

MFBF POLICY BOOK 2008-2009

MFBF policies are subject to reaffirmation every three years. Policies that have been reaffirmed are marked by *R followed by the year of origin.

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AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONS

2008-1 *R (2005)

Whereas there are over 120 Agricultural Commissions established in the state of Massachusetts, and
Whereas these are an invaluable resource to Farm Bureau, and consequently need to be fostered,
encouraged and kept in close contact to Farm Bureau,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation assist in establishing Agricultural
Commissions in towns that don't have one and encouraging county members to be active on their local
town Ag Commissions;

Be it further resolved to encourage Ag Commissions to become Farm Bureau members.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

2008-2 *R (1996)

Whereas; the Massachusetts FFA Organization is part of the National FFA Organization, and;
Whereas; the National FFA Organization's Federal Charter is established under Public Law 81-740, and;
Whereas; both organizations prepare students for a wide range of careers in agriculture, agribusiness and
other agriculturally related occupations in Massachusetts and the nation, and;
Whereas; State funding for the full time position of State FFA Advisor/ Executive Secretary and State
Supervisor of Agriculture has been deleted from the Massachusetts Department of Education, and;
Whereas; the position is now only a half time federally funded position and the funds will not be available
come July 1, 1997;

Be it resolved: that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation become involved with helping the
Massachusetts FFA students in two ways:

- 1 The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file legislation to establish a full time State FFA
Advisor/Executive Secretary and State Supervisor of Agriculture within the Department of Education
and/or the Department of Agriculture;
- 2 The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage all County Farm Bureaus to support the
Massachusetts FFA Association and the Massachusetts FFA Foundation with donations to help the
state FFA program continue to run.

2008-3 *R (1996)

Whereas; Smith Vocational Agricultural School has been under pressure to drop the agricultural
vocational course, and;
Whereas; this is the only agricultural course offered in western Massachusetts, and;
Whereas; agriculture needs all of the exposure possible to keep young people educated about agriculture;

Be it resolved that Hampshire County Farm Bureau do all they can do to encourage Smith School to
continue to keep the school farm and the courses in agriculture, and;

Be it further resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work on the state level to maintain
Smith Vocational School agriculture.

2007-1 *R (1998)

Whereas; our agricultural high schools in Bristol, Essex and Norfolk Counties provide attractive targets for large savings to county government in these increasingly urbanized areas;

Be it resolved that MFBF work with the Mass. DAR and other appropriate state, county and local agencies to:

- Ensure adequate funding from all sources, public and private for these institutions, and;
- Develop new programs to serve the secondary educational needs of the entire agricultural community.

2006-1 *R (2003)

Whereas; Massachusetts Legislators need to be made more intimately aware of the value of Massachusetts' agriculture,

Be it resolved that all Massachusetts Legislators be encouraged to visit farms in their counties throughout the year to become more educated about agriculture.

2006-2

Whereas Agriculture is an important part of the culture of Massachusetts;
Whereas Science, Math and Technology are necessary to keep our competitive edge;
Whereas we need strong school systems and good teachers;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau work with our state government to:

- Support our Agriculture Department (DAR) more fully;
- Support Agriculture in the Classroom as an important partner;
- Provide legislation to support the education of the next generation of students and maintain Massachusetts as a leader in agricultural innovation.

2006-3

Whereas Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom (MAC) previously had a line item in the State budget of \$125,000 which was subsequently cut out in the 1980's budget crunch;

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau Federation work with whatever means possible to restore the line item in the State budget for this great organization.

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION RESTRICTIONS

2008-4 *R (2005)

Whereas land protected by an APR who's restriction are held by the Commonwealth or, subdivision thereof, are subject to the "Public Purpose" provisions of Article 97 of the Articles of Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth; and

Whereas restrictions or regulations of any kind, that either further restricts the use of he APR land, that impair the continued agricultural use of the property or the agricultural enterprise conducted on the restricted land, run contrary to the declared "Public Purpose" of the APR

Be it resolved that:

1. Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation expects that Massachusetts DAR will advocate for the land owner against any further restrictions, conditions or regulations of any kind imposed on APR land;

2. Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file legislation that releases the APR when further restrictions, regulations or conditions imposed impair the continued operation of the enterprise conducted thereon and that such release occurs without penalty, financial or otherwise, to the landowner; and

3. Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seek legislation to further protect APR landowner rights by prohibiting any rights of the landowner from being further restricted or diminished without acquiring 2/3rds vote of the Legislature and without the landowner incurring any penalty, financial or otherwise.

2007-2 *R (1998)

Whereas; MFBF acknowledges the value of and has supported the APR program since its inception, and;
Whereas; numerous members have negotiated APRs on their properties which included compensation and certain terms, and;

Whereas; DAR is attempting to change the terms of those agreements without additional compensation through a policy that has not been officially adopted as regulation, and;

Whereas; “The Commonwealth compensates the landowner for his willingness to place a permanent restriction on his land prohibiting all non-farm development and allowing only for agricultural uses. The landowner still owns the land and retains all rights of ownership such as the right to privacy, the right to sell the land, lease it, and will it to heirs.”, and;

Whereas; DAR staff is pursuing a goal of artificially restricting the growth in value of agricultural land in its quest for pursuing its definition of affordable land at the owner’s expense;

Be it resolved that MFBF opposes any and all actions of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which force or coerce land owners to accept conditions that are contrary or additional to those agreed to at the time of the placing of the APR, and;

Be it further resolved that DAR cease all activities which derogate the value of APR farmland, and;

Be it further resolved that MFBF petition the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to promulgate regulations and rules pertaining to c184 and c132a and that affected parties be included in the process. These should include but not be limited to definitions of agriculture, development rights, agricultural value, and derogation of agricultural use. Regulations should include an appeals process for those farmers aggrieved by DAR actions and should include agricultural impact and small business impact statements;

Be it further resolved that MFBF establish a library of APR transactions and meeting minutes of the Agricultural Land Preservation Committee.

2007-3 *R (2001)

Whereas; Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seeks to protect the rights of landowners with farms enrolled in the APR program, and;

Whereas; the Department of Agricultural Resources has chosen to redirect the APR program to be an “affordable farmland” program rather than a “farmland preservation” program, thereby allowing the state to establish resale prices and to qualify or exclude potential buyers, and;

Whereas; such actions by the state short-change the landowner in the long run by providing a short-term infusion of cash, while restricting the long-term viability of the farm business because of lack of interested lenders, lack of housing opportunities for a farm owner, lack of opportunity to participate in other state government programs, and lack of incentive for farm improvements;

Therefore, be it resolved that MFBF initiate legislation that clearly redirects the APR program back to its farmland preservation roots, establishes more detailed administrative procedures in the statute, and enhances the opportunities for farm businesses.

Be it further resolved that such legislation include protections therein that clearly protects the landowners of existing APR farms from the state's misinterpretations or distortions of the original legislative intent of the program.

2007-4 *R (2001)

Whereas; the equine industry comprises a large and growing segment of Massachusetts agriculture, and
Whereas; the equine industry supports the agricultural infrastructure of feed suppliers, equipment dealers, veterinarians and others, purchases hay from local farmers, and helps to preserve substantial acreage of open land, and

Whereas; equine operations are currently discriminated against by DAR relative to involvement in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program because said program only recognizes the definitions contained in Chapter 61A, and

Whereas; the equine industry is recognized as "Agriculture" in the definition contained in Mass. General Laws, Chapter 128, Section 1A, therefore

Be it resolved that MFBF work to change the definition of "Agriculture" used in the APR program to the Chapter 128;1A definition.

2007-5 *R (2004)

Whereas; some parties have taken a very aggressive position to render APR land accessible to the public,

Be it resolved that MFBF will not support public access doctrines as a condition in APR or Farm Viability Contracts, or Chapter 61, Chapter 61-A or 61B.

2007-6

Whereas the APR purchasing cap has been set at \$10,000 per acre for a long period,

Be it Resolved that MFBF work to eliminate the cap.

2007-7

Be it resolved that, pending satisfactory progress as determined by MFBF Board of Directors towards resolution of those concerns expressed in MFBF 2007-2*R and 2007-3*R, that MFBF support those aspects of the Environmental Bond Bill that are consistent with MFBF policy.

2006-4 *R (2000)

Whereas; the APR program was initiated to protect the agricultural lands for future food and fiber production and

Whereas; controversy has erupted over the off season or multiple uses of some of these lands due to the changing nature of today's agriculture and

Whereas; the stewardship of these lands influences the number of visitors in the Berkshires and

Whereas; the economic well-being of many farmers is threatened by low agricultural prices for their products and adverse weather;

Therefore be it resolved that MFBF call for a review of the APR Program with particular emphasis on the financial well being of agriculture.

2006-5 *R (2000)

Whereas; there are several issues that have surfaced in Massachusetts on the enforcement of APR contracts, (such as the State having the right of future real estate price setting of APR farms), the intent of the legal language of the contracts and other matters. And;

Whereas; a study panel has been set up to study this and Farm Bureau is a member of that study panel.
And;

Whereas; as always, Mass. Farm Bureau is concerned with the protection of the farmer and the commonwealth's fairness in the interpretation of the contracts past, present and future.

Therefore, be it resolved that it be MFBF policy that the farm residence and/or alterations or new construction of dwellings for farm family members or farm labor, and other buildings associated with present or future operation of the farm be unimpeded by an APR contract.

2006-6 *R (2000)

Be it resolved that MFBF work to ensure that APR farms be given equal opportunity to participate in all programs of the state, such as the Farm Viability Program, and not be excluded further financial help because they are under an APR contract.

2006-7 *R (2000)

Be it resolved that MFBF work to ensure that past and present APR contracts be fairly interpreted by the Commonwealth, and that the contracts not be changed or amended without comparable considerations being mutually agreed to by all parties.

2006-8

Whereas APR contracts have many restrictions, but the open space properties are ideal for renewable energy systems,

Be it resolved that MFBF will work to secure language allowing for these systems to be installed on APR farms.

ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE

2007-8 *R (1998)

Whereas; the animal health programs of the Commonwealth are basic to the survival of the dairy industry and the health of the citizens;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support adequate funding of the Bureau of Animal Health.

2007-9

Whereas, Massachusetts livestock farmers and ranchers and equine facility operators are experiencing increased regulation regarding the disposal of aging or injured animals,

Be it resolved the Mass Farm Bureau work at the local, state, and federal levels to insure that burial of deceased animals be allowed as one option.

2006-9

Whereas the equine industry is dependant on the movement of animals within and out of the state and, Whereas potential health threats to the industry do exist,

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau Federation supports an animal identification program that ensures privacy for both individuals and other government entities; an easy manageable system for informational

input and maintenance; and cost effectiveness with minimal expenses, for the ultimate goal of ensuring the security of the equine industry.

APIARIES

2006-10

Whereas the honeybee population in North America has been devastated by Varroa and Tracheal mites for over two decades rendering the wild honeybee all but extinct, and

Whereas the number of beekeepers (many of whom are hobbyists) has also declined during the same period due to financial loss of killed or impaired colonies, and

Whereas the honeybee is absolutely essential to the effective pollination of many Massachusetts crops and has been shown to increase yields in certain crops by up to 40 percent,

Therefore, Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau proposes that the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture establish and maintain a fund beginning in January 2007 with a goal of increasing the honeybee population in Massachusetts by:

- 1.) Providing a grant for the purchase of bees and equipment to new or existing Massachusetts beekeepers to increase their colonies by up to two additional hives to be located in Massachusetts, cost not to exceed \$150.00 per hive; and
- 2.) Education for new Massachusetts beekeepers, not to exceed \$100.00 per beekeeper, and training to be provided by beekeeping organizations within Massachusetts.

AQUACULTURE

2008-5 *R (1996)

Whereas; the right to farm laws apply to those who own or lease and

Whereas; aquaculture grants are licenses,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts right-to-farm laws be amended to include farmers that are licensed or otherwise control aquaculture sites.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

2008-6 *R (2005)

Whereas, biotechnology, in the form of genetically modified crops, is important to an increasing number of farmers, and

Whereas, there is an effort at the local level in Massachusetts to prohibit the planting of genetically modified crops,

Be it resolved, that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support preemptive legislation, precluding local authorities from regulating seed and crops.

2007-10 *R (2001)

Whereas; Massachusetts is considered a world center for biotechnology research and development, and

Whereas; biotechnological advances are improving our capacity to produce foodstuffs and eliminate hunger, as well as providing considerable medical benefits,

Therefore, be it resolved that MFBF embraces the benefits of agro-biotech developments as positive for Massachusetts agriculture and consumers, and

Be it further resolved that MFBF oppose state regulation of agro-biotechnology, and urge that proper oversight of such research and development rests with federal agencies such as FDA, USDA and EPA.

COMMUNICATIONS

2007-11 *R (2004)

Whereas; There are many commissions, committees, and groups purporting to speak for farmers and share what's best for farms.

And whereas; Few of these commissions and committees actually involve working farmers.

Therefore be it resolved that MFBF assemble a presentation and set of common practices that can be made available to towns and municipalities on how to support agriculture.

2007-12 *R (2004)

Whereas; There are many agricultural and commodity groups that duplicate effort within the state.

And whereas; MFBF's strengths lie with working at the legislative level.

Therefore let it be resolved that MFBF network with other agricultural associations and commodity groups to streamline operations and eliminate duplicate efforts.

2006-11 *R (2003)

Whereas; important information is slow in reaching the farmer,

And, information transfer between individual farmers and between farmers and Massachusetts Farm Bureau is too slow, by today's standards, and slows down individual responses to situations.

And Whereas; many modern communication modes, like fax and email, are widely available which are capable of disseminating this information in a timely manner for a much lower price than that of methods currently used.

Be it resolved: Massachusetts Farm Bureau will work with County Farm Boards to establish better communications with individual members and boards.

2006-12 *R (2003)

Whereas; many issues confronting Agriculture in the commonwealth are issues and confrontations with local town boards and governing bodies

Whereas; many of these issues can be resolved by informing and facilitating communication between the farming community and the local boards.

Be it resolved: That Farm Bureau encourage and support the formation of local committees on a county level to assist in the resolution of these problems and act as a local information resource on issues, to both the members of Farm Bureau and to the local boards.

And further be it resolved: That Farm Bureau encourage and support FB members to join local town/municipal boards.

2006-13

Whereas certain members are getting AFBF newsletter and others are not,

Be it resolved that all members are given equal access to Farm Bureau publications and newsletters.

CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT

2007-13

Whereas several states and federal agencies have considered regulating animal manure as hazardous waste, and

Whereas manure is a valuable agricultural resource that can be properly managed,

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF work to maintain farm use of livestock manure, and prevent classification of animal manure as hazardous waste.

CROP AND LIVESTOCK DAMAGE

2008-7

Designated hunter on nuisance permit

Whereas; many farms suffer from extensive deer damage in particular years and often qualify for a nuisance permit from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife allowing for hunting by immediate family and full time employees, but in many cases a particular farm will not have any qualified hunters among those permitted to hunt,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife to expand this qualified list to two trained and licensed hunters available for this nuisance control under the farm owner’s direction.

2008-8 *R (2002)

Whereas; the damage to crops and other agricultural goods by black bears has increased

And Whereas; the current length of the state hunting season on black bears has not adequately controlled the population numbers to limit damage to agricultural and other goods;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau work with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to allow baiting and to extend the current hunting season on Black Bears as soon as possible.

2008-9 *R (2002)

Whereas; the black bear population in Massachusetts had been becoming more and more prevalent, and;

Whereas; the black bear population is reaching a point where it is a danger to livestock, crops and humans, and;

Whereas; the bear numbers are a direct result of a lack of hunting pressure;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to reinstate the use of hounds to hunt bears in Massachusetts.

2008-10 *R (2002)

Whereas; the beaver population in Massachusetts is growing unabated, and;

Whereas; beaver activity often threatens productive farmland, as well as some suburban areas with flooding;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to allow trappers to return to the safe use of the conibear traps to catch beaver, and thus eliminate any current restrictions on such traps.

2008-11 *R (1996)

Whereas; migratory crows are causing ever larger bird pull damage to corn during the early growing season of May and June when they are protected by law;

Be it resolved that farmers be allowed special permits during this period to allow the crows to be hunted by non-farm employees.

Be it further resolved that farmers be allowed to use chemical bird repellants.

2008-12 *R (1996)

Whereas; possession of leghold traps are illegal;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to amend the law to possession by permit only, and;

Be it further resolved that an amendment be proposed that there be a trap buy back program and that the Division of Fish and Wildlife hold these traps in trust.

2008-13 *R (1996)

Whereas; birds and animals are causing considerable damage to crops during the growing season in Massachusetts;

Be it resolved that farmers or their agents be permitted to hunt these pesky animals throughout the growing season.

2008-14 *R (1999)

Whereas; white tail deer are rapidly reproducing in all areas of Massachusetts, few hunters and a limited hunting season are not controlling the deer population, and damage to crops is a constantly increasing problem,

Be it resolved that:

1. The state establishes a fund to pay for deer damage to farms.
2. The state pay for deer fencing on farms.
3. The state pay for deer fencing installation on farms.
4. The state allow farmers to rent their land to a hunter or group of hunters to kill deer during the off season.
5. The state allow the farmer to keep the deer without having to submit a report to Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

2007-14 *R (1998)

Whereas; wildlife crop damage continues to be a major problem for many Massachusetts farmers;

Be it resolved: that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau work with Massachusetts Sportsmen's Council and others to develop an effective crop insurance program to compensate Mass farmers for wildlife crop damage and to help to maintain open land for sportsmen.

2007-15

Whereas it has been two years since Mass Fisheries and Wildlife has increased the bear hunting season with virtually no increase in the harvest; and
Whereas the recommendations of the Mass Farm Bureau and Mass Sportsmen’s Council, Inc. were ignored,

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau ask for a public hearing of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board to increase the bear season in 2008 to set an annual quota of harvest needed to control the bear population and to have the current September season and all other seasons open until such quota is met which would include a two (2) bear bag limit per hunter.

2006-17 *R (2003)

Whereas; many farms have encountered problems with excessive number of starlings in their barns,
And Whereas; these birds pose a serious health threat to livestock and humans as well as a persistent nuisance,
And Whereas; there is no legal and effective way of dealing with this pest,

Be it resolved that MFBF work with DAR and the DF&G to develop a permitting process to allow farmers to purchase starlicide and bait these birds at the farmer’s expense.

2006-18 *R (2003)

Whereas; a bacterial wilt disease named “Ralstonia Solanacearum” has recently been introduced to the United States from Kenya, Africa, and since this disease is listed as a bioterrorism organism that could have devastating effects on solanaceous crops such as potatoes, tomatoes, tobacco and geraniums.

Be it resolved that MFBF continue its efforts to strengthen and not weaken any restrictions to importation of agricultural commodities from other countries especially with respect to allowing material in soil to be imported.

2006-19 *R (2000)

Whereas; some rare and endangered plant species in an area of critical concern ACEC are threatened with extinction caused by habitat flooding created by beaver dams, and;
Whereas; beavers don’t file environmental impact statements. Nor are they subject to orders of conditions. Yet, the results of their activities often produce a significant negative impact, and;
Whereas; the explosion in beaver population clearly demonstrates a need for new management strategies;

Be it resolved that MFBF and others develop a strategy with two objectives:

- (1) Bring the beaver population to manageable levels.
- (2) Seek “by right” legislation establishing pre-existing “normal” water levels as a right upon the abandonment of a site by a beaver colony. Normal elevation, such as: floors of culverts, drainage ways or other structure established by the Commonwealth or other public bodies to protect the public and private interests.

DAIRY

2008-15

Whereas Massachusetts consumers wish to purchase local food from local producers; and

Whereas several New England states have definitions to define and label dairy products produced in those states.

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau advocate for legislation that allows for labeling Massachusetts produced milk as “Massachusetts Fresh”.

2007-16 *R (1998)

Whereas; a Massachusetts milk dealer receiving milk from non-coop milk producers must be bonded for the amount owed to said producers, which is normally a blended price;

Be it resolved that MFBF work with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources to require Massachusetts milk dealers also be bonded for the amounts due to The Producer Settlement Fund of the MA Department of Agricultural Resources.

2007-17 *R (1998)

Be it resolved that MFBF work to ensure that appropriate action be initiated to perpetuate the nutritional benefits of dairy products.

2006-20 *R (2003)

Whereas; there is a need to ensure that the food supply is safe, and that dairy products are of good quality for the consumer,

Be it resolved that AFBF work with the USDA to ensure that ALL milk marketed in the U.S. be of the same quality standards. Be it further resolved that these standards be at current Grade A levels or higher.

2006-21 *R (2003)

Whereas; the current MILC payments made to dairy farms across the U.S. is based on the class one price,

Be it resolved that any payments made to dairy farms is only made on milk that meets Grade A standards.

2006-22 *R (2000)

Whereas; the Northeast Dairy Compact has proven to be beneficial to both consumers and producers,

Be it resolved that American Farm Bureau Federation support the reauthorization and expansion of the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact, the establishment of the Southern States Dairy Compact, and further support the concept of regional dairy compacts.

2006-23 *R (2000)

Whereas; the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact will conclude upon completion of the Federal Farm Bill in 2001;

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF work to extend the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact beyond the sunset clause.

Be it further resolved MFBF work with other state Farm Bureaus to support and enhance the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact pricing.

2006-24

Whereas Dairy Farmers are suffering from low prices that are similar to those paid in 1981 and milk is in tight supply in the area;

Be it resolved that MFBF work together with neighboring states to develop a regional pricing structure that exceeds federal order pricing.

2006-25

Whereas dairy production in Massachusetts and the rest of New England is experiencing difficulties (1980's prices),

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau strive to establish relief and aid as Connecticut and Vermont have accomplished.

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau take immediate action to inform its dairy members about the status of the accomplishment.

2006-26

Whereas dairy is currently not able to participate in income insurance,

Be it resolved that MFBF work to help allow dairy farmers to create an income insurance program.

DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURE

2007-18 *R (2001)

Whereas; not all statutes and state agency regulations have definitions consistent with Mass. General Laws Chapter 128, Section 1A,

Therefore, be it resolved that MFBF work to have all statutes and regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that define "Agriculture" be consistent with the statutory definition of "Agriculture" as said definition appears in MGL chapter 128, Section 1A.

ENERGY

2008-16

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work with the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and the Renewable Energy Trust to provide incentives for biomass use and fuel production (i.e. cord wood, wood pellets, corn and other biomass renewable energy options) and work to extend tax credits and incentives at the state and federal levels.

2008-17 *R (2002)

Whereas; the Electric Companies of Massachusetts lower power at different times of the year causing older refrigeration motors and other motors to burn out from overheating;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Department of Public Utilities to compensate Agriculture and Industry for these burnouts.

2008-18 *R (2002)

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file legislation to add the practice of harvesting wind for production of energy be included in MGL 128A definition as an Agricultural use.

2008-19 *R (2005)

Whereas energy costs are currently escalating and current forecasts predict a steady long term increase in energy and fuel costs and

Whereas agricultural commodity income is not increasing proportionally with increasing costs of productions related to energy and fuel costs;

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau Federation investigate alternative energy production and procurement techniques and technologies and possible abatements to help farms.

2007-19 *R (2004)

Be it resolved that MFBF pursue regulatory changes to have farms billed at the least expensive electric rate.

2007-20

Whereas the cost of electricity continues to rise, and

Whereas electricity costs continue to be a major expense for many agricultural operations;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau work to increase the agricultural discount in Massachusetts from 10% to 20% and eliminate uses charges and/or transfer farms to residential.

2007-21

Whereas renewable energy will continue to become more important to agricultural operations in Massachusetts, and

Whereas, new legislation includes many new beneficial concepts regarding net metering and funding opportunities,

Be it resolved that MFBF support favorable legislation for renewable energy as determined by the MFBF Board of Directors.

2006-27 *R (2000)

Whereas; the demand for all forms of energy is exceeding existing supplies and near term needs and

Whereas; the Northeast is particularly vulnerable because of its distance from coal, oil and natural gas reserves;

Therefore, be it resolved that all segments of the Northeast economy push for a regional strategy and implementation policy under the auspices of the New England Governors Conference or a similar regional entity that will help to insure a competitive position for the goods and services of our region.

2006-28

Whereas farmers are experiencing 30% higher energy costs in 2006,

Be it resolved that MFBF seek energy rebates from the state and federal energy taxes.

Be it further resolved that alternative energy sources and saving techniques be subsidized or incentives offered by the state.

2006-29

Whereas farms provide some of the best sites for wind turbines and often have high on-site energy costs, and the town and city governments in which they are located often have no experience with interpreting the Mass General Laws exempting farm structures and equipment from local zoning bylaws,

Be it resolved that MFBF work to integrate all forms of renewable energy systems, including wind turbines, solar, hydro and Bio Mass Facilities, into the language of the Mass General Law which grants zoning exemptions to agricultural machinery and structures.

2006-30

Whereas we all agree that our dependence on petroleum fuels is not a healthy and sustainable practice,

Be it resolved that MFBF will work to promote local production and/or availability of ethanol and biodiesel.

2006-31

Whereas Massachusetts utility companies are required by law to promote the production of green energy, and where they allow for interconnection to renewable energy systems, and where they at this time only accept monthly net metering which provides inefficient use of energy produced during period of high production and low on-site demand,

Be it resolved that MFBF will petition the state utility companies to implement annual net metering for agricultural properties.

2006-32

Whereas agricultural operations are increasingly dependent on sustainable energy resources for ongoing viability, and

Whereas investment and commitment to sustainable energy represents an important and increasing source of income for many farms,

Be it resolved that MFBF work for a law at the state level preventing individual municipalities from adopting bylaws forbidding or hindering the use of sustainable energy systems in or on agricultural operations unless said operation present a clear and abiding danger to the community.

EQUINE

2008-20

Whereas; the federal bill HR 6598 “Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2008” will establish criminal penalties for the transport of equines for slaughter, and

Whereas; such a law would result in horse abandonment and other horse cruelty actions,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation actively oppose the “Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2008” and similar federal legislation.

2008-21

Whereas the equine industry has significant impact within the state,

Be it resolved that the equine committee prepares a scope of work for a technical report of the economic impact and land use of the equine industry in the state, and further that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors at their discretion takes action to compile said report and make it available to Farm Bureau Counties. The funding to be provided by Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and any grant opportunities that are available.

2008-22

Whereas Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation believes strongly in the classification of horses as livestock, and that this is already an American Farm Bureau Federation and Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Resolution,

Therefore be it resolved that American Farm Bureau Federation make Equine 307, (3) of the American Farm Bureau Federation Policy Book which reads in full “ (3) The classification of horses as livestock;” be made a Priority Issue for American Farm Bureau Federation.

2008-23 *R (1999)

Whereas; regulations and guidelines for testing horses for Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA), using the Coggins Test, vary from state to state within New England and the state of New York; and
Whereas; testing may be required as often as every six months to enter another state, and
Whereas; horsemen in New England travel from state to state often, thus triggering even more testing, which is expensive and time-consuming;

Be it therefore resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the state farm bureaus of New England and New York, and appropriate state agencies to write regulations which either allow for one test valid in all six New England states and the state of New York, or have a reciprocal agreement between the states allowing all New England equines to be subject to the same requirements as in-state equines.

2007-22 *R (1998)

Be it resolved that, notwithstanding any general or special law, rule, regulation or directive to the contrary, the Department of Conservation & Recreation is authorized and directed to allow horseback riding and equine driving on all lands which are otherwise open for public recreational use.

2007-23 *R (1998)

Whereas; horse farms currently amount to significant percentage of the membership of MFBF;

Be it resolved that the MFBF Equine Committee work with the insurance industry to review existing horse farm coverages and insurance programs and make recommendations to the company regarding suggested modifications.

2007-24 *R (2001)

Whereas; Massachusetts and the federal government lack a comprehensive count, census or database of horses and ponies in the state, and income and expenditures of the industry,

Be it resolved that MFBF work with USDA and compile data to be published with other commodity reports. These will aid the equine community, their suppliers and related businesses to better serve the industry and to further our legislative goal.

4-H**2006-33 *R (2003)**

Whereas; the 4H program in Massachusetts has been severely shortchanged;
And, 4H has been an exceedingly valuable resource in educating the youth of the commonwealth in agriculture and life skills,
And, the demise of such a program for 23,000 youths without public debate or notice is not in the best interest of the public;

Be it resolved: Massachusetts Farm Bureau shall investigate ALL avenues, by which other states fund and operate their 4H programs,

And further be it resolved: Massachusetts Farm Bureau attempt to find if federal funds exist that they might be used to restore the program in the Commonwealth.

2006-34 *R (2003)

Whereas; Massachusetts Extension Service is severely limited in the services it can provide due to budget cuts,

And, 4H is in jeopardy

And Whereas; we are losing ground in both education and information services, as well as in the public's perception of what we do and the issues we confront,

And, we feel that it is necessary for Farm Bureau as an organization to ensure the public has accurate information on what we do and the issues we confront,

Be it resolved: That Massachusetts Farm Bureau work with the County Boards to bring together a concerted effort to educate and inform the public on an ongoing basis.

2006-35 *R (2003)

Whereas; the University of Massachusetts has dealt severe budget cuts to the UMass extension program;

Whereas; 4-H is a part of UMass extension which provides a valuable opportunity for school children and young adults from both rural and urban communities to explore other interests outside of the classroom in an affordable manner;

Whereas; 4-H is a national program that has helped to foster leadership and life skills for young people for 100 years.

Whereas; the 4-H field program has been drastically reduced at UMass,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau encourages the state legislature to earmark funds for a fully funded 4-H field program.

FAIRS

2008-24 *R (1996)

Whereas; the agricultural fairs of Massachusetts are truly the *show windows* of all production agriculture, and;

Whereas; they are very frequently the only source of information and knowledge for largely urban sections of our consuming populous, and;

Whereas; the scheduling of dates for fairs needs to be properly overseen, and;

Whereas; youth fairs and youth classes at major fairs form the best possible vehicle for education and encouraging our youth to pursue agricultural vocations, and;

Whereas; all agricultural fairs should be encouraged to conduct and/or maintain agricultural-educational exhibits via the issuance of matching funds by the Division of Fairs, and;

Whereas; the youth fairs, in particular should receive financial assistance as needed, especially in areas of premium payment, and;

Whereas; all agricultural fairs in Massachusetts should join a suitable association of such fairs toward a primary goal of the exhibition and presentation of all agricultural products produced in this state;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation exert its utmost effort to fund the DAR Fairs Program, including reinstating the *Agricultural Purposes Fund* at least at its FY 1989 level and to exert every effort to prevent further disintegration of the Division;

Be it further resolved that every effort be taken to mainstream all agricultural fairs into the furtherance of an urban populace and consuming public's knowledge of the importance of Massachusetts agricultural industry in the production of safe, high-quality foodstuffs and the preservation of the land itself as well as the kind of life it represents.

FARM BUILDINGS

2008-25

Whereas; building codes require stamped lumber which put native lumber at a disadvantage;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seek to remove this requirement for farm buildings and housing construction.

2008-26 *R (1999)

Whereas; the revised Massachusetts Building Code requires Greenhouses for retail to not be plastic roofed,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to amend the code to allow farms to be exempt from this requirement.

2006-36 *R (1997)

Whereas; New York State now provides farmers with a ten year tax exemption on new farm buildings, then taxing them as depreciated, ten year old buildings;

Be it resolved that MFBF sponsor similar legislation in the Massachusetts legislature.

2006-37

Whereas municipalities assess real estate taxes on greenhouses as though they are permanent structures;

Let it be resolved that Mass Farm Bureau work toward an exemption or at least a fair method of calculation.

FARM EQUIPMENT, MOTOR AND RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

2008-27

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation lobby aggressively for laws to identify the use of all alternative energy equipment and systems as farm machinery and seek an agricultural exemption to the Department of Environmental Protection regulations governing use of biomass equipment and systems.

2008-28

Whereas; farm vehicle laws are somewhat confusing;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation create an effort or outreach program to educate officers on the current law (i.e. 10 mile law).

2008-29

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to allow the use of pup-trailers and like vehicles for the transport of agricultural products, using a farm plate in Massachusetts.

2008-30 *R (2002)

Whereas; there is much confusion with farm plate registration and getting motor vehicle safety inspection stickers;

Therefore let it be resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the department of registry to rectify this issue.

2008-31 *R (2002)

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with Mass Registry of Motor Vehicles to amend the Farm Plate regulation to include the use of Farm Plates on Agricultural buses used to transport farm labor.

2008-32 *R (1999)

Whereas; diesel fuel is the most used farm fuel, and;

Whereas; this fuel is a prime target for federal and state taxes which lead to complicated handling and usage regulations to enhance revenue collections, and;

Whereas; the farmers' main use and consumption is on his own or leased lands. This agricultural use is substantially different from public and commercial highway usage;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation intensify their efforts through legislation to separate agricultural uses of diesel fuel from those of other consumers;

Be it further resolved that an effort be made to simplify the transportation, storage and recordkeeping (permits, decals, revenue reports, etc.) required with the use of this fuel.

2007-25 *R (1998)

Whereas; more and more Massachusetts residents operate two, three and four-wheeled, as well as airborne recreational vehicles which are not currently required to be registered, and;

Whereas; these vehicles cause substantial economic and aesthetic damage to crops, land, livestock and wildlife, and;

Whereas; a farmer or other landowner may be subject to suit in the event of injury to the operator and/or passengers of such vehicles, even though he/she may not have given permission to the operator to use his/her land;

Be it resolved that MFBF file legislation to require:

- That all such vehicles, including dirt bikes, three and four-wheeled RV's, balloons capable of transporting humans, ultra-light aircraft and mountain bikes be registered by the Division of Marine and Recreational Vehicles, and;
- That all such vehicles display legible registration numbers that are purchased and applied at the time of sale, and;
- That all operators of such vehicles carry appropriate insurance while operating off of their own property.

2007-26 *R (2004)

Be it resolved that: MFBF work to update the trailer weight statutes and regulations to allow agricultural trailers to be used with farm plates up to the manufacturers' weight specifications.

2007-27

Whereas Massachusetts agriculture uses plumbing to convey liquids for agriculture purposes,

Be it resolved that MFBF seek to insert into the Massachusetts Plumbing Code the recognition that agriculture needs special exemption.

2006-38 *R (2000)

Whereas; the farming community in many areas of the country have to travel the roads with their equipment to get from field to field,
and Whereas; the amount of on-road compared to off road time is relatively small,
and Whereas; the extreme hardships and impracticality of constantly changing fuels in farm equipment fuel tanks,
and Whereas; the use of off road fuel may not be enough to warrant replacement of an on-farm fuel tank and the distance to a fueling station may be a great distance causing excessive fuel consumption, time and labor losses as well as economic losses,
and Whereas; the purchase of straight on road fuel may be cost prohibitive to many small family farms,

Be it resolved, that AFBF work with the EPA and the Department of Transportation and all other necessary agencies exempting farm tractors, equipment and other farm vehicles from the use of on-road fuel.

Be it further resolved, as an alternative to the treatment proposed above for farm trucks, that AFBF work with EPA and all other necessary agencies to have all farm trucks exempt from the on-road fuel so long as they are within 50 miles of the farm.

2006-39 *R (1997)

Whereas; farm tractors are required to have inspection stickers and;
Whereas; some farmers have problems acquiring inspection stickers because of the time and distance involved in driving to an inspection station;

Be it resolved that MFBF work towards getting the Registry of Motor Vehicles to exempt farm tractors from safety inspections.

FARMERS LIVE ANIMAL MARKETING EXCHANGE (F.L.A.M.E.)

2008-33

Be it resolved, that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors investigate and institute mechanisms to insure that any new or additional debt, incurred by FLAME Inc., is subordinate to the loans and accounts receivable currently on the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation balance sheet.

2007-28 *R (1998)

Whereas; there has been conflict between the operations at the Farmers Live Animal Market Exchange in Littleton and the Northampton Co-op Auction in Whately, and;
Whereas; the sale of beef through these auctions are a critical part of the livelihood of dairy farmers and other agriculture in Massachusetts;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau should do everything in their power to coordinate the activities between these two auctions that results in the successful operations of both auctions.

FARMING OPPORTUNITIES

2007-29 *R (2001)

Whereas; land values in Massachusetts make it extremely difficult for first-time buyers to purchase farmland and establish a farm business, and

Whereas; the average age of Massachusetts farmers continues to rise.

Therefore be it resolved that MFBF study possible ways to enhance the opportunities for new farmers, expanding farm businesses, and others, through state grants, “green payments”, or other means.

Be it further resolved that MFBF file legislation, if appropriate, establishing such programs.

2006-40

Whereas, farmers can sometimes be at odds due to specific production requirements, and

Whereas, efforts have been made by some growers and grower groups to ban certain production methods,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation supports the principles of Co-existence in agriculture. Co-existence has been defined as existing together (in time or place) and to exist in mutual tolerance.

FARM VIABILITY

2007-30

Whereas the Dairy Task Force was set up to provide a long term solution for increasing the viability of dairy operations within the state; and

Whereas general food production agriculture is facing a similar “crisis in the making” due to rising costs,

Be it resolved that MFBF take the experience of the Dairy Task Force and extend the work and build on its results to reach to other commodities existing within MFBF.

2007-31

Whereas ethanol production has driven up the cost of grain for livestock production,

Be it resolved that MFBF support an affordable grain effort to keep supplies for livestock farmers.

2006-41 *R (2003)

Whereas; since the Farm Viability Program does not accomplish the urgent tasks which were intended,

Whereas; since the Farm Viability Program is being modeled as APR with the same restrictions, the program does not give enough money and has too long restrictions for the farmer to be practiced;

Be it resolved MFBF will work for the granting of more money and have less time committed for farmers.

Be it resolved going back to the original intention of helping farmers modernize or diversify so that the farmers can exist economically in the present time.

FOOD SAFETY

2008-34

Whereas food safety and environmental quality are important to the public, and

Whereas, agriculture is a mainstay in helping to secure that safety and quality,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support efforts of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, UMass Extension, and commodity groups to help growers adopt Best Management Practices, Good Agricultural Practices, Commonwealth Quality and other similar voluntary programs designed to maintain or improve food safety and environmental quality.

2006-42 *R (1997)

Whereas; cider production is extremely important to the viability of apple producers;

Be it resolved that MFBF work to preserve the right for Massachusetts apple producers to make and sell unpasteurized apple cider.

2006-43 *R (1997)

Whereas; production of fresh unpasteurized cider is an important and needed product of apple producers large and small and has been since colonial times, and;

Whereas; production of fresh unpasteurized cider is a way for producers to utilize substantial portions of the apples grown on the farm, resulting in the ability to stay competitive, and;

Whereas; pressure is being put on this small and needed industry to change its product or warn consumers about E. Coli 0157:H7 concerns that very rarely exist, and;

Whereas; E. Coli 0157:H7 is responsible for 20,000 illnesses and 400 deaths annually in this country and less than 100 illnesses and 1 death have been attributed to unpasteurized cider in the last seven years, and;

Whereas; the majority of the problems associated with E. Coli 0157:H7 are from food stuffs completely unrelated to unpasteurized cider;

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF aggressively oppose any rule, regulation or law that would adversely affect a producer's ability to make and or sell unpasteurized cider.

2006-44 *R (1997)

Be it resolved that MFBF work with MADAR and UMass to support a literature review and analysis of scientific data and studies as to the published benefits from drinking cider.

GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND FUNDING

2008-35

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation lobby to decrease 10 acre limit for USDA funding.

2008-36

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation investigate and implement policies which could transfer forestry programs from the Department of Conservation and Recreation to the Department of Agricultural Resources.

2008-37 *R (2002)

Whereas; UMass Extension is in danger of being further reduced in budget and staff;

Be it resolved the Mass Farm Bureau Federation work with the State Legislature and UMass to support the current and future funding and staffing levels of UMass Extension.

2008-38 *R (2002)

Whereas; the Department of Agricultural Resources is in danger of being eliminated;

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau Federation should vigorously work to support the continued existence of this department.

2008-39 *R (2005)

Whereas changes in the upcoming Farm Bill will likely see reduction in dollars going to Ag support and commodity programs, and

Whereas Agricultural Extension and research formula funding has been almost level for several years,

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation work for increases in extension and research formula funding in the next Farm Bill.

2008-40 *R (2005)

Whereas: Massachusetts farmers face increasing development pressures and declining infrastructure support, and whereas Massachusetts is at a critical mass as to FSA office and staff availability,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation be opposed to any closing or consolidation of FSA and NRCS offices.

2006-14 *R (1997)

Whereas; the University of Massachusetts was established as a land grant university to teach agriculture, and;

Whereas; the university presently is inclined to de-emphasize production agriculture, both in the classroom and in its extension services, and;

Whereas; certain administrators have displayed an insensitivity to budget expenditures;

Be it resolved MFBF encourage enhancement of agricultural offerings by the University of Massachusetts from within the university or cooperatively with other universities in the northeast university programs, and;

Be it further resolved that the university reduce its expenditures, particularly in the areas of administration and direct these monies toward either teaching or tuition reduction.

2006-15 *R (1997)

Be it resolved that MFBF support state budget funding in Executive Office of Environmental Affairs for activities of the state's conservation districts to support Massachusetts agriculture.

2006-16

Whereas the state has been mandated to have conservation districts but the conservation district funding was cut several years ago,

Therefore be it resolved Farm Bureau work to establish state funding to county conservation districts through out the state.

GRANTS AND LOANS

2008-41

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation lobby for inclusion of biomass systems to existing tax incentives and grants for other sustainable energy alternatives.

2008-42

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation investigate and identify methods to buttress Farm Service and Farm Credit relative to the current and on-going financial down turn and credit crises.

2007-32 *R (2004)

Whereas; Available grants in the state are more closely aligned with conservation practices than farm diversification,

And whereas; Pursuit of state administrated grants in Massachusetts involve a multiple year process, which slows or delays the implementation of desired processes and products on farms within the state.

Therefore be it resolved that MFBF will lobby or work with the Department of Agriculture Resources to streamline the grant application process within the state.

2007-33

Whereas the '08 Federal Farm Bill includes language to support Specialty Agriculture,

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF continue support Specialty Agriculture and it's funding in the Federal Farm Bill.

2006-45

Whereas USDA FSA loans are untimely and insufficient for modern business lending,

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau Federation work with this institution to streamline lending and FSA programs.

INSURANCE AND BANKING

2008-43 *R (1996)

Whereas; the legal test for determining whether an employer must pay unemployment tax has been a payroll of \$20,000 in any quarter for many years;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation take appropriate action to bring this payroll level up to \$40,000 and each year thereafter the amount be corrected for inflation.

2007-34 *R (2004)

Whereas, the current Membership List Purchase Agreement between MFBF and Farm Family Insurance no longer requires MFBF membership as a prerequisite for purchasing Farm Family Insurance past the first year; and whereas, there is the potential for loss of membership in MFBF, especially by Associate members, as a result:

Be it resolved that MFBF continue to work with Farm Family Insurance to strengthen ties and to encourage a stronger bond which either requires membership in MFBF every year or encourages membership in MFBF through insurance discounts or some other incentive for MFBF Members.

2006-46 *R (2003)

Whereas; membership in a group is necessary in order to obtain reasonable rates for health insurance
And Whereas; many MFBF members need to join an additional business group in order to provide health insurance for themselves and their employees,

Be it resolved that MFBF form a health insurance group so as to provide this valuable service to our membership.

2006-47 *R (1997)

Whereas; Farm Bureau members have had to pay increased insurance premiums as a result of employees being injured during the work day but off the job site. Such cases are subrogated against third parties;

Be it resolved that MFBF urge the Massachusetts legislature to change the law so that when full recovery of a workers claim under a workers compensation policy can be made, no experience modification or ARAP charge be made to the employer's policy.

2006-48

Whereas, agriculture and rural communities need greater, more dependable access to competitive, flexible, financial resources in order to compete in a changing global economy;

Whereas, restrictions in the Farm Credit Act prevent Farm Credit institutions from serving a number of businesses that directly impact on agriculture including certain types of farm supply businesses, agricultural processing and marketing businesses and new generation cooperatives, fishing related businesses and sawmills.

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau Federation support policy changes that would provide agricultural producers, commercial fishermen, farm and fishing-related and rural businesses and communities with broader access to financing by the cooperative Farm Credit System.

LABOR

2008-44 *R (2002)

Whereas; there is much confusion on Sunday time and one-half and the Massachusetts Blue Laws seem to be a thing of the past therefore;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to amend this outdated Blue Law on time and one-half on Sundays, to exempt farm retail operations.

2008-45 *R (2005)

Whereas, the H2A program continues to be important to many growers as their primary source of labor, and

Whereas, needed changes to the H2A program are delayed because these changes are part of larger labor and immigration reform legislation,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation work to secure needed changes to the H2A program even if comprehensive labor/immigration reforms are not part of the legislation.

2008-46 *R (2005)

Whereas, an important component in H2A/immigration reform deals with the limited amnesty of millions of un-documented workers working in the agricultural industry today, an important element which is necessary in developing a long term solution to this issue.

Further whereas, agriculture desperately needs comprehensive immigration and H2A reform that includes border security and access to legal foreign workers. This reform should not result in a delay in sourcing workers and causing other severe economic consequences to the agriculture industry.

Be it resolved, that American Farm Bureau Federation support Immigration and H2A reform that includes limited amnesty to the present work force and all the other reforms as outlined above.

Further resolve that in any Immigration Reform legislation passed, employers should not be put in the position of being the enforcers of immigration policy.

Further resolve that American Farm Bureau Federation seeks immediate passage of these reforms.

2008-47 *R (2005)

Whereas the legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is considering an increase in the state's minimum wage, and

Whereas Massachusetts farms are indirectly affected by the minimum wage by having to compete for labor with businesses that must pay the minimum wage,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation convey to the Massachusetts legislature the effect that increasing the minimum wage has on the Commonwealth's farms, and

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation investigate the feasibility of having a lower minimum wage for people under the age of eighteen.

2008-48 *R (2005)

Whereas: Some states do not enforce the regulations for all foreign workers.

Whereas: in Massachusetts the regulations are very strict and some regulations go beyond being reasonable for the land owner and it is difficult for the landowner to comply:

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with American Farm Bureau Federation to help in proper regulations. All States should be required to comply with Federal regulations. The federal law on H2A and non US citizens should be applied the same in all states.

2007-35 *R (1998)

Whereas; the AFBF is on record for change in the current H2A labor program because of its many problems that persist for Massachusetts and New England producers, and;

Whereas; there is presently activity in Washington to amend and change the current H2A labor program;

Be it resolved that MFBB work comprehensively with the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation and the New England Apple Council to enlist their support for this change.

2007-36 *R (2004)

Whereas, an adequate supply of offshore labor is necessary for the continuance of a profitable and viable agriculture,

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF support the creation of a multi-sector temporary guest worker program that includes agriculture, but only if its requirements are no more stringent for one sector than another.

Be it further resolved that we oppose:

- a) Requiring employers to pay more than the prevailing wage rate for a particular occupation and region, if required to pay above the Fair Labor Standards Act minimum;
- b) Requiring housing or transportation, or the hiring of domestic workers after the contract period has begun;
- c) Placing a limit on the number of temporary worker visas that may be issued, or guaranteeing payment of any fraction of the temporary workers' pay for work that has not been performed;
- d) Expanding the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA) to employers of agricultural temporary workers or otherwise providing those workers with a private right of action in state or federal court; and
- e) Applying any labor law that does not currently apply H2A visa workers.

Be it further resolved that MFBF recommend to AFBF that policy pertaining to the H2A program within the **IMMIGRATION 84** policy should be categorized in the AFBF policy book under **FARM LABOR 136**.

2007-37

Whereas the cost of agricultural labor continues to rise; and

Whereas the Massachusetts state legislature has voted to increase the minimum wage, and

Whereas the agricultural exemption for state unemployment insurance remains at \$80,000 per year or \$20,000 per quarter,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau work to increase the agricultural exemption for the state unemployment insurance to \$120,000 per year, and

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau work to eliminate the quarterly exemption cap, and only have a per year cap on the exemption.

2006-49 *R (2003)

Whereas; retail farm store employees who work less than 40 hours per week but who do work on Sunday are required to be paid overtime for those Sunday hours, and;

Whereas; garden centers are exempt from these provisions;

Be it resolved that MFBF work towards exempting retail farm store employees from overtime for any work week in which an employee has worked less than 40 hours, regardless of which day of the week that employee has worked.

LAND PRESERVATION & TRUSTS

2008-49

Whereas many towns have purchased land using Land Bank or CPA funding which all carry state matching funds,

Whereas the reason for purchase of these lands was to limit development; and
Whereas the language in the Articles at Town Meeting include the term “Passive Recreation” and may not specifically include “Agriculture”; and
Whereas many towns like to license these lands for agricultural use,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work towards legislation to include agricultural use on lands purchased with intent of “Passive Recreation” and/or “Open Space”.

2006-50 *R (1997)

Whereas; farms are changing;

Be it resolved that MFBF work to build a bridge between land trusts and farms interested in keeping their land open and available for farming.

LOCAL ISSUES

2008-50

Whereas; outdoor wood boilers are important to rural residents and farmers for safe and affordable heat;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation oppose any regulation limiting seasonal use and unreasonable setback requirements.

2007-38

Whereas there is increasing interest among our state’s farmers with intent to install wind turbines; and

Whereas there is considerable confusion and delay during the permitting/application process as town and city boards and officials struggle to handle these projects,

Be it resolved that MFBF work closely with state government to develop minimum state standards for wind turbine siting and installation as a guide to town and city governments to allow for quicker processing of these applications, and

Be it further resolved that MFBF continue their efforts to provide documentation that these installations are a farmer’s right when they are used as farm equipment.

2007-39

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau support H842 or any other proposal of the same intent, requiring local town boards and commissions to submit an agricultural impact statement for any regulation which might affect agriculture.

2007-40

Be it resolved that MFBF support efforts to limit or prevent local towns efforts to unduly regulate or prohibit the use of outdoor wood burning furnaces, remove local enforcement, and take into account future technical developments within the industry.

MARKETING & FARM SIGNS

2008-51

Be it resolved, that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work to have a USDA slaughter facility constructed and operated in Southeastern Massachusetts.

2008-52

Whereas Farmers Markets are increasingly important for net agricultural income, and

Whereas lawyers are paying increased attentions to farmers markets and the farmers who attend those markets,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation pursue legislation that limits liabilities of farmers markets and farmers who attend those markets to one of gross negligence as now exists for PYO farms.

2007-41 *R (1998)

Whereas; farm signs telling what products are for sale are a need but some towns are restricting or banning signs;

Be it resolved that Farm Bureau work for adequate signage for farms.

2007-42 *R (1998)

Be it resolved that MFBF will express to the Commissioner of Agriculture the need for him to convince the supermarket chains to support local agriculture.

2006-51 *R (1997)

Whereas; producers of small livestock, poultry and exotic species have limited access to markets and processing facilities;

Be it resolved that MFBF investigate the feasibility of developing a cooperative processing and marketing facility.

2006-52

Whereas the number of custom and USDA slaughterhouses in Massachusetts and neighboring states continues to decline,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau work with County Farm Bureaus to establish Livestock Commodity Committees to work in conjunction with similar groups and associations to:

Encourage the establishment of new livestock processing facilities in parts of the state which currently need them; and

Encourage the orderly shipment of product to these facilities to ease the seasonal glut which jeopardizes their economic viability.

2006-53

Whereas: We all agree that the promotion of local agriculture through the efforts of the four “buy local” programs (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), Southeast Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP), Berkshire Grown and Essex County Buy Local) has benefited farmers and consumers throughout the Commonwealth,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau will work to secure funding and provide support to these local efforts.

2006-54

Whereas, the Massachusetts State Building at the Big E has been a venue to showcase Massachusetts agriculture, and

Whereas, the various farm commodity groups work as non-profits with volunteer labor, and

Whereas, in the case of the Massachusetts Dairy booth, much of the revenue is gifted to worthy programs, such as the Massachusetts 4-H Dairy,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture should continue to make space available to Massachusetts farm commodity groups in the Massachusetts State Building at no charge, and

Be it further resolved that the Massachusetts State Farm Bureau works to this end.

2006-55

Whereas the number of wineries in Massachusetts has grown from seventeen to twenty seven in the last two years,

Whereas wine grapes and fruit wines represent among the highest value-added agricultural products,

Whereas almost all farm wineries are family owned businesses, and

Whereas the moderate consumption of wine in conjunction with family meals is increasingly understood to be part of a healthy and happy lifestyle,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau initiate legislation to create a Massachusetts Wine Council which will represent the interests of all Massachusetts wineries and grape and fruit growers. Among its goals will be the education of the legislature and public and to seek enlightened measures to promote this vital, rapidly growing segment of Massachusetts agriculture.

2006-56

Whereas farm gate prices are the same as in the 1970's and 80's for many agricultural commodities, and the cost of producing these goods is increasing tremendously and;

Whereas buyers are beginning to realize the advantages of buying local as opposed to subsidized long distance transport of these same commodities;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau educate consumers on the true (real) price of food and its cost of production.

PEST MANAGEMENT

2008-53

Whereas; there has been a serious infestation of the Asian Longhorn Beetle in Worcester County, which can be very devastating to the maple sugaring and timber harvesting industry in Massachusetts;

Whereas; this infestation was caused by products being received from China or other Asian countries on untreated wood pallets or wood products;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work on legislation to protect Massachusetts from further outbreaks of this infestation, by prohibiting the use of untreated wood pallets from other countries that we know have the Asian Longhorn Beetle.

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with American Farm Bureau Federation to strengthen inspections on wood products coming from these and other countries to protect the US forest resources.

2008-54 *R (1996)

Whereas; pesticides, herbicides and other pest controls that are no longer used or effective, and;
Whereas; the illegal disposal or dumping of such chemicals become a hazard to our environment, and;
Whereas; the cost of disposal by individual is prohibitive;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the proper state agencies to have a general amnesty for the purpose of the proper disposal of these chemicals.

2008-55 *R (1996)

Whereas; pesticides are an essential tool of modern agriculture, and;
Whereas; farmers' use of these pesticides is regulated by a *Pesticide Board*, and;
Whereas; there being only one farmer on the Board, regulation without representation is no more acceptable than taxation without representation, and;
Whereas; converting Massachusetts into one gigantic urban sprawl, an inevitable consequence of the present Board's actions, will be a monumental environmental disaster;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work for the appointment of members who shall be unbiased and objective and will include competent scientists from relevant fields and an equal number of farmers.

2008-56 *R (2005)

As the deciduous forests, mostly maple, oak, and ash, in many parts of Massachusetts have been infested with insect pests for the past few years, which could have dire economic effect on the Mass. Maple sugar industry, tourism, and the harvesting of quality forest products,

Be it resolved that the Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Agricultural Resources institute a spray program, (similar to the State of Vermont's) to eradicate these pests on both private and state lands.

2007-43 *R (1998)

Whereas; the use of pesticides are under attack from concerned citizens and the DEP;

Be it resolved that MFBB continue to support and increase efforts to promote IPM research and implementation.

2007-44 *R (1998)

Whereas; there is currently much confusion in pesticide labeling resulting in reduced productivity and lost time to the grower;

Be it resolved that MFBB work with AFBF to develop standardized labeling, including particularly a requirement that the EPA number and re-entry interval of each substance be printed in legible type size directly below its name.

2007-45 *R (2004)

Whereas, the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has achieved great success in reduction of pesticide use and development of effective alternative crop protection tools for both agricultural community and the homeowner; and whereas, funding by the state of

Massachusetts has been severely diminished resulting in insufficient funding for research, education and promotion of IPM, as well as the implementation of the Children and Families Protection Act:

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support sufficient state budgetary expenditures relating to such research and that its funding be directed to the Department of Agricultural Resources with necessary IPM funding being passed through (DAR) to UMASS Amherst Cooperative Extension Service.

Be it further resolved that MFBF favor repealing the sales tax exemption for retail sales of pesticides and fertilizers as one means of generating revenue for this funding.

2007-46 *R (2004)

Whereas, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts currently has an effective structure in regulating and overseeing the registration and use of pesticides administered by the DAR and the state Pesticide Board.

Be it resolved that MFBF support the continuation of the regulatory structure in place for the administration of any and all pesticides and their sales, storage, and applications in the Commonwealth.

2006-57 *R (1997)

Be it resolved that MFBF should continue to promote affordable and economical programs for disposing of unused or outdated pesticides.

POLICY AND ORGANIZATION

2008-57 *R (1999)

Whereas; The cultivation and sale of Farm Bureau membership is essential to the survival of Farm Bureau, and;

Whereas; Interaction with Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation staff is a benefit that current members need and deserve, and;

Whereas; Other agricultural commodity organizations have members who are not members of Farm Bureau;

Be it resolved: That in an effort to meet our memberships' needs and to generate new membership, Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will exhibit at least five (5) agricultural commodity trade shows or meetings.

2008-58 *R (1996)

Whereas; Farm Bureau members are representative of the farm community and are both producers and consumers of farm products;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage the use of Massachusetts farm grown or produced products in season at all Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation functions.

2008-59 *R (2005)

Whereas: Membership retention and growth is essential to Farm Bureau effectiveness,

And, whereas many long-time members are upset by tardy mailing of membership cards, electronic communications, incorrect inclusion on unpaid lists, unnecessarily curt wording of cover letters, and other deficiencies in the membership system,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation staff and Membership Committee redouble its efforts to insure that these problems are rectified promptly and do not recur.

2008-60 *R (2005)

Whereas the availability of accounting services with an agricultural background are both expensive and of limited availability, and

Whereas the sophistication and complexity of tax and accounting laws represent an oppressive burden to the beginning farmer;

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau explore the possibility of offering entry and beginning farms access to accounting and financial counseling resources.

Further let it be resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation investigates an alliance with the Farm Bureaus in other northeastern states for the purpose of instituting such a plan or service.

2007-47 *R (1998)

Be it resolved that MFBF take the lead in coordinating and unifying the promotional, educational and political goals of all agricultural groups in Massachusetts.

2007-48

Whereas, MFBF is the largest and most respected agricultural trade organization in Massachusetts,

Be it resolved that MFBF move to energize its Government Affairs Committee; and

Be it Further Resolved that MFBF look to improve membership participation in the political process.

2006-58 *R (2000)

Whereas; the problems of Agribusiness in Massachusetts can arise quickly and at any time,

Be it resolved that qualified staff person from Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) be available in the MFBF office or on call during all normal MFBF business hours.

2006-59 *R (1997)

Whereas; agriculture is increasingly at odds dealing with differing regulations and definitions;

Be it resolved that MFBF work to create a uniform definition of *farms* and *farming* so that local and state statutes are compatible.

2006-60 *R (1997)

Whereas; many MFBF members have had positive legal precedent setting law cases and decisions;

Be it resolved that members be encouraged to file these crucial helpful precedents in the MFBF office where they are available to other members and their attorneys in dire need of this vital information.

2006-61 *R (1997)

Whereas; the young farmer is the next generation to continue business;

Whereas; this same farmer will have to be increasingly aware of and involved in the politics of the trade;

Be it resolved that MFBF continue to promote, support and encourage the young farmers' and ranchers' program.

2006-62 *R (1997)

Whereas; the continuing urbanization of Massachusetts has put our farmland in jeopardy, and;
Whereas; we feel strongly that public policy should be protecting our rights as farmers is of the utmost importance;

Be it resolved that MFBF work towards strengthening the right-to-farm policy of the Commonwealth.

2006-63

Whereas, We the farming community of Massachusetts have elected a new Governor and his website does include agriculture for one of his “working groups” as part of his administration transition process.

Be it resolved: that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau make a request to Deval Patrick to form a “working group” to address issues that face agriculture in Massachusetts and include this said group on his new website patrickmurrytransitions.org so individuals can make suggestions and or comments for the new administration.

Be it further resolved: that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau make every effort to educate our new governor and his staff concerning the current state of affairs of the Dairy Industry in Massachusetts. That MFBF set up a time to meet with Deval Patrick and the dairy farmers of Massachusetts to discuss urgent issues that they face.

2006-64

Whereas county farm bureaus and agricultural commissions are changing and becoming less of a nucleus for social and grassroots organizing,

Be it resolved that County Farm Bureau create yearly “Open Barn” meetings/gatherings/Information sessions/Round Tables to inform and collaborate with members and potential members in the community.

2006-65

Whereas, MFBF dues have been at the same level for several years,

Be it resolved that associate dues be increased to \$60 and regular dues be increased to \$180.

2006-66

Whereas Farm Bureau needs and desires new members,

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau Federation explore and solicit grants and fund-raising possibilities for marketing, and assisting Mass Farm Bureau Federation policies and programs locally and statewide.

2006-67

Whereas numbers of farms are dropping, and every current existing and potential farm becomes more important,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau create/implement marketing devices to facilitate retention and recruitment.

2006-68

Where as FB membership & Directors are increasing in years (avg. age)

Be it resolved that every MFBF County Farm Bureau seek out one/more young farmer Farm Bureau person to be placed on their board and encourage and/or entice the Young Farmer to participate locally and statewide.

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

2008-61

Whereas; nuisance suits are becoming larger issues to farms across the Commonwealth we wish to propose protecting the rights of farmers;

Whereas; nuisance suits have no legal basis, but still must be defended against, they impose a crippling financial burden on the farmer. Presently there is no accountability for the person(s) filing illegitimate nuisance suits;

Whereas, this resolution will safeguard good agricultural practices against the misuse of nuisance suits,

Therefore be it resolved: if a finding is in the farmer's favor, the person filing the nuisance suit shall pay all legal costs and treble damages for both federal and state suits.

2008-62

Whereas there is an increase by state and local agencies to regulate agriculture,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work towards the re-file of legislation of 1990, 30A Section 18.

2008-63 *R (2002)

Whereas; local boards of health are granted statutory emergency powers, not subject to review by other boards and commissions within the cities or towns;

And Whereas; many of the issues confronted by the board of health are often the result of neighborhood disputes;

And Whereas; the action taken by the board may result in negative impacts for the whole city or town while attempting to address a site-specific issue;

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage its members to cultivate a relationship with local boards of health personnel, to know what's going on relevant to the activities of the board and to insure that a balanced approach may be undertaken and implemented in dealing with issues within the purview of the board of health.

Be it further resolved that Mass Farm Bureau Federation work to have Public Health Regulations fall under the review of the Attorney General.

2007-49 *R (1998)

Whereas; it is recognized that a system of independent, land-owning farmers has been a hallmark of this nation and has been enormously successful in providing all of its agricultural needs, and;

Whereas; it is recognized that land and water are fundamental to the conduct of all agricultural endeavors, and;

Whereas; it is further recognized that there is an increasing tendency today to restrict or deny farmers their historical use of these vital resources;

Be it resolved that the MFBF endorses as a fundamental right of all farmers the right of private property ownership of land and of water resources, to wit:

- The right to restrict access to private property;
- The right to protection of their herds, flocks, crops, pastures, timber, orchards and other agricultural products of the land from damage or destruction by vandals, trespassers, thieves, animal predators or pests.
- The right to unobstructed use of their land for reasonable or customary agricultural purposes;
- The rights of riparian ownership or use of groundwater for reasonable or customary agricultural needs;
- The right to sell or convey their property;
- The right to protection from unlawful seizure or taking of their property;

Be it further resolved that MFBF will pursue an active program to defend and promote these rights for all farmers, and;

Be it finally resolved that these policies become policy of AFBF.

2007-50 *R (2004)

Whereas, the Massachusetts Farm Bureau supports the protection of private property rights and land use opportunity;

Be it resolved the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation specifically opposes National Park Service administration and or involvement in the M & M Trail and the creation of a national forest of any sort in Massachusetts.

2006-69 *R (1997)

Whereas; many times eminent domain settlement does not reflect true losses suffered by farmers whose land has been taken;

Be it resolved that MFBF work to have “multiple damages” awarded in cases of hardship to farmers.

2006-70 *R (1997)

Whereas; there is a continuing erosion of “private property rights” by the imposition of burdensome government regulations;

Be it resolved that MFBF file state legislation that would define “taking”, under these regulations, to be a reduction or decrease in value of 25% or \$10,000 of value.

2006-71 *R (1997)

Whereas; land, its ownership and its traditional rights and privileges are the basic building blocks of all agricultural endeavors and;

Whereas; this land and the buildings thereon are the financial cornerstone and security as well as the farmer’s domain and base of operations and;

Whereas; this ownership and its rights are protected by the constitution of the United States to be invaded only if required by the public health and welfare and then only with fair restitution to the owner;

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF take whatever action necessary to show progress to counter the continual erosion of these rights by laws and regulations at town, county, state and federal government levels without consideration of these constitutional guarantees and particularly restitution of the financial loss to the owner by these takings. The amount of these damages to be arrived at as any other governmental annexation.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

2007-51 *R (1998)

Whereas; agriculture does not always receive positive media coverage, and;
Whereas; farmers are often placed on the defensive;

Be it resolved that MFBF do more work with public relations to give agriculture a more positive image.

RATITES

2007-52 *R (1998)

Be it resolved that *ratites* (ostrich, emu & rhea) raised for commercial purposes be included in the definition of agriculture and farming in all relevant sections of Massachusetts law and regulations;

Be it further resolved that *ratites* raised for commercial purposes be removed from the authority with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and placed under the authority of the Department of Agricultural Resources.

TAXES, ASSESSMENTS AND FEES

2008-64

Whereas; farms are heavily burdened with property taxes, as well as sales taxes on the many products they need to purchase for new or repairing of agricultural structures;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have property taxes delayed for ten (10) years on new agricultural structures, at which time they then would be assessed at a ten year depreciated value.

Be it further resolved that all agricultural building materials be exempt from sales tax.

2008-65

Whereas; some neighboring states are exempting their farmers from sales tax on farm trucks;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have the sales tax removed on farm trucks that can be registered with farm plates.

2008-66

Property taxes on agricultural buildings

Whereas; farm buildings are assessed at full commercial rates, and

Whereas; much of the square footage of many of these structures is used for unique agricultural practices for short seasonal periods of time,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will petition the state to instruct town and city assessors to not only create a reduced agricultural rate for farm buildings, but will also pro-rate the assessment according to the "time in use".

2008-67 *R (2002)

Whereas; a deficit budget is forecast and the Commonwealth will be looking to raise taxes,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation recommends against an increase in all taxes and against a resumption of the inheritance tax.

2008-68 *R (1996)

Whereas; much confusion exists over the taxation of different types of horse operations;

Be it resolved that all commercial horse operations be classified as agricultural enterprises and that they enjoy the same tax exemptions as other agricultural enterprises.

2008-69 *R (2002)

Whereas; public land is for use by the public, and;

Whereas; the farm community uses this land for growing of feed and crops, and;

Whereas; public land cannot be developed or improved by the farm community, and;

Be it resolved: the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Department of Revenue, Inspector General's Office and cities and towns to exclude farmers from paying property taxes on public land or, as an alternative, the value of the land be based on use value.

2007-53 *R (1998)

Whereas; income tax is still levied against income on land taken by eminent domain;

Be it resolved that the income tax on land taken by the state in eminent domain proceedings be eliminated.

2007-54 *R (1998)

Whereas; the Chapter 61A program has been important to Franklin County and Massachusetts farmers, and;

Whereas; there is consistent pressure from town assessors and revenue department personnel;

Be it resolved that MFBF continue to support the per acre land value recommendations provided annually by the Farmland Evaluation Advisory Commission relative to 61A values.

2007-55 *R (1998)

Whereas; owners of land parcels of less than five acres are ineligible for tax relief under Chapter 61A, and;

Whereas; many such owners or their leasees make honest livings in agriculture by combining many such parcels into a single operation, and;

Whereas; in municipalities which have adopted property tax classification, such parcels are taxed at the *commercial* rate which exceeds even that of *residential* land;

Be it resolved that MFBF:

- Continue its efforts to have such small parcels as are actively used in productive agriculture be covered by Chapter 61A, or;
- Seek legislation stipulating an additional classification called *agriculture*;
- Seek legislation mandating the classification of land actively used for agricultural purposes as *open space*.

2007-56 *R (1998)

Whereas; the keeping of bees is an important entity to all of agriculture and provides the consuming public with a safe, wholesome, natural sweetener, and;

Whereas; the raising, keeping, stabling and breeding of horses, ponies and all members of the equine species is important to the agricultural infrastructure and the preservation of open space;

Be it resolved that MFBF take appropriate action to implement and apply the agricultural exemptions granted under M.G.L. Ch. 64H and I to all of agriculture.

2007-57 *R (2004)

Whereas, property values throughout the Commonwealth, especially in the southeastern portion, have increased dramatically in the past three years,

And whereas local assessors have in some cases, sharply increased the value of farms, often violating both the spirit and the letter of Chapter 61 and Chapter 61-A,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau staff continue its excellent work, both through intervention on behalf of individuals and through seminars, in protecting our members, and sustaining existing laws which protect farmland from unfair taxation.

2007-58 *R (2004)

Be it resolved MFBF supports the implementation of a fair tax system including an exploration of the IRS present legal basis used to determine the taxable income of US citizens.

2007-59

Whereas, energy is the largest agricultural input, and

Whereas, anything we can do to promote alternative fuels will enhance profitability and help the environment;

Be it resolved that the MFBF and AFBF work to remove both the federal and state taxes from bio-fuels when used on a farm, or when used for the transportation of agricultural products by a farm.

2007-60

Whereas personal property taxes represent a substantial annual expense to agricultural businesses in Massachusetts, and

Whereas citizens of the Commonwealth have generally supported providing tax relief for agriculture,

Be it resolved that MFBF explore avenues to provide relief from personal property taxation on farm equipment and inventory.

2006-72 *R (2003)

Whereas; the finances of farms are such that attracting customers with reasonable prices is important to the continuation of the farm, and;

Whereas; the tax burden on the citizens of the Commonwealth is already high;

Be it resolved the Massachusetts Farm Bureau will work diligently to prevent the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or any Massachusetts city, town, or village to collect any visitor impact fee for any event organized and sponsored by any Massachusetts non-profit organization or agricultural enterprise.

2006-73 *R (2003)

Whereas; a tax-exempt or non-profit status is granted to alleviate certain financial burdens, and;

Whereas; a tax-exempt or non-profit organization may sell assets that may be of high value or that may provide open space,

Be it resolved that if any church, synagogue, school, college, university, or non-profit organization sells any real estate of which they have paid no property tax, that they be subject to the tenets of chapter 61, 61A and 61B regarding repayment of back property tax and that the city, town, or village have the right of first refusal to purchase the real estate for a period of 120 days.

2006-74 *R (2003)

Whereas; the vast majority of farms and businesses in Massachusetts are family owned and operated; And State laws supporting Medicaid have made passing on of property and the family farms and businesses more difficult or impossible for those with limited insurance because of liens requiring repayment to Medicaid, And passing on of the farms and businesses is necessary to support agriculture as it is currently practiced in the commonwealth.

Be it resolved: Massachusetts Farm Bureau devote resources to ensuring through legislation or other means that the farm and businesses may be passed on to future generations, without presenting an undue financial hardship to succeeding generations.

2006-75 *R (2003)

Whereas; the State, tax exempt and non profit organizations own land and sell forest products yearly,

Be it resolved to allow the collection of an eight percent stumpage fee from the sale of forest products sold from land owned by the State of Massachusetts, and by tax exempt and non profit organizations.

2006-76 *R (2003)

Whereas; wildlife attacks on farm livestock is an increasing problem, it has become a necessity to use firearms to protect animals and people; Whereas; The State of Massachusetts has imposed a \$100 fee every four years on Firearm Identification cards to raise revenues for the commonwealth; Whereas; this is an excessive tax and farmers get no benefit from this expense,

Be it resolved that MFBB support legislation making FID fees a one-time fee.

2006-77 *R (2003)

Whereas; since farmers have been the backbone of the State of Massachusetts since colonial days. In today's world many of their farm buildings are not practical for their current purpose; Whereas; since the farm houses and building have to be renovated, change structure, or rebuilt in order for farmers to exist on their farms;

Be it resolved that MFBB, encourage a formation of a government program that farmers may secure low interest loans for buildings so that farmers can operate successfully.

2006-78 *R (2003)

Whereas; the value of farm houses has risen in the exploding real estate and building demand, and the taxes on houses, farm buildings and farm retail operations has exploded even more, and Whereas; Farmers have invested for generations of their families keeping open space while toiling on the farm, and Whereas; In many cases farmers cannot afford to live in their own farm house because of higher taxes on their house forced by the demand of the land values in our farming communities.

Be it resolved that it be a priority of MFBB to work aggressively to place farm houses and buildings at a true agricultural value as a necessity for the operation of the farm.

2006-79 *R (2003)

Whereas; there are significant legal questions with regard to the way the IRS is applying the Income Tax code,

And Whereas; the tax code is incredibly cumbersome and expensive to adhere to,

Be it resolved that MFBF supports the implementation of a Fair Tax system.

2006-80 *R (2000)

RE: Interest, Dividends, and Capital Gains.

Our family farms in Massachusetts are struggling to keep in existence. It is important for all of our Massachusetts citizens to protect this open space, environmental quality and resource and local food supply for all the people.

One way of keeping agriculture is for working farmers to be taxed fairly on their Massachusetts income tax form. Many farmers have invested money conservatively to help through times such as at present with record low commodity prices. Farmers are not allowed to offset losses from the farm with interest, dividends and capital gains. These columns are taxed separately. This is unfair for farmers and only will result in their demise as they are forced to liquidate assets.

To keep agriculture going a farmer should be able to use all sources of revenue to pay the expense of his farm losses.

2006-81 *R (1997)

Whereas; state-wide there are inconsistencies in real estate valuations;

Be it resolved that MFBF act to encourage whatever action is necessary to tax silos and feed storage units as farm machinery and equipment and;

Be it further resolved to take whatever actions necessary to have land values assessed consistently according to Chapter 61A guidelines.

2006-82 *R (1997)

Whereas; many farms have business zoned land and where farm buildings in business zones are often included with the same tax rate for commercial and industrial buildings;

Be it resolved that MFBF work to have the lowest tax classification rate for small or farm businesses in business zoned land.

2006-83 *R (1997)

Whereas; farm buildings are often assessed at valuations far above their agricultural values;

Be it resolved that MFBF work to establish a mechanism for fair valuation of farm buildings, similar to the Farmland Assessment Act.

Be it resolved that MFBF express to the Department of Revenue the necessity of educating said officials and the public about the Chapter 61A process.

2006-84

Whereas, the farm animal, machinery excise tax is implemented inconsistently across the Commonwealth and is burdensome to many agricultural producers,

Be it resolved that MFBF explore options to reduce these burdens on communities and producers.

2006-85

Whereas the M.G.L. Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 45 grants an excise tax exemption to renewable energy systems for 20 years, and whereas many of these systems have a useful life of over 30 years,

Be it resolved that MFBF will work to change the language of the above law from “20 years”, to the “useful life of the system”.

2006-86

Whereas government grants are taxed as normal income;
Whereas this is effectively taxing taxes;

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau work to eliminate state and federal tax on these funds.

2006-87

Whereas, Thru the Paperwork Reduction Act the Congress required that all official government forms are mandated to have an OMB number. There are two basic forms used by government agencies to request an OMB number. One form’s criteria is for Proposed Information Collection-the form IRS inappropriately used for their 1040 request. This application has IRS’s statement that no legal requirement exists, so how can IRS pursue taxpayers who may not file and pay taxes based on the 1040 form? IRS’s request should have used the form needed to establish the legality and mandated use of the information to generate taxes from US citizens. This form requires the listing of laws/regulations which mandate the 1040 uses. IRS, Treasury and OMB have refused to discuss this issue with individuals, so we need group action.

Therefore, be it resolved that MFBF meet with responsible decision makers to determine how IRS has been allowed to continue this apparent illegal use of the 1040 returns.

TRESPASS, VANDALISM AND DESTRUCTION OF FARM PROPERTY

2007-61 *R (1998)

Whereas; Massachusetts livestock producers and handlers have an exemplary record of providing efficient and humane care, and;

Whereas; after a 2 and 1/2 year study, the report of the Farm Animal Welfare Study Committee, which consisted of representatives of Animal Rescue League, Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Massachusetts Farm Bureau and industry representatives agree that there exists no evidence of abuse or neglect on farms in Massachusetts;

Be it resolved that MFBF continue its aggressive program of promoting agriculture’s image, and;

Be it further resolved that MFBF vigorously oppose and urge prosecution of those animal rights groups and individuals who, by criminal trespass and vandalism, seek to damage and destroy the image of livestock agriculture.

ZONING

2008-70 *R (2002)

Whereas; the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is concerned about the affordability of housing, and
Whereas; the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is also concerned about agriculture and open space,

Be it resolved that all housing proposals under MGL Chapter 40B shall require a one hundred (100) foot buffer zone from any adjoining property line of property that is used for agriculture, open space, or that has a conservation, forestry, or agricultural restriction,

Be it resolved that there shall also be a fence installed on the property line to safely keep any young children from coming into the agricultural area where they may become injured.

Also be it resolved that such buffer zones shall be planted in evergreen type shrubs to help reduce noise, dust, and or any odors from reaching the housing development.

2008-71 *R (1999)

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation prepare a reference document examining zoning bylaw, and other regulatory issues, concerning farm related businesses. These issues include agricultural tourism, farm vacations, and recreational activities, on farm entertainment, processed products and related farm occupations.

2008-72 *R (2005)

Whereas there are efforts being made to change the way zoning and/or planning boards operate in the Commonwealth,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to fight against any legislation that would:

- Do away with “form A” applications
- Change the passage of zoning/planning by-laws from 2/3 to simple majority
- Do away with attorney general oversight on by-law and regulation passage.

2006-88 *R (2000)

Whereas; Chapter 61A provides for specific use of land for a residence for the owner or a parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, or brother or sister of the owner, or the surviving husband or wife of any deceased such relative, or for living quarters for any persons actively employed full time in the agricultural or horticultural use of such land;

Whereas; this provision of the State Law is used as an incentive to keep land in agricultural use and therefore open space;

Whereas; The Cape Cod Commission Act has been interpreted by its enforcers to usurp the section of Chapter 61A intended to allow for division of property for a residence as stated above without first meeting their demands for set-asides for open space, affordable housing, etc., and

Whereas; The threshold for mandatory referral to the Commission by the Town Planning Board is division of any land contiguous including non-developable land (wetlands) of presently 30 acres and being considered to be lowered to 10 acres;

Therefore, be it resolved, that, as with the Wetlands Protection Act, an exemption for owners of land being assessed under Chapter 61A shall be made from the Cape Cod Commission Act and similar regional planning statutes.

2006-89

Whereas there are currently significant town, county and state efforts to change local zoning regulations to decrease allowable lot densities (also known as “down-zoning”), and

Whereas there are significant changes being proposed to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A that propose the elimination of ANR (approval not required) lots and increase allowable lot sizes and densities, and

Whereas these proposals will reduce the asset value of forest farmland without compensation to the owners,

Be it resolved that MFBF opposes the concept of down-zoning and will work actively to assure that any and all changes to local, regional, or state laws that reduce the value of an agricultural landowners' property or diminish his rights are only for significant and legitimate public health, safety or welfare reasons.