementation of equity goals will require broad engagement, empowerment, and coalition-building. Katharine Otto is working closely with MDAR’s EJ Team to engage with equity partners early in the process to ensure that Historically Underserved Farmers and the organizations that support them are involved.

How can I explain the plan to others?

The MFAP is a big plan! There are lots of strategies, actions and tasks – and all the supporting information needed to support those.

Over the coming months we'll be creating some quick guides and doing many presentations to explain the MFAP for various audiences. Please reach out to Katharine if there is a specific audience or topic you'd like her to work on sooner rather than later!

Upcoming events and meetings

- For Land Trusts – Online meeting. Wednesday, September 18. 12pm – 1:30pm. [More details and register here.](#) Email Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov for details
- More to come soon!

Let Katharine know if you have an upcoming meeting or event which you'd like her to attend!

For more information

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

For questions, please reach out to

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