

Planning for Farmland in Massachusetts

An Overview at the Municipal and Regional Level



This document was created by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) with review by partners (visit [Acknowledgements](#)). It was last revised on 8/13/2026. Photographs by MDAR Staff of various Massachusetts farms.

For more information please visit:

[Ag Resources for Municipalities Webpage](#)

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About this document

The [2023 Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan](#) outlines a pathway for many partners across the state to address the urgent challenges of farmland loss, access to farmland, and farm economic viability. During the initial steps of its implementation, there were several requests for additional information about how to incorporate farmland protection into municipal plans and actions, including Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRPs).

In Spring 2025 an updated [Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook \(OSRP Workbook\)](#) was released by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services (DCS). While this document is primarily focused on supplementing the OSRP Workbook about how to incorporate farmland into OSRPs, this document can also support work on other municipal and regional planning documents such as Master Plans, Strategic Plans, Food System Plans, Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plans and Economic Development Plans. This document also provides information relevant to the wider realm of planning for farmland, such as community building, engagement and municipal operations.

This document was drafted by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) as a resource to support the implementation of the [2023 Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan](#). The MFAP Implementation Matrix¹ identifies several tasks in the

Plan that focus on improving planning for farmland protection at a municipal level.²

Audience

The primary audience for this document is staff at municipalities, Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) and land trusts. This audience has an understanding of the complexities of land use and other types of planning, so this document can focus on highlighting where planning for farmland might differ from or align with planning for open space, conservation, and other uses.

This document may also be a useful starting point for volunteer board and committee members of municipalities and land trusts. More resources for this audience will be developed in the future.

For farmers seeking to understand more about how to work with municipalities and in the community there are other resources, such as *An Entrepreneur's Guide to Farming in Massachusetts*.³

Scale

The primary focus of this document is on planning for farmland at the municipal and regional levels. Statewide and multi-state planning are not the focus of this document.

¹ The MFAP Implementation Matrix is a living document includes all the goals, strategies, actions and tasks from the Plan, and tracks what partners have done and what partners intend to do. The matrix is available on the [MFAP webpage](#).

² Task 1017, 1018, 1114, several tasks under Action I.B.7 and many others. This document primarily supports implementation of Task 1017 - Add guidance to the Open Space and Recreation Plan's Workbook and other EEA program and

funding guidance that would meet NRCS requirements related to agriculture to allow local and regional OSRPs to be used for ACEP-ALE eligibility.

³ New Entry Sustainable Farming Project – [An Entrepreneur's Guide to Farming in Massachusetts. Fertile Resources, Harvestable Tips, and a Side-Dress of Regulatory Reality](#). December 2023. For this topic, "Factsheet 10 – Farming & the Community" is particularly useful.

Types of farmland and agriculture

For the purpose of this document and the Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan we focus on farmland, as explained in the [“Agriculture in Massachusetts”](#) section. Aquaculture and forestry are not included within this focus.

Before you start

It is helpful to also review the [Open Space and Recreation Planner’s Workbook 2025](#) (“OSRP Workbook” in this document)⁴ when you are using this Overview.

There are also many references to additional resources in the text and footnotes. The intention is not to re-write resources that are already created and maintained by other organizations with expertise in these areas.

In some places there are not comprehensive resources that can readily be referenced. The hope is to work with partners to create these resources to meet needs in the coming months and years.

Help with next steps

This document is intended to help implement next steps, but some may want or need assistance. Municipalities that would like assistance with incorporating farmland protection into their work can reach out to their Regional Planning Agency⁵ which may be able to provide technical assistance.

⁴ Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Division of Conservation Services (DCS). [Open Space and Recreation Planner’s Workbook 2025](#)

Revisions and suggested edits

As this is the first version of this document, refinements will most likely be needed as planners and communities work with it. For suggestions of edits, please email Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov.

Acknowledgements

This document was reviewed by many partners, including MDAR staff, EEA staff, municipal staff, municipal volunteers, Regional Planning Agency staff, and land trust staff. These partners helped ensure that the document reflected the diversity of circumstances found in communities and regions across Massachusetts and in approaches to planning to farmland. Their review and comments were greatly appreciated. A list of partners who contributed can be found in [Appendix B \(Acknowledgements\)](#).

Use of this document

This document is for education purposes only and should not be relied upon as legal or tax advice. All users should follow up with the appropriate legal and tax professionals. Wherever another federal, state, or local entity is listed as having jurisdiction, MDAR defers to their guidance and encourages all users to reach out directly to those entities for further information.

⁵ More information can be found of the [Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies website](#).

Agriculture in Massachusetts

Communities across Massachusetts are rooted in a long and evolving agricultural tradition. Agriculture provides food and other products, supports local and regional economies, contributes to natural resource protection and enhancement, and strengthens community character and quality of life. From working landscapes to smaller-scale operations in developed areas, agriculture remains an important land use across the Commonwealth.

This section gives a brief overview of some useful context related to agriculture in Massachusetts.

What is “agriculture” according to state statute?

According to Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.),⁶ “Farming” or “agriculture” shall include farming in all of its branches and the cultivation and tillage of the soil, dairying, the production, cultivation, growing and harvesting of any agricultural, aquacultural, floricultural or horticultural commodities, the growing and harvesting of forest products upon forest land, the raising of livestock including horses, the keeping of horses as a commercial enterprise, the keeping and raising of poultry, swine, cattle and other domesticated animals used for food purposes, bees, fur-bearing animals, and any forestry or lumbering operations, performed by a farmer, who is hereby defined as one engaged in agriculture or farming as herein defined, or on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with such farming operations,

⁶ [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 128, Section 1A](#)

⁷ [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 61A](#). See the [Tools chapter](#) for more explanation.

including preparations for market, delivery to storage or to market or to carriers for transportation to market.

Agriculture and horticulture is also defined under M.G.L. Chapter 61A for tax purposes.⁷ Some sections of M.G.L. Chapter 61A are also used as part of determining eligibility of a property for the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program.

What is farmland?

Farmland is more than just cropland. It includes a wide variety of land uses, such as woodland, pasture, orchards, field crops, forage, nursery, Christmas trees, and the associated infrastructure, buildings and other elements that support the farm business.⁸

It is important to recognize the diversity of what farmers do on their land to sustain their farming operation.

⁸ [US Census of Agriculture. Table 8: Land 2022 and 2017. Massachusetts.](#)

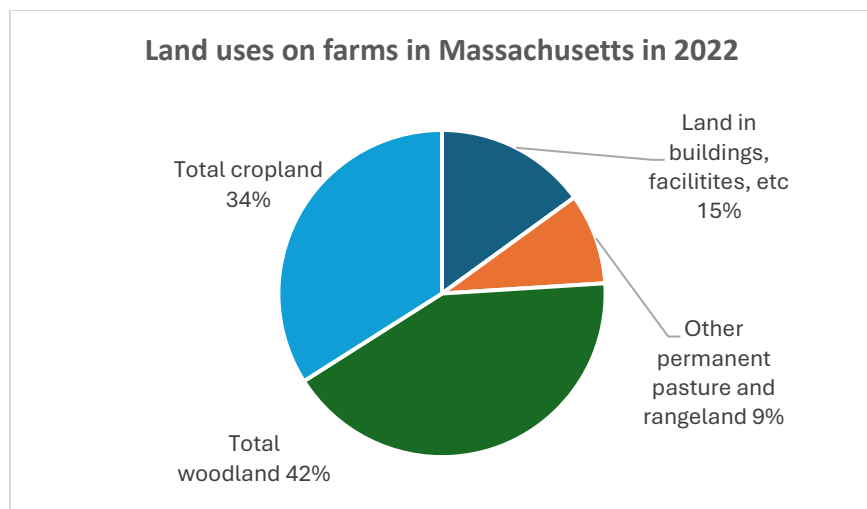


Chart 1: 2022 Land uses of farms in Massachusetts according to the [US Census of Agriculture. Table 8: Land 2022 and 2017. Massachusetts.](#)

What are the benefits of local agriculture?

The following are some of the benefits of local agriculture:

Economic benefits

- Generates revenue
- Provides employment
- Contributes to local economy
- Attracts tourists and visitors

Environmental benefits

- Provides carbon sequestration
- Retains biodiversity
- Enhances flood mitigation

- Reduces carbon footprint of transporting food from the farm to the home
- Improves soil quality
- Includes wildlife buffer

Food security benefits

- Helps community members access fresh and healthy food
- Reduces dependency on food from far away and creates a more resilient and secure food source
- Improves food resilience in times of crisis

Scenic and social benefits

- Contributes to scenic vistas
- Provides passive recreational opportunities
- Provides opportunities for community activities

To give an idea of scale, according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture,⁹ \$607 million of agricultural goods were sold in Massachusetts in 2022 and nearly 28,000 people were employed by farms. There were 7,083 farms on 464,451 acres, covering about 9% of the land area of Massachusetts.

⁹ [US Census of Agriculture 2022. Tables 1,2, 4, 5 and 52.](#)

Why protect farmland?

We are losing agricultural land fast! Between 1997 and 2022 Massachusetts lost 113,000 acres of farmland to other natural and developed uses.¹⁰

That's about 1.8 times the size of Martha's

Vineyard. We now have around 464,000 acres of farmland remaining in Massachusetts.¹¹

According to American Farmland Trust's "Farms Under Threat 2040" Report,¹² between 2016 and 2040 Massachusetts, without additional investment and policy changes, is projected to lose approximately 1,200 farms and between 50,100 – 89,400 acres of farmland, which is the equivalent of losing approximate \$91 million in annual farm output and 4,900 jobs. This loss occurs not only due to large scale development but also low-density development/sprawl.

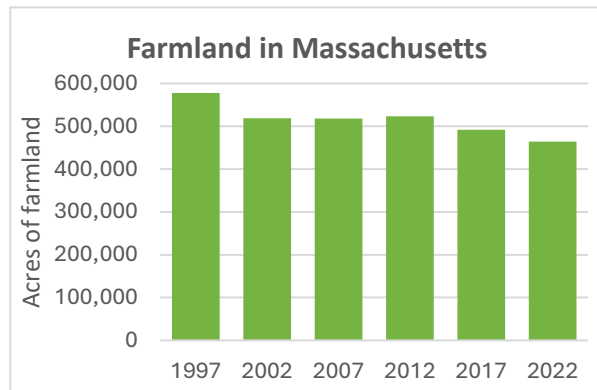


Chart 2: Acreage of land in farms in Massachusetts according to the US Census of Agriculture. [Table 1: Historical Highlights for 2022 and Earlier Census Years. Massachusetts](#)

The American Farmland Trust highlights five main reasons why protecting farmland is good for communities in their "Case for Farmland Protection" resource¹³ with supporting data, research and additional resources for each reason:

- Farmland is an irreplaceable resource
- The agricultural economy depends on farmland
- Farmland provides fiscal stability
- Farmland enhances the environment
- Farmland sustains community character

What are the challenges for farmers and farmland?

- The economics of the American food system favors larger scale farms in other regions of the country, while Massachusetts farms tend to be smaller, family-owned operations. As a result, economic viability of farms in Massachusetts is challenging, and when farms go out of business their land is often lost to other uses.
- Massachusetts farmland prices have risen significantly in recent decades, particularly in the last six years.¹⁴
- There is intense commercial, housing, solar and infrastructure development pressure.

¹⁰ [US Census of Agriculture 2022 and earlier. Tables 1,2, 4, 5 and 52.](#)

¹¹ Farmland in this case includes the whole farm property, which includes tillable land, orchards, cranberry bogs, forestlands and other land uses.

¹² American Farmland Trust. [Farms Under Threat 2040. Choosing an Abundant Future](#) and [Farms Under Threat. 2040 Future Scenarios. Massachusetts.](#)

¹³ American Farmland Trust/ Farmland Information Center. [The Case for Farmland Protection](#). Accessed 5/16/2025

¹⁴ US Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). [Land Values 2025 Summary. \(August 2025\).](#)

- The farmer population is aging. 40% of MA producers were 65 or older in 2022¹⁵ and most have not identified what will happen to the farm when they pass away or are no longer able to manage the operation.
- Due to high input costs, the average cost of production is greater than the value of goods produced. The average farm earned 95 cents for every dollar spent on production in 2022.¹⁶
- Climate change is exacerbating flooding, drought, and other extreme weather impacts which makes farming more unpredictable, putting crop production and farm viability further at risk.
- There is a lack of comprehensive statewide land-use planning with clear goals for farmland protection and agriculture alongside other land uses.
- There is a lack of comprehensive local land use planning with clear goals for farmland protection and agriculture alongside other land uses.
- There is a very limited farm labor pool, and retaining farm workers is challenging.
- As the number of farms diminish, the prevalence of farm service providers such as vets and mechanics for equipment repair also diminish, making farming more difficult.
- Historically underserved farmers including beginning, socially disadvantaged, and immigrant farmers still face disproportionate challenges in accessing farmland,

securing long-term tenure, obtaining financing, and other elements of running a farm.

Additional Context

In addition to the specific resources listed in this section, additional summaries and context can be found in:

- [Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan 2023 and the 2024 Progress Report](#)
- [Agricultural Resources, Facts and Statistics collated by MDAR](#)
- New England Feeding New England – [A Regional Approach to Food System Resilience 2023](#) and [Massachusetts State Brief 2023](#)
- [Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan 2015](#)
- American Farmland Trust, Conservation Law Foundation and Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group - [New England Food Policy: Building a Sustainable Food System](#). March 2014

¹⁵ Census of Agriculture 2022. Table 52. See previous reference.

¹⁶ Census of Agriculture 2022. Tables 2 and 5. See previous reference.

Tools to support farming and protect farmland

Municipal decisions, permitting, regulations and actions can have notable impacts on farm businesses and farmland, and they can vary significantly between municipalities and boards over time. Farms of various sizes produce a wide range of agricultural products and services¹⁷. The diversity of the agricultural sector highlights the need for a range of equally diverse policies and actions to support farmers and the agricultural economy.

This section explains some tools that can help support farming and protect farmland, including some definitions of terms used later in this resource. [Massachusetts Farmland Protection Options](#)¹⁸ includes more details about how these tools are applied once your municipality moves past the planning stage and into protection.

Note: In this section we refer to the “**Municipal Authority**” in several places. This could be the city council, mayor, town manager/administrator, selectboard, or other municipal decision-making individuals and/or bodies. Decisions affecting farms and farmland can come from many parts of a municipality including the planning board, board of assessors, board of health, and selectboard in addition to the water, electric and utility controlling agencies. Other municipal entities, such as conservation commissions and agricultural commissions are also important and should be working with decision making bodies.

¹⁷ Sometimes agricultural products are called “commodities.”

¹⁸ American Farmland Trust – [Massachusetts Farmland Protection Options: A Guide for Landowners, Land Trusts, and Municipalities](#). September 2025.

1) Municipal Master Plan and other planning documents

An important tool for a municipality is its Master Plan. It explores a wide variety of land uses and activities within a municipality. This could include exploring the degree to which the community desires to protect/maintain farmland and sets the foundation for several other tools such as zoning. The Master Plan and other planning documents can also help set priorities and outline fiscal support for the municipality to use tools like M.G.L. Chapter 61A Rights of First Refusal and Community Preservation Act funding (visit tools below).

2) Chapter 61A Rights of First Refusal (ROFR)¹⁹

M.G.L. Chapter 61A creates a statutory structure that reduces the property tax burden for land used in agriculture and/or horticulture and which meets the other criteria set forth by the legislature.²⁰ When the owner of a property enrolled in M.G.L. Chapter 61A intends to sell the parcel or convert it to another use, municipalities have the “Right of First Refusal” (ROFR), which gives them the right to purchase the land before anyone else, within a

¹⁹ This is not intended to be legal advice. This is intended to raise awareness of the tool at a high level. Please consult necessary legal professionals.

²⁰ [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 61A](#)

limited time period.²¹ The Municipal Authority decides whether to use the authority granted them by the ROFR or to pass on their right to a qualified land trust or government body.

Municipal Authorities²² should be kept aware of farmland in the municipality that is in M.G.L. Chapter 61A and the desire of the community to see it permanently protected. AgComs should be included on this notification as well. While keeping the Municipal Authority aware of M.G.L. Chapter 61A lands is important so they are prepared to potentially exercise or assign the ROFR, it is perhaps more important that the municipality take a proactive approach by gathering preliminary information and adopting a procedure for how to act when M.G.L. Chapter 61 properties are in transition. This could be part of the process of developing or updating an OSRP, or a separate planning/strategic process.

Land under M.G.L. Chapter 61A can be considered temporarily protected, with the disincentives of paying back taxes and the ROFR process providing the protection.

For more information on M.G.L. Chapter 61A lands or a procedure for Chapter lands visit [A Town's Guide to Land Conservation](#)²³ and [Conservation and Land Use Planning Under Massachusetts Chapter 61 Laws](#).²⁴ There are also some resources primarily

created for forestlands by MassWoods that may have information transferrable to farmland and agriculture.²⁵ Also visit [CPA Section](#) for information about how to use of CPA funds in a short time frame.

As part of a [Farmland Partnership Program project](#), additional resources will be created on this topic in 2026 and 2027.

3) The Community Preservation Act (CPA)²⁶

The CPA is a local option law adopted by 201 Massachusetts municipalities that generates funding for open space protection (including farmland), historic preservation, affordable housing, and outdoor recreation.²⁷ Farmland is part of the open space category and dozens of communities statewide have used CPA funding to protect farmland.

CPA funds can be used for farmland protection both via purchasing the land outright and by purchasing a restriction (APR, CR or Private APR). CPA funds can also be used as match for state, federal and private funding sources.

Having CPA gives the municipality a funding source to react to Chapter 61A ROFR offers in a timely manner. This tool can be used to keep agricultural land open and available for farmers.

²¹ Municipalities have 120 days to act on their ROFR per [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 61A, Section 14](#).

²³ UMass Extension and Highlands Communities Initiative. [Connecting People and Partners. A Town's Guide to Land Conservation](#)

²⁴ Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. [Conservation and Land Use Planning under Massachusetts' Chapter 61 Laws A Primer for Cities, Towns & Conservation Organizations](#). Second Revised Edition, November 2007

²⁵ MassWoods. [Chapter 61 Current Use Tax Programs webpage](#) and UMass Amherst and Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. [Chapter 61 Programs. Understanding the Massachusetts Ch. 61 Current Use Tax Programs](#). May 2018

²⁶ This is not intended to be legal guidance. This is intended to raise awareness of the tool at a high level.

²⁷ [CPA: An Overview](#) – By Community Preservation Coalition

However, CPA requires a town meeting or city council vote for funds to be appropriated, and that can create a timing issue given the limited amount of time municipalities have to respond to M.G.L. Chapter 61A offers. Forward-looking communities can address the timing issues by creating a Conservation Fund with their conservation commission or Agricultural Preservation Fund with their agricultural commission (AgCom), and transferring CPA (and other money) into that fund.²⁸ With a Conservation Fund or Agricultural Preservation Fund, communities can have a funding source that can be used quickly for acquisitions, without a need for further appropriation by the legislative body. This could be used for purchase of agricultural land and/or conservation restrictions (CRs), Private APRs and APRs, including in the situation of M.G.L. Chapter 61A ROFR.

To learn more about CPA, please visit the [Community Preservation Act webpage](#) and [Community Preservation Coalition Website](#).

4) Agricultural Commissions (AgCom) and other municipal committees

An AgCom is a municipal committee of resident volunteers, established by the municipality through a process established by the legislature, that serves as a local voice advocating for farms and agriculture-related interests.²⁹ AgComs should include

farmers in the municipality as members and provide visibility as well as support for farming and forestry activities within a municipality. One example of an initiative that an AgCom could do is to work to develop and implement Right-to-Farm bylaws for the municipality to consider adopting. AgComs may also work with other municipal officials, boards, and committees on issues facing farmers and/or the municipality as they relate to agriculture and natural resource management.

An AgCom is an important tool to give farmers a voice in the community. It can be an advocate for farmers and agricultural businesses. It is important to involve it in the development of planning documents and processes that involve farmland, including OSRPs.

In 2025 and 2026 MDAR engaged a contractor to provide technical assistance and education to AgComs, and to municipalities interested in establishing an AgCom.

To learn more about AgComs, visit the [MDAR AgCom webpage](#).

In addition to AgComs there are other local committees and commissions that may be interested/involved with supporting agriculture, including conservation commissions, community preservation committees, open space committees, and natural

²⁸ A Conservation Fund is overseen by the conservation commission and selectboard, and spending the funds only requires approval of those two boards. An Agricultural Preservation Fund is overseen by the agricultural commission and selectboard, and spending the funds only requires approval of those two boards. For more information on a Conservation Fund and conservation commissions who can establish it visit [Massachusetts General](#)

[Laws, Chapter 40, Section 8C](#). For more information on an Agricultural Preservation Fund and the agricultural commissions who can establish it visit [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 8L](#)

²⁹ The full definition of an agricultural commission and the functions it can provide are found in [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 8L](#)

resource protection committees. These groups can be particularly important for communities without an active AgCom.

5) Right to Farm Bylaw

A Right to Farm Bylaw helps educate residents about the realities and needs of local farms and farmers, including noise, odors, etc. This increased understanding and promotion of agriculture can help avoid conflicts between residents and farmers. Having a Right to Farm Bylaw can also encourage the growth and development of farm related businesses in that municipality. It does not, however, supersede other municipal regulations, bylaws, or ordinances.

Learn more in this [Right to Farm Bylaws Factsheet](#).³⁰

6) Zoning Bylaws

Zoning can both help and hinder agriculture. Some examples of how zoning can help agriculture are:

- Concentrating the development of new housing in existing densely populated areas can reduce the development pressure on farmland.
- For zones that include commercial farms, it can be helpful to allow accessory uses that promote farm viability, such as farm labor housing and infrastructure to support processing and direct sales.

³⁰ Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. [Understanding Right to Farm Bylaws. Pioneer Valley Sustainability Toolkit](#).

Zoning is a big topic. The [MA Farmland Action Plan](#)³¹ recognizes the need for additional resources to help guide Massachusetts municipalities with zoning that supports agriculture and farmland.

7) Farmland protection options (APR, Private APR, CR, and Agricultural Covenants)

When protecting farmland there are several protection options available. It is important to weigh the needs of the landowner and farmer, as well as the needs of the community, and look for the protection type that balances those needs, as well as fits with available funding sources. Protection mechanisms used in Massachusetts include:

- Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)
- Private APR (PAPR)
- Conservation Restriction (CR)
- Agricultural Covenants

The following is a brief overview of the options. Municipalities can get involved in these protection tools in a variety of ways, including purchasing the land outright, contributing funds for purchase of a restriction, and holding or co-holding a restriction.

³¹ [Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan 2023 and Implementation Matrix](#). There are several tasks under Action I.B.7 in the Protection goal, under II.A.3 in the Access goal, and Action III.A.4 in the Viability goal

For more details, including relative benefits and challenges of each approach for farmland protection, please visit [AFT's Massachusetts Farmland Protection Options document](#).³²

An APR is an easement/ restriction held by the state through MDAR.³³ The program strives to pay eligible farmland owners the difference between the fair market value and the agricultural value of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction on the title to the farmland, which restricts any use of the property that will negatively impact its future agricultural viability, and secures a commitment to keep the land in agricultural production in perpetuity.

Learn more from [MDAR's APR webpages](#) and [AFT's Massachusetts Farmland Protection Options document](#).

A private APR (PAPR) is an Agricultural Preservation Restriction in which the primary holder is an entity other than MDAR.³⁴ The easement/restriction can be held by a municipality, land trust, or another eligible entity.

Learn more from [MDAR's PAPR webpage](#) and [AFT's Massachusetts Farmland Protection Options document](#).

A CR is a legal agreement that protects natural resources, which can include agricultural resources such as soil and water, on private property.³⁵ Uses of the land are limited in order to protect specified conservation values including the natural, scenic, or

open condition of the land. CRs can be held by governmental entities such as municipalities and the state, as well as non-profit organizations.

Learn more from DCS's [CR Review Webpage](#) including a model CR that considers agriculture, DCR's [CR Stewardship Webpage](#), and [AFT's Massachusetts Farmland Protection Options document](#).

In addition to these three permanent protection mechanisms, **agricultural covenants** are a temporary protection mechanism that restricts the use of and improvements to farmland to agriculture for a fixed period of time. This can be useful to protect investment of public funds in a property, as well as serve as an alternative for farm owners that are not ready or eligible for permanent protection. For example, MDAR's Farm Viability Enhancement Program provides business assistance and funding for farm improvements in exchange for a 10- or 15-year Agricultural Covenant on the farm property. These covenants are signed by the landowner and MDAR, recorded at the appropriate Registry of Deeds, and the rights are held and stewarded by MDAR.

Learn more about how Agricultural Covenants are used in the context on [MDAR's Farm Viability Enhancement Program webpage](#).

³² American Farmland Trust. [Massachusetts Farmland Protection Options. A guide for landowners, land trusts and municipalities](#). September 2025.

³³ The legal definition can be found in [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 184, Section 31](#)

³⁴ The legal definition can be found in [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 184, Section 31](#)

³⁵ The legal definition can be found in [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 184, Section 31](#)

8) Municipally owned farmland

In addition to purchasing restrictions on privately held farmland, municipalities can also choose to purchase farmland outright (“in fee”). It can then set up an agreement with farmer(s) to use that land for agriculture, typically using a license or a lease³⁶. If there is an AgCom, it should be involved in this process.

The high cost of farmland is a significant barrier for those looking to farm in Massachusetts. Land licenses are a useful, low-cost mechanism for farmers to access land. The [State-Owned Farmland Licensing Program](#) makes publicly-owned agricultural land available to farmers and others through agricultural licenses. As part of [MDAR’s Farmland Partnership Program](#) additional resources for municipalities wishing to use their land for agriculture will become available in 2026 and 2027 (look for the “municipal land licensing” related projects).

9) Buy-Protect-Sell

Buy-protect-sell is a land protection transaction model where a farmer sells their land to a land trust or other qualified entity, which then protects the farmland with an easement/restriction and then facilitates a sale of the protected farmland to a new farmer.

Learn more on AFT’s [Buy-Protect-Sell webpage](#).



³⁶ What’s the difference between licensing and leasing? A license is a non-exclusive right to use the property for a particular purpose, while a lease is an exclusive right to use the property for all purposes except what is excluded by

the agreement. State and local governments generally issue licenses. Land trusts, non-profits and private landowners can lease land.

Understanding farmland and agriculture in your community

Using the tools shared in the previous section, we will now move into the more practical “how to” part of this document. This section provides some highlights of what to keep in mind in relation to agriculture – in addition to what is already on the municipality’s radar when planning.

In addition to what is shared in the Massachusetts Open Space and Recreation Planner’s Workbook ([OSRP Workbook](#)), the following are useful to keep in mind when incorporating farmland and agriculture into your municipal OSRP and other planning documents and processes.

AFT’s [Planning for Agriculture CT](#)³⁷ offers examples and suggestions about how to understand agriculture and farmland in your municipality including:

- Creating a baseline inventory of how many farms and how much farmland is in your municipality
- Using decision-making practices that consider agriculture or includes farmers, including Agricultural Commissions
- Creating municipal plans and zoning regulations

[Local Food Systems: The Role of Municipal Governments](#) is also a useful resource, particularly in the “Planning + Development” chapter.³⁸

It can also be useful to see the advice given to farmers about how to work with municipalities and in the community. [An Entrepreneur’s Guide to Farming in Massachusetts](#) is a useful guide in this area, particularly “Factsheet 10 – Farming & the Community”.³⁹



³⁷ Page 24 onwards in American Farmland Trust. [Planning for Agriculture. A guide for Connecticut Municipalities](#). 2020 Edition. Please note that this document is included for reference purposes and that Connecticut laws most likely differ from Massachusetts laws. While many planning principles are transferable, please make sure that you are applying the Massachusetts state specific laws in any work that is inspired by this reference.

³⁸ Massachusetts Food System Collaborative. [Local Food Systems. The Role of Municipal Governments](#). September 2018.

³⁹ New Entry Sustainable Farming Project – [An Entrepreneur’s Guide to Farming in Massachusetts. Fertile Resources, Harvestable Tips, and a Side-Dress of Regulatory Reality](#). December 2023.

Planning guidance in state statute

Agriculture is not specifically mentioned within state statute relating to municipal master plans, but can be incorporated in the Land Use and Open Space elements, as well as touched upon in other elements such as housing, economic development and natural resources.⁴⁰

Some municipalities may choose to add additional chapters, sections or separate plans to address farmland and agricultural needs. Some examples of other municipal and regional planning documents with overlap include OSRPs, Strategic Plans, Food System Plans, Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plans and Economic Development Plans.

Additional resources to help guide municipalities wishing to include more on farmland protection, including in municipal farmland protection plans, will be created in 2026 and 2027 as part of a [Farmland Partnership Project](#).

The AgCom enabling statute includes the following guidance for developing a “comprehensive local agricultural land plan”:⁴¹

“A commission may conduct research and prepare agricultural-related plans, including a comprehensive local agricultural land plan which shall be, to the extent possible, consistent with any current municipal master plan and regional area plans. The plan shall show or identify:

- (i) agricultural land areas and facilities;
- (ii) matters which may be shown on a tract index under section 33 of chapter 184;
- (iii) acquisitions of interest in land under this section;
- (iv) municipal lands that are held as open space;
- (v) nonmunicipal land subject to legal requirements or restrictions to protect that land or use it for open space, conservation, recreation or agriculture;
- (vi) land that should be retained as a public necessity for agricultural use; and
- (vii) any other information that the commission determines to be relevant to local agricultural land use.

The commission may amend the plan whenever necessary.”

Planning documents helping implementation

In addition to the benefits of the planning process itself, the creation of some plans can also open doors for funding and other opportunities to assist with implementation. The creation of OSRPs is required to receive certain grants from the state. Good references to agriculture and farmland in planning documents can also help with state and federal funding opportunities for farmland protection.⁴²

⁴⁰ [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, Section 81D](#)

⁴¹ [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 8L](#)

⁴² For example, [NRCS’s ACEP Agricultural Lands Easements Program](#), in addition to other land eligibility criteria about soils and other criteria, it has one for

“land that furthers a state or local policy consistent with the purposes of ACEP-ALE”.

Current conditions

Find out what the needs of farmers are in your community. An AgCom is a good place to start. Talk with farmers and Chapter 61A landowners in your municipality through a survey, an informal chat, or a focus group conversation. Why are the farmers in Chapter 61A? Is it for the tax benefits alone? Or are there other reasons such as keeping the land in farming, the scenic qualities, wanting to pass it on to the next generation, or another reason?

Analyze where local agricultural fits into the physical landscape.

Does the community have land with soils suitable for agriculture? If it does, is that land adjacent to a flood-prone area or is it located on hilly terrain? This information can show eligibility of farms for state and federal funding sources and lead to possible zoning ideas or planning based on soils, from the perspective of protecting the finite resource. Prime soils are defined as being able to support a wide range of agricultural opportunities while State Important and Locally Important soils are more limited. For more information please visit the [NRCS's Farmland Soil Classes of Massachusetts resource](#).⁴³

Some additional questions to consider

- How will your municipality use the farmland it acquires or protects?
- What farmland resources are valued?

- What are neighboring municipalities doing?
- Are there shared agricultural and farmland resources within the immediate area?

Identify resources, needs and threats

In addition to what is shared in the [OSRP Workbook](#), the following context is useful to keep in mind when identifying resources, needs, and threats to protecting farmland.

Farmland protection is about an ongoing relationship rather than a single transaction for the purchase of land or an easement.

Fostering relationships with local, regional, and statewide organizations that provide technical assistance and resources to farmers is important. Municipalities don't need to be experts on how to keep a farm business viable, how to lease out farmland, how to transfer a property to a new landowner, or other farm related information, but should be able to provide some connections and direct farmers to resources.⁴⁴

Farm businesses are affected by local rules and regulations.

Farms often seek revenue from a diverse range of sources, including wholesale, farm stands, farmers markets, pick-your-own, agritourism, value-added production, compost, renewable energy production and more. Do your municipal regulations and planning efforts assist or hinder farm businesses? What needs emerge in

⁴³ United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). [Farmland Soil Classes of Massachusetts](#). Published June 2021.

⁴⁴ Some potential resources in this area include land trusts (see Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition website for list of local, regional and statewide land trusts <https://massland.org/land-trusts>), Land for Good, as well as several teams at MDAR (Agricultural Business Assistance, Land Licensing, APR and others).

response to them? As shared in the [Planning for Agriculture CT](#),⁴⁵ there are many different ways municipalities can intentionally foster a supportive business environment for farming, including through regulations and guidance related to on-farm retail, signs, off-farm sales, on-farm processing, compatible businesses, urban agriculture, community gardens, on-farm housing, taxes on farm equipment and other areas. Strategies related to economic development, celebrating agriculture and Buy Local⁴⁶ initiatives are also important.

There have been historic patterns of inequitable access to farmland, some of which continue to impact historically underserved farmers today. Historically underserved farmers,⁴⁷ often face disproportionate challenges, including longstanding inequities in land ownership, land loss, and access to financial resources. It is important for all farmers to have equitable access

to farmland, and to the associated benefits of secure tenure. To enable this, intentionally recognizing and including historically underserved farmers in planning work is important. Policies and documents should reflect and support a broad diversity of approaches to agriculture and food systems. Learn more on the [MDAR Environmental Justice webpage](#).

Farmland and farm businesses are one part of a larger food system. This document primarily focuses on the land part, but it is important to consider how the farm business connects with the next steps in the process that gets food and agricultural products to their markets. This includes commercial kitchens and processing facilities, food hubs to support food distribution, retailers and wholesalers. To learn more about the wider food system, visit the 2015 [Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan](#).

⁴⁵ See above. Page 25 in [Planning for Agriculture CT 2020](#). Please note that this document is included for reference purposes and that Connecticut laws most likely differ from Massachusetts laws. While many general planning principles may be similar, please make sure that you are applying the Massachusetts laws in any work that is inspired by this reference.

⁴⁶ For a list of Buy Local organizations across Massachusetts visit www.mass.gov/info-details/buy-local-groups

⁴⁷ Historically underserved farmers, includes socially disadvantaged, veteran, limited resource, beginning, and Tribal Nations and Entities, Indigenous farmers. The 2018 Farm Bill, as referenced by [NRCS](#), had the following definitions:

- Limited Resource Farmers: Individuals who have limited financial resources and face challenges in accessing land, capital, and other resources necessary for farming.
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmers: Individuals who belong to groups that have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice. This includes African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asians, Hispanics, and Pacific Islanders.
- Veteran Farmers: Individuals who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and have not operated a farm for more than ten years.
- Beginning Farmers: Individuals who have operated a farm or ranch for ten years or less.

Things to keep in mind when developing strategies to protect farmland

Municipalities can get involved in protecting farmland in several ways. They can choose to protect farmland – whether signing off on an easement held by another entity, purchasing part or all of the easement, and/or becoming the holder or co-holder of the easement. They can also choose to own farmland which they can rent to others.

Protecting farmland is similar to but not the same as conserving other types of land due to the ongoing relationship between the entity⁴⁸ holding the easement/restriction and the landowner/farmer.⁴⁹ A choice has been made that the entity/community values not only the open agricultural land but also values keeping the land in active production as a working farm, and wants the land to remain a part of the economic fiber of the community. The landowner/farmer in this way has a partner and is supported by the community for the community.

In addition to what is shared in the [OSRP Workbook](#), the following are useful to keep in mind when developing strategies to protect farmland.

Municipal roles and responsibilities

When a landowner decides to pursue protection of their farmland, the municipality must be involved. If protected through the APR program, MDAR requests the municipality to announce publicly about the Commonwealth's intent to protect farmland, and

municipalities can also provide additional information to MDAR to assist their decision making. Similar processes exist for Private APRs and agriculture-friendly CRs, with other entities, such as land trusts.

The municipality may also choose to get involved more with protecting that farmland, whether by contributing part or all of the cost of the restriction and/or co-holding or holding the easement.

For municipalities that choose to own farmland or hold/co-hold an easement there are additional ongoing responsibilities for these properties going forward. It is important that farmland is stewarded and monitored to ensure it stays in good condition for farming both now and in the future. As such, all easements should include specific requirements for what and how often the farm property is monitored, how specific activities are reviewed and approved, and what activities are considered detrimental to future agricultural use of the property. For farmland protected as an APR, MDAR has created policies and guidelines to provide a transparent process for decision making around uses of the protected farmland, such as labor housing, subdivisions and ground-mounted solar.

For more details of the process for municipalities, specific to the APR Program, please visit [Summary of Municipal Role for APR](#)

⁴⁸ This entity could be local, state or federal government, as well as some charitable corporations/ trusts. In some cases tribal entities can also hold the restriction.

⁴⁹ For explanation of protecting farmland and what a restriction is, see the [“Farmland protection options \(APR, Private APR, CR, and Agricultural Covenants\)” subsection in the Tools Chapter](#).

[Application and Enrollment Process](#)⁵⁰, [MDAR's APR Program Resources for municipalities webpage](#), [MDAR's APR Policies and Guidelines webpage](#), and the [MDAR's Private APR webpage](#). Also visit [Massachusetts Farmland Protection Options](#).⁵¹ Additional resources to help entities consider farm viability in their farmland protection decisions are being created in 2026 and 2027.

Agricultural soils

Agricultural soils are an important resource. They are a finite resource that can significantly impact the viability of farmland. As mentioned in the OSRP Workbook, Prime and Statewide Important soils are essential and limited resources. In addition, a municipality may work with USDA-NRCS to designate soils that are suitable for crop production, but are not identified as Prime or Statewide Important soils, as Farmland of Local Importance (FLI). Designating FLI soils at the municipal level may increase the number of farms eligible for farmland protection funding from state and federal sources. For more information visit this [Soil Classes Factsheet](#), [FLI Factsheet](#) and [MA FLI Screening Tool](#).

Farm businesses integral to farmland

Farmlands cannot be separated from the farm businesses on them. Municipal regulations and bylaws relating to land use can have notable impacts on both the farmlands and the farm businesses – for example, what uses are permitted and building locations. Other municipal decisions and regulations can also

impact farmlands and farm businesses – whether tax assessments, rules on signage along roadways, health regulations, roadway ditch maintenance practices, event permits, traffic and parking rules, and more.

Farmers, landowners and messaging

The landowner may not be the farmer. Many farmers in Massachusetts operate on land they do not own. Some of these arrangements are by leases or licenses, but others can be by informal agreements. When strategizing on protecting farmland the messaging for a non-farming landowner versus a farmer may need to be different.

Leasing and licensing farmland

Many farms in Massachusetts operate on land they do not own. Some of these arrangements are by leases or licenses, but others are by informal agreements.

A license is a non-exclusive right to use the property for a particular purpose, while a lease is an exclusive right to use the property for all purposes except what is excluded by the agreement. State and local governments generally issue licenses. Land trusts, non-profits, and private landowners can lease land. For more information visit [Land For Good's Leasing Resources](#) and MDAR's [State Land Licensing Webpage](#). Additional resources for municipalities seeking to license their land for farming will be

⁵⁰ MDAR – [Agriculture Preservation Restriction \("APR"\) Program. Summary of Landowner Checklist and Prospective Municipality Role For APR Application and Enrollment Process](#). August 2026

⁵¹ American Farmland Trust – [Massachusetts Farmland Protection Options: A Guide for Landowners, Land Trusts, and Municipalities](#). September 2025.

available later in 2026 through projects of the [Farmland Partnership Program](#).

Underutilized farmland

Protecting farmland could include increasing use of underutilized farmland. While much farmland is being lost to other land uses, a significant amount is also underutilized, and protecting farmland could mean increasing the use of such land. Underutilization of land could occur for many different reasons, including the capacity of the farmer, fiscal constraints, economic realities, and changing conditions on the land. It can be helpful to encourage landowners, including municipalities, to license or lease out land that is underutilized to farmers that can use it. In other cases farmland is balancing other conservation priorities on the land so the farmer may, for example, reduce the full agricultural usage in favor of other projects (e.g. only mowing a field for hay once a year in order to protect wildlife habitat, where multiple mowings may otherwise occur).

Land use trade-offs, adjacent and co-located land uses

It is important to consider the trade-offs for what types of uses to prioritize on the land as well as how different land uses can complement each other. Good agricultural soils are finite resources. A farm property could have a patchwork of land use/land cover – including where farmers grow crops, raise livestock, or cut hay. These same properties may also have forested areas, wetlands, and field edges that may function as wildlife habitat. When planning, a community should carefully

review its land use priorities and consider tradeoffs when considering what land uses and activities to encourage or discourage in particular areas of the community. Learn from local farmers how various land uses complement or hinder each other when adjacent to and/or sharing a space with farmland. Then discuss how these land uses could fit together across your community. Not all land uses are compatible, but through policy and investments planners can be intentional about making decisions for the future vision of how things fit together across the entire community and in the wider region.

Consider agricultural needs when expanding infrastructure.

While farmland can be less attractive to developers if it is not in close proximity to water and sewer service, farms can also benefit from access to water and sewer to be more resilient in the face of the changing climate, particularly for irrigation. It is also useful to consider how infrastructure and services, such as wellhead protection areas, can have impacts on agricultural practices on adjacent farmland.

Consider how agriculture and residential uses may interact.

Housing developments near agricultural land can be a benefit to a farmer as a close customer base and as a place for farmworkers to live, but consider having a Right to Farm Bylaw in place prior to buildout. Other factors to consider include stormwater runoff, traffic, noise, tree removal, public transit access for farmworkers and customers, etc.

Consider how agriculture and renewable energy sources may interact. Installing solar and other renewable energy sources can help farmers meet their energy needs for their farm business,

including the infrastructure and machinery. There are resources available for communities to be proactive in balancing the need for renewable energy with the needs of farmers, including from the [Mass Farm Energy Program](#). Massachusetts' [SMART program](#) incentivizes and regulates the use of dual use solar on farmland.

Consider the cost of community services and infrastructure.

According to AFT, tax and other revenues collected from farms more than cover the public service costs these lands incur. While farms may have a lower tax rate if they utilize Chapter 61A, they also cost less in terms of infrastructure (roads, etc.) and services (schools, etc.) than additional housing.⁵²

Public access to farmland

Discuss public access needs when considering protection of working farms as they may affect which type of protection mechanism is used (CR, APR, Private APR⁵³) and which funding programs may fit.

Public access to farmland is case dependent. APRs and Private APRs recognize that the farm is being protected for the public good, but that public access to that land is up to the landowner. The following are some reasons for limiting public access to farmland:

- Farms need to protect the safety and welfare of the animals and crops that are part of their farm operation.

Visiting dogs, for example, may be a risk to animals and crops via trampling, digging, and relieving themselves.

- Farms are a working landscape with large equipment, uneven terrain and sometimes large animals. Safety can be a concern if visitors enter operational areas of a farm property rather than areas that welcome customers for retail sales or visitors for education.
- Visitors to farms can be a biosecurity threat as they can inadvertently bring pathogens onto farmland.

On the other hand, if using funding sources more oriented towards open space purposes, the farmland may need to have a certain amount of public access (e.g. [several programs run by DCS](#)). The following are some examples of how public access to a working farm could be integrated:

- Some urban farms welcome visitors during the daytime for direct access to nutritious food, education and youth training opportunities. Urban farms benefit from fencing to ensure crop safety and barriers from non-farm animals.
- Some farms have a community farming model and/or welcome visitors for Pick-Your-Own, tours, or events.
- Some farms allow passive recreation on non-agricultural parts of their property.

⁵² There are various studies that examine the “Cost of Community Services”, for example on Page 9 of AFT’s [Planning for Agriculture CT](#) and [Cost of Community Services webpage](#).

⁵³ See the “[Tools](#)” section of this document for more information about the types of protection.

Transfer and succession

Transfer/succession of farmland is important to consider alongside protection options. With farms protected in perpetuity the farm business and farmland will need to change ownership in the future. The cost of farmland is very high in Massachusetts which can be a significant barrier to accessing farmland for the incoming farmer. Farmers often rely on the money they get from selling their farmland for retirement. Protecting farmland can help reduce the cost of farmland for the incoming farmer while also providing compensation for the outgoing farmer for their investment in the land.⁵⁴

A [ROFR](#) is an important tool to include in the protection agreement if an emphasis is placed on the buyer's plan to keep the land in production. All municipalities have a ROFR of all Chapter 61A properties in their jurisdiction. As such, municipalities have an important opportunity to exercise that right so that farmland remains in agricultural production when the property changes hands or when there is a proposed change in use of the property.

[Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value \(OPAV\)](#) is an evolved version of a ROFR. It is an important tool to include in the protection agreement (APR or Private APR) so that land remains at agricultural value which helps it be more affordable for the next generation of farmers to purchase. Otherwise, without an OPAV, the property has no limitation on how much it can be sold to the

next landowner. It is also a helpful tool that should require that the land be transferred to another farmer. In addition to limiting the re-sale value of the land, an OPAV may also include a process to review who purchases the property.

Municipalities and communities can also support transfer and succession work by working with local and regional organizations who are doing this work to provide workshops and resources for local farmers. Partners for this work include Land For Good, land trusts, Buy Local organizations and others.

More resources about farmland transfer and succession can be found on the [Land For Good](#) website and [New England Farmland Finder](#). Resources on how municipalities can better understand and use their ROFR under M.G.L. Chapter 61A are being developed as part of the [Farmland Partnership Program](#) in 2026 and 2027.

Agritourism

Agricultural tourism, also known as agritourism, is an important part of many farm businesses today. The 2022 Report from the MA Agricultural Tourism Study Commission defines agritourism as “a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural products and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors onto a farm or other agricultural businesses, educating and entertaining visitors while generating additional income for the farm and business owner.” Municipalities can limit or support agritourism through zoning, permitting and regulations. Municipalities may also be

⁵⁴ See the Farmland Conservation. [Access and Succession Brief in the NH Food and Agriculture Plan 2025](#) for more information (Pages 82 – 86)

involved with review of some agritourism requests on land where they co-hold or hold an easement. For more information, including examples of the wide range of activities that can be defined as “agritourism” as well as recommendations on how to support agritourism on statewide, regional and municipal levels, visit [The Massachusetts Agritourism Study Commission Final Report](#).⁵⁵ As of July 2026 there are several bills pending that would define agritourism in statute.

Farming in the urban environment

Protecting farmland in an urban environment shares many considerations with more suburban and rural farms, but there are also some different considerations. Urban farms may be eligible for different funding sources to purchase and protect farms, particularly given their smaller acreages. They primarily focus on revitalizing neglected lots and turning them into healthy and productive green spaces that typically contribute to greater access to fresh foods, youth programming and improved health for constituents. In some places there is also potential for intentional use of land for community growing spaces, including community gardens. Protecting farmland is influenced by the structure of farm businesses in urban areas and how they seek to be viable for the long term. Links to resources on urban farming can be found on [MDAR’s Urban Agriculture Resources webpage](#).

⁵⁵ Agricultural Tourism Study Commission. [The Massachusetts Agritourism Study Commission Final Report](#). Compiled by the MA Department of Agricultural Resources. March 16, 2022

Farmland as part of the food system

Farmland that produces food is part of a much larger food system. [Local Food Systems: The Role of Municipal Governments](#)⁵⁶ highlights additional considerations relating to how farmland fits into the wider food system from a municipal perspective for municipal leadership, planning and development, health, schools, public works and public safety. Connecting with Regional Planning Agencies, Buy Local organizations and local Food Policy Councils can be helpful to understand local opportunities.

Ongoing assistance for farmers

Keeping farms viable in today’s world can be challenging. There are many grant programs and technical assistance providers that can directly assist farmers and landowners with their farm properties and businesses.

For a full list of programs and technical assistance provided by MDAR, please visit [Grants and Financial Assistance](#) and [Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance \(DACTA\)](#) webpages. There are also many other technical assistance partners that provide assistance and training in Massachusetts, such as [NRCS](#), [Buy Local organizations](#), [Conservation Districts](#), [UMass Cooperative Extension](#), [American Farmland Trust](#) and others.

⁵⁶ Massachusetts Food System Collaborative - [Local Food Systems. The Role of Municipal Governments](#). September 2018.

Other Resources

Farmland Partnership Program projects

As part of the [Farmland Partnership Program](#) (FPP), several RPAs are creating new resources that will supplement this resource.

Municipal Farmland Protection Plans

This project includes developing a process and model for developing municipal Farmland Protection Plans with communities of varying sizes and characteristics. For more information, visit the [project webpage](#).

Zoning and planning tools that reduce farmland loss

This project will provide education on zoning bylaws, best practices, municipal planning documents, and policies/procures related to conservation subdivisions and compact development that supports farmland protection. For more information, visit the [project webpage](#).

Land acquisition, M.G.L. Chapter 61A and ROFR

Three projects intersect to cover education, workshops, technical assistance and capacity building for municipalities on several farmland protection topics.

- For more information on municipal workshops on M.G.L. Chapter 61A and ROFR, visit the [project webpage](#).
- For more information on building the capacity of municipalities to respond to ROFRs, visit the [project webpage](#).

- For more information on municipal training, visit the [project webpage](#).

Using Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds for Chapter 61A land

This project includes creating informational materials on the use of CPA funds for acquisition of M.G.L. Chapter 61A lands and providing technical assistance to municipalities about how CPA funds can be used to support farmland protection as it relates to ROFRs. For more information, visit the [project webpage](#).

Other topics of interest from FPP projects

FPP projects cover a wide range of other topics that may be helpful for municipalities and regions, including municipal land licensing, indigenous and local foodways for municipalities, and others. For more information, visit the [Farmland Partnership Program webpage](#).

Resources from other sources

In addition to the many resources referenced within this document, additional resources will be published to [MDAR's Ag Resources for Municipalities webpage](#) as they become available.

Appendix A – Abbreviations

ACEP	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
AFT	American Farmland Trust
ALE	Agricultural Land Easements (part of ACEP)
APR	Agricultural Preservation Restriction
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
CR	Conservation Restriction
CPA	Community Preservation Act
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
EEA	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
FLI	Farmland of Local Importance [soils]
FPP	Farmland Partnership Program
HUF	Historically Underserved Farmers
MDAR	Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
MFAP	Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan
MGL	Massachusetts General Law
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWL	Natural and Working Lands
OPAV	Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value
OSRP	Open Space and Recreation Plan
OSRP Workbook	Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook
PAPR	Private APR
ROFR	Right of First Refusal
RPA	Regional Planning Agency
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WRE	Wetland Reserve Easements (part of ACEP)

For definitions of terms, please see [Tools section of this document](#), as well as footnotes throughout the document.



Appendix B – Acknowledgements

This document was reviewed by many partners, including MDAR staff, EEA staff, municipal staff, municipal volunteers, Regional Planning Agency staff and land trust staff. These partners were essential to ensure that the document reflected the diversity of circumstances found in communities and regions across Massachusetts and approaches to planning to farmland. Their review and comments were greatly appreciated.

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