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# October/November Farm & Market Report

10/22/20

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## COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Greetings, Mass. Agriculture and all its friends,

Sometime back in March or April I started reminding staff and others (likely way too many times) that we were in a marathon, not a sprint, and that we all needed to pace ourselves based on the race that we were running. At some point, I changed my tune a little: we aren't in a marathon, we are all in an ultramarathon, and we need to respond accordingly. I think we have; we have settled in to deliver most, if not all, of our services in the COVID environment. I hope you are, too.

As one indicator that things have “settled down” at MDAR, I'm back to furiously trying to meet Rick's deadline for this column. For a while there, I was easily on time, but now I'm back to my normal crazed effort to get this written reasonably on time. (I have learned that I've worried Rick's mom as I may have inadvertently given the impression that I don't take kindly to his imposed deadlines. Please don't worry, Mrs. LeBlanc, Rick's doing A-OK! He needs to get this newsletter out on time, and he knows the best ways to get wayward contributors like me to toe the line!)

Though the season hasn't ended yet, by all reports, and in spite of so many hurdles, 2020 seems to be going into the books as an overall successful year for Mass Ag, and who expected that outcome last spring? Across the board we are hearing about successful and creative adaptations by farmers to bring their products to market. Our largest ag sector, nursery/greenhouse, has been extremely busy growing and caring for its plant material for a consumer base that has found greater desire during COVID to have a backyard victory garden or to improve their outdoor environment. Similarly, the demand for locally produced food has skyrocketed and local ag producers have answered the call despite unique (COVID) and regularly occurring circumstances (drought).

Let's think back to March. There were so many questions for which the “wrong” answer could have been devastating to Ag. Now those questions had to be asked because everything had to be considered through the public health lens above everything else. Could the nurseries, garden centers and greenhouses open? Could farmers markets and farm stands operate? Could Agritourism occur? Was there a way to conduct Pick Your Own operations? With a lot of careful planning by many, the answers were essentially “Yes”, though with consideration of COVID.

That all happened with a lot of communication with several commodity groups which provided tremendous assistance as COVID protocols were created. MA Nursery and Landscape Association and MA Flower Growers Association were heavily involved in discussions leading to that industry's path forward. MA Farm Bureau Federation, along with other food producer organizations and the Buy Local organizations, provided tremendous insight into how to get their members' products safely grown, harvested, and sold.

I've been on both sides as I've been a member of several of these organizations during my private career. Industry priorities and government priorities don't always completely line up perfectly, and there's no denying from time to time we are on different sides of the table on issues, but that's normal business. I honestly see us as one big ag family, and like all families, there are the inevitable internal squabbles, but when there is a threat from the outside, like a family, we come together, put aside those squabbles, and work to address those larger problems.

I want to express my genuine appreciation to all industry partners and organizations who worked very closely with us to get the answers to those early questions, and then to have implementation of practices that have proven to be very successful.

Have there been issues? Yes, but they have been very much the exception, not the rule. All in all, MA Ag has done a fantastic job responding to COVID!

Moving on, understandably, but sadly, we just haven't gotten out on the road as much as we'd like, but we are grateful for the opportunities we've had.

We appreciate that Congressman Jim McGovern continues his annual practice of organizing and hosting farm tours in his district. This year I was pleased to join him late August at Riverland Farm, Sunderland; Mycoterra Farm distribution hub, Hadley; Still Life Farm, Hardwick; Lilac Hedge Farm, Holden; and Tougas Farm in Northborough.

In September, Ashley and I finally joined State Senator Jo Comerford for a tour she arranged of dairy farms in her district (the tour was originally planned for March/April!). We visited Bree-Z-Knoll Farm, Leyden; DAR Ridge Farm, Colrain; and Sunbrite Farm, Bernardston. We were pleased to join the Senator for a delightful outdoor lunch at Hager's Farm Market in Shelburne, along with State Senator Adam Hinds and State Representative Natalie Blais.

In recognition of Climate Week, I visited Smith's Country Cheese, Winchendon; and Davidian's Farm in Northborough to observe practices to reduce carbon footprint and sequester carbon. We saw innovative composting practices, production of heat and electricity through solar, and learned about no-till practices in produce production. That's 21st century farming!

Our October tours were hosted by Buy Local organization, CISA and featured farms in the Valley. Ashley and I visited Prospect Meadow Farm, Hatfield; Riquezas del Campo, Hatfield; All Farmers in W. Springfield; and Gardening the Community's Urban Farm in Springfield. It was a great day learning about how commercial ag interacts so well with individuals with developmental disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and urban farmers!

Similarly, there aren't many physical commodity group meetings to attend, but I was pleased to attend the outdoor meeting of the MA Christmas Tree Growers Association at Turkey Hill Farm, Haverhill in September. That industry has carefully observed what has worked and not at the PYO farms, and is gearing up for a successful COVID appropriate season. I'm looking forward to Green Friday in November!

We are also working as a member of two newly formed (through legislation) public bodies. We are delighted to sit with a cross section of state, municipal and interested stakeholders on the Mosquito Control for the Twenty-First Century Task Force, chaired by Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Kathleen Theoharides. I am chairing the Agricultural Tourism Study Commission. Both groups are actively meeting to deliver what the legislature has requested.

With the coming change in weather, I want to remind everyone that both the [Boston Public Market](#) and the [Worcester Public Market](#) are open for business. Both of these facilities host MA farmers who are selling their own products, and in many cases, products from other farms as well. Both have established appropriate safety protocols. Please check out their websites and consider a visit.

I need to provide an update on our ongoing efforts to convert our pesticide exams from a paper test and at a designated location at a designated time to an online exam that can be taken at any time 24/7/365. I know that it's results that are desired, not a progress report, but we continue to move forward.

We are very excited that we are in the testing phases of getting the online exam implemented. Every system has certain limitations, but we believe the tremendous flexibilities this system allows greatly outweigh that one must use a device with a camera and use Google Chrome, along with other requirements, including an additional cost. I would hope that being able to take a test on demand whenever one wishes to take it and without travelling are great benefits.

Please know we are working very hard on this, but the same team has numerous other responsibilities, including handling renewals and also working on electronic submission of Continuing Education Units (CEUs).

I need to take this opportunity to mention that a new invasive insect, the Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF) is of concern. Please review [this link](#) to learn more, see a photo, and learn about our reporting tool. We need your help on this project.

As I begin to close, I have two items, one serious, and one anything but.

MDAR is extremely proud of our long standing, positive relationship with the four Food Banks in the Commonwealth since the inception of the Commonwealth's [MA Emergency Food Assistance Program \(MEFAP\)](#) in 1995 when the General Court appropriated \$840,840 to be distributed through MDAR contracts to fund the purchase of emergency food for those in need. The annual appropriation has grown over the years to a \$20M appropriation in FY 20, but by no means does that account for all the food product the food banks purchase and distribute through the pantries. I should also mention that MEFAP has required for many years that a dedicated portion of that food be purchased from MA farmers, fishers, and food producers.

Not unexpectedly, demand for emergency food has dramatically increased due to COVID, and that increased demand is expected to continue as we enter the winter season. The Baker Polito Administration has increased the Commonwealth's distribution due to COVID, but the need remains.

May I ask anyone able to do so to please consider supporting The [Food Bank of Western MA](#), The [Greater Boston Food Bank](#), the [Merrimack Valley Food Bank](#), the [Worcester County Food Bank](#) or any of the local food pantries across the state in some fashion.

And lastly, the non-serious item...

I imagine just about everyone has seen the [TikTok video](#) (I barely knew what TikTok was-still not sure exactly what it is) of Nathan Apodaca (otherwise known as TikTok user @420dogface2080) of Idaho happily skateboarding down the road drinking cranberry juice while lip-synching to Fleetwood Mac. It's gone viral and more-all over the Internet and traditional media including network news and the morning network shows! It has also encouraged all sorts of countless tribute videos including from Mick Fleetwood and Stevie Nicks from the band.

So once the [story broke](#) and our social media team saw what was going on, in consideration of the MA cranberry growers and processors, Rick emailed that I should get on board and on a board and record something for MDAR. My response to him: "I don't even know if you're joking." His response back: "Me either!"

Well, the gauntlet had been thrown, and I had to accept the challenge. So on a beautiful fall weekend day, I badgered my videographer, my wife (“You want to do WHAT???”) to record it. We taped something on our front steps from a stationary position, as there is complete certainty that there is no way I could manage a bottle, a song and a skateboard without embarrassing, or more likely injuring myself, along with the Department, the Administration, and the Cranberry Industry!

So we did it in two takes as a Yellowjacket decided it wanted in on the first shot and I sent the video off to the team. I honestly had no idea what people would think, as I neither skateboarded nor lip-synched.

Being informed that in less than a week it’s become the most viewed video in MDAR’s social media history, I honestly don’t know what to think about that. Fortunately, the response has been kind.

If you want to see it, it’s at MDAR’s [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), and our MassGrown [Instagram](#). If you do, please friend, or follow us, as there’s much better, more important and interesting materials to come from all those sites.

Stay safe, be well,



John Lebeaux

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## Deputy’s Dialogue

### **Pandemic Positives: How Massachusetts Agriculture Continues to Adapt and Thrive During Unprecedented Times**

While this year’s harvest season has looked remarkably different from previous seasons, our Massachusetts farms have worked tirelessly to provide a safe, socially distant experience for residents and visitors to the state. Pick-Your-Own (PYO) and agritourism farms are reporting some of their busiest years in terms of visitors, sales, and harvested/picked apple availability. With Columbus Day weekend regarded as the height of the season for apples, pumpkins, mums, and fall harvest activities, some farms were already closed as their orchards were completely picked. It presented relief to some as managing their operations with the current COVID-19 guidelines was challenging, while others had hoped to have a few more weekends for sales opportunities.

October marks National and Massachusetts Farm to School Month in the Commonwealth. MA Farm to School is organizing events throughout the state to highlight the integral connection between our farms and schools. To kick-off the month, New Entry Sustainable Farming Project hosted area legislators, school meal coordinators and staff from Salem Public Schools and Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School, and MDAR to discuss school meal local procurement challenges, the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box program, impact of state grant programs including the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG), and how school meal service providers have adapted during COVID-19. MA Farm to School will be hosting their next tour at New Bedford Public Schools, a recipient of the FSIG program, to learn about the impact of the grant and the

school's community garden and local food component. With food insecurity on the rise in communities across the nation, school meal programs offer a critical safety net to families struggling to put food on the table during the pandemic. When we can connect local farms with schools and incorporate more locally grown/produced food items, it's a win-win for all.

For the first time to MDAR's knowledge, the Commonwealth has also declared October as Massachusetts Cranberry Month. One of the staple foods in our upcoming holiday meals, cranberries are a vital part of our agricultural and state economy. The administration remains committed to the sector as they work to renovate bogs to grow more modern varieties, address drought impacts, and position themselves to remain innovative in a competitive marketplace. While we have heard of some growers facing harvest challenges due to the drier conditions, many are reporting high yields and good quality fruit. I should note that the Cranberry Bog Renovation grant was recently posted and available for growers to apply for through December 4, 2020: [www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-cranberry-renovation-bog-renovation-grant-program-request-for-response-rfr-0/download](http://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-cranberry-renovation-bog-renovation-grant-program-request-for-response-rfr-0/download).

Throughout the fall, Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation hosted 12 annual county meetings. Most of the meetings were held virtually, and while members are experiencing "Zoom fatigue" like many of us, the discussions and resolutions that passed were well received and intended to effectuate positive changes for Massachusetts agriculture. It was also great to attend and welcome the newly formed Martha's Vineyard Farm Bureau chapter to the organization; with highly motivated and dynamic leaders on the Board of the MVFB, this is certainly a pandemic positive to be celebrated and recognized! Beyond the county meetings, we have been in constant communications with the Farm Bureau team regarding PYO activities, agritourism, supply chain disruptions, and other timely topics. The discussions regarding agritourism have evolved and continue to develop as the Agritourism Study Commission has been formed. Farm Bureau serves on the 13-member Commission and contributes to the dialogue by identifying challenges and solutions for Massachusetts agritourism operations. Ultimately, the body will produce a final report with recommendations for how to support the growing sector and make sure agritourism remains a viable part of the Massachusetts landscape.

The work of the Food Security Task Force continues as we prepare for the winter season and providing food for residents across the Commonwealth. Not surprisingly, the four food banks and nearly one thousand food pantries in the state have seen the highest levels of demand on record during the pandemic. At the end of their fiscal year in August, the Greater Boston Food Bank reported distributing over 100 million pounds of food; pre-COVID, they thought it would take eight years to reach this number and had projected to reach 68 million pounds. The Worcester County Food Bank reported an 18% increase in food distribution year-over-year and the Food Bank of Western MA saw distribution increase by 22% in FY20. Food box distribution efforts and coordination continues as the food banks and pantries adapt their operations for the colder months ahead.

The Food Security Infrastructure Grant program closed on September 15<sup>th</sup> to applicants and received over 1,300 submissions, the largest amount ever received for a state grant program. Round 4 and 5 review have recently been completed and are anticipated to be announced in the next week. As several applicants have requested additional information regarding the status of their applications, a communication was sent out the week of 10/19 discussing the timeline for review, the contract process, and provides responses to frequently asked questions. Applicants are notified by the grant manager of the decision on their grant with either approval, denial, or the opportunity to amend their application and resubmit. The review team has expanded to accommodate the number of grant applicants, and MDAR now has 8 individuals supporting the program. Thank you to the administration's support of this program, as well as our MDAR team that has committed significant time to the review process.

On the legislative front, Governor Baker recently filed the FY21 budget and we are pleased that MDAR saw a 3% increase in our operating budget. Beyond the filing of this legislation, the legislature has not acted on any MDAR-related bills of note. We have continued to engage with legislators on constituent matters however, through Zoom meetings, calls, emails, and at a handful of farm tours and events. Most recently, I had the opportunity to attend “A Tribute(ary) to the Connecticut River” hosted by Senator Jo Comerford (D-Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester) and Karen Foster of All Out Adventures. The day-long kayak trip was organized to raise awareness about the river’s importance to the region and connection to the environment, economy, agriculture, ecology, heritage, and culture. On a crisp fall morning in Western Massachusetts, EEA Secretary Theoharides, Rep. Blais, Rep. Carey, Rep. Domb, Rep. Sabadosa, local and state partners, and I took to the waters and shared ideas for collaboration, partnership, and a common goal of preserving this critical resource in the Commonwealth. This is certainly a trip and experience I will remember for years to come!

Commissioner Lebeaux and I also visited Western MA earlier this month for a truly inspiring day of farm tours organized by Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA). The tour included stops at ServiceNet’s Prospect Meadow Farm in Hatfield, Riquezas Del Campo in Hatfield, All Farmers in West Springfield, and Gardening the Community in Springfield, where we visited with Liz O’Gilvie of the Springfield Food Policy Council. The focus of our conversations included food access/equity, social justice, land access, drought impacts/need for infrastructure, and ways in which MDAR can continue to assist new and beginning farmers, as well as underserved farming populations. Thank you, Phil K., for organizing the tour and showcasing a side of Massachusetts agriculture that is not often seen or recognized.

Our team continues to find ways to connect and be engaged recognizing that we are all working remotely through at least December 2020. We celebrated National Chocolate Milk Day on September 27th with a chocolate milk toast and at the end of the month, we will have a virtual Halloween celebration with staff, children, and pets attending in their best costumes. We provide Department updates on these calls and offer time for staff to talk about how they are doing, their latest Netflix/TV/movie recommendations, recipes/cooking ideas, and provide a few laughs for the team. We are also continuing to host our ag stakeholder calls, which have gone to a monthly format, to provide updates on Department initiatives, connect with industry members, and address questions and concerns. We plan to continue the all-staff meetings/check-ins, as well as our monthly ag stakeholder calls to connect with industry members, for the foreseeable future and post-COVID. As always though, our team is available to assist our farmers and work with the industry as we enter the next phase of COVID-19 response efforts.

As we move into the winter season, some of the issues that remain at the top of our minds include winter farmers’ markets and food access points, maple production and sugarhouse operating procedures, supply chain disruptions, and anticipating inventory for the spring growing season. We are currently working to revise and amend the PYO guidance to incorporate Christmas tree farms, as well as the farmers’ market guidance to be more reflective of how winter markets will need to operate. If there is additional guidance that would be helpful to your industry or farm, please let us know and we will work with our team to develop appropriate guidance.

Thank you for all you are continuing to do to provide food, feed, fiber, and fuel for our residents and consumers across the region. Wishing you all a safe, healthy, and thankful holiday season.

Locally grown and proud,

Ashley

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# FOREFRONT

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## Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) Program Update

On May 17<sup>th</sup>, Governor Baker announced the creation of the \$36M [FSIG Program](#) to make investments in a resilient food system with a goal of ensuring that local food reaches residents in need across the Commonwealth. The FSIG Program seeks to ensure that individuals and families throughout the Commonwealth have equitable access to food, especially local food. The FSIG program was one of the sixteen final recommendations of the Food Security Task Force, based on the current demonstrated need and future long-term resiliency of the Massachusetts food system. The program is also dedicated to helping local farmers, food pantries and community partners, summer meal sites, fisheries, nurseries, and other local producers and participants in the food distribution network adapt to disruptions in the supply chain and fill infrastructure gaps.

The Request For Responses (RFR) was posted on June 10, 2020, with applications being accepted on a rolling basis through September 15, 2020. To date, the grant program has received over 1,300 applications for consideration with 91 projects receiving funding totaling \$11.7M; the volume and interest in the program is truly unprecedented.

A typical state agency grant program may receive an average of 20-30 applications, with a posting window of two months, a month for review and vetting, and then a few weeks for contract reviews. Due to the urgency and need fulfilled by the FSIG program, the grant review team has worked to expedite the timeline, while at the same time conducting a thorough review of each application on its merits to address food security.

While the first three rounds of funding have been announced, it is anticipated that due to the volume of applications there will be multiple rounds of future grant awards. Please be aware that some applicants may be contacted for further supporting documentation or with clarifying questions regarding your project proposals. The review team provides applicants with a 1-week window to respond to the request once received; it is to the applicant's benefit to provide this information in a timely manner so the review process is not further delayed.

If you are notified of a favorable decision on your application, the grant team will contact you to start the contract process. Once you review and return the contract, it will be vetted for final signature and returned to the awardee, commencing the contract term and allowing the awardee to begin project work. The timeline from when an awardee signs and returns their contract to final authorization by the grant team varies based on project scope and may take up to 3-4 weeks to complete the process. The grant team appreciates your patience as we work to finalize contracts and return them to awardees.

On behalf of the Baker-Polito Administration, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), and Food Security Task Force, we thank you for your continued efforts to keep consumers across the Commonwealth fed and healthy, and your efforts to address food security during these unprecedented times.

If you have further questions about the [FSIG program](#), please email the grant manager at: [foodsecurity.grant@mass.gov](mailto:foodsecurity.grant@mass.gov).

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## Energy News

### [MDAR's MA Farm Energy Program \(MFEP\) - Energy Audits - Technical Assistance – Be Prepared: Energy Grant Season A-Coming](#)

Remember MDAR's Massachusetts Farm Energy Program (MFEP) has funds to help farms cover audits, energy efficient projects, and select renewable energy projects. We are still providing these services remotely.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Now is the time to have a technical assessment completed for any energy project you are considering in preparation for upcoming energy grants! You will need a technical assessment to file an energy grant application whether with MDAR or USDA. So start planning now; if you wait until applications come out you may not be able to have one scheduled in time! Remember MFEP pays 75% of the technical assessment, first come, first served. Our MFEP is providing tele-assessments during this trying time.

Contact MFEP now for more information through the Center for EcoTechnology (CET), our partner carrying out the MFEP. 413-727-3090, [info@massfarmenergy.com](mailto:info@massfarmenergy.com), or visit [www.massfarmenergy.com](http://www.massfarmenergy.com), submit a *Request Form*, and then you will be contacted.

### **Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Units Guideline Straw Proposal**

This article from: [www.mass.gov/info-details/smart-400-mw-review-emergency-rulemaking](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/smart-400-mw-review-emergency-rulemaking)

On October 15, 2019, the Department issued proposed changes to the Guideline Regarding the Definition of Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Units (“Guideline”). The Department collected public comments until November 6, 2019. Following the review of these comments, DOER has drafted a straw proposal of potential changes to the Guideline. The straw proposal for the Guideline can be found [here](#).

The straw proposal removes many of the changes to the technical and application requirements that were proposed in October 2019. Instead, the straw proposal maintains much of the requirements in the existing version of the Guideline, dated April 26, 2018. Two areas that the Department contemplates modifying pertain to project size and opportunities for third-party certification.

**The deadline for submitting written comments for the straw proposal is Friday, October 30, 2020, by 5:00 pm.**

Written comments on the straw proposal should be submitted to [doer.smart@mass.gov](mailto:doer.smart@mass.gov) with “SMART ASTGU Guideline Comments” in the subject line. As an alternative, the public may submit written comments via mail to the Department of Energy Resources, 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 1020, Boston, MA 02114, attention Kaitlin Kelly. Please be advised that there may be delays in receiving written comments via the mail.

[Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Units Guideline Straw Proposal](#)

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## Apiary Program

Get the New England Honey Bee Update by joining New England states Apiary Inspectors of America members to learn about the latest regional seasonal activity, Coronavirus (COVID-19), and honey bee health updates for

our area on **Friday, November 13, 2020**: 2:00 pm-4:00 pm. Join Zoom Meeting: <https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/j/98407146084?pwd=RHNEOGU3b1FTdUpGWmZaVUxLeIJPdz09>, Meeting ID: 984 0714 6084 Passcode: 042153, One Tap Mobile: +16468769923,98407146084#

[Fall 2020 Newsletter](#) - Note the [NEW Apiary Program Message Line](#) phone number: 508-281-6784. This will replace the existing message line number: 617-626-1801. [Apiary Program here](#). Questions, [bees@mass.gov](mailto:bees@mass.gov).

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## The Markets Corner

Mary Jordan, Director – [Division of Agricultural Markets](#), [Mary.Jordan@mass.gov](mailto:Mary.Jordan@mass.gov).

Where has this year gone!....and now the holidays are upon us! As you hustle and bustle to finish up the harvest, your customers are gearing up for the upcoming holidays and making the best of them during the COVID-19 situation. We would like to share some information to help you gear up for the upcoming season.

### The MassGrown Exchange

Since the launch of the MassGrown Exchange on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 200 businesses have registered and 238 products have been listed on the platform. The top 5 product categories appearing in product listings are Value-added (69 listings), Vegetables (50 listings), Meat (37 listings), Fruits (18 listings), and Dairy products (17 listings). Fish/seafood (14 listings) and Aquaculture products (5) were also featured on the Exchange. We also have 28 companies that are providing services to food and farm related businesses.

For those who haven't seen it yet, the [MassGrown Exchange](#), is a new online platform that facilitates **business-to-business** connections within our local food system.

[Retailers/Farmstands](#): Looking to supplement your crops/products with other local products for the upcoming holiday season? Check out the [products listings](#). If you are looking for something that is not listed? [Register and list it today](#) – you will be automatically notified when it becomes listed!

We're excited it was recently mentioned in a recent [Progressive Grocer article](#), as well as on [MassLive.com](#).

We invite you to visit the [MassGrown Exchange webpage](#), which includes a short [video tutorial](#). For any questions, contact [Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov). For technical issues, contact [Joao.Tavares@mass.gov](mailto:Joao.Tavares@mass.gov).

### Agricultural Event Certification

“Calling MA farm wineries”: If you plan on attending any special holiday markets or agricultural events, be sure to complete your [Agricultural Events Certification application](#) and send to Katie at [Katelyn.Rozenas@mass.gov](mailto:Katelyn.Rozenas@mass.gov). The holidays are a great opportunity to promote your brand and sell your product!

### List Upcoming Culinary and Agricultural Events

ATTENTION FARMERS AND AG INDUSTRY PARTNERS! Did you know that MDAR maintains an online calendar



geared towards consumers that lists upcoming culinary and agricultural events throughout Massachusetts? You can find that calendar [here](#). We are always happy to help spread the word on your event and welcome your submissions. You can send your event listing to Phu Mai at [Phu.Mai@mass.gov](mailto:Phu.Mai@mass.gov). Please be sure to include the

name of the event, location, date and time, a brief description with any details such as cost to attend, etc. and a link to the event itself or your event page.

## Winter Farmers Markets

Those planning winter farmers' markets, should follow the current documents for the upcoming season.

- MDAR guidance document and DPH Order (updated 9/17) found [here](#).
- Retail guidance (includes capacity limits for indoor retail locations) [here](#).

While some provisions will need to be adapted due to the nature of winter markets, the overarching guidance remains the same. Note, capacity limits for indoor retail locations in the retail guidance. Winter farmers' markets should be proactively working with their local Boards of Health (if they have not done so already) to determine location, resource requirements/needs, and rules to operate the market safely and successfully this upcoming season.

Winter Farmers Market Survey/Updates for Listing - MDAR is currently updating our list of winter farmers' markets for the 2020 - 2021 season. The information provided will be used to update the Department's listing of markets on the web at [www.mass.gov/massgrown](http://www.mass.gov/massgrown). Contact information will also be provided to prospective growers who may be interested in selling at your market. A survey was sent to past winter farmers market managers on October 21st. If you are planning a new market or did not receive the survey, contact David Webber at [David.Webber@mass.gov](mailto:David.Webber@mass.gov).

## 2020 Massachusetts Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

As the Massachusetts FMNP comes to a close in just a few weeks, we wanted to remind you of some deadlines and procedures to wrap-up the 2020 season.

- October 31<sup>st</sup> - Last date that FMNP recipients can redeem coupons at certified farmers markets as well as farm stands. \*Farmers cannot accept coupons after October 31<sup>st</sup>.
- November 15<sup>th</sup> - Certified farmers must submit their coupons for reimbursement to the Massachusetts Farmers Markets Association. Contact Joe McIlwain, [joe@massfarmersmarkets.org](mailto:joe@massfarmersmarkets.org).

For more information on FMNP Guidelines, [click here](#). Questions, contact [Rebecca.Davidson@Mass.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Davidson@Mass.gov).

## Massachusetts Building Vendor Marketplace to Stay Online Throughout the Year

Looking for Massachusetts made Christmas gifts? Look no further than the Massachusetts Building online [Exhibitors page](#). Find unique gifts by clicking on each individual link.



## Export Market Development for Shellfish

### EU market for shellfish reopens after ten years

MDAR has been working with Food Export USA Northeast, funded by USDA, to prepare initiatives and market entry support for the Massachusetts shellfish sector. Activities to support the shellfish industry have included hosting international buyers to the Seafood Global Expo trade shows in Boston for one-on-one meetings and in 2019, a shellfish seminar in anticipation of the EU market opening. Buyer Missions at this event always include an educational program. The Division of Marine Fisheries has been a partner in conveying the quantity, quality, and sustainability of Massachusetts seafood products.

Later in 2019, an international shellfish mission of buyers from nine countries toured oyster farms along the south shore and Cape Cod. Cape Cod Cooperative Extension's aquaculture specialists were partners. Separately, shellfish market research was commissioned for markets including Hong Kong, China, France, Taiwan, and the EU. In 2020, an international virtual seafood mission included shellfish buyers.



Currently, MDAR is working with Food Export's European seafood specialists as they interview shellfish importers and other industry representatives to assess the current market situation, including shellfish consumption changes due to the pandemic. Resources and initiatives will continue to be shared with the industry. After ten years without access to the EU market, Massachusetts shellfish could be exported to Spain and the Netherlands as early as December 2020. An agreement on equivalency, the EU tests the water and the US tests the meat, was reached last month.

As the shellfish sector increases production and volume from innovative and efficient farming methods, the need to develop international customers is becoming more important. Oyster production has doubled on the East coast over the past five years and is predicted to double again in the next five, causing worry that domestic consumption will not keep up with production. In 2018, the value of the oyster industry in Massachusetts was \$27.6 M and hard clams \$962,000 (DMF). At least 90% of oysters and 70% of clams are consumed in restaurants. (Eastern Shellfish Growers Association). This was before COVID-19 hit. The restaurant sector in the EU has also been negatively impacted.

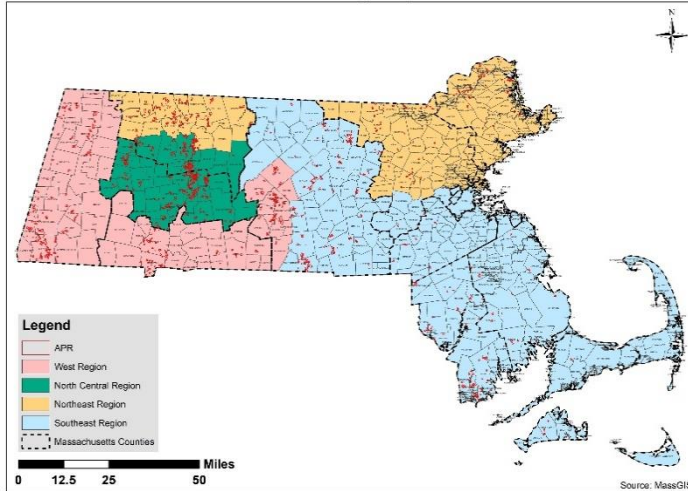
MDAR been involved in the support of seafood export market development since 2004, as a member of [Food Export USA Northeast](#), accessing USDA funds. MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux is a board member and serves as the organization's secretary. For additional information, contact Bonita Oehlke: [Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov](mailto:Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov).

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## APR Stewardship Team Update

The MDAR Stewardship Team has recently added staff and redrawn our APR regions in order to improve our responsiveness to farmers.

APR Stewardship Regions 2020



Northeast Region Stewardship Planner - Christine Chisholm, 617-455-9204, [Chris.Chisholm@mass.gov](mailto:Chris.Chisholm@mass.gov)

Southeast Region Stewardship Planner - Delia Delongchamp, 617-626-1737, [Delia.Delongchamp@mass.gov](mailto:Delia.Delongchamp@mass.gov)

North Central Region Stewardship Planner - Caroline Raisler, 857-276-1285, [Caroline.Raisler@mass.gov](mailto:Caroline.Raisler@mass.gov)

West Region Stewardship Planner - Kristina Smith, 617-455-5201, [Kristina.Smith@mass.gov](mailto:Kristina.Smith@mass.gov)

assigned regions:

Julie Weiss, [Julie.Weiss@mass.gov](mailto:Julie.Weiss@mass.gov) and Taylor Arsenault, 617-655-3870, [Taylor.Arsenault@mass.gov](mailto:Taylor.Arsenault@mass.gov)

We look forward to connecting!

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## Exploring the Small Farm Dream Course

MDAR is offering the Exploring the Small Farm Dream course online this winter!! This course is designed to guide aspiring farmers through the decision-making process of starting a farm. The experienced course instructor will cover many aspects of starting a farm business including marketing, financing, regulations, and labor. Participants will assess their skills, knowledge, and available resources, hear from a panel of farmers, and analyze the feasibility of their small farm dream to clarify their farming vision. The course is a 5-week program, consisting of one 2-hour class per week with assignments completed by students at home between each session.

Virtual classes will be held Tuesday evenings from 6:00 – 8:00pm on January 5, 12, 19, 26 and Feb 2, 2021. Cost is \$100 per enterprise, with a second farm partner attending at no extra cost. Applications are available on the [MDAR website](#). Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until November 23<sup>rd</sup>, with payments due by December 5<sup>th</sup>. Email questions and completed applications to Deanna at [Beginningfarmercoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:Beginningfarmercoordinator@gmail.com)

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## Massachusetts Introduced Pests Outreach Blog

Follow our [Massachusetts Introduced Pests Outreach Blog](#) for updates on invasive insects in the state and suggestions for at-home activities to stay connected to nature.

### **State Agricultural Officials Urge Residents to Report Signs of Invasive Spotted Lanternfly**

MDAR recently identified two dead specimens of the spotted lanternfly (SLF) in Massachusetts communities, and is urging residents to report any sign of the invasive pest. The specimens were recovered in the towns of Milford and Norwood, and were brought into Massachusetts on materials shipped from Pennsylvania counties

currently under a spotted lanternfly quarantine. [More here](#). Looking to identify, visit [Is that a Spotted Lanternfly or a Stink Bug?](#)

### **Emerald Ash Borer Updates**

As of October 9<sup>th</sup>, seven new municipalities have been confirmed to have populations of emerald ash borer: Florida, Fall River, Sherborn, Foxborough, Millis, Plainville, and Wrentham. This brings the total number of municipalities with EAB in the state to 140 (40%). [Details here](#).

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## **Organic Cost Share Reimbursement Program**



MDAR is currently accepting applications for reimbursements for USDA Organic Cost Share funds for farmers and food processors. The program includes a new major change - applicants will now receive up to 50% (\$500 dollars maximum) reimbursement of total certification cost. Through the USDA Farm Service Agency, funds are available to farms and food companies that are inspected and certified and/or inspected and receiving renewal of certification.

Application deadline has been extended to December 15, 2020. \*Funds for Handler/Processor certification category have been fully expended, Handlers/Processors must apply through Farm Service Agency.

Details and application available [here](#). Reimbursements will be available on a first come, first served basis until funds are fully expended. Organic growers may also seek their reimbursement through their local FSA office (only one reimbursement request will be accepted, through either MDAR or FSA, not both). If you have any questions, please contact Keri Cornman, [Keri.Cornman@mass.gov](mailto:Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

**Retail Organic Farms:** If you would like to be included in the consumer MassGrown statewide [map for organic farms](#), please fill out [MDAR's Marketing survey](#). Wholesalers are encouraged to post crops/products on the business-to-business [MassGrown Exchange](#). Questions, contact [Richard.LeBlanc@Mass.gov](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@Mass.gov).

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## **Agricultural Soil Health (ASH) Program**

Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021) [Request for Response \(RFR\)](#): RFR File: AGR-ASH-FY21 for the development of an agricultural soil health program to increase the adoption of soil health practices within the produce and dairy industries in the Commonwealth.

Complete details on [COMMBUYS](#). **Deadline for applications is November 6, 2020.** Questions: Laura Maul, [Laura.Maul@mass.gov](mailto:Laura.Maul@mass.gov).

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## **Agricultural Produce Safety Program (APSIP) Round Two**

Reminder - A second round of MDAR's APSIP Grant has been posted with a due date of Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup>

MDAR has decided to open a second application period for the APSIP to accommodate for overlapping goals with the recently closed Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) Program, in addition to timing issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the APSIP grant is to support produce operations in implementing

enhanced produce safety measures that help reduce food safety risks and help to minimize microbial contamination and food-borne illnesses. In addition, by implementing eligible upgrades that help reduce a food safety risk, the program helps operations maintain or increase their market access. APSIP is a competitive, re-imbusement grant program that funds projects up to \$40,000 or 80% of total project costs. Projects must be completed by June 30, 2021.

NOTE: For those applicants who have already submitted their applications under the first round RFR-AGR-APSIP-FY21 you do not need to resubmit. All applications received in Round One will be evaluated separately from those received in Round Two. Once all applications have been reviewed, MDAR will announce awarded grants to the top applicants in each Round. If you currently have submitted an application that you would like to withdraw from consideration for funding please email [Laura.Maul@mass.gov](mailto:Laura.Maul@mass.gov). APSIP grant applications are available at [www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/about/divisions/afsip.html](http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/about/divisions/afsip.html).

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## Conservation Law Foundation Offers Resource Library of Legal Guides

Conservation Law Foundation's [Legal Food Hub](#) has been working to build out its [Resource Library](#) of legal guides, which answer common legal questions that farmers, food entrepreneurs, and nonprofits encounter. Here is a summary of the latest additions:

- The following guides, developed in partnership with [Klavens Law Group](#), address issues farmers might face as they shift their business model in response to the pandemic:
  - [Running a Farmer-Operated Food Hub](#)
  - [Home Delivery of Farm Products](#)
  - [Selling Farm Products Through Online Food Hubs](#)
- [Sick and Medical Leave During Covid-19: Rights and Obligations](#) explains the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which mandates paid sick, medical, and family leave for employees affected by COVID-19.
- [What is Mediation?](#) was produced with [Boston Law Collaborative](#) and offers guidance on mediation services that are standing at the ready to assist in conflict resolution.
- [Incorporating a Non-Profit in New England](#) is for those of you exploring how to start a nonprofit.
- Finally, several of the Legal Food Hub's guides for farmers are now available in Spanish:
  - [Decidir La Estructura Apropriada Para Su Negocio](#) - Deciding on the Right Business Structure
  - [Exenciones De Responsabilidad Para Actividades Agrícolas Dentro De La Finca](#) - Liability Waivers for On-Farm Activities
  - [La Negociación Del Alquiler De Sus Tierras](#) – Negotiating Your Land Lease
  - [Lo Básico De Los Impuestos Sobre El Salario](#) – Employment Payroll Tax Basics
  - [Cómo Trabajar Con Un Abogado?](#) - How to Work with a Lawyer
  - [Introducción A La Ley De Cultivo](#) – Introduction to Farm Law

You are encouraged to circulate any and all of these guides widely. And if you have any specific questions pertaining to your business or organization, don't hesitate to reach out to the Legal Food Hub via [its website](#) or email [legalfoodhub@clf.org](mailto:legalfoodhub@clf.org).

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## Industrial Hemp Training Program for Agricultural/Technical Service Providers

UVM Extension Northwest Crops and Soils (NWCS) program is offering this course in collaboration with the following organizations: Vermont Agency of Agriculture (VAAF), Food & Markets, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), SUNY Morrisville, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners (MOFGA), Northeast Organic Farming Association of NY (NOFA-NY), and Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (NE-SARE).

Offerings include up to 13 webinars (7 are required), up to 5 in-field intensives (1 is required), and admission to attend the 2021 and 2022 Industrial Hemp Conferences. You will also be asked to complete a pre- and post-course survey. All this is FREE and you can also earn Certified Crop Adviser credits. Webinar trainings will be live on Tuesdays, 12pm to 1pm.

\*Please note that this training is offered for Agricultural and Technical Service Providers. Interested in enrolling? Please register by October 26, 2020 at [this website](#). This information can also be found on [UVM NWCS Conference and Events web page](#). Questions? Please contact Catherine Davidson, [Catherine.Davidson@uvm.edu](mailto:Catherine.Davidson@uvm.edu), or Heather Darby, [Heather.Darby@uvm.edu](mailto:Heather.Darby@uvm.edu) or 802-524-6501.

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## 2021 Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar Now Available



Farms looking to sell on consignment at your retail farmstand? Add to your CSA share? Or looking to give a great gift to a special teacher? Look no further than the [“Celebrating the Seasons of Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar,”](#) which features winning photos from the annual photo contest. It includes beautiful diversity of crops grown across Massachusetts as well as be a learning tool for teachers and educators, as each month includes “Fun Facts” and “Teaching Tips.”

The annual Calendar is produced in collaboration with [Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom \(MAC\)](#), the [MA State Grange](#), and the MDAR, along with the many great sponsoring associations: MA Farm Bureau, MA Maple Association, MA Flower Growers Association, MA Fruit Growers, MA Fairs Association, Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, MA Dairy Promotion Board, and the



MA Christmas Tree Association. Proceeds go to the great work MAC does for Massachusetts teachers and educators across the Commonwealth.

[Details and ordering information here.](#) If you are a farm or retail business, and would like to offer Calendars to your customers, there is a bulk price offered. Contact [Bobbie Oles](#) for more information.

We also encourage everyone to submit photographs for the [2021 Photo Contest](#) - We're always looking to highlight agriculture, aquaculture, and horticulture related photos throughout the seasons of Massachusetts!

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## UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

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- **October 22 – "Why Farm to School? Why Now?"** - Virtual Massachusetts Farm to School Network Public Stakeholder Event - 2-4pm. [Register here.](#) Description: Join the Massachusetts Farm to School Network (NFSN) for a virtual version of our annual stakeholder gathering where we will explore why farm to school is as important as ever in the time of COVID. This event will provide local perspectives on themes raised by National Farm to School Network's "Food Justice is Racial Justice" event on 10/14 and will address how COVID-19 is shaping the present and future of farm to school in Massachusetts. It is recommended that attendees view the recording of the 10/14 National Farm to School Network (NFSN)'s Virtual Movement Meeting "Food Justice is Racial Justice" in advance of 10/22, as we'll be responding to themes and takeaways as part of the 10/22 MA Farm to School Network event. [Learn more about the NFSN event here.](#)
- **October 23 - Testing Soil for Meaningful Results** – 12 – 1pm. Webinar is an excellent "Soil Testing 101" for farmers and backyard gardeners alike. [Details here.](#)
- **October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> - SBN's Local Food Speed Trading Virtual Series - Sign up for Local Food Producers** - Invite local farms and food businesses based in Massachusetts and greater New England to connect virtually with food buyers of all sizes. [Details here.](#)
- **November 4 – December 16 - The Northeast Greenhouse Conference and Expo** – Wednesdays; All webinars take place from noon to 1:00 pm. Sessions include: Pests of Chrysanthemum, and an Insect Management Update; Biological Control: How to be successful; Growing Garden Mums Without Disease Losses; Learn the newest strategies to keep root rots from hurting your bottom line; Young Plants and Plant Growth Regulators: Saving time and Improving Quality; Cleaning Surfaces in the Greenhouse. [Details here.](#)
- **November 4 - 5 - Garden Ecology for Landscape Professionals** - Demand for ecology-based landscapes is increasing faster than the information available on how to provide them. Consequently, converting a lawn to a meadow, or a weedy woodland to a graceful fern glade, will require landscape practitioners to expand their toolbox. [Details here.](#)
- **November 7 - Mass. Beekeepers Association first virtual Annual Fall Meeting** – 8:00 am to 12 pm. Pre-registration is required. [Details here.](#)
- **November 10 - 2020 Fall WasteWise Forum Webinar** - 10:00 am-12:00 pm. Free webinar will be hosted by RecyclingWorks in MA and will focus on strategies and opportunities to reduce and recover food waste, including information on the commercial organics waste ban and presentations from businesses and institutions with food waste diversion programs. [Details here.](#)

- **November 12** - The [Massachusetts Food Policy Council](#) annual meeting focus will be the MA Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program including highlights and case studies, an opportunity to showcase some of the outcomes from this program to the state's administration and legislators. Remote participation information is forthcoming. [Updates here.](#)
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## USDA News

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### USDA Extends Regional Conservation Partnership Program proposal deadline to Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has re-posted a revised Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funding announcement, inviting potential conservation partners to submit project proposals for federal funding. NRCS will award up to \$360 million dollars to locally driven, public-private partnerships that improve the nation's water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat and protect agricultural viability. [Complete release here.](#)

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## Classified

- **Farmers Markets Seek Vendors** - MDAR posts an updated list of farmers markets looking for vendors [here](#). The contacts for markets are posted [here](#). *MassGrown* statewide map of farmers markets [here](#).
  - **Job Posting** – Mass. Animal Fund Community Liaison (Environmental Health Inspector I) – MDAR, 251 Causeway Street, Boston, MA. Please note that requisitions (former Posting IDs) will remain open for 90 days; however, first consideration will be given to those applicants that apply within the first 14 days of the posting. [Details here.](#) The MDAR - State Reclamation Board is an Equal Employment Opportunity/ Affirmative Action Employer.
  - **Job Posting** – Accepting applications for a Temporary Program Technician - Hampshire/Hampden County Farm Service Agency is currently accepting applications for a 20 hour a week Temporary Program Technician, flexible hours can be arranged. Responsibilities include carrying out general office activities and functions pertaining to the administration of Farm Service Agency programs, and office administrative activities in Hampshire and Hampden counties. Candidates must have excellent written, verbal and computer skills. Must be a U.S. Citizen and have reliable transportation. Must be a high school graduate or equivalent; college background preferred. Interest in agriculture and farm background is desired. This position is a temporary position through January 30, 2021. All candidates must submit resume, hard copy or email, by October 29, 2020 to: Heather Baylis, County Executive Director Hampshire Hampden County Farm Service Agency 195 Russell St STE B-5 Hadley MA 01035, [heather.baylis@usda.gov](mailto:heather.baylis@usda.gov).
  - **Meatworks** - Designed with the highest animal welfare and humane handling standards in mind, Meatworks is a state of the art slaughter facility available to small-scale livestock producers in Southern New England. Committed to working with local farms to keep a steady supply of fresh, sustainably raised meats available to our communities, at reasonable prices. Please book your processing date today by calling 774-319-5616. For more information, visit [www.meatworkswestport.com](http://www.meatworkswestport.com)
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## About the *Farm & Market Report*

Published bi-monthly by MDAR:

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- Michael Botelho, Director of Produce Safety, [Michael.Botelho@mass.gov](mailto:Michael.Botelho@mass.gov)

Complete staff directory [here](#). Next issue to be published in December. Please send news, events, or classified information by December 1<sup>st</sup> to [Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov). To unsubscribe, or change your email address, contact [Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov).

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### [COVID-19 Resources for Agriculture](#) [MassGrown: COVID-19: How & Where to Buy Local](#)

MDAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – MDAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit MDAR's website at [www.mass.gov/agr](http://www.mass.gov/agr).

