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April / May Farm & Market Report

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CLASSIFIED

COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Greetings, Mass. Agriculture and all its friends,

Boy, this winter just doesn't want to call it quits! Regardless of that, we at MDAR, like all of you, have been preparing for the 2018 growing season.

On a cold and snowy day in early March, Lt. Governor Polito joined Senator Adam Hinds, Representative Smitty Pignatelli, Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matt Beaton and me for the Maple season kickoff at Mill Brook Sugarhouse in Lenox. Our hosts, Elaine and Bill Markham, along with their daughter Jessie and son-in-law Chris, run a great operation and gave Lt. Governor Polito an in-depth demonstration of their operation and discussed relevant issues.



We continued our celebration of the first seasonal crop of the year the next week visiting four sugar houses: Snowshoe Farm in Worthington, Tessier's Sugar House in Cummington, Paul's Sugarhouse in Williamsburg and Zawalick's Sugarhouse in Florence (Northampton). Joined by Senator Adam Hinds and Representative Steve Kulik, we toured a range of Maple producers of various sizes and with differing distribution models.

As I have mentioned in previous columns, at my family's business we posted horticultural puns on a letterboard by the road. For close to 50 years, my dad and later I would start the season by posting in March "Sappy Days are Here Again!" It's always a lot of fun to tour sugarhouse operations; both for what they are, and also that we know that Spring is upon us, even if it feels wintery.



In March, I had the great pleasure to attend and speak at a Stockbridge School of Agriculture Alumni event at Elm Bank in Wellesley. People don't usually mention their educational backgrounds, so I was happy to find many of my farmer friends are Stockies! As my dad graduated from there in 1948 with the help of the GI Bill after his service in WWII, it was a great treat to meet so many alumni from all years and learn what successes their Stockbridge educations helped them to achieve.

My dad proudly displayed a Stockbridge mug (beer stein more likely) prominently in our house when I was a kid. When it was time to empty the house out after he died, I brought it to our house. It's now here in Boston with me on a shelf right above and in front of me as I sit at my desk. I keep my blue pens in it, so whenever I have to sign a legal document in blue ink, I directly interact with my dad's mug.

Earlier this week we concluded the fourth and final session of our APR Looking Forward process. I want to thank the approximately 200 people who took the time to "go on the record" and share their thoughts, ideas, suggestions, criticisms and compliments with me and appropriate staff about the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program. We held sessions in Amherst, Middleborough, Danvers and Worcester and found it to be very worthwhile! We are also seeking written comments through 4 PM on April 13. If you didn't get a chance to attend, or if you want to supplement oral testimony, please do so though [this link](#).

As I mentioned at each of the 4 events and last fall when we celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the legislation that established the program, we thought that milestone was signal to rigorously take stock internally and externally to find opportunities to improve it.

Agriculture Day at the State House on March 27th was simply excellent! Legislators and State House staffers got a chance to hear about pressing agricultural issues, and to enjoy locally produced ag products. Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito spoke at the speaking ceremony, and Governor Baker walked through the Hall of Flags, interacting with farmers as he sampled the fruit of their labors. Congratulations to Mass. Farm Bureau and the Mass. Promotional Board on organizing a successful day – MDAR was happy to participate and assist.

As usual, the student speaker was just outstanding! State Future Farmers of America President Molly Ross left everyone inspired and positive about the future.

Legislative Agent Henry Gillet (about whose untimely passing I reported last month) posthumously received the Kent Lage Award which he richly deserved. Susan and other family members accepted the award.

Speaking of Henry, the Mass. Nursery and Landscaping Association renamed its Environmental Leadership Award in his name and at its February 28th meeting named me as its first recipient. I am tremendously honored to receive this award named after my old friend.

Recent events prompt me to remind you all to consider your best options to mitigate any type of major business interruption (fire, building collapse, prolonged loss of power, etc.) Speak with your insurance agent who may have planning tools and advice.

I'm speaking from experience. We had 3 farm fires, all pretty devastating – one before my time, one I watched out the window when I was 5 or 6, and the last one when I was in my 30s. Some of the steps I could have taken before the loss I had to manage would have been pretty easy to accomplish, so I encourage you all to think about what's vulnerable and how what's critical might be protected.

In typical fashion, I'm past Rick's deadline again, so I'll wrap it here. Please help us get the word out. Encourage those interested in Mass. Agriculture to subscribe to the [Farm and Market Report](#), friend us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).

It's an exciting time of year – for many it's time to implement the planning decisions that have been made following last year's growing season. May it be the best year yet!

Best regards,



John Lebeaux

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FOREFRONT

Energy News

AgEnergy Grants Applications Posted & Due April 25, 2018

MDAR's annual AgEnergy Grant applications are now available and due April 25, 2018. This year's AgEnergy Grant Request for Responses (RFR) contains applications for two separate energy programs: our Ag-Energy Traditional Grant, now in its 11th year, encompassing a wide variety of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects: and Ag-Energy Special Projects, now in its 3rd year, for six specific project categories for

agricultural energy projects that would typically require higher capital cost but potentially yield greater savings and/or positive agricultural impacts.

Reimbursement grants of up to \$30,000 will be awarded on a competitive basis for the Ag-Energy Traditional Grant Program, while reimbursement grants up to varying amounts by category will be awarded on a competitive basis for the six specific categories under Ag-Energy Special Projects. The deadline for both program applications is Wednesday, April 25, 2018. All projects must have construction completed by June 30, 2019.

By implementing these projects under our programs, agricultural operation can help demonstrate novel ideas while contributing to the goals of: the MA Food Systems Plan; MA Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Implementation; and the MA Global Warming Solutions Act; and to advance technologies that can be replicated at other agricultural operations in Massachusetts.

Ag-Energy Grant applications are now available on MDAR's website at www.mass.gov/service-details/agricultural-energy-grant-program-ener, as well as at the state website COMMBUYS.

Agricultural Net Metering Facilities – DPU Solar Net Metering Credit Value Order

Based on the recent D.P.U. 17-10-A Order, DPU has determined and ruled qualified Agricultural Solar PV Net Metering Facilities are still eligible to receive the original 100% net metering credit value in lieu of recently enacted Marketing Net Metering Credits for private solar PV facilities which are now valued at 60% of the original value. Presently this affects only solar PV credit values. Exemptions from the new 60% Marketing Net Metering Credits are smaller systems, including 10 kW or less with single-phase electric service and 25 kW or less with three-phase service. MDAR, EEA & DOER provided comments to the DPU 17-10 docket to continue to allow all Agricultural Net Metering Solar PV Facilities to still be eligible for the original 100% net metering credit based on the original Agricultural Net Metering Facility definition (220 CMR 18.02), provided that at least 50% of the energy generated by the system is used by metered agricultural accounts of the farm business.

In their review of the matter in Docket 17-10-A, DPU ruled that: "The fact that the Legislature defined certain facilities, regardless of fuel type, as agricultural facilities in the GCA (Green Communities Act) suggests an intent to grant agricultural facilities some benefit or designation that is different from other types of net metering facilities." And further: "The Department finds that in reading the GCA in partnership with the Solar Energy Act (the new Act Relative to Solar), new solar net metering facilities may also be designated as agricultural net metering facilities and benefit from receipt of the agricultural status. The benefit of a new solar net metering facility that is also designated as an agricultural net metering facility is that it may generate a net metering credit equivalent to 100 percent of the net excess kWh so long as it retains its designation as an agricultural facility. G.L. c. 164, §§ 138, 139. Further, where the Solar Energy Act integrated the solar provisions into the GP (G.L. c. 164, §§ 138, 139, and 140), this interpretation permitting a new solar net metering facility that is also an agricultural net metering facility to generate net metering credits pursuant to 220 CMR 18.04(1)/(5) is reasonable. Further, such facilities will be able to generate a net metering credit equivalent to 100 percent of the net excess kWh for 25 years from the date that it interconnected to the electric distribution system."

MDAR greatly appreciates DPU's special recognition provided for farms in the net metering regulations and their subsequent decision and order, as well as the collaborative effort of EEA and DOER in pursuit of this.

All farms considering installing a non-exempted (10 kW/25 kW as noted above) solar PV system, should be aware of the requirements to benefit from qualifying as an Agricultural Net Metering Facility as you work on your PV system capacity and design. An optimum design would be one designed to provide more than 50% of the generated energy to be used or credited to agricultural accounts on the farm.

To qualify as any type of Agricultural Net Metering Facility including solar PV, farms need to submit to MDAR an Agricultural Business Determination form found on the MDAR website at massnrc.org/agr/ag-business/.

By regulation, to qualify the renewable energy system must demonstrate per the Agricultural Net Metering Facility in the Net Metering regulations 220 CMR 18.02, Definition:

Agricultural Net Metering Facility. A Renewable Energy generating facility that is operated as part of an agricultural business and is not participating in the Small Hydroelectric Net Metering Program, generates electricity, does not have a generation capacity of more than two megawatts, is located on land owned or controlled by the agricultural business, and is used to provide energy to metered accounts of the business. Agriculture has the same meaning as provided in M.G.L. c. 128, § 1A; provided that, when necessary, the Commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources shall determine if a business is an agricultural business and whether the facility is operated as part of that business.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Gerry Palano, Energy Programs Coordinator, Gerald.Palano@state.ma.us, or 617-626-1706.

USDA REAP 2nd Round of Applications Due April 30, 2018

USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) second round of applications for their FY2018 are due April 30, 2018. 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. Please see this link - www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency.

Please contact Anne Correia, Energy Coordinator, BCP Specialist, Business & Cooperative Programs Rural Development, MA/CT/RI, USDA, 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 SMART 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. DOER and MDAR are now working to finalize the Guidelines.

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.

MDAR's MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP) - Energy Audits – Now is a BUSY time!

MDAR's Massachusetts Farm Energy Program (MFEP) has funds to 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. 413-727-3090, info@massfarmenergy.com, or visit www.massfarmenergy.com, submit a "Request Form", and we will contact you.

Produce Safety News – Program Update

The Department of Agricultural Resources' Produce Safety, Market Access and Certification Program is continuing its deployment of program objectives in support of the Food Safety Modernization Act's (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule's (PSR) implementation in Massachusetts.

To support these objectives the program has deployed five regional Produce Safety experts this year who will be serving fruit and vegetable farms across the Commonwealth. Regional personnel will be supporting growers through education, training, and on-farm technical assistance and will serve as first line responders to farm's requesting service in each region. Regional staff will also be responsible for the conduct of pre-audits/inspections, on-farm readiness reviews, as well as market access and certification support for MGAPS, under the Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP). The MGAPS/CQP program will incorporate current PSR requirements into an integrated checklist this year supporting future uptake/compliance windows as well as anticipated market demands. The Program will also continue to support the USDA GAPs/Harmonized GAPs program for the 2018 production year.

Farm Registration

The Produce Safety Team is currently supporting the population of a farm inventory database of those farms growing fruits and vegetables in the Commonwealth. All fruit and vegetable farms in Massachusetts are strongly encouraged to register through the submission of a farm registry form to facilitate program operations and sector support. Regionally deployed Program staff are currently conducting phone calls and site visits within their assigned regions to verify farm registry data, introduce themselves to farmers and their staffs, and to provide technical assistance and grant support to farms in anticipation of compliance dates and market access requests. Please feel free to share your concerns and challenges along with any questions you may have with your regional contact. Their job is to assist you with any concerns you may have. Registration Forms will be available during visits and will be made available on-line shortly.







Once again, if you've been a member of the Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP), please be reminded that the requirements of the audit program have been harmonized with the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule. You'll learn more about this during your 2018 visit. Please call us to register and/or to schedule your audit for the upcoming season if you have not received an outbound contact from regional staff.

The Department's focus is to establish a robust Produce Safety program that promotes public health protection in line with its core mission of working to ensure its farms are economically and environmentally sustainable now and in the future.

Thank you to all of the farmers, commodity groups, Massachusetts Farm Bureau, Buy-local organizations as well as the UMASS Agricultural Extension Service, for your continued support of our program and services.

Produce Safety Program Team

Meet the Produce Safety expert responsible for your region. Please feel free to contact her/him for any questions, concerns you might have or to schedule a visit or service request.

Michael Botelho Produce Safety Program Director Mobile: 508-985-8751 Michael.Botelho@state.ma.us	Kate Bailey Produce Safety Inspector Mobile: 857-315-7478 Kate.Bailey@state.ma.us Region: WEST	Alexandra Hachem Education, Research and Outreach Coordinator Mobile: 857-507-6346 Alexandra.Hachem@state.ma.us Region: CENTRAL EAST	Denise Pavao Produce Safety Inspector Mobile: 857-292-2043 Denise.Pavao@state.ma.us Region: SOUTHEAST	Steven Pilis Operations Coordinator Mobile: 857-507-6347 Steven.Pilis@state.ma.us Region: CENTRAL WEST	Erik Stenfors Produce Safety Inspector Mobile: 857-292-1872 Eric.Stenfors@state.ma.us Region: NORTHEAST
					

Is your farm covered by the Produce Safety Rule under FSMA?

Do you know the status of your farm under the Produce Safety Rule? [Click this chart](#) to figure out where your operation lies in terms of coverage, and to get familiar with the documentation you should keep in case your operation is “qualified exempt”.

For more information about the Produce Safety Rule:

The [Produce Safety Rule](#), which sets food safety standards for farms in an effort to minimize the risks of microbiological contamination that may occur during the growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of fresh produce was finalized in November 2015. This rule is among seven major rules that were recently finalized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and span across the supply chain.

Worcester Regional Food Hub: Building & Strengthening Central Massachusetts Farms & Food Businesses

The Worcester Regional Food Hub builds and strengthens Central Massachusetts farms and food business in two ways. The first is by increasing market opportunities for local farms by aggregating food from local farms and distributing to local institutions such as schools, universities, and health care institutions. Farmers gain access to large wholesale markets while being paid a fair price. The second is by helping food entrepreneurs to produce and sell value-added products through its commercial incubator kitchen and consulting services.

The Worcester Regional Food Hub is a collaborative effort between the Worcester County Food Bank and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, made possible by the generous support of The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts. Designed to bolster a robust regional food system, the Food Hub fuses these partner organizations' respective missions to increase local food access and consumption and recruit, retain, and incubate local food entrepreneurs, collectively building healthy, sustainable, and just communities.

The Food Hub is housed within the Worcester County Food Bank in Shrewsbury. For more information, visit www.worcesterfoodhub.org, or contact Shon Rainford, Senior Project Manager, at srainford@feedingamerica.org or 508-842-3663 ext. 245.

Massachusetts Landscape and Nursery Industry Survey

What are the needs and impacts of our landscaping and nursery businesses? Please take our survey!

A 2015 survey by the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association estimated the impact of the Massachusetts Green Industry to be \$5.17 billion in output, 48,772 jobs, and \$2.46 billion in labor income. The goal of this survey is to gather information on the issues most important to the landscape and nursery industries in Massachusetts. This information will be used by researchers and Extension Educators at the University of Massachusetts to:

- Develop industry-focused research
- Create needed programming to support the industry
- Provide an overview of the state of the industry

This survey will not only help to focus research efforts, but will also provide insight on how national and state regulations and public perceptions of issues such as the impact of landscapes and plant production on pollinators are impacting the industry in Massachusetts.

The survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete. Part of the survey is meant to be completed by an owner or manager of the company. Please complete the survey as thoroughly as possible. Responses will be aggregated, analyzed, and shared with the industry. No individual or company names or other contact information will be associated with the responses or the analysis.

Follow [this link](#) to the Survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mandy Bayer at abayer10@umass.edu.

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Legal Food Hub Offers Services for Farmers, Food Entrepreneurs, and Related Organizations

What we do:

The Legal Food Hub, a project of Conservation Law Foundation, maintains an extensive network of experienced volunteer attorneys. Farmers, food entrepreneurs, and food-related organizations seeking legal assistance contact the Hub through our intake hotline or web form. After assessing each participant's case for eligibility, we reach out to the attorney network and carefully match the participant with a skilled lawyer who

will provide free legal services. We also partner with farm organizations to provide educational opportunities, including legal workshops and trainings, to the farming community.

Who we serve:

- Farmers, including aquaculture
- Food entrepreneurs who primarily produce food for people and source are least one ingredient or food item grown in New England
- Not-for-profit organizations whose primary constituency or membership base is farmers or food entrepreneurs
- Community groups whose mission is to address social justice issues related to the food system
- See Eligibility Guidelines at www.legalfoodhub.org/for-participants/eligibility/

Types of cases:

The Legal Food Hub focuses primarily on cases involving transactional issues, such as land acquisition or transfer, estate issues, taxes, contracts, and corporate formation, among others. We also assist with a limited set of regulatory issues like food safety. Examples of cases we can help with include transferring a family farm to the next generation, helping a farmers' market become an LLC, and providing legal assistance to create an urban community garden.

Contact us at 1-844-LAW-GROW, legalfoodhub@clf.org, www.legalfoodhub.org.



The Livestock Institute Announce the Opening of Meatworks

The Livestock Institute is proud to announce the opening of Meatworks, a state-of-the-art, USDA-inspected meat processing facility in Westport, MA.

The mission of The Livestock Institute of Southern New England (or TLI) is to revitalize and strengthen livestock farming in Southern New England by (a) providing education and training to the community regarding humane and safe animal handling and slaughtering techniques, processing of meat, and related matters; (b) providing resources and information to the community regarding economic and agricultural development and management of resources; (c) offering job training for workers in small-scale, multi-species slaughterhouses and butchery; (d) conducting workshops and producing publications and materials to further the programs and educational concepts; (e) the creation of a state-of-art, USDA-inspected slaughterhouse and processing facility in Southeastern MA.

Meatworks is accepting bookings for livestock for June - December 2018. Visit www.thelivestockinstitute.org or contact Amado Baeza for more details: Amado@thelivestockinstitute.org.

Farm Share Fair Seeks Vendors

[2018 Vendors and Sponsors Registration Open: Invite Farms, Food Producers, Independent Local Companies, and Retailers](#)

Attend THE ARMORY in Somerville on MAY 10th for Boston's annual consumer info event featuring all the CSA's and Home Delivery programs in the Greater Boston area. Offer veggies, fruit, flowers, meat, fish eggs, dairy, and specialty products. Over 40 vendors will be at the fair, including some wonderful sustainable food product companies and service providers.

Farm Share Fair - Thursday, May 10th - 5:30 - 8:30 pm - The Armory, 191 Highland Ave, Somerville (outside Davis Square) - [Register here](#).

Questions? Contact Maria Smith and Myla Green - Event Coordinators - 310-663-0054, www.farmsharefair.com.

New Entry's Beginner Sustainable Crop Production Course Starts Next Week

Would you like to be a part of sustainable agriculture but have never worked on a farm? [New Entry](#) here to help.

The course will teach you everything need to know to get started in sustainable commercial vegetable production, with no experience necessary! This is a pilot production for aspiring sustainable farmers who want to implement innovative conservation practices from day one of their farming careers. Industry experts will present hands-on classes in the evening at our farm in Dracut with special emphasis on emerging and innovative sustainable practices. You will enjoy presentations from conservation leaders in the agricultural industry and from state and federal agencies.

This course will cover all aspects of commercial vegetable production including:

- Propagation and the Greenhouse Environment
- Soil Preparation for Field-based Crop Production
- Drip Irrigation Systems and Conservation Best-practices
- Low-impact Weed Control Strategies
- Nutrient Management: A Sustainable Approach
- Pest Prevention and Control Techniques
- Harvest and Post-Harvest Best-practices
- Using and Maintaining Farm Tools
- Sustainable Whole-farm Planning

Completion of this course satisfies prerequisites for entry into our [Farm Business Planning Course](#), during which you will develop a complete business plan for your farm before moving onto our incubator and launching your own business.

Dates: Tuesdays, April 17th - September 25th - Location: New Entry Incubator Farm, Dracut. Time: 6:00 - 9:00 pm - Cost: \$600, which can be paid in up to 3 installments - scholarships of \$80-\$400 available. For more information on class topics, cost, and schedule, contact Juliette at Juliette.Enfield@tufts.edu or 978-654-6745 ext. 106.



MA Food Special License Plate Update

What's on your license plate? Low Numbers are now available for a MA Food Special License Plate. There is a newly designed [website](#) which offers instructions about the Low Numbers.

The requested donation will reserve your plate and goes directly to support [New Entry Sustainable Farming Project](#), [Mass Farmers Markets](#), and [Beginning Farmer Network of Massachusetts](#). Thank you so much for your support of Massachusetts' beginning farmers and your community farmers markets.

Your donation for these special numbers helps to support:

- Business Course Training for New Farmers
- Incubator Farm Experiential Education
- Access to Marketing & Distribution Networks
- Farmers Market Coordination and Management
- Knowledge-Sharing Amongst Farmer Educators
- Subsidized Food Shares for Elderly and Low-Income Youth & Families

For more information, visit: www.mafoodplate.org. Questions? Please email Mike Massicotte - Michael.Massicotte@tufts.edu or call 978-654-6745.

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UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

April 10 - Learn How to Promote Your Farm - by New Entry Sustainable Farming Project - 6 - 9 pm - Tufts Cummings School, N. Grafton. Marketing, Branding, and Social Media Workshop Series of 4 workshops - Session 4: Building Online Engagement to Market Your Farm - Guest Speaker: Maddie Elling, Co-Owner, Hosta Hill. [More here.](#)

April 10 - Fruit Twilight Meeting - 5:30 pm, UMass Cold Spring Orchard, Belchertown. Shawn McIntire will be our host. Jaime Pinero, our new UMass Extension fruit entomologist will be welcomed. 2 pesticide recertification credits will be offered. [Details here.](#)

April 11 - Fruit Twilight Meeting - 5:30 pm, Carlson Orchards, Harvard. The Carlson brothers will be our hosts. 2 pesticide recertification credits will be offered. [Details here.](#)

April 11 - Northeast Harvest Agricultural Conference - Coolidge Hall, Topsfield Fairgrounds – 9 am to 3 pm. Topics include: Worker Protection Standards; CropLocal; Backyard Poultry; Sweet Corn Infestation – Pumpkin and Squash Infestation – Stink Bug; Crop Insurance and Risk Management; Honey Bees and Pesticides, and then "Wrap Up" with James O'Brien, Northeast Harvest Executive Director. Questions? Call 978-887-5000 or email joy@topsfair.org. [Details here.](#)

April 11 - Creating an Edible Residential Landscape - Publick House, Sturbridge. Have your landscape and

eat it too! One of the biggest landscape trends currently is the incorporation of edibles into the landscape. [More here.](#)

April 12 - Grant Webinar - MDAR is offering webinar to answer questions about eligibility or proposal submission for [FSMIP](#) and [Specialty Crop Block Grant](#). 10:00 am – 11:00 am. To register, or for more information on this opportunity, please email Rebecca.Davidson@state.ma.us.

April 12 - CISA Annual Meeting - [Look Memorial Park](#) - Florence. 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm - CISA supporters and members, you are invited to our Annual Meeting at the Garden House at Look Park! Join with the CISA community to celebrate CISA's 25th anniversary, honor this year's [Local Hero awardees](#), and participate in a vibrant discussion about our local food economy with CISA staff, board, and your community. Dinner will be provided, with catering from River Valley Co-op! This event is free, and seating is limited to 175 people. RSVP to save a seat. Call 413-665-7100 or e-mail [Jennifer](#).

April 12 - Fruit Twilight Meeting - 5:30 pm, Henry J. Steere Orchards, Greenville, RI. Two hours of pesticide credit should be available (pending) and a light dinner will be served. [Details here.](#)

April 14 - Native Pollinator Biology and Conservation - Mass Aggie Seminar - Come learn about the many types of pollinators present in our region and how to protect and encourage them in your landscape. Led by Sonia Schloemann. \$35 fee. [Details here.](#)

April 19 - State Regulations Pertaining to Invasive Plant Management - Hadley Farms Meeting House. While landscape and turf professionals may be knowledgeable about the state regulations that govern the type of work they normally do, regulations that govern certain aspects of invasive plant management may be different. This session covers state regulations including the Wetlands Protection Act, the Rivers Protection Act, and pesticide regulations, including those specific to right-of-ways. This workshop is Session A2 of the Invasive Plant Certification Program. [Details here.](#)

April 25-27 - The 9th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference - Cincinnati, Ohio. This event is the only national gathering of stakeholders from across the farm to cafeteria movement, making it a crucial leadership development opportunity to advance community health, build economic opportunities for farmers and producers. Help put Massachusetts's farm to cafeteria efforts on the map. [Details here.](#)

April 27 - Making Sustainable History - Plymouth. The 2018 Massachusetts Sustainable Communities and Campuses Conference connects stakeholders from government, education, business, and nonprofits and learners interested in sustainability. [Details here.](#)

April 30 - Ag Com Boot Camp - Topsfield Fairgrounds - Ag Coms and members in their community looking for guidance on animal health, regulations and available resources. [Details here.](#)

May 4 - Massachusetts Food Policy Council Meeting - UMass Amherst. [Details here.](#)

May 14 - Ag Com Boot Camp - Greenfield - Ag Coms and members in their community looking for guidance on animal health, regulations and available resources. [Details here.](#)

May 16 - Landscape Pests and Problems Walkabout – Stanley Park, Westfield. **Diseases and Weeds** - Get some hands-on experience scouting and identifying landscape diseases, insects, weeds, and abiotic problems. [Details here.](#)

May 18 – Mass Envirothon - Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park in Uxbridge. [Details here.](#)

Save The Dates:

November 7 & 8, 2018 - Northeast Greenhouse Conference and Expo, Boxborough Regency Hotel, Boxborough. For exhibit space and sponsorship opportunities, contact karen@delaneymeetingevent.com.

February 27 – 28, 2019 – Harvest New England Ag Marketing Conference and Trade Show, Sturbridge Host Hotel.

Updates made here: [MDAR Events Calendar.](#)

USDA News

USDA Reopens Enrollment for Improved Dairy Safety Net Tool

Bipartisan Budget Act Makes Substantial Program Changes

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue is encouraging dairy producers to consider enrolling in the new and improved Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy), which will provide better protections for dairy producers from shifting milk and feed prices. With changes authorized under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has set the enrollment period to run from April 9, 2018 to June 1, 2018.

About the Program:

The program protects dairy producers by paying them when the difference between the national all-milk price and the national average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount elected by the producer.

Changes include:

- Calculations of the margin period is monthly rather than bi-monthly.
- Covered production is increased to 5 million pounds on the Tier 1 premium schedule, and premium rates for Tier 1 are substantially lowered.
- An exemption from paying an administrative fee for limited resource, beginning, veteran, and disadvantaged producers. Dairy operators enrolled in the previous 2018 enrollment period that qualify for this exemption under the new provisions may request a refund.

Dairy operations must make a new coverage election for 2018, even if you enrolled during the previous 2018 signup period. Coverage elections made for 2018 will be retroactive to January 1, 2018. All dairy operations desiring coverage must sign up during the enrollment period and submit an appropriate form (CCC-782) and dairy operations may still “opt out” by not submitting a form. All outstanding balances for 2017 and prior years must be paid in full before 2018 coverage is approved.

[Complete release here.](#)

FSA Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Visit the local [FSA county office](#) for help preparing and processing the application forms.

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Classified

- **Position Available:** Seasonal Apiary Inspector - Specific information and additional details can be found on the [MassCareers Job Opportunities webpage](#) by searching for the **Keyword: Apiary**.
- **Farmers Markets Seeking Vendors** - Check back periodically for updates to this list. If updates, please send to David.Webber@state.ma.us.
- **Scholarship opportunity:** The Massachusetts Flower Growers' Association will again sponsor its' annual college scholarship award of up to \$4,000 depending on length of study. Deadline for applications is May 15th. [Click here for information](#).

About the *Farm & Market Report*

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Next issue to be published in April. Please send news, events, or classified information by June 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.

