

# Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan – Q&A Session for Potential Partners

Notes from online discussion on 1/13/2025

## Context

On Monday, January 13, 2025 at 11am Katharine Otto hosted the first Q&A session for potential partners. The meeting had no presentation – instead the content was guided by questions and comments from attendees. It was organized as an easy way to connect in, anticipating that recent discussions and new resources may have sparked additional thoughts. The primary audience was potential partners.

Facilitator – Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator, MDAR. [Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov](mailto:Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov) with assistance from Gerard Kennedy, Director for Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance, MDAR

*The following is a brief summary of the conversation that occurred during the Q&A session.*

Some notes regarding the comments and questions:

- Some have been edited or combined.
- Comments have been collated by topics, in no particular order
- These comments are from voluntary participants in open discussion. These comments may or may not align with positions of MDAR or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

## Discussion notes

*The following is a brief summary of some of the conversation that occurred in the chat box during the meeting as well as some of the oral comments. It includes links and resources shared with participants.*

### *Starting implementation*

- Need funding and resources for partners to help implement the Farmland Action Plan
- Recent meetings with potential partners have been helpful to raise awareness of what they can do and what they are already doing that aligns with the plan
- Searchable matrix to see what to do will be helpful
- What can farmers do to help with implementation at this stage?
- Methods for how to do things is more important than what needs to be done
- What will actually work? What are the priorities? Work on the easy things first.

### *Local and regional involvement*

- Get farmers and ag comms to work on communal plans to look at challenges such as climate change and sustainability.
- Need for region level planning. What are the priorities, strengths and needs in the regions? Then you can see where to help
- Importance of community getting more locally grown food into the food system. How can we mobilize to address challenges for this such as contracts, Boards of Health, etc?
- Building up Ag Comms

### *Protecting farmland*

- Need for system level plan for purchasing individual farms that covers topics like education, eligibility and process
- The APR program is not the only program for protection. How do we encourage other mechanisms, such as Private APRs? How do we promote use of other programs that have funds for acquisition, such as MDAR Urban Ag Program?
- Workshop on how to talk to landowners about restrictions. Likely to be challenging and charged conversation.
- Need messaging to dispel rumor that if put land into a CR your taxes will go up

### *Resources for farmers*

- Upcoming workshops for landowners about protection and viability resources – known as “Flapjacks and farm chats” last year
- MDAR Ag Resource Fairs

### *Other*

- Challenge of connecting people
- On the ground relationships are important
- Where is there state legislative action needed on the plan?