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February/March Farm & Market Report

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COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Greetings, Massachusetts Agriculture and all its friends!

We are all noticing the days getting a little longer. The earlier sunrises and sunsets are a welcome signal of the approaching Spring, though I am writing this column during the "Great" Northeaster of 2017.

Soon houseplants will begin to react to the longer days and better quality light and start putting out their new growth. Since last May, I have two window boxes in my office in Boston, containing flowering plants and herbs produced by Mass. Flower Growers' Association members. They've done quite well I'm pleased to say, but I'm anxiously awaiting March 1, when I plan to cut them back and fertilize them to trigger strong new growth for the approaching season.

I've been thinking a lot lately about change. A personal milestone made me recently think of what I was doing ten years ago, which was running my family's nursery/garden center. I then realized I was also doing exactly that both twenty and thirty years ago, and that though forty years ago (gulp) I wasn't running the business, I was working there.

In these past ten years, I've closed the business, became unemployed, ran for State Senate, and am now at my fourth job. I've had a lot more ups and downs the last ten years than the thirty before. What I think I've learned is that one should realize that whether it's wanted or not, in current times change is almost the rule, not the exception. I also learned it's better to think about what you can do to prepare for change, or better still, to try to actively position oneself toward a desired change than just to wait and see what happens

MDAR's participation as a member of the state's [Drought Management Task Force](#) continues. Fortunately, we have been seeing a fair amount of precipitation since the growing season ended. According to the [February 7th U.S. Drought Monitor](#), none of Mass. is now classified as "Extreme Drought", though all of Mass. with the exception of Nantucket remains in some lesser drought category. The drought remains strongest in a band starting in northern Central Mass. that extends southwesterly toward southern Berkshire County. Let's hope the February weather pattern continues to bring much needed moisture to recharge reservoirs, groundwater and our soils.

The Task Force is examining the state's response to last year's drought, and using that real experience to improve the [2013 Mass. Drought Management Plan](#). Likewise, MDAR is making best efforts to have programs in place should there be drought issues facing Mass. Agriculture in 2017.



I will try from time to time to feature an MDAR program here that might not be as well-known as some others we offer. This time it's the [Agricultural Directional Signage Program](#) which establishes a means by which drivers on a state road can be directed to a farm's location. These signs work! Miller's Family Farm in North Attleboro recently sent us a letter telling us how happy they are with how their sign has helped their business.

I have a new personnel announcement to make. MDAR Agricultural Economist Catherine de Ronde is leaving MDAR in late February. Catherine has done a great job providing all of MDAR with her analysis of a tremendous range of data and statistics. She has also excellently handled a variety of special projects for my office, and has worked closely with the dairy industry, administering the Dairy Farmer Tax Credit Program. We will miss Catherine, but wish her continued success in her new position at Agri-Mark, where she will continue her relationship with the dairy industry.

Once we passed the holiday season, the winter meeting season began. I attended meetings of the Mass. Cheese Guild at the Boston Public Market, and the Mass. Farm Wineries & Growers Association and the Mass. Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA), both in Sturbridge. MNLA's event was a Career Fair in addition to the Annual Business Meeting. Many MNLA members are actively hiring for the upcoming season. Find a list of those businesses [here](#).

In late January, MDAR Chief of Staff Alisha Bouchard and I attended the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture's Annual Winter Policy Conference in Washington, DC. It was very interesting to be in Washington just days after President Trump was inaugurated and his Administration commenced.

I am pleased to report that everything I heard about Secretary of Agriculture-Designate Sonny Purdue was very positive. Mr. Perdue, former Governor of Georgia, grew up on a farm, is a veterinarian by training, and has been in the grain and fertilizer business.

The concern I heard is that as the last traditional Cabinet member to be named, it some may take before the Senate acts on Mr. Perdue's appointment, and that most other senior USDA positions will not be filled until sometime after that. It may take months before USDA, EPA and FDA are fully staffed at their most senior levels; that may cause uncertainty which is not helpful to anyone.

While in Washington, Georgia Department of Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black and I made a friendly wager of agricultural product over the results of Super Bowl LI. We agreed to wait until harvest season before the loser needs to make good. I admit that by the end of the first half I was very concerned, but as we all know, the Patriots only needed that one amazing second half and overtime to be victorious!

Among the presenters at the meeting were representatives of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) which is responsible for implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). MDAR is a recipient of an FDA grant to develop a Mass. program that is consistent with the law. I have designated Assistant Commissioner Jason Wentworth to take the lead on this project, working with MDAR's Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP) Coordinator Michael Botelho. Our plan for FSMA is to work it through the CQP model. Funded through the grant, MDAR is beginning to add staff for its FSMA program. There will be much more news on this in the future.

Not changing since last column, we are continuing to receive numerous inquiries from parties interested in growing marijuana or hemp. The ballot question assigned authority over legalized recreational marijuana and hemp to the State Treasurer's Office. Accordingly, we are referring all inquiries to that office. State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg's webpage on the subject is [here](#). It contains a link to a Frequently Asked Questions page that will grow over time as the Treasurer's Office develops its program. MDAR's Pesticide Program does have responsibilities for pesticide use on medical and recreational marijuana, no differently than its general responsibilities.

Since my last column, new legislation has been enacted that pushes back retail sales by six months; numerous other pieces of legislation were filed recently on the subject. My best recommendation to anyone considering cultivating marijuana or industrial hemp is to pay very careful attention as the framework passed by the voters has already changed once, and may change many more times as this process evolves.

Last time I informed you all that former MDAR Assistant Commissioner and Chief of Staff Kent Lage died unexpectedly Wednesday, December 7th. When I wrote that I don't think the date of his memorial service had been established. As Kent was a great advocate for all things agricultural and friend to many, I want to inform you that the memorial service to celebrate Kent's life will be held on Saturday, March 18, 2017, at 11:00 AM at Christ Church, 25 Central Street, Andover, MA 01810. Donations in memoriam may be made to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, 54 Portsmouth Street, Concord, NH 03301 or www.forestsociety.org.

The days are getting longer. We're less than a month away from the traditional start of the agricultural season, the kickoff of the Maple Sugar season at the ceremonial tree tapping March 3rd at 10 AM, at Steve's Sugar Shack in Westhampton. I hope to see you there when sappy days will be here again!



Energy News

MA Farm Energy Program

Energy Audits – The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program has funds to help farms cover audits, energy efficient projects, and select renewable energy projects. Contact for more information 413-727-3090, info@massfarmenergy.com or visit www.massfarmenergy.com, submit a “Request Form”, and you will be contacted.

MA Farm Energy Program REAP Application Assistance

Need help preparing your USDA REAP application? The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program is able to provide it! Our program recently received a grant to help farms prepare their REAP applications, at no cost. But don't wait until the deadline approaches; REAP applications can be submitted any time, so contact us now! Next REAP application deadline is March 31, 2017 for all projects sizes and requests.

DOER Presents New Solar Incentive Program

As noted in the last Farm & Market Report, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) is in the process of designing a new solar incentive program pursuant to [Chapter 75 of the Acts of 2016 signed into law by Governor Baker on April 11, 2016](#). DOER is working to create a long-term sustainable solar incentive program to promote cost-effective solar development in the Commonwealth and this page is designed to provide an overview of past and planned public meetings, relevant documents, presentations, and reports related to the new program. DOER worked with a number of stakeholders in this process, including MDAR. Agricultural canopies are being incorporated for the first time as we try to incentivize simultaneous production of crops and energy on farmland, i.e. not taking any land out of agricultural production while still generating clean energy. As well, Energy Storage will also be presented as part of this program for the first time.

On January 31, 2017, DOER presented the final program design to stakeholders at the Federal Reserve Building in Boston. A copy of the presentation is found below.

- [Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target \(SMART\) Program \(.pdf\)](#)
- [January 31, 2017 Meeting](#) audio file size 193MB

You can find out more about this effort at www.mass.gov/eea/energy-utilities-clean-tech/renewable-energy/rps-aps/development-of-the-next-solar-incentive.html or contact Gerry Palano, Gerald.Palano@state.ma.us.

Mass Clean Energy Center News

Commonwealth Organics-to-Energy Program

Organics to Energy - The Commonwealth Organics-to-Energy program provides funding to support the construction of facilities employing anaerobic digestion or other organics-to-energy technologies, and to help communities and businesses evaluate potential organics-to-energy projects. Please visit this website if you are interested in implementing an anaerobic digester project or a compost heat recovery project on your farm: www.masscec.com/get-clean-energy/business/organics-to-energy or contact Gerry Palano @ Gerald.Palano@state.ma.us

Feb 8, 2017 – The Baker Polito Administration announced \$942,100 in funding to support early-stage clean energy, water technology and energy storage innovations in seven communities across the Commonwealth. The funding, awarded through the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's (MassCEC) InnovateMass program, will support projects in the communities of Amesbury, Dedham, Middleborough, Milford, Reading, Somerville, and Westford.

www.masscec.com/about-masscec/news/state-energy-officials-announce-942100-grants-fund-seven-cleantech-innovations

Jan 27, 2017 –The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) announced \$200,000 in grants for four early-stage clean energy companies as part of AccelerateMass, a program designed to provide funding to Massachusetts-based startup companies that recently graduated from business accelerator programs that focus on developing clean energy innovations.

www.masscec.com/about-masscec/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-200000-grants-early-stage-clean-energy

January 06, 2017 - [Floatovoltaics: Making a Splash in the Solar Industry](#)

Anna Sciaruto, Solar Incentive Fellow @MassCEC. As solar energy becomes increasingly popular, there effectively becomes less space to install solar photovoltaic (PV) systems. Finding technically viable site locations for projects that require large amounts of space without encroaching on surrounding communities continues to challenge the solar industry and drive innovation. Traditionally, solar panels have been installed on rooftops, in open fields, along highways and in parking lots—until now!

Recently, floating solar photovoltaic panels, also known as floatovoltaics, have become increasingly popular in Japan, France and the United Kingdom. The project closest to home is on a reservoir in Millburn, [New Jersey near the New Jersey American Water's Canoe Brook Water Treatment Plant](#). This project is one of the first successful uses of floatovoltaics in a region which experiences significant freezing and thawing throughout the year.

With [538 solar modules](#) installed, the system generates 115 kilowatts of Alternating Current power per year, generating approximately 2% of the Plant's overall usage. Although this amount may seem small, the power generated from the system saves the utility approximately \$16,000 per year in energy costs.

Analyses from the use of floatovoltaic systems in Millburn as well as in other parts of the world, suggest that floating panels may be more advantageous in particular environmental contexts when compared to traditional ground mounted panels. As solar PV panels become hotter throughout the day, they also become less efficient. A typical PV module's efficiency will be reduced roughly [0.5% for every degree Celsius of temperature increase](#). By placing panels in a body of water, the temperature is less variable. In a study conducted at Pomona College, researchers found that a pairing water and solar could [increase production efficiency by 8-10%](#).

In addition, floatovoltaics have the potential to provide valuable shading to the bodies of water in which they are installed. This could not only cool the overall water temperature but also lower evaporation rates, [ideal for drought-prone areas](#), and decrease algal blooms.

Massachusetts will continue to keep an eye on these advances in solar technology to ensure renewable energies stay afloat!

Federal State Marketing Improvement Program

The Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant program that funds projects that improve the efficiency and success of the U.S. agriculture marketing system. Every year, Congress decides on the appropriation amount, which generally falls between \$1.1 and 1.3 million. The average project award is \$60,000.00.

Eligible projects range from:

- Determining best methods for processing, distributing, or marketing agricultural products.
- Eliminating barriers to movement of agricultural products in various channels.
- Exploring new uses or markets for certain commodities.

Organizations seeking to assess challenges and develop methods or practices that could assist producers in marketing agricultural products that meet the mandates of the Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act are encouraged to apply.

The deadline to submit a proposal to MDAR is **March 13, 2017**.

Click [here](#) to access the [RFR](#) and for more information on FSMIP. A webinar is scheduled on Tuesday February 21st from 12:30-1:30 PM, and on Thursday February 23rd from 12:30-1:30 PM. To sign up, or for more information about this opportunity, please contact Rebecca Davidson, FSMIP Coordinator, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, 617-626-1744, Rebecca.Davidson@State.ma.us.

Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference & Trade Show



Turn Up the Volume on Your Farm Marketing - March 7-9, Sturbridge, MA

Valentine's Day Special! Early Registration Pricing Extended to February 14th - Harvest New England is extending the early registration deadline for the Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show until February 14th! So register today and bring your valentine to the best agricultural marketing conference of the year!

Sign up for a Pre-Conference Tour: Two pre-conference farm tours will be held on Tuesday, March 7th. With two to choose from, the tours will offer growers an opportunity to explore a variety of exceptional farm businesses up close and personal.

Conference Highlights:

Nearly 30 workshops over 2 days covering retail and wholesale marketing, agri-tourism, business planning, value added product development, social media, online marketing and lots more. Any farm business will find something of value here!

Conference Keynotes:

- *Are you in Marketing, Isn't Everyone?* Just because your job title or business card doesn't say "marketing" doesn't mean you aren't responsible for marketing your farm's brand.
- *Media Strategies: When Things Go Right....and Wrong.* Farmers from New England will participate in a panel discussion. Learn tips, tricks and techniques designed to help you develop a plan for preparedness to promote the good and address the seemingly bad.

A Sampling of the Workshops:

- Determining the Right Marketing Strategy for My Farm
- Three Astounding Ways Social Media is Impacting Your Business (Whether You Like it or Not)
- Create A Marketing Plan to Achieve Your Sales Goals
- Value-Added Farm Ingredients for Success: Top Three Steps to be Production Ready
- On-Farm Food Festivals and Dinners
- Running Your Business (Instead of Letting it Run You!)
- Developing a Value Added Meat Supply Chain
- Financing and On Line Crowd Funding Platforms: How do They Work? Are They Right for Me? And Many More!

Other Conference Features:

- New England Farmers Market Managers Workshop: Wednesday, March 8th
- Trade Show: Over 70 agricultural suppliers and vendors so far! A reception will be held in the trade show for conference attendees on Wednesday at 5:00 PM.
- Pre-conference tours: Tuesday, March 7th
- SNAP Resource Center: One stop shopping where farmers and market managers can complete their USDA application to accept SNAP benefits and obtain information on low cost wireless equipment to process SNAP payments.

Go to www.harvestnewengland.org/events for more information. Program details and lodging options are also available at this site. Harvest New England (HNE) is a cooperative marketing program created by New England's state departments of agriculture in 1992. It has sponsored this regional conference since 2007.

Upcoming SNAP Retailer Sign-Up Days for Farmers and Farmers' Market Managers



MDAR, along with the Department of Transitional Assistance, (DTA), USDA and our community partners will be holding several sign up events so farmers and farmers market managers can easily get their farm or market ready to accept SNAP (formerly food stamps) benefits. At these drop-in information sessions you can get your farm, farm stand or farmers' market authorized for SNAP and receive your USDA FNS number the very same day! USDA staff will be on site to walk you through the process and assist with your application. You will also learn about equipment options and about processing SNAP and the new Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) benefit.

DTA, DAR and USDA staff will be available at the following events:

1. [SEMAP Agriculture and Food Conference](#): Sunday, February 26, 2017, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, Bristol County Agricultural High School, Dighton, MA
2. [Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show](#): Wednesday, March 8, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM and Thursday, March 9, 7:30 AM – 3:00 PM, Sturbridge Host Hotel, Executive Room, Sturbridge, MA
3. [Northeast Harvest Agricultural Conference](#): Tuesday, March 14, 9:00 AM – 2:30 PM, Topsfield Fairgrounds, 207 Boston St, Topsfield, MA
4. Berkshire Grown SNAP Sign Up: Tentative date: March 23 – Details to be announced soon!

If you intend on getting an FNS (SNAP retailer authorization) number, please bring copies of the following documents which will be attached to your application:

Picture ID (driver's license or passport).

- 1) Social Security Card (or other official document with your name and SSN).
- 2) Copy of voided check for bank account you will use to deposit funds.

For non-profit 501(c)(3) Only

Farmers' Markets operated/sponsored by a non-profit are the ONLY applicants that are not required to submit verification of a Social Security number for corporate officers/board members.

Documentation Required:

- a. Copy of the IRS Determination Letter stating the organization is a 501(c)(3). A (C)(4) and (C)(6) will not be accepted.
- b. Letter from the sponsoring agency stating that they are sponsoring the farmers market and who they have appointed as their legal representative to operate the farmers market.
- c. The application must be signed by a corporate officer or a board member.

For Government Owned/Operated Farmers Markets Only

Documentation Required:

- a. Copy of the City/Town IRS EIN/TIN Tax Exempt Letter.
- b. City/Town Official must sign the Application Certification Page.
- c. No personal information is required or needed.

For more information contact:

David Webber - Department of Agricultural Resources – 617-626-1754, David.Webber@state.ma.us

Frank Martinez Nocito - Department of Transitional Assistance – 413-772-3411, Frank.Martineznocito@state.ma.us

Mass Ag in the Classroom Updates

Growing Minds Through Agriculture: [Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom](#) (MAC) is offering our "Growing Minds Through Agriculture" Conference/Day of Workshops on **Saturday, March 11**, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM, at Pathfinder Regional Technical High School in Palmer. "Energize the Curriculum with Agriculture and the School Garden". Come meet other teachers interested in agriculture and gardening, attend workshops about using pallets in the garden, how to identify plants, math and the garden, reading and the garden, encouraging good nutrition, and MORE! Register now, www.aginclassroom.org/conferences.

Mini-Grants: Apply for a Mini-Grant for your agricultural project at your school! Farms, promote this grant opportunity to your local schools.

Since 1994, MAC has been awarding mini-grants to Massachusetts educators for agricultural education projects. The Mini-Grant program was launched when MAC Board member James Munger outlined a project inspired by his work with the Bristol County Farm Bureau. **Next cycle date is April 1.** [Complete details here.](#)

Nominations for the Massachusetts Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education Award

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) announced recently it is now accepting nominations for its annual Secretary's Awards for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education until March 28, 2017. EEA Secretary Matthew Beaton will present awards this spring to Massachusetts teachers and students involved in school-based programs that promote environmental and energy education. [Click here for complete release and application.](#)

March is Maple Month in Massachusetts!



Join us at the season kickoff event as MDAR Commissioner Lebeaux taps the ceremonial first tree at Steve's Sugar Shack in Westhampton at 10:00 AM on Friday, March 3.

Maple Weekend is March 18-19, when sugarhouses around the state will be open for demonstrations, tours, and tastings, and restaurants will be featuring items made with pure Massachusetts maple syrup. See www.massmaple.org for details.

The Massachusetts Maple Producers Association has published a new recipe brochure, demonstrating the versatility of pure maple products in cooking and baking. Contact winton@massmaple.org if you'd like copies to distribute.

2017 Exhibitor Application for Massachusetts Building at The Big E



Each year MDAR invites Massachusetts businesses and organizations to apply for the opportunity to exhibit in the Massachusetts State Exposition Building at The Big E, September 15 – October 1, 2017. The mission of the Massachusetts State Exposition Building is to showcase Massachusetts agriculture, culture, commerce and tourism through informational, educational, promotional and retail exhibits. It is an opportunity to showcase and sell to over a million attendees that come through the Massachusetts Building.

Interested applicants are encouraged to review the exhibitor guidelines and application, and submit a completed application **by Monday, March 13**. For more information, please contact Katharine Robb at Katharine.Robb@state.ma.us or at 617-616-1748. Applications can be downloaded from the MDAR [website here](#).

Apiary Update

Recently Lost Colony and Not Sure Why?

While our routine health inspections are over for the season, we are still performing post mortem analysis inspections for dead outs/winter losses. If you are interested, please submit an [online inspection request](#) or call 617-626-1801 and an inspector will contact you to setup a visit.

Want to Document Your Loss and/or Surviving Colony(ies)?

Are you experiencing more fall/winter losses than last year? Or similar levels? Or decreased levels? Please consider reporting it to the [MA Hive Loss Survey](#). This survey is a fantastic way for us to not only document overall local honey bee health, but also help us gauge the needs of beekeepers.

Pollinator Protection EPA's Pollinator Risk Assessment Guidance [website](#).

February 12: Veterinarians Role in Saving Honey Bees: How and Why the FDA VFD Affects You – [More here](#)

February 14: Pollinating apples and cherries East of the Rockies – Free Webinar - [More here](#).

March 18: Mass Beekeepers Association Spring Meeting at Coolidge Hall at the Topsfield Fair Grounds – [More here](#)

Updates posted at MDAR's Apiary Program [website](#). If you sell honey and/or related products, and are open to the public, consider being mapped on the "[MassGrown and Fresher](#)" map. Please fill out the Massachusetts Farm Marketing [Survey \(.doc\)](#) [\(.pdf\)](#).

Upcoming Events / Workshops

February

February 14 - Employee Management and Labor Laws - Instructors: Kristen Wilmer (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture) Frank Diluna (Murtha Cullina Attorneys at Law) and Massachusetts Department of Labor Agriculture Investigators Suzanne George and Patricia Colarossi. A Department of Labor (DOL) Investigator will join us in the morning to clarify labor laws in Massachusetts pertaining to agricultural workers. After they leave, get an informative presentation and ask questions of Frank Diluna a seasoned agricultural lawyer, and finally, work with Kristen Wilmer from CISA to develop tools such as an Employee Handbook and improve communication strategies to fit the needs of your employees.

Registration: www.regonline.com/vegwinterschoollabor.

February 16 - Taking Your Farm to the Cloud: Record Keeping and QuickBooks - 5:30 - 8:30 PM - Lenox Community Center, 65 Walker St, Lenox, MA. Like most other small business owners, farmers are often overwhelmed by the additional time it takes to keep track of their finances. Setting up consistent, easy to use methods for tracking income and expenses is a huge step toward relieving that stress. Go from tearing your hair out while balancing your checkbook and wondering how much money you really have in the bank to confidently checking your cash and profitability over a quick cup of coffee. Part of Berkshire Grown workshop series.

[Details here](#).

February 21 - Conn. Mass. Tobacco Growers Association Meeting - 9:00 AM - Held at the Boy Scout Hall, 28 Abbe Road, East Windsor, CT. Registration and details, contact andrew.urbanowicz@gmail.com.

February 22 - Farming Smarter with Richard Wiswall (recordkeeping, budgets, and more!) 8:30 AM– 4:00 PM - Brigham Hill Community Barn, 37 Wheeler Road, North Grafton. Renown farmer and author of The Organic Farmer’s Business Handbook, focuses on making a profit, record keeping strategies, building budgets, and improved financial management for your farm. [Details here.](#)

February 23 - Making the Most Out of Pasture and Hayfields - Mass. Fish and Wildlife Headquarters, Westborough, MA - 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM- co-sponsored by UMass Extension and NE SARE. Program includes: Hayfield Improvement, Extending Grazing Opportunity through Summer Annuals, Double Cropping, and Pasture Improvement. – Attendees will enjoy interactive presentations, panel discussions, lunch and refreshments with presenters from UMass, UVM, UNH, and UMaine faculty and Extension educators. 5 CEU’s are being offered; 2 Nutrient Management and 3 Crop Production. More details and registration information. [Details here.](#) Contact Kelly Kraemer 413-545-5221 with an questions or registrations.

February 26 - 10th Annual SEMAP Ag & Food Conference - 9 AM– 3:30 PM, Bristol County Agricultural High School, 135 Center St., Dighton. Whether you’re a professional farmer, a backyard gardener, or just curious about locally grown food, this is the event 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. [More here.](#)

February 28 - Incentive Programs and Risk Management class of UMass Vegetable Winter School - Brigham Hill Community Farm, 37 Wheeler Rd., Grafton. Sessions include: Fundamentals of Risk; MDAR Programs (Craig Richov, Director, Farm Viability Programs); Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Grants; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Programs; FSA Loan Programs; FSA Farm Programs; MDAR Energy Programs; Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis. [Details here.](#)

February 28 - Strategic Marketing for a Stronger Farm Business - 5:30 - 8:30 PM, Lenox Community Center, 65 Walker St, Lenox MA. Is your marketing strategy “we sell whatever we have to anyone that will buy it”? Learn how a focused strategy and specific efforts can reduce your marketing labor needs and make every step count. If you want to sharpen and focus your marketing skills or just don’t know where to begin developing a marketing plan, we can help. Presented by Matt LeRoux, Ag Marketing Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension. Part of Berkshire Grown workshop series. [Details here.](#)

March

March 1 - Local Specialty Crop Trade Show & Local Food Trade Show - The [Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts](#) (SBN) is offering its 6th Local Food Trade Shows. 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. This event is ideal for restaurants, retailers and institutional buyers interested in trading with local food suppliers and who desire to buy more locally produced products from growers, fishermen, and value added producers from MA and NE. **The Local Specialty Crop Trade Show** - exhibitors will include New England based farmers, produce distributors and local specialty crop producers (products made with 50% or more specialty crops also qualify). Booths are **free** for specialty crop farmers and producers: [register here.](#) **Local Food Trade Show** - This trade show is open to all non-specialty crop food producers including meat and dairy farms, fisheries, baked goods and other added value producers; [register here.](#) The Trade Shows will include workshops offering best practice topics around some of the most pressing barriers to specialty crop sales in Massachusetts. [More here.](#)

March 1 - Worker Protection Standard Updates for Greenhouse Growers - 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM - Cavicchio Greenhouses, Sudbury, MA (2 pesticide credits). Co-sponsored by Massachusetts Flower Growers Association and UMass Extension. [Details here.](#)

March 4 - 5th Annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference - 7:45 AM- 5:00 PM - Northeastern University Curry Student Center, 346 Huntington Ave, Boston. Conference is designed to advance the opportunities and address the barriers involved in cultivating a resilient and thriving urban farming sector. The 5th annual Conference is comprised of interactive panels, demonstration workshops, expert discussions on diverse and relevant topics with distinguished conversation leaders and practitioners. The event always sells out! Early Bird Special, \$50, ends December 30, 2016. [Register here.](#) For panel/workshop information, contact Rose Arruda at MDAR: Rose.Arruda@state.ma.us.

March 7 - 9 - 2017 Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show: Turn Up the Volume on Your Farm Marketing! Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge, MA. Featuring Craig Ostbo from [Koopman Ostbo Communication Marketing](#) in Portland, Oregon. [AGENDA:](#) See all that the conference has to offer at the 2017 Conference. [TRADE SHOW:](#) Conference registration

includes a national industry trade show. Those interested in exhibiting should register by December 2, 2016 and save \$100!
Advertise: Interested in advertising in the conference program? Over 800 people, from New England and beyond, attend this three day conference. Sponsor: As the only regional ag marketing conference, your sponsorship will provide name recognition throughout New England. From supporting an individual breakout session, to sponsoring lunch or the entire trade show , there are numerous ways to support this well attended conference. www.harvestnewengland.org/events/

March 7 - FSMA: What You Need to Know - 5:30-8:30 PM, Lenox Community Center, 65 Walker St, Lenox MA. Have questions about the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule and what it means for your farm? This workshop will provide an overview of the requirements of FSMA, including exemptions and the compliance timeline for small and medium-sized farms. We'll also discuss general good practices for produce safety and why recognizing contamination risks and making food safety improvements on your farm is good business even if you are exempt from the law. Presented by Lisa McKeag, UMass Extension Vegetable Production and Food Safety Specialist. Part of Berkshire Grown workshop series. [Details here.](#)

March 10 - Massachusetts Food Policy Council - UMASS, 9:30 – 12:00, Room 165 Campus Center. Contact Bonita.Oehlke@state.ma.us for more info.

March 11 - Growing Minds through Agriculture - Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School, Palmer, MA. Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom invites you to attend our "Growing Minds through Agriculture" winter conference. Attendees may receive ten PDP's by attending workshops about Energizing the Curriculum using the School Garden and Agriculture. Workshops on soil, plant identification, garden math, learning styles in the garden, reading and agriculture, and more will be offered. [Details here.](#)

March 11 - QuickBooks for Farmers 10:00 AM– 2:00pm - Sackler Building 145 Harrison Avenue, Boston. Join New Entry and Julia Shanks for a practical, hands-on Quickbooks workshop for farmers! Learn how to: set up a chart of accounts that suits your business, enter transactions, track enterprise-specific data, and generate and interpret farm financial statements. This workshop will be 4 hours long with plenty of brain breaks and time for one-on-one coaching. [Details here.](#)

March 14 - Northeast Harvest Agricultural Conference - 9 AM- 2:30 pm, Coolidge Hall at the Topsfield Fairgrounds. Sessions include: Worker Protection Standards; Our New Look – Northeast Harvest Website; Healthy Incentives Program (HIP); Market Your Farmers' Market; Review of the 2016 Growing Season – Pest & Weather Issues in Fruits & Vegetables; Supporting Pollinators in the Farm Landscape; Wrap Up with James O'Brien, Northeast Harvest Executive Director. [More here.](#)

March 16 - Unpacking the Farm Labor Puzzle: An Intro to Labor Management - 5:30-8:30 PM, Lenox Community Center, 65 Walker St, Lenox MA. One of the biggest challenges in reaching your farm goals is likely related to employees—finding, training, and retaining them. Without employees your growth is limited. Choose the wrong employees and your dreams turn to nightmares. Managing the transition from farmer to boss requires skill, practice and patience. In this workshop we'll look at best practices in recruiting, training, and retaining farm employees, and strategies for making better decisions. Presented by Mary Peabody, Community Economic Development Specialist, UVM Extension. Part of Berkshire Grown workshop series. [Details here.](#)

March 29 - Farm Share Fair 2017 - The Armory, 191 Highland Ave, Somerville. Boston area's direct-to-consumer marketing event for food producers across Massachusetts. Consumers want to meet their farmers and have the opportunity to compare options. Vendors - get to know your target market one-on-one, and have the opportunity to sell your CSA, Farm Share or Home Delivery programs. On-site sampling, and food or product sales welcome! This annual event draws over 500 participants. Sign up now – vendor space is limited! Sponsorship visibility opportunities available. www.farmsharefair.com. [Click here](#) to sign up. Questions? mindy@mindyharriscommunications.com.

USDA News

USDA Announces \$252 million Available for Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Applications requested for innovative partner-driven projects

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is inviting potential conservation partners, including private industry, non-government organizations, Indian tribes, state and local governments, and universities to submit project applications for federal funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Through this fourth RCPP Announcement for Program Funding (APF), USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will award up to \$252 million dollars nationwide to locally driven, public-private partnerships that improve water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat, and protect agricultural viability. Applicants must match or exceed the federal award with private or local funds.

USDA is now accepting proposals for Fiscal Year 2018 RCPP funding. Pre-proposals are due April 21. [Full release here.](#)

The Deadline for Disaster Coverage is March 15th

The 2016 crop year was an especially challenging year with a February freeze followed by an extreme drought. Growers have a chance to update their insurance coverage on their 2017 crops. Farmers have a variety of risk management options to protect their investment. The options include the following:

[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. Don't miss this opportunity to protect your farm from crop or income losses. USDA, through the 2014 Farm Bill, provides several heavily subsidized tools to help farmers develop a risk management plan for their farm. Remember: It is each producer's responsibility to develop a risk management plan for their farm that will provide adequate protection if a disaster occurs...and to live with the consequences.

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 pmrrussell@umext.umass.edu or Tom Smiarowski at tsmiarowski@umext.umass.edu.

USDA Funding Available to Help Protect Wetlands

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced the availability of funding to help landowners protect and restore wetlands in Massachusetts. The funding is provided through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), created by the 2014 Farm Bill to protect critical water resources and wildlife habitat, and encourage private owners to maintain land for farming and ranching. Through the voluntary sale of an easement, landowners limit future development to protect these key resources.

"The benefits of restoring, enhancing and protecting critical wetlands cannot be overstated," said Christine Clarke, Massachusetts State Conservationist for NRCS. "USDA is committed to restoring and protecting vital sensitive wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat and improve water quality."

ACEP's Wetland Reserve Easements allow landowners to successfully restore, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Eligible landowners can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in 30-year

contracts. In federal fiscal years 2014 and 2015, 294 acres of wetlands were protected in Massachusetts under ACEP. Interested landowners should apply by March 3, 2017. Contact your local USDA Service Center for more information. To learn about ACEP and other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS, visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

Classified

- **Job Posted:** Technical Assistant III - Landscape & Construction Services - Physical Plant Division - Coordinates operation and maintenance of the departmental greenhouse facilities and nursery beds for the production of Campus landscape plants. Grade 15: \$1,639.70 bi-weekly. Please apply to: <http://umass.interviewexchange.com/jobofferdetails.jsp?JOBID=70143> and reference Req#358196. Review of applications begins February 8th, 2017. *The University of Massachusetts Amherst is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer of women, minorities, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities and encourages applications from these and other protected group members.*

About the Farm & Market Report

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Next issue to be published for early April. Please send news, calendar and/or classified information by March 31 to Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us, or fax to 617-626-1850. 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.