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August / September Farm & Market Report

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COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Greetings Mass. Agriculture and all its friends,

Most of my messages to you focus on farms, farming, and how MDAR interacts with commercial agriculture, but that's not where all of MDAR's focus lies. In fact, when I meet with my colleagues from other states, we frequently note the many responsibilities we generally share, and also those that differ from state to state. Some of us have jurisdiction over state parks; many also have responsibility over gas pumps!

MDAR has statutory authority over [pesticides](#) in Massachusetts, and does so in conjunction with the Pesticide Board. To give some sense of proportion, according to the most recent 2012 USDA Agricultural Census, there are 7,755 commercial farms in Mass. A major part of the Pesticide Program's responsibilities is the examination and licensing of over 9,000 licensed pesticide applicators. Much of the revenue MDAR generates for the General Fund is derived from fees associated with this program.

Until very recently, much of those pesticide examination and licensing processes were conducted through programs and procedures dating back decades. Applications for licenses and examinations were conducted with numerous processing steps including mailing hard copies of applications and making payments by check; frankly those processes were not reflective of how one would generally conduct them in modern times. Both our customers and our staff found them to be what I will politely call "less than desirable".

In the late spring/early summer of 2015, Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito established a *Business Process Redesign* training program for all Executive branch agencies. MDAR Chief of Staff Alisha Bouchard and I attended. Now I admit I was not familiar with the term *Business Process Redesign*, but it's essentially what business people try to do every day: streamline their operations to make them operate more effectively and economically. As part of the exercise, we needed to identify a business process within MDAR that needed redesign. Now after being on the job for less than six months I had already heard frequently from the industry that it strongly desired a better system, so we immediately realized that MDAR's pesticide examination and licensing application

process was the perfect candidate. An extremely detailed analysis of every single step in the process took place, and better alternatives were explored.

This analysis was not only undertaken by MDAR staff and consultants. It also included industry stakeholders invited to offer their advice and perspective. An unexpected reaction when we showed them how everything had to be done with the available tools and resources was their surprise at how complicated and time-consuming the process was, to the point that many actually sympathized with and greatly appreciated what our team had to do in order to make the old system work!

That was the start, and it then fed into the Baker-Polito Administration's development of a brand new environmental data and public information system that was announced on August 2, [EIPAS](#), a modern online tool for several other agencies as well as MDAR, but one that provides our pesticide applicators the ability to conduct activities online, make payment by credit card, and immediately understand their current status.

Prior to release, we asked industry stakeholders back to help with some beta-testing, and even brought in some individuals totally unfamiliar with pesticide exam and licensing applications (me) to gauge reaction. The stakeholders were very helpful and excited with the usability of the EIPAS online tool, and I was delighted at how much they liked the new tool.

This advancement was a huge step in our efforts to better serve our customers. I'm very proud of the hard work and dedication of MDAR's team: our Pesticide Program group along with others in our Crop and Pest Services Division, and MDAR's Legal Division. I also greatly appreciate the leadership, cooperative spirit and teamwork provided by Commissioner Suuberg's team at MA DEP and Sec. Beaton's group at EEA-IT to help integrate our MDAR program into the broader umbrella of EIPAS.

Two MDAR staffers were at the office early many mornings and late many days making sure EIPAS was advancing, while still managing their daily responsibilities. Though many at MDAR and at other agencies all played important roles, MDAR Pesticide Operations Coordinator Steve Antunes-Kenyon and MDAR Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Services Database Coordinator Joao Tavares led our efforts and deserve to be recognized for their great work that led to such a positive result!

EIPAS is not the only major new event at MDAR since I last wrote you. Though the voters approved marijuana legalization last November, there has been subsequent related legislation, both last December and most recently on July 28, when Governor Baker signed a major amendment into law.

We had been thinking about MDAR's role long before last November, but until July 28, we were unsure of exactly what our responsibilities would be. Now we have moved into active development of how we will address them.

Essentially, with one important exception, what was legalized falls under the jurisdiction of the yet to be appointed Cannabis Control Commission (CCC), comprised of five members, each with specific backgrounds: three members to be appointed individually by the Governor, Attorney General, and Treasurer, and two to be selected by majority vote of the Governor, Attorney General, and Treasurer.

The statute also provides that the CCC will be advised by a twenty-five-member Cannabis Advisory Board (CAB) which will be comprised of individuals with specific backgrounds. Fifteen members are appointed (five members each individually appointed by the Governor, Attorney General, and Treasurer), and there are also ten specific *ex officio* members, including MDAR's Commissioner.

Among the Governor's five appointments was to be an individual who per the statute "shall be an expert in farming or representing the interests of farmers". To fill that position, Governor Baker appointed Lydia Sisson, Founding Co-Director of *Mill City Grows*, an urban agricultural organization in Lowell. Prior to her work at *Mill City Grows*, Lydia ran a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm. Additionally, and how I know her best is that she also serves on the Massachusetts Board of Agriculture which MDAR staffs. Lydia knows very well her way around both growing operations and board tables-I think she will do a great job serving on the CAB with me!

When I began my discussion of legalized marijuana, I mentioned that the CCC has jurisdiction with one exception. That exception is Industrial Hemp and that is to be under MDAR's jurisdiction.

Industrial Hemp is of the marijuana species but it is not psychoactive. In fact, by the statute it must contain less than three per cent (by dry weight) THC, the compound that makes marijuana psychoactive. With that low THC content, Industrial Hemp has no recreational value, but it can be processed for use in a variety of industries (textile, cordage, construction, paper and others). Essentially, it's a crop.

I was on the job for less than a month back in 2015, when some older farmers took me aside and talked to me about the large amount of hemp that was grown by farmers in certain parts of the state, until it became lumped into the definition of marijuana, when it was classified as illegal.

MDAR's Industrial Hemp Program will be situated in our Crop and Pest Services Division (CPS), led by Director Taryn LaScola. She is currently working along with MDAR Legal and my office as we develop it. It's exciting to start a new program from scratch, but there are a lot of decisions to be made about how MDAR will support this now legal (from the Commonwealth's perspective) agricultural activity.

One more thing about what has been legalized by various legislations-whether it's medical marijuana recreational marijuana, or hemp, if the use of pesticides is involved (and it's very likely they will be in some respect) MDAR's Pesticide Program (also within CPS) has jurisdiction. So, while we are advising the CCC and developing an Industrial Hemp Program, we are also planning on how our Pesticide Program will see that if pesticides are used, they are used properly and safely, and protect both end users, those making the applications, and any other workers involved in the process.

So that's what new at MDAR right now, but we are still doing all our usual activities. For me, this time of year we are doing a lot of farm touring, attending association summer meetings, and hitting the fairs. Assistant Commissioner Jason Wentworth, our Agricultural Markets team, other MDAR staff and I are doing our best to attend as many fairs as we can. It's a wonderful opportunity to speak with people one on one and learn their concerns; it's also just great fun!

My garden isn't great this year but better than last when the woodchucks wiped it out. This year I'm battling them better. I harvested my garlic and the tomatoes are slowly coming. Speaking of tomatoes, don't forget the [33rd Annual Massachusetts Tomato Contest](#), Tuesday August 22nd at the KITCHEN at the Boston Public Market.

So, with that, I'm going to close this edition's column. Rick is a tough task master and I'm approaching his deadline. (Actually, I'm usually late, but once in a while, like today, I have it to him just before the bell rings. Whew!)

I remind you to follow us on [Twitter](#) and friend us on [Facebook](#) (both @MassDeptAgr) for information between Reports.

Every year's a challenge, but I think most, if not all of us are ahead of the game than where we were a year ago, deep in the drought.

I hope to see you while I'm on the road this summer. It's always nice to hear the many nice things people frequently say to me about the people and programs at MDAR, but we can always do better, so I also want to hear your suggestions or criticisms.

May the rest of the summer be fruitful to all,



John Lebeaux

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FOREFRONT

MDAR Announces the Introduction of “eLicensing” through the Commonwealth’s ePlace Portal

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Pesticide Program (Department) is pleased to announce the introduction of “eLicensing” through the Commonwealth’s ePlace Portal. All new exam registrations, results, and license applications will now use this new online system. A public access portal is also online to verify license credential types and license numbers.

- The following examination and licensure actions will now be performed online:
- Apply to take the exam
- Apply for a new license
- Submit proof of insurance (as may be required)

- Receive your license via email
- Renew your license
- Update your address, employer information and insurance information
- Submit all examination and licensing fees via checking account or credit card

In order to be able to perform these actions an individual will need to create an ePLACE Portal Account. All existing licensees or individuals with exam results are now being mailed instructions on how to link their existing records to their new ePlace Portal Account.

All new exam and license applications must be processed in the new system. Those individuals applying for an Applicator (core) License or Commercial Certification are required to upload a certificate of insurance when applying for their credential. If an individual submits exam registrations or license applications using the old method, please be aware that this will significantly slow down the processing of the applications.

While the Department is handling the transition between the old data system and the new ePlace Portal, please be aware that we are expecting an increase in phone calls and ask for your patience and understanding during this time. Should you have questions please follow the information below in order to ensure that your issues or concerns are addressed as quickly as possible.

Pesticide Examination and Licensing (Apply Online) - <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/pesticides/pesticide-examination-and-licensing.html>

- ePlace Technical Assistance: 844-733-7522 between 7:30 am-5:00 pm, Monday-Friday
- Examination and Licensure Specific Issues: Steven Antunes-Kenyon, 617-626-1784

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MDAR's Agricultural Business Training Program

There are a few openings in **TILLING THE SOIL OF OPPORTUNITY BUSINESS PLANNING** course for farmers scheduled this Fall at Fidelity Bank in Leominster on the following dates from 5:30pm to 8:30pm: Tues 10/17, Wed 10/25, Wed 11/01, Wed 11/08, Wed 11/15, Tues 11/21; Wed 11/29, Wed 12/06, Wed 12/13, and Wed 12/20.

This course is for owners/managers of established income-generating farms, to help develop a business plan and improve decision making on the farm. The experienced course instructor guides participants through the creation of a full business plan during 10 group sessions. The instructor visits each participant's farm during the course and provides individualized assistance and confidential one-on-one financial planning. The course draws on peer experience, instructor knowledge and guest speakers on topics such as taxes, legal issues and marketing. Cost is \$200 per enterprise.

The Fall **EXPLORING THE SMALL FARM DREAM** course, for those exploring or planning a small farm as a commercial enterprise, is now full. We are accepting applications on a first come first serve basis for the next course expected to be held in Amherst in late winter/early spring (dates & times TBD). This course provides guidance and resources to help make informed decisions about what's involved with owning and operating a small farm to help you decide whether or not your idea is feasible. Cost is \$100 per enterprise.

For more information or to access an application for either course, go to the MDAR's Agricultural Business Training Program site www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/land-use/agricultural-business-training-program-abtp.html or contact Melissa Adams at 413-548-1904 or Melissa.L.Adams@state.ma.us.

FY2018 Massachusetts Food Ventures Program Request for Response (RFR)

Reminder: Application deadline is 2 pm, September 7, 2017.

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources seeks proposals for funding projects that will advance the Massachusetts Food Ventures Program ("MFVP"), help to implement the objectives of the [Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan](#) and provide

economic opportunities that promote job creation enterprises or new businesses. MDAR is seeking to award grants statewide, primarily in communities of low or moderate income, to individuals or entities with experience developing and supporting food businesses.

[Click here for RFR details and link to COMMBUYS](#)

Organic Cost Share Program



2017 Organic Cost Share Program - **Reminder** – Applications are due October 15, 2017.

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. Funds are available to farms and food companies that are inspected and certified and/or inspected and receiving renewal of certification.

[Criteria and application here.](#)

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](#).  

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The Market Corner

Announcements & Information from MDAR's Division of Agricultural Markets

Hope to see Your Farm's Tomatoes at the Annual Tomato Contest

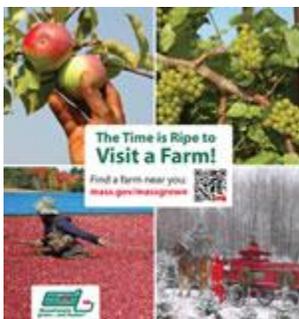
Come to Boston for the 33rd annual Massachusetts Tomato Contest next **Tuesday, August 22** in the KITCHEN at the Boston Public Market, 100 Hanover Street, Boston. Tomatoes will be judged by a panel of experts on flavor, firmness/slicing quality, exterior color and shape. The contest is sponsored by the New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Association in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and Mass Farmers' Markets and hosted by the Boston Public Market Association and Trustees of Reservations. This friendly contest is open to commercial tomato growers and is designed to increase consumer's awareness of local agriculture.



Farmers who want to submit entries can bring tomatoes to the market between 9:00 am and 10:45 am on the 22nd or drop their entries off with a registration form to one of the drop off regional locations on August 21st. Drop off locations include sites in Amherst, Northboro and Waltham. These tomatoes will be brought in to Boston on Tuesday by a DAR staff member.

For the complete details, including drop off locations, contest criteria and a registration form, [click here](#).

Look for The *Massgrown and fresher* Ag-tourism signs in September on the MBTA Commuter Rail



If you take the commuter rail in or out of Boston in September, don't be surprised to see our *Massgrown and fresher* poster cards. With support from USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, we have purchased 420 posters to be featured throughout North and South Station rail cars. It is an opportunity to promote the Specialty Crops that are associated with the fall season.

Agritourism and PYO farms are reminded to update your online information if needed. New or not listed retail farms on the [Massgrown and fresher map](#) should fill out our Markets survey to get listed:

[Massachusetts Farm Marketing Survey](#)   If you need promotional materials featuring the *Massgrown and fresher* logo, [click here for more information](#). Questions, contact Rick LeBlanc, Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us, 617-626-1759.

Vendors Invited to Two Fall Events

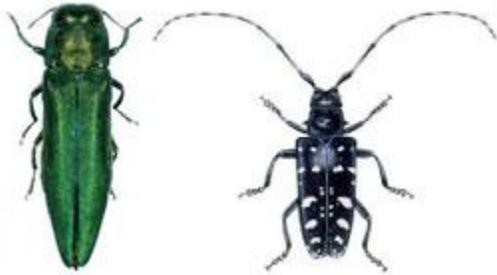
September 9 & 10 – Wachusett Mountain Farm Fresh Fest – Princeton, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

This two-day festival will feature a Farmers' Market, Craft Fair, Cooking Demos, Local Wine Growers, Agricultural Demonstrations, Workshops, Contests, Live Music and much more! More than 70 Vendors on display featuring produce, baked goods, speciality foods, crafts, soaps/oils; knits/wools; plants/herbs and more. Live music all weekend! Cooking Demos taking place every hour throughout both days. [Registration details and application here.](#)

September 17 - Boston Local Food Festival - Rose F Kennedy Greenway, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm

For one spectacular day each year, SBN transforms the Rose Kennedy Greenway and the City of Boston into the nation's largest local & sustainable food hub! Boston Local Food Festival is a FREE outdoor festival that showcases farmers, local restaurants, food trucks, specialty food producers, fisher folks, and organizations focusing on healthy food and fitness from New England. The festival also features lively chef & DIY demos, a seafood throwdown competition, diverse music and performances, family fun zone and more. If you would like to apply for a booth, [click here.](#)

It's Tree Check Month!



Did you know that this August has been officially recognized by the US Department of Agriculture as Tree Check Month? Insects like Asian longhorned beetle and emerald ash borer currently threaten hardwood forests in Massachusetts, and Tree Check Month is the perfect time to check your trees for signs of damage. Take ten minutes of your time to find out how to spot signs of damage from these insects and to check your trees to ensure their health and survival!

More at the [Massachusetts Introduced Pests Outreach Blog here.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

Remaining 2017 Honey Bee Education Days at State Apiary

Are you interested in learning more about honey bees, their health and hive management techniques? Join State Apiary Inspectors from the MDAR to get a tour of live working honey bee hives and an educational demonstration. These events are open to the public, but will focus on topics of interest to beekeepers. [Details here.](#)

- **Saturday, August 19 (fall management)**
- **Saturday, September 16 (winter preparation)**

Participants must bring protective clothing (i.e. bee suit and/or bee veil with long pants) and closed toed shoes as it will not be provided and is necessary before entering the apiary. Alternate dates will be provided in event of inclement weather.

August 21 - Dairy Day - Whittier Farm Tour - 90 Douglas Rd, Sutton - 3:00 - 4:30 pm; **Forgotten Farms Screening** - Elm Draught House, Millbury - 5:30 - 8:00 pm. [Details here.](#)

August 22 - Is the Public Really Safe on Your Farm? Learning The Keys to Success in Agritourism - 9:45 am – 4:00 pm, Charlton Public Library – Dexter Hall, 40 Main Street, Charlton. As a farmer who invites the public onto your farm or perhaps as a fair operator who manages a petting zoo, it is vital that you take steps to protect the health of the public and the animals. This FREE training workshop, hosted by the USDA Veterinary Services, in cooperation with the state departments of agriculture and public health, aims to maximize your knowledge in order to minimize the risks on a variety of agritourism operations. It will focus on topics such as overall farm safety risks, the relationship between animal health and public health, best practices to keep your livestock healthy, farm liability, and much more. This full day workshop will involve speakers from various federal, state, and university extension agencies with a wide array of knowledge about agritourism-related topics. FREE risk assessment toolkits and various signage will be available to attendees. Reserve your spot today! [Register Here.](#)

August 26 - Massachusetts Christmas Tree Association's Annual Meeting - 9:00 am - 3:00 pm - Mistletoe Acres Tree Farm, LLC, East Bridgewater. Hosted by Matt and Megan Krugger. All Christmas tree growers invited. [Details here.](#)

September 5 - Twilight Meeting: UMass Vegetable Program's Research Tour and Pest Roundtable - 4:00 - 7:00 pm, UMass Crop Research and Education Center
91 River Rd., Deerfield. Tour the ongoing research Center and participate in a roundtable discussion. Research trials include: cucurbit disease management, cabbage aphid control, and nitrogen contributions from cover crops for vegetable fertility. After a field tour, we will have a roundtable discussion with UMass Extension Specialists where you can get crop or pest management questions answered over dinner. Co-sponsored by Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE) and USDA - National Institute for Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). Registration is free, but please pre-register. Pesticide Credits will be available. [Click here to register.](#)

September 12 - FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food Certification Training BLENDED COURSE at UMass AMHERST - Food businesses: Food Safety Modernization Act regulations are looming. In September 2017, all food manufacturers with more than \$1 million in annual sales will be required to comply with the Preventive Controls for Human Food regulation of the Food Safety Modernization Act. That means you need to have a "qualified individual" responsible for writing your Food Safety Plan. The Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance has developed a blended course for small manufacturers. Instead of taking the 3 day face-to-face course, you can take Part 1 of the course online, then attend Part 2, as a one-day training session, to complete the Qualified Individual course requirements. In partnership with UMass Food Science, the Specialty Food Association (SFA) is offering this one-day class, to allow you to comply with this important Federal law. FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food Qualified Individual BLENDED COURSE will be held at the UMass Campus Center in Amherst on September 12. [To register, click here.](#) The program will be taught by Amanda Kinchla who is a UMASS Amherst Extension Assistant Professor/Food Safety Specialist and a FSPCA Lead Instructor, with training to teach the FDA recognized standardized curriculum.

September 15 - Food Policy Council Meeting - 9:30 am – 12:30 pm – Tower Hill Botanical Garden, Boylston. Focus on education: This broad goal from the MA Local Food Action Plan is to Support expanded educational opportunities for farmers and other food system workers. The current focus is to support Massachusetts higher education, UMass Extension, and vocational technical schools by developing and offering appropriate curricula to meet food system needs. [Updates here.](#)

September 26 - 'Tis the Season to Market your Business B2B - 6:00 - 8:30 pm. Are you a business owner or manager seeking to increase sales and brand awareness during the holiday season? Are you looking for ways to make your storefronts and displays more festive? Join Sustainable Business Network (SBN) of Massachusetts for a workshop on holiday marketing! Experts Caitlin Drown from Teak Media and Christine Moynihan from Retail Visioning will make presentations on how to improve online marketing and how to boost sales through festive displays. Sarah Michalik of Charged Glassworks and Patrick Clarke of Cape Clasp will join for a short panel discussion. The panel will be facilitated by Myrna Greenfield of Good Egg Marketing. Following, there will be a short Q&A session. Topics include: Specific tools to "get the word out" about your brand and products, Create a timeline for a successful holiday marketing campaign; How to follow up on holiday sales and transition to a successful year-long business; The role of a charitable plan in holiday marketing, and more. [Details here.](#)

October 5 - Food Product Development Considerations: Beyond the Concept - Franklin County CDC, Western MA Food Processing Center, 324 Wells Street, Greenfield, 9am - 5pm. Do you want help better understanding the food safety principles behind your process? Do you need help with product development for a current or future product? Propel your food business to the next level by delving into product development and food safety with Amanda Kinchla, of the UMASS Food Science Department, an expert on HACCP and product development. The full day course will cover: Principles of Food Safety and Risk Management; Establishing Process Controls & Effective Strategies for Record Keeping; Quality Attributes of Food; Financial/Business Considerations to account for in your product development process, and more. [Details here.](#)

October 30 - NO-TILL Conference - Carter and Stevens Farm, 500 West Street, Barre, 9:00 am-3:00 pm. NRCS Resource Conservationist Kate Parson will talk about "Why No-Till and How it Works," Tom Morris of UConn will talk about "Nutrient Management in No-Till," and Katie-Campbell-Nelson of UMass will talk about "Pest Management and IPM practices in NO-Till." Plan to have an equipment trade show and close out the day with a panel of farmers. The event is Sponsored by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts, and Worcester County Conservation District, UMass Extension, Carter and Stevens Farm, and SARE. Registration is [available here](#) or contact Lisa.Trotto@ma.usda.gov.

USDA News

Funding Opportunity: Acer Access and Development Program 2017

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced that \$1 million in competitive grant funding is available for the Acer Access and Development Program (Acer). [This program supports the efforts of states, tribal governments, and research institutions to promote the domestic maple syrup industry.](#)

Activities eligible for support include: promotion of research and education related to maple syrup production; promotion of natural resource sustainability in the maple syrup industry; market promotion for maple syrup and maple-sap products; encouragement of owners and operators of privately held land containing species of trees in the genus *Acer* to initiate or expand maple-sugaring activities on the land or to voluntarily make the land available, including by lease or other means, for access by the public for maple-sugaring activities.

Please review the Request for Applications on the [AMS website](#) for details about eligible projects. Applications from eligible applicants must be submitted electronically by **11:59 pm, Eastern Time on Friday, August 25, 2017** at [Grants.gov](#).

NOTE: AMS publication of the *Acer* RFA to [Grants.gov](#) is pending. If you would like to receive updates on this, or have other questions, please contact Martin Rosier at martin.rosier@ams.usda.gov or Karin French at KarinR.French@ams.usda.gov.

Classified

- [Farmers' Markets Seeking Vendors](#) (click back for updates throughout the season) – This includes new proposed markets, as well as existing ones.
- **Agricultural Excavation – Grading Services** - provide earth moving, drainage, land/pasture reclamation, greenhouse preparation, and rock raking services. Includes but not limited to orchards/equine facilities/cranberry bogs/nurseries. Chris Merrill Excavating merrilltrucks@comcast.net, 978-897-9977.

About the *Farm & Market Report*

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Next issue to be published in October. Please send news, calendar and/or classified information by October 2 to Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us. To unsubscribe or change your address, send an e-mail message to 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.

