



Massachusetts



Department of
Agricultural Resources



FARM VIABILITY BASIC PHILOSOPHY

The BEST way to keep land in agricultural use is to make agriculture PROFITABLE for those who use the resource.



PRIMARY CONCEPTS OF THE FARM VIABILITY PROGRAM

Improve individual farm's economic viability

- Encourage more value-added & direct retail
- Promote vertical integration
- Enhance product diversity

Improve environmental practices used on farms.



ADDITIONAL CONCEPTS TO SUPPORT FARM VIABILITY

Protect agricultural land and open space more economically

Increase access to capital

Provide access to technical assistance no longer available elsewhere

Improve business and management skills among farmers.



CRITERIA for SELECTION

- 1.) Threat to the continuation of agriculture;
- 2.) Number of acres to be placed in the covenant, the intensity of use on the land, and its significance to MA agriculture;
- 3.) Whether the farm has diversified or is interested in retail or value added activities;
- 4.) Number of years & type of experience of applicant;
- 5.) Degree to which the project would accomplish environmental objectives;
- 6.) The suitability/productivity based on soil classification, features and location.



Program Description

Phase I – Business Planning

Phase II – Covenant, Contract and Grant Award

Phase III – Receipts, Reporting and Evaluation



Phase I Business Planning:

- Orientation meeting following notification
- Initial Site visit by Point Person – assemble “Team”
- Historical Financials
- Individualized Technical Assistance
- Environmental Planning/Projects
- Marketing Plan
- Construction/Architectural Planning
- Business Plan Writing Assistance



Phase II – Covenant, Contract and Grant

COVENANT OPTIONS

- *5 years - \$25,000*
- *10 Years - \$50,000*
- *10 Years - \$75,000 - if over 135 acres*

CONTRACT

What is to be accomplished with funds and when

GRANT/CHECK

6 to 8 weeks following signing

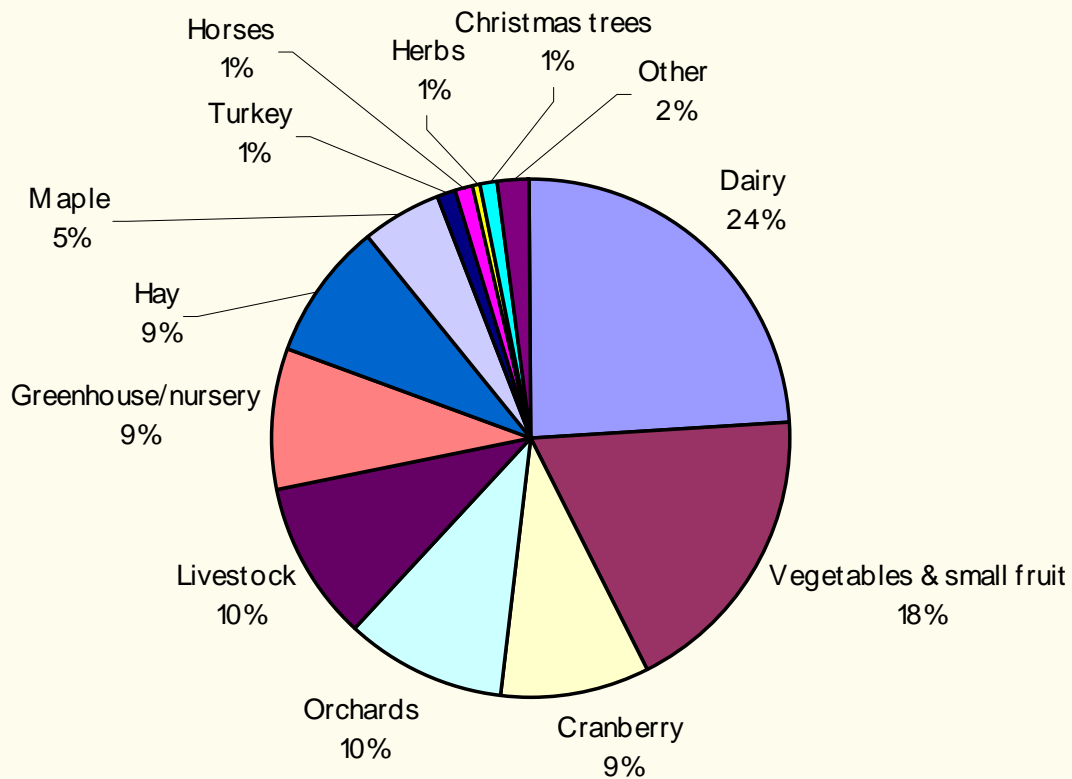


FARM VIABILITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

- ✓ Established in 1995 – over 300 farms participated
- ✓ 29,010 Acres Under Covenant
- ✓ Cost per acre of covenant land - \$411
- ✓ 24,865 Additional Acres Impacted
- ✓ Cost per acre included impacted - \$216
- ✓ 73% make additional investment averaging \$31,791 per farm
- ✓ Average projected increase to bottom line \$18,585

- ✓ Replicated Since In At Least Four States

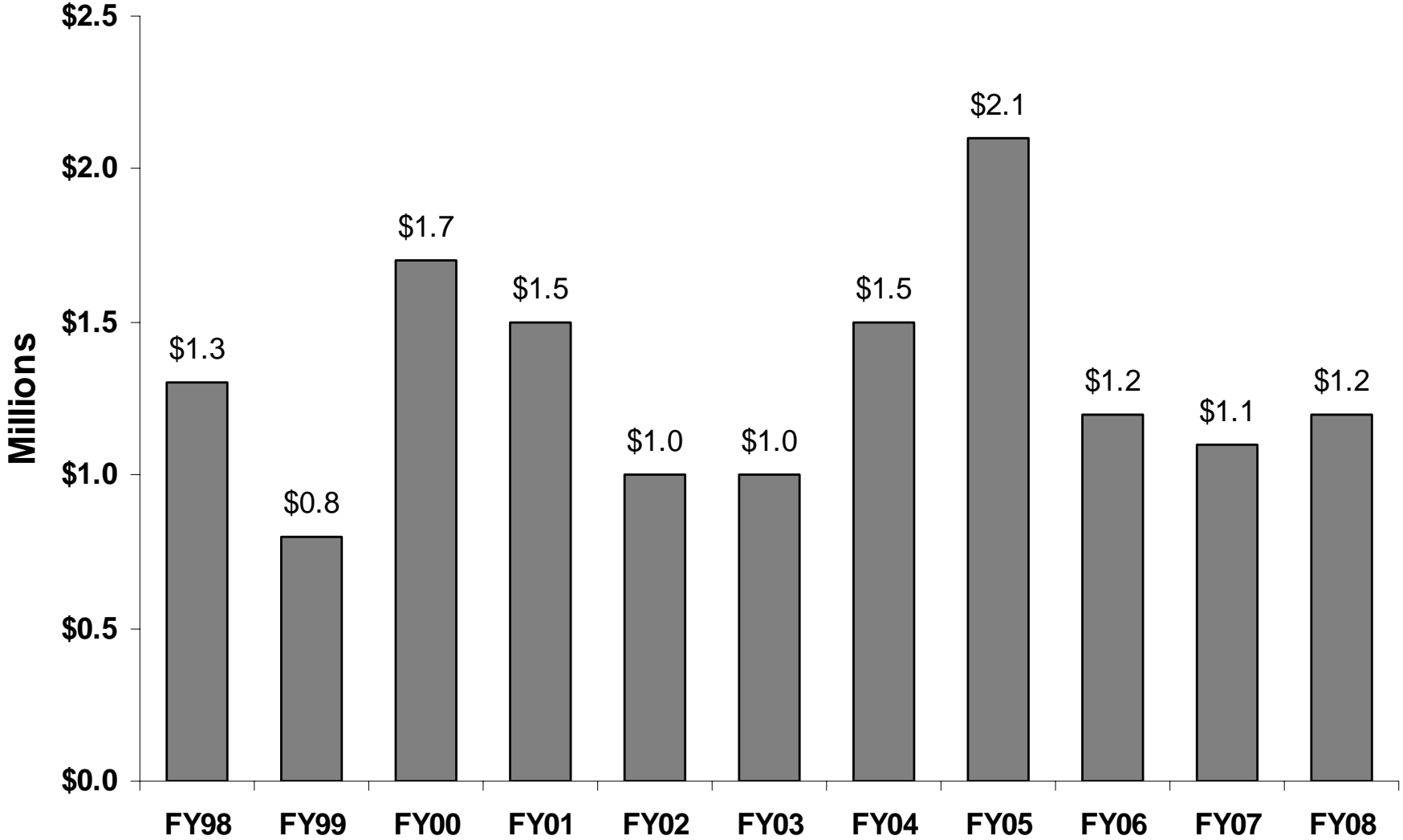
Farm Viability Enhancement Program Participating Farms 1996 - 2007

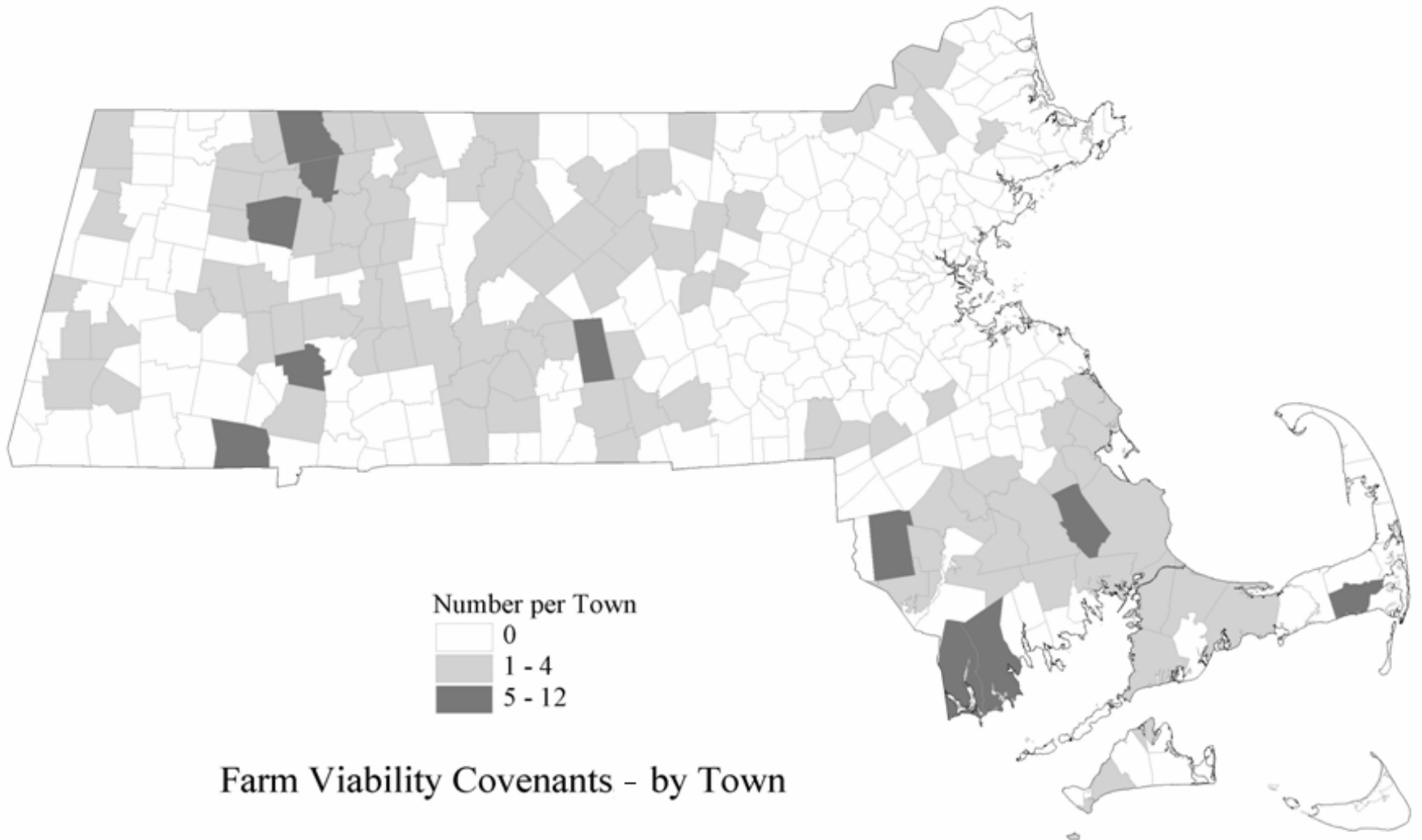
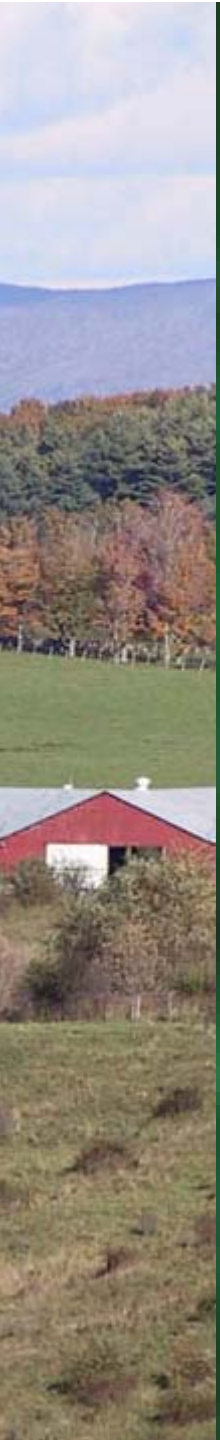


Dairy	82
Vegetables & small fruit	62
Cranberry	31
Orchards	34
Livestock	34
Greenhouse /nursery	30
Hay	29
Maple	17
Turkey	4
Horses	4
Herbs	2
Christmas trees	3
Other	7



Farm Viability Enhancement Program: Historic Spending






Farm Viability Covenants - by Town



- "...the program has made the farm a survivor in this economic time of hardship." – *Dairy farmer*
- "The Farm Viability Program has made a great difference for our quality of life...While it is still hectic, there is less stress...we now have the time to feel better about the details of running our farm that we were conscious of in the past but is now more manageable." – *Dairy farmer*
- "Without those monies and the plan...we would not be here today. Life is much more enjoyable...we were almost ready to quit, and now we have a plan and a path." – *Vegetable grower with retail facility expansion*



- “The technical assistance, the plan and the seed funds helped us figure out how to grow steadily and plan expenses to match the growth. We wouldn’t have been able to do this and keep the farm going without the funds and the plan.” – *Small beef operation*

- “[As a result of the plan and funds]...our work is more efficient and we get more done...we can think about the future.” – *Hay farmer*

- “Operations have become more efficient, freeing up time for other things – some to make money.”
– *Wood products, Maple Producer*



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