

Complete List of Supporting Massachusetts Agricultural Organizations:


Northeast Harvest | Massachusetts Federation of Sheep Association | New England Small Farm Institute | The Topsfield Fair
Northeast Organic Farming Association – Massachusetts Chapter | Berkshire Grown | MA Farmers Markets
MA Association of Agricultural Commissions | MA Wood Producers Association | Sustainable Nantucket
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project | MA Maple Producers Association | MA Farm to School Project
Community Involved in Sustainable Agriculture (CISA) | Southeastern MA Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP)
Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association | New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Association
Essex County Fruit Growers Association | MA Fruit Growers Association | MA State Grange | American Farmland Trust
MA Flower Growers Association | MA Forest Landowners Association | Massachusetts Federation of Beekeepers
MA Farm Bureau Federation | Project Bread - The Walk for Hunger

2011 Agriculture Day at the State House


Massachusetts Agriculture has been experiencing a Renaissance during the last few years. Consumers are increasingly buying local. This is good news not only for local farmers but for the Commonwealth as a whole. There has been more than a 25% increase in the number of farms in Massachusetts since 2002. This means more open space is being preserved, more dollars are circulating in the local economy, and more workers are employed. These farms are also providing healthy food for Massachusetts residents. For example, we have seen almost a 250% increase in the number of farmers markets in Massachusetts between 2007 and 2010 alone! Many are in the city, with farmers markets more than doubling the volume of fresh produce they offer in urban areas during this same time period.

Massachusetts Agriculture wants to keep growing! To do so, we need to enact laws that will strengthen *Off-farm Infrastructure*: government accountability, agriculturally related businesses, tax structure, and consumer rights – all of which are critical to the continued growth of agriculture in the Commonwealth. We need a strong Department of Agricultural Resources to maintain effective oversight and assist in economic development, we need a strong UMass Center for Agriculture to develop relevant research and technology, and a strong UMass Extension to transfer that research and technology to our farmers.

Priority Legislation for the Massachusetts Agricultural Community



HB 1141 – An Act to Promote Farm Viability – Massachusetts - Agriculture has diversified considerably in the last few years with more farmers' markets, on-farm processing, CSAs, etc. Local Boards of Health (BOH), which have considerable authority, have appropriately become interested in these activities. Resulting regulations have unfortunately come into conflict with necessary agricultural practices and standards. This has occurred because BOHs often lack expertise in agriculture. This bill would create a review panel of Public Health and Agriculture experts to review all BOH regulations impacting agriculture, and work with BOHs to develop sound regulations. This bill does not prevent BOHs from protecting public health. It simply provides technical assistance and ensures good governance.



HD 1184 – An Act to Strengthen the Massachusetts Agricultural Infrastructure Relative to Meat and Poultry Production and Processing - There is huge demand for local meat and there is sufficient production capacity on MA farms to meet this demand. One of the biggest barriers to creating a local market for meat is the lack of slaughter and processing facilities in MA. There are currently only two USDA inspected meat slaughter facilities in MA, and no USDA poultry slaughter facilities. To address this need, this bill would move state oversight of slaughter from DPH to DAR, and allow DAR to enter into an agreement with USDA to take on federal inspections (USDA would pay for half the costs). This bill would create a *single* agency overseeing meat processing - one that has a *dual* focus of consumer protection and economic development. Maine and several other states have taken a similar approach and seen a sharp increase in the number of slaughter and processing facilities.

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HD 02321 - An Act to Promote Economic Stimulus in Natural Resource Based Small Businesses - MA law currently provides a 3% tax credit for *incorporated* agriculture and fishing operations for purchase and lease of goods with more than 4 years “shelf life.” Unfortunately, most farms and many fishing operations are not incorporated. This bill would extend the credit to non-incorporated agricultural and fishing operations, and stimulate the economy - particularly in rural areas that have suffered the most with the recent economic downturn. Further, farmers who take advantage of this tax credit will never move their farms overseas! This is a sound and solid investment in the state economy, and local agriculture.



SB 335 - An Act to Promote the Care and Well-Being of Livestock - As anyone who has toured Plimoth Plantation can tell you, farmers have been raising livestock in Massachusetts longer than any other state in the country. We know what we are doing. Recently, outside special interest groups have come into Massachusetts to tell us how to raise livestock. We understand and share concerns about the humane treatment of animals and have worked with humane agencies in Massachusetts for decades. We also know that this is an increasingly important issue for consumers – we know because many of us sell directly to consumers. To address consumer concern, and outside influence, this bill would create a Livestock Care and Standards Board which consists of farmers, humane groups, veterinarians and other interested parties - ***all from within the Commonwealth***. The group would have the ability to promulgate regulations on *any* aspect relating the humane treatment of livestock.



HB 1995 - An Act Relative to the Distribution of Raw Milk - Massachusetts agriculture faces some of the highest land, labor and regulatory costs in the country. Many Massachusetts farmers have survived, and thrived, by selling directly to the consumer. Opportunities for direct sales of dairy products are limited. However, there is a growing consumer demand for raw milk which has been a boon to many dairy farmers. Currently, raw may be sold only from the farm. This bill would allow farmers to deliver raw milk to customers, many of whom have difficulty in visiting the farm on a regular basis. This is a particular problem where there are declining numbers of dairy farms. The bill would also charge DAR with ensuring deliveries occurred in a manner ensuring the safety of the milk

Legislation of Concern



SB 160 – An Act Relative to Agricultural Zoning - This bill would repeal a law passed *less than a year ago* which extends protection from unreasonable zoning to farms of 2 acres or more. Previously such protection was afforded only to farms of 5 acres or more. We are unaware of any problems arising from the new law. It’s very perplexing to see a bill that seeks to remove a privilege which has not even been in place for a single growing season. Small farms are small businesses. Small farms are the backbone of Massachusetts agriculture, and small businesses are the backbone of the Massachusetts economy. This bill undermines the success of both.