

February/March Farm & Market Report

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CLASSIFIED

COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Greetings, Mass. Agriculture and all its friends,

As many of you already likely know, Mass. Agriculture lost a great advocate with the passing of Henry Gillet in December. Henry very ably served for many years as the legislative agent of the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, the Mass. Association of Dairy Farmers, the Mass. Farm Wineries and Growers Association, the Mass. Flower Growers Association, the Mass. Nursery and Landscape Association, the New England Brown Egg Council and other ag and non-ag interests. Henry listened very carefully to the issues facing the memberships of the organizations he represented, and then very effectively worked with those organizations to implement strategies to address them with government.

I'll give you one very concrete example of Henry's success working for ag interests. I hope you are acquainted with the [Farm Energy Discount Program](#) which provides discounts on electricity and natural gas bills of 10% to eligible entities engaged in production agriculture. You may know the old saying that "Success has many friends, but failure is an orphan." I can't say that Henry brought the Program about singlehandedly, but I can say he certainly played one of the most major and critical roles in getting that program approved by the General Court and the Governor. The program has provided significant savings for many operations in all aspects of agriculture.

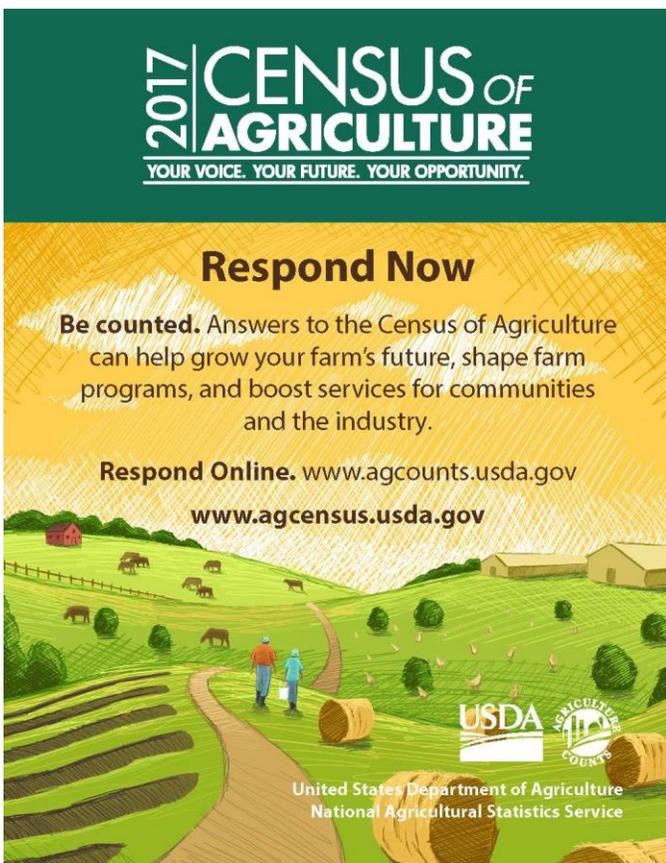
I first met Henry when he became associated with the Mass. Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA), and I was getting active in MNLA at the committee level. I worked more closely with him when I joined MNLA's Board of Directors, and even more so while I served on MNLA's Executive Committee, and later as its President. It was Henry who first encouraged me to expand my service beyond my industry association and seek appointment to the Board of Food and Agriculture (now the Board of Agriculture); Henry later introduced me to the leadership of the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers, who then supported my appointment to the Water Resources Commission. Serving on those two bodies began my introduction to state government and continues to very helpful to me as Commissioner. I can honestly say that I would not have the privilege I now have to serve as MDAR Commissioner were it not for the friendship, support, guidance, and education I received from Henry Gillet.

Mass. Agriculture has lost a great champion, a great friend, and just a great guy. MDAR expresses its deepest condolences and sympathies to Susan and their family.

After writing about Henry's passing, I really don't know how to make a graceful transition to some matters at hand, but I know Henry would want me to get on with business, so I move on, admittedly rather abruptly.

I'm pleased to share that in February and March the department will be holding a series of listening sessions across the state titled "[The APR Program- Looking Forward](#)" which are intended to be opportunities for individuals to recommend ideas and policy considerations for the APR program to meet the evolving needs of farming in Massachusetts and to address the challenges that can result from placing agricultural land under a restriction for posterity. The APR Program is forty years old; though much remains the same, much has changed in Mass. Agriculture, and MDAR is anxious to hear from stakeholders. Comments may be made by speaking at one of the sessions or by providing written comments. Please follow the link above to learn where the sessions will be held and to access the web portal to supply written comments. Please also know that though sessions have been scheduled in Western (I know, Berkshire farmers don't think of Amherst as terribly west.), Central, and Southeast Mass., we are in the process of scheduling a fourth session in the Northeast. We will eblast out that date when it is established. and will of course post that on the website. I plan to attend all the listening sessions and I am very much looking forward to hearing directly from stakeholders.

I also want to remind everyone how important it is to participate in USDA's Census of Agriculture. So much of the data we use at MDAR to help our farms is derived from the Census which doesn't occur annually but every five years. USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service provides the following information on the Census:



Every five years, the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts the Census of Agriculture, which is the only source of uniform, comprehensive and impartial agricultural data for every county in the nation. It's a complete count of U.S. farms and the people who operate them. From small plots of urban and rural land to large farms with thousands of acres, the Census counts them all plus looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, and income and expenditures.

According to Gary Keough, NASS State Statistician for the New England States, "Previous Censuses of Agriculture have shown that in Massachusetts, as well as the other New England States, don't always follow trends seen in other parts of the U.S. For example, we have seen increases in the number of farms in the 2007 and 2012 Census of Agriculture. This is counter to most other States. Marketing directly to consumers, retailers, restaurants, and institutions is also more common. Also, because Census data is so comprehensive, it's easy to see trends in agriculture down at the county-level. For instance, in 2012 Massachusetts had six counties that

ranked in the top 60 counties in the US for direct food sales to consumers."

Why is data like this good to have? Farmers have an opportunity to decide if they'd like to expand or diversify their operations to fill a gap that may show in the trends. The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources uses the data to educate legislators, local officials, and consumers about the importance of Massachusetts agriculture to the State's and local community's economies. Universities like the University of Massachusetts can identify a need in the county/state, build programs and workshops for farmers to learn about best practices and strategies, and possibly write grant proposals to benefit farmers looking to diversify

and grow their operations. Agribusinesses have insight to where particular farm machinery or processing facilities are needed to address farmers' needs.

There is no other source for detailed agricultural data, and NASS needs all farmers to accurately respond to the Census, and all surveys, to provide accurate, timely data to the ag community. There are some interesting changes coming to the 2017 Census. New demographic questions will better demonstrate who owns, runs and makes decisions for the farms in America. "After the 2012 Census of Agriculture, NASS received feedback that the way it measured farm operators may not be fully capturing the role of women and new and beginning farmers" Keough explained. "This is especially important in Massachusetts where the percentage of farms operated by women is one of the highest in the nation."

"We ask for farmers to report all persons involved in making decisions for the farm, not just persons involved in day-to-day decisions," Keough explained. "We used to ask detailed questions for up to three people per farm, but now they can report for up to four. We removed the concept of principal operator from the form to better acknowledge that many farms operate with joint principals – husbands and wives may manage the farm together, or two brothers, or a father and daughter."

New, also, to the 2017 Census of Agriculture is asking whether a farmer is serving or has ever served in the military. Farmers make up less than two percent of the U.S. population, and those in the military are an even smaller percentage. From this, the USDA can measure the number of veterans who have taken up farming and develop programs to meet their needs.

NASS's new web response tool for this year's Census saves time, is user-friendly, calculates totals automatically, and skips questions not applicable to your operation.

Farmers in Massachusetts should have received their ag census forms. If you haven't please contact Gary Keough at 603-227-3129 or email at gary.keough@nass.usda.gov.

I know many are hesitant to share information, but I urge you to participate in the Census as it really is in your and all of Ag's best interests to do so.

Lastly, I want to let you know that I attended the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture's (NASDA) annual Winter Policy Conference in Washington DC at the end of January. Always a very valuable meeting, this year the Secretaries, Commissioners, Directors and Chiefs of Ag departments from the fifty states and additional US territories had an unprecedented level of access to our Federal partners at the very highest level. The highlight of our agenda was a half day of meetings at the White House where NASDA members directly engaged with Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke, Food and Drug Administrator Dr. Scott Gottlieb and other high-ranking officials on the issues that concern NASDA's membership. Vice President Mike Pence also stopped by to speak to us. I should also mention that we met with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt who attended the Conference site itself.



I must say how impressed I am with Secretary Perdue. I first met him this summer on his listening tour at Davidian Brothers Farm in Northborough. Following that meeting, he requested further information on certain things he heard there: specifically, elements of what the Baker-Polito Administration is doing to help Mass. Ag, which I and others provided in a conference call with USDA senior staff in DC.

One lighter event in DC that I hoped would have ended differently was that I was able for the second year in a row to wager Mass. Ag. products with my Pennsylvania counterpart on the Super Bowl. Though last year MDAR won a beautiful basket of Georgia grown products from Commissioner Gary Black, this year it was my task to make good on my bet with PA Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding. I admit I talked a little trash to my NASDA colleagues before this year's game and even suggested that there's an excellent chance that MDAR will be well positioned to make a similar wager before next year's Super Bowl. I also wore my Pat Patriot cap a fair amount and I happily received unsupportive comments from various individuals including hotel staff and White House Security. I'm sure I'll take some lumps from my colleagues about this year's game when we meet next in June-Go Pats!

Many thanks to Rihana and everyone at Atkins Farms in Amherst for helping me put together and ship an appropriate gift box to Secretary Redding and his team on the Eagles' well-deserved championship victory.

I guess that's going to do it for now. It's great to see some subtle signs of the approaching spring. I have Geraniums starting to bloom and see new growth developing on windowsill houseplants-they are already responding to the lengthening days. Get ready, folks, Spring will be here before we know it!

Best regards,



John Lebeaux

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FOREFRONT

“THE APR PROGRAM - LOOKING FORWARD” - LISTENING SESSIONS 2018

NORTH SHORE LOCATION TO BE ADDED FOR MARCH

As the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program celebrates its 40th year, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources is hosting a series of four (4) listening sessions to hear from the public about their ideas for protecting farmland for the future in Massachusetts. Titled [“The APR Program- Looking Forward”](#), these sessions are intended to be opportunities for you to recommend ideas and policy considerations for the APR program to meet the evolving needs of farming in Massachusetts and to address the challenges that can result from placing agricultural land under a restriction for posterity. The dates and times are:

Tuesday, February 13, 5:30 - 7:00 PM: The Red Barn at Hampshire College, 893 West St., Amherst
(*snow date, 3/6*)

Wednesday, February 28, 5:30 - 7:00 PM: Middleborough Public Library, 102 North Main St., Middleborough

Wednesday, March 7, 5:30 - 8:00 PM: MassDEP Office, 8 New Bond St, Worcester *between Reed Machinery and Abby Kelly High School* (FACILITATED SESSION)

March - North Shore: We are adding a location for an APR Listening Session on the North Shore for the middle of March. Details to follow.

The Amherst and Marlborough sessions will have a presentation followed by a comment period. The Worcester session will have a presentation with small facilitated discussion groups afterwards.

We are open to suggestions on all aspects of the program but are particularly interested in the following topics:

- Transfers of APRs: ROFRs and OPAVs;
- Approvals: e.g. Renewable Energy, Composting, Dwellings, Labor Housing;
- Non-Agricultural Uses: e.g. Weddings, Events, Races;
- Acquisitions: e.g. process.

[Click here for flyer.](#)

Written comments may be [submitted here](#) through March 31, 2018, or emailed to Gerard.Kennedy@state.ma.us

Pre-registration is not required for any session but is recommended for the Worcester meeting by emailing Dorothy.Du@state.ma.us.

Application Period Open for MDAR Grant Programs

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) is accepting applications from Massachusetts farmers who wish to participate in these Department farm improvement programs in Fiscal Year 2019. Program information and applications are available on the Department website: www.mass.gov/guides/agricultural-grants-and-financial-assistance-programs or if you would like an application mailed to you, call the program contact listed below. **The due date for all applications is April 10, 2018.**

[Farm Viability Enhancement Program \(FVEP\)](#) - This popular business planning and technical assistance program provides management advice and grants from \$25,000 up to \$100,000 to implement farm growth and sustainability strategies. Farm operators receive grant awards for signing a 5 or 10 year Agricultural Covenant, and receive technical assistance and a business plan. Typical uses of funds from the Farm Viability Program include constructing new farm buildings or repairing existing structures, modernizing field equipment, purchasing delivery vehicles and tractors, and adding or improving retail marketing structures or food processing facilities. Contact Craig Richov at 617-626-1725 or Craig.Richov@state.ma.us.

[APR Improvement Program \(AIP\)](#) – for APR farms - helps sustain active commercial farming on land that has already been protected through the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program. AIP provides business planning assistance to farmers selected to participate in the program and grants from \$25,000 up to \$100,000 may be available on a reimbursement basis to improve farm productivity and profitability of participating APR farms. AIP funds are used primarily for capital improvements to farm infrastructure, such as new or improved barns, farm stands, livestock housing, or processing facilities; or land management for agricultural use, such as reseeding hay fields, pasture improvements, fencing, or establishing perennial crops. Contact Melissa Adams at 413-548-1904 or Melissa.L.Adams@state.ma.us.

[Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture \(MEGA\)](#) - for beginning farmers- helps with business expansion on beginning farms. MEGA provides business planning assistance and grant funds of up to \$10,000 on a one to one matching cash reimbursement basis. It is the objective of the MEGA Program to assist beginning farmers in their first through fifth year of business who aspire to develop their farms into commercially viable operations. Funds may be used for equipment, infrastructure or other capital improvements identified through the business planning process. Contact Melissa Adams at 413-548-1904 or Melissa.L.Adams@state.ma.us.

[Stewardship Assistance and Restoration on APRs Program \(SARA\)](#) - helps resolve stewardship issues caused by a prior owner to restore active commercial farming on land that has already been protected through the Department's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program. Funds for selected participants may be used for materials and contracted labor or equipment rental costs to clear or reclaim inactive fields that are out of production at no fault of the current owner. Examples of eligible projects include clearing vegetation, pulling rocks or stumps, cutting back grown in field edges, or reseeding or applying soil or crop amendments to inactive cropland or pastureland in order to bring it back into production. Grant funds of up to \$25,000 are available on a cost reimbursement basis with a 15% match of total project costs required by the farm participant. Contact Melissa Adams at 413-548-1904, Melissa.L.Adams@state.ma.us.

Energy News

MDAR's **MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP)** - Energy Audits – Now is a great time! MFEP funds help farms cover audits, energy efficient projects, and select renewable energy projects. Contact us now for more information through the Center for EcoTechnology (CET), our partner carrying out the MFEP. Call 413-727-3090, or e-mail: info@massfarmenergy.com. You may also visit www.massfarmenergy.com, submit a *Request Form*, and we will contact you.

USDA REAP 2nd Round of Applications Due in April 2018

USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) second round of applications for their FY2018 are due this coming April 2018, the final date still to be determined. The REAP program provides grant funding (up to 25% of the total costs) to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements to their operations. [Click here](#). Please contact Anne Correia, Energy Coordinator, BCP Specialist, Business & Cooperative Programs, Rural Development, MA/CT/RI, United States Department of Agriculture, 15 Cranberry Highway, West Wareham, MA 02576, (508) 295-5151 Ext 7242, Anne.Correia@ma.usda.gov. Also, our MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP) is able to help guide you through the REAP application process. Please feel free to contact our MFEP at 413-727-3090 regarding this assistance.

DOER's MART PROGRAM GUIDELINES OUT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT & SMART Tool Development

DOER's new solar incentive program, SMART (Solar MA Renewable Target), has posted all of the program's Guidelines which will be incorporated as part of the final SMART regulations. Included are the Guidelines for the Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Unit (ASTGU), also known as dual-use of land. Comments are due by February 23, 2018 – [click here](#).

Also, DOER, MDAR and the University of Massachusetts Clean Energy and Vegetable Extensions are developing a SMART Tool that will provide shading analysis and agricultural assistance for farmers and developers alike. Utilizing the SMART Tool for shading analysis and potential agronomical use will be required as part for every

ASTGU application. The SMART Tool will also incorporate an annual program required monitoring report format.

Here is an excerpt from the January 11, 2018 edition of the UMass Vegetable Extension Notes:

NEWS

Get SMART: New Solar Incentive Program Coming to Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) is in the process of finalizing a new solar PV incentive program, the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Program. The regulations for SMART include an option for dual-use solar arrays on continually farmed agricultural land, namely an Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Unit.

UMass Extension is named in the regulation as a resource to farmers and developers in the development of dual-use agricultural plans. Specifically, these plans will be developed “in conjunction with UMass Amherst agricultural extension services, including compatibility with the design of the agricultural solar system for such factors as crop selection, sunlight percentage, etc.” Guidelines for the SMART program have not yet been finalized.

UMass Clean Energy Extension (CEE) is actively working with UMass Agricultural Extension, DOER, and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resource (MDAR) to develop tools and guidance for those considering dual-use PV systems. If you are being contacted by solar development companies about building arrays on your land, or just has interest or questions about this new regulation, please feel free to contact River Strong at CEE: gcstrong@umass.edu, 413-545-8510 ext. 2. For further reading, here is the [link](#) to the regulation.

DPU Battery Storage & Net Metering

The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) held a technical conference on January 31, 2018 regarding battery storage and net metering. The conference was a continuation of discussion on this topic whereby projects wishing to incorporate energy storage with their solar PV projects will need to comply with some type of rules and perhaps additional metering that would prevent possible storing of utility generated power on-site in batteries and then exported back onto the grid and receive net metering credits for such. This is termed gaming and the development of rules and possible additional metering will be decided upon by DPU as a result of this and previous conferences and information requests.

The agenda for this recent meeting included a presentation of DOER’s proposed options by DOER Commissioner Judith Judson as part of the following agenda:

- A. Introduction
- B. Technical solutions to prevent gaming and manipulation
 - 1. Solutions to manage charging
 - 2. Solutions to manage exports
- C. Process to certify and enforce customer compliance
 - 1. Potential modification(s) to existing process (es)
 - 2. Additional process (es)
- D. Next steps
- E. Adjourn

For more information on Energy Storage, [click here](#). For more information from DPU please see [docket # 17-146](#) – note this includes Commissioner Judson’s presentation.

Markets Corner - Agritourism



In the coming weeks and months, our [Agritourism Program website](#) will be undergoing exciting changes! We'll be providing helpful links and resources for you in order to get the most out of your online experience. Be on the lookout for new features that we will highlight to help promote agritourism in the Commonwealth.

If you have ever thought about getting some directional signage help for your farm? Take a look at the [Agricultural Directional Signage Program](#).

As you know, we map all Massachusetts farms open to the public on the *Massgrown and fresher* [map](#). We'd also like to take this opportunity to make sure we have the most up to date information for what services and experiences your farm offers to the public (i.e. corporate events, weddings, birthday parties, hay rides, etc.). While we finish up our winter season, take time to update your farm information by taking our [Marketing Survey](#) so we'll have an accurate accounting of your "ag-tivities". Any questions, contact Phu Mai at Phu.Mai@state.ma.us, 617-626-1746.

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2017 Organic Cost Share Program Remains Open for Reimbursement



The Application Period for Fiscal Year 2017 Organic Cost Share Program Remains Open for Reimbursement. The MDAR works with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to reimburse certified organic farmers and food processors up to 75% (\$750 dollars maximum) of the total certification cost.

The application period (October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017) has been extended for Federal Fiscal Year 2017 as funds are still available to farms and food companies that are inspected and certified and/or inspected and receiving renewal of certification within the time period noted above. Details and application are here: www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/markets/organic-cost-share-program-generic.html.

The remaining grant has an end date of September 30, 2018 and MDAR can accept late submissions until November 2, 2018 or until funds are depleted.

Organic Cost Share Funds for Federal Fiscal Year 2018 has not been released by USDA as of this communication.

If you are certified organic, open to the public, and would like to be mapped on the [Massgrown map](#), please fill out the Massachusetts [Farm Marketing Survey](#).

Tax Time is a Great Time to Help Local Animals!



Taxpayers can write in any donation amount on Line 33f of the Massachusetts Income Tax Form. These donations are administered by the Massachusetts Animal Fund and are used to spay/neuter and vaccinate cats/dogs who are homeless or who live with families who cannot afford these procedures.

Funds are also used to train local animal control officers to ensure they are up-to-date on best practices. Through taxpayer donations the Fund has already helped 7,500 local cats and dogs in need across the Commonwealth, but there many more are still waiting for assistance. You can learn more about this program at www.massanimalfund.com.

Name The Queen Bees Contest for Schools



Pollinator health nationally and locally has been poor for the past decade, represented most noticeably by the high annual losses of honey bee colonies. A vast majority of Massachusetts agriculture and our local food supply relies on honey bees for pollination. To respond to this need, we recently released the Massachusetts Pollinator Protection Plan and created State Apiaries with the goal of providing improved support for honey bees through the Commonwealth. The State Apiaries located in Danvers and Amherst were created through collaboration between the University Of Massachusetts Stockbridge School of Agriculture and the Essex Technical High School. In addition to providing a vessel for education, these apiaries are also considered to be critical components of each campus by providing valuable pollination services to each campus's cultivated acreage of crops, gardens, trees and wildflowers.

To further education about honey bees, we are excited to announce the first ever **Name The Queen Bees Contest** sponsored by the [MDAR Apiary Program](#). The goal of this contest is to increase awareness, facilitate discussion and promote an overall greater understanding of honey bees and their vital role in the Commonwealth. You and your students are invited to participate by submitting names for the two new queens that will be located in honey bees colonies established at the State Apiaries this spring. If your class's entry is selected, the class will have an opportunity to follow their queens' hive throughout the remainder of the school year, summer and fall via social media and correspondence from the MDAR Apiary team. In addition, MDAR will visit the class to present them with a certificate and more information on honey bees. To participate, [click here for more information and entry form](#). If you have additional questions contact Kim Skyrms, Chief Apiary Inspector at 413-548-1905 or email Kim.Skyrm@state.ma.us.

MFBF to Host ELD Workshop on March 6 To Answer Members' Questions

Tuesday, March 6, 2018 - 4 pm - MFBF Office, 249 Lakeside Ave, Marlborough, MA 01752 (US Route 20, just East of I-495, Exit 21A)

In 2012, the United States Congress enacted the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century" bill, or, more commonly referred to as MAP-21. That bill, which also outlined the criteria for highway funding, included a provision requiring the FMCSA to develop a rule mandating the use of electronic logging devices (ELDs). In its simplest form, an electronic logging device - or ELD - is used to electronically record a driver's Record of Duty Status (RODS), which replaces the paper logbook some drivers currently use to record their compliance with Hours of Service (HOS) requirements. In MAP-21, horses and livestock were specifically listed. It will impact any type of activity or hobby that requires a large vehicle and trailer and where there is the potential to win money in competitions. The ELD Mandate requires that your vehicle must be fitted with a device under the following conditions:

- Your vehicle is a commercial vehicle
- Your activities fall outside of the exemptions allowed for agriculture and livestock transportation. Most who show horses or livestock will fall outside of the exemption requirements.
- You are required to obtain a Commercial Driver's License due to the weight of your truck and trailer

Until March 17, 2018, drivers are excepted from using an ELD while transporting ag commodities under 391.5(k)(1) regardless of the distance. However, that date is fast approaching, and the new regulation can be confusing. To help answer your questions about the ELD Mandate, Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is hosting a workshop presented by Steven Hanley, US DOT FMCSA federal program manager for Massachusetts. Topics include:

- The exemptions that agriculture previously enjoyed from the ELD Mandate;
- How these exemptions changed under MAP-21; and
- What are the exemptions moving forward.
- He also will take questions from the crowd to help you gain a better understanding of how this could impact you and your business.

Cost: This workshop is free to all current Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation members. If you are not a member but would like to attend, you may do so for a \$25 per person membership fee. If you are unsure of your membership status, please contact the office at 508-481-4766. Please RSVP: To attend this event, please RSVP today by completing this form <https://goo.gl/forms/glCqygVBaYxGFkA02>. No registration for non-members is complete until payment has been made. Payment will not be accepted at the door. If you cannot make the workshop on March 6th, MFBF is planning on hosting one later in March. Please stay tuned for additional information on that workshop.

Dairy Promotion Grant Program Fiscal Year 2019

Request for Response (RFR): RFR File: AGR-DairyPromoGrant-2019

Responses must be received by: February 22, 2018

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UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

February 16 - The 2018 Hop Conference - Burlington, Vermont. Sessions include: Hop sensory technology including an interactive taste and aroma presentation by Roy Desrochers of Tufts University and known around the world for his experience in beer flavor evaluation; From propagation to pint presentation by Joe Catron of Select Botanicals Group out of Yakima Valley; How we can succeed and win in a Niche Market by hop grower Pam Miller from Michigan; Marketing opportunities for Vermont hops (small and local) by Julian Post with Mt. Philo Hops; Build a hop yard, basic hop production, drip irrigation and fertigation, pest management strategies, and hop harvesting and drying; hop production, harvest timing, creating and sustaining value in a dynamic supply chain, feral hops, and hop research updates. [More here.](#)

February 22 - Berkshire Grown: Websites 101: Designing & Maintaining a Website for your Business, 5:30-8:30 pm, Lenox Community Center, 65 Walker St, Lenox. Join a panel of website designers to learn about the options for an affordable, manageable website for your business, whatever your size and capacity. [Details here.](#)

February 24 - 2018 Annual Meeting Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions - Ag Coms come together for networking, educational sessions and an update on agricultural matters. [More here.](#)

February 25 – SEMAP’s 11th Annual Ag & Food Conference - Bristol County Agricultural School, Dighton, 9:00 am – 3:30 pm. Whether you’re a professional farmer, a backyard gardener, or just curious about locally grown food, the Ag & Food Conference is for you! Each year, the lineup includes workshops for the general public as well as info-packed sessions for farmers and gardeners of all experience levels. Registration includes a locally-sourced lunch and at the Resource Fair, you’ll learn about local organizations and businesses that provide services and products to help you grow, whether you’ve got a hundred acres or a couple of window boxes. [Details here.](#)

February 27 - CISA Winter Workshop: Farmer to Farmer - Northampton - Join farmers from across the Northeast as we talk about experiences, successes and challenges in our relationships as managers and people in the broader community of food and agriculture. We will also talk with each other about the future of farmers as managers, workers, leaders, activists, and family members. [Details here.](#)

February 27 & 28 – MNLA Green Industry Career Fair - Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center – Tuesday, Feb. 27th, 1:00 - 5:00 pm & Wednesday, Feb. 28th, 8 am – noon. Landscape, nursery and greenhouse companies will be on hand to talk with job seekers about a wide variety of jobs. The industry needs irrigation technicians, project managers, foremen, salespeople, managers and supervisors, horticulturists and licensed applicators, landscape designers, equipment and fleet mechanics, people with CAD experience and laborers. Green industry companies have offices and need support staff on their teams, too. Cost: It’s FREE but pre-registration is required. [Click here.](#)

February 28 – Learn about SNAP and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program: The Luna Theater in Mill No. 5, 250 Jackson St, 4th Floor, Lowell. Drop in between 9:00-4:00; Join New Entry, Mass. Dept. of Transitional Assistance, and MDAR to learn about accepting SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC/Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program benefits at farmers markets. Registration help will be open all day for your USDA SNAP vendor license. If you would like to attend this event please email Justin, the Farmer Training Team Manager, at justin.chase@tufts.edu or [RSVP here.](#)

February 28 - Mass. Farm Wineries & Growers Assoc. Annual Meeting - 8:30 am - 4:00 pm, The Publick House, 277 Main St., Rte. 131, Sturbridge. [Details here.](#)

March 1 - Cape Cod Cranberries Growers Association Annual Mtg - Hotel 1620, Plymouth Waterfront. [Details here.](#)

March 4 - New England Flower Exchange 1st Spring Show & Seminar - 260 2nd Street, Chelsea - The New England Flower Exchange, home to 9 Wholesale Floral and Hard-goods Distributors, is hosting an 8:00 am – 2:00 pm floral show and business information session sponsored by Farm Credit East. This one-day

event, open to florists, garden centers, event professionals, floral growers and hard-goods suppliers, as well as educators in the industry, will focus on the 2018 tax reform, leveraging business sales, and networking within the industry. For more information, [click here](#).

March 5 - 7th Annual Specialty Crop and Local Food Trade Show – Northeastern University, Boston - The Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts (SBN) is offering the 2018 Show designed to facilitate connections and stimulate business relationships between producers and wholesale buyers of local food, with a focus on specialty crop food products in Massachusetts. At this event, buyers will have the unique opportunity to meet nearly 100 farmers and producers who grow and craft some of New England’s finest foods. Please note that booths may sell out. Exhibition booths are free for specialty crop farmers + producers. [Complete details and registration here](#).

March 6 - Strategies to Optimize Yield and Quality of Forage on Your Farm - 9:30 am to 3:30 pm - UMass Crop and Animal Research Education Center. [More here](#).

March 13 - Lenox Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training - Participants will learn about produce safety best practices, key parts of the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements, and how these requirements will be enforced in MA through MDAR’s Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP). There will be time for questions and discussion, so participants should come prepared to share their experiences and produce safety questions. [Details here](#).

March 13 - 15 - Preventive Controls for Human Food Qualified Individual Training - UMass Amherst. This course developed by the FSPCA is the “standardized curriculum” recognized by FDA; successfully completing this course is one way to meet the requirements for a “preventive controls qualified individual.” Upon completion of this 20-hour (2.5 days) course, the trainee will become a FDA-recognized “Preventive Controls Qualified Individual” (PCQI). [Details here](#).

March 14 - Northeast Hardscape Expo - Providence, Rhode Island. Come see MDAR’s Forest Pest Outreach Coordinator at the Northeast Hardscape Expo in Providence and learn about what you can do to combat the threat of invasive insects. We’ll be handing out free educational materials on a variety of introduced pests including Asian longhorned beetle, emerald ash borer, spotted lanternfly and many more. [Show details here](#).

March 16-17 - Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference (UFC) - Bunker Hill Community College, Boston. The annual Conference is designed to advance the opportunities and address the barriers involved in cultivating a resilient and thriving Urban Farming sector. The UFC is a multi-sector stakeholder forum designed to share information regarding what is currently happening in Massachusetts. The UFC fosters solutions, sustainable networks and business relationships. [More here](#).

March 20- April 10 - Marketing, Branding, and Social Media for your Farm - Marketing can help you decide what to grow or produce, choose where and how you want to sell it, differentiate yourself from other farmers, and make effective use of social media and other marketing tools. Learn the basics to doing your own direct marketing or supervising someone else. This series of 4 workshops is designed as a complete direct marketing class, but you can register for as many as you like. Sessions will include guest speakers, handouts, discussions and in-class exercises. [More here](#).

March 20 - Wareham Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training - Participants will learn about produce safety best practices, key parts of the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements, and how these

requirements will be enforced in MA through MDAR's Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP). There will be time for questions and discussion, so participants should come prepared to share their experiences and produce safety questions. [Details here.](#)

March 27 – Ag Day at the Statehouse

MDAR Events Calendar

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USDA News

Agricultural Land Easement Application Deadline

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications from state and local governments, non-governmental organizations and Native American Tribes that would like to protect working farmland through an Agricultural Land Easement under the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

Created by the 2014 Farm Bill, ACEP Agricultural Land Easements protect critical natural resources and encourage private landowners to maintain land for farming through the voluntary sale of an easement, which limits future development. NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements. State and local governments, non-governmental organizations and Native American Tribes that have farmland or grassland protection programs are eligible to partner with NRCS to purchase conservation easements.

Applications should be submitted to Darlene Monds, USDA-NRCS Massachusetts State Office, 451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002 [by Friday, March 2, 2018](#). Information on how to apply and application forms are available on the NRCS Massachusetts [website](#).

Help Available to Mass. Farmers and Forest Land Owners Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which helps farmers and forest land owners improve water quality, conserve water and energy, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and improve soil health, wildlife habitat, plant and animal communities.

Farmers and forest land owners may apply for financial and technical assistance through EQIP at any time throughout the year by visiting their local NRCS field office. USDA Service Center locations are listed on-line at <http://offices.usda.gov>. Funding decisions will be made monthly and will continue until federal fiscal year 2018 funds are exhausted. Complete applications will be ranked on the third Friday of each month. A conservation plan must be completed before an application can be considered for funding, so farmers are encouraged to call or stop by their local NRCS field office as soon as possible.

EQIP, a voluntary program authorized under the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and forest land owners to address natural resource concerns through an array of conservation practices. General program information is available on the NRCS Massachusetts website at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

EQIP can provide eligible applicants up to \$450,000 over the six-year life of the Farm Bill. Program applicants can choose to compete in any of the various funding pools, including:

- Land use pools - cropland, pasture and hayland, farmsteads, forestland, and wildlife habitat;
- Special initiative pools - aerial cover crops, high tunnel systems, certified or transitioning organic production, on-farm energy conservation, New England Cottontail habitat, the Palmer River Watershed water quality initiative, and third party written Conservation Activity Plans
- Historically underserved farmer pools – Indian tribes, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, limited resource farmers

“If you operate a farm or manage forest land and want to improve your land, we can help,” said Christine Clarke, State Conservationist for NRCS in Massachusetts. “A planner will discuss with you your vision for your land, and will explain the conservation planning process and how to apply for financial assistance.” NRCS is a federal agency that works hand-in-hand with the people of Massachusetts to improve and protect soil, water and other natural resources. The agency has offices in USDA Service Centers in Greenfield, Hadley, Holden, Pittsfield, Westford, West Wareham and West Yarmouth, which work with local conservation districts and other partners to serve farmers and landowners in their area.

Crop Insurance Deadline – March 15th

The past two growing seasons have seen hail, drought, and freeze across Massachusetts. If you’re concerned with extreme weather events and the impact they can have on your farm you should consider purchasing some level of coverage on your major crops. The 2014 farm bill provided a variety of risk management tools growers can use to protect their income and/or crops. The deadline to purchase revenue coverage or coverage for annual crops is March 15th.

[Whole Farm Revenue Protection \(WFRP\)](#) provides growers with farm revenue protection from crop or market losses. WFRP replaced the Adjusted Gross Revenue policies that have been available in previous years. WFRP is sold by crop insurance agent. [Check with your crop insurance agent.](#)

Individual Crop policies, growers can purchase federal crop insurance on potatoes, fresh market sweet corn, tobacco, corn (grain/silage). These policies protect growers from natural disaster losses. [Check with your crop insurance agent.](#)

Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP) is available on all annual crops not covered by crop insurance. Farmers can now purchase coverage up to 65% of their yield and 100% of the established price. NAP is sold by the [USDA Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#).

Beginning, historically underserved, and limited resource farmers receive special consideration which include waiver of NAP administrative fees, 50% reduction in NAP premiums and up to an additional 10% premium subsidy and waiver of policy fees on their crop insurance policies.

UMass Extension works in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) to educate Massachusetts producers about Federal Crop Insurance and Risk Management Programs. For more information, please visit www.rma.usda.gov or contact UMass Risk Management Specialists Paul Russell at pmrussell@umext.umass.edu or Tom Smiarowski at tsmiarowski@umext.umass.edu.

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- **Position Available:** Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in Athol, MA has an opening for a TerraCorps-AmeriCorps member. Position would start in mid to late-February and continue until August 10, 2018. This is an incredible opportunity for someone to learn the ropes of conservation, youth engagement, and community organizing. On-going projects include: working with youth on environmental curricula and a school garden, running a family-friendly Camp Out, and creating an outdoor classroom at the Eagle Reserve Conservation Area. This is a 900-hour AmeriCorps position. Members receive a living allowance, education award, and additional AmeriCorps benefits. Application specifics, position descriptions, and more information about this position can be found at terracorps.org. Interested applicants are encouraged to apply immediately. Feel free to reach out to Hanna Mogensen with any questions about the position. 978-248-2043, c: 207-240-0050, mogensen@mountgrace.org.
- **Intern Positions Available:** The UMass Fruit Team (umassfruit.com) is looking for one (or two) full-time, spring- summer undergraduate student Integrated Pest Management assistants/interns (paid hourly positions) Responsibilities to include (but are not limited to): install and maintain orchard pest monitoring equipment and other orchard fieldwork tasks as required. Mostly, this is a learning/mentoring position for the right individual(s). Therefore, we might expect you to also draft content for newsletters and other publications based on monitoring information and relevant field observations. [Details here](#). Interested? Please contact: egarofal@umass.edu.

About the *Farm & Market Report*

Published bi-monthly by MDAR:

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Next issue to be published in April. Please send news, events, or classified information by April 1 to Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us. To unsubscribe, or change your email address, contact Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us or call 617-626-1759.

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.

