



Young Farmers & Ranchers Happenings

If anyone is interested in hosting a tour of their farm
or joining the YF&R committee, please email
Heather at
heatherbonanno@gmail.com.

Make Plans To Attend Our Oct. 15 Tour at Four Star Farm in Northfield!



Hops! Solar! Beer!

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Location: 496 Pine Meadow, Northfield, MA

Join us for a tour of Four Star Farm and their new brewery! Nestled along the banks of the Connecticut River you'll find the family farm, a fertile piece of land (about 250 acres). The farm's heritage is deeply rooted in agricultural tradition, built and passed

down by 14 generations, and driven by a steadfast commitment to responsibly balance what is right for the environment with what is viable for the farmland and the family. Over the years, the farm has evolved and innovated to remain sustainable in changing markets and is now focused on hops. To learn more, please visit: <https://fourstarfarms.com>.

RSVP By emailing: katelyn@mfbf.net

Upcoming YF&R Events!

If you are interested in attending any of the following tours, please let us know so we can send you details. Please email katelyn@mfbf.net.

Nov. 10 & 11, 2021

The group will tour agriculture on Martha's Vineyard!

Dec. 2 & 3, 2021

MFBF's Annual Meeting in Marlborough! Details here: <https://mfbf.net/annual-meeting/>

Baker-Polito Administration Announces \$15 Million in Support for the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program



Building on investments to address food insecurity among Massachusetts residents, the Baker-Polito Administration today announced it has made available \$15 million in funding through a second round of its Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program. The funding will enable the Administration to continue to implement the recommendations of the Food Security Task Force, which was convened last year by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center in response to increased demands for food assistance.

“Addressing food security issues remains a high priority of our Administration to help ensure all residents have fresh, healthy produce readily available to them,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “By working with dedicated partners, we will continue to strengthen the food distribution supply chain and address more needs throughout the Commonwealth.”

“This round of grants from the Food Security Grant program will further expand on our efforts to provide greater access to locally harvested and produced food products,” **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. “With higher numbers of people experiencing food insecurity, we continue to take significant strides in ensuring fresh, locally sourced food remains widely available to the residents of Massachusetts.”

The Administration opened the funding opportunity on Wednesday, September 15, 2021 and is currently accepting applications for funding. In this round, the program is focused on addressing access to fresh food by improving and strengthening the resiliency of the Commonwealth's food system and expanding the distribution of locally grown and sourced products to vulnerable communities. The Request for Responses for project proposals is available [here](#), and is open until Oct. 31, 2021.

The Administration launched the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program last year as part of a \$56 million investment to combat food insecurity for Massachusetts families and individuals. In addition to expanding access to healthy local food, the program seeks to ensure farmers, fishermen and other local food producers are better connected to a strong, resilient food system to help mitigate future food supply disruption. Last year's program dedicated over \$35.5 million to hundreds of projects to address food insecurity across the Commonwealth.

“The Baker-Polito Administration continues to dedicate critical resources to address food insecurity and ensure that residents across the Commonwealth are able to access fresh, local food,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Kathleen Theoharides**. “Building on recent investments with this additional

funding will further strengthen the Commonwealth's food distribution network, invest in local farms and fishermen and women to areas of food insecurity and build a more resilient food system."

"The Baker-Polito Administration has been addressing increased food insecurity for families as a result of the public health emergency, building on and strengthening the infrastructure in place, and leveraging existing nutrition resources like SNAP and WIC," said Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders. "The \$15 million in additional funds will further strengthen the food system in Massachusetts, increasing access to local, healthy food, particularly among communities hardest-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic."

Eligible grantees include entities that are part of the Massachusetts local food system, including production, processing and distribution, the emergency food distribution network, community and food organizations, school meal programming, urban farms and community gardens, non-profits, and other organizations involved in ensuring that everyone in the Commonwealth has access to fresh, healthy foods. Applications for the second round of the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program are due Sunday, October 31, 2021.

Eligible proposals include, but are not limited to, projects seeking to:

- Increase the resiliency of the overall food system in the Commonwealth;
- Increase capacity for food storage;
- Increase capacity of local food distribution partners;
- Increase capacity of the emergency food network;
- Increase capacity of food production by purchasing food processing equipment; and,
- Offer innovative solutions for urban farming.

Eligible grantees include entities that are part of the Massachusetts local food system including production, processing and distribution, the emergency food distribution network, Buy Local, community and food organizations, school meal programming, urban farms and community gardens, non-profits, and organizations that provide business planning, technical assistance and information technology services.

The first round of the Food Insecurity Infrastructure Grant Program was announced in May 2020 as part of a \$56 million investment by the Baker-Polito Administration to combat urgent food insecurity for some Massachusetts families and individuals as a result of COVID-19. The Administration also announced a \$5 million increase for the [Healthy Incentives Program](#) to meet increased demand for local produce and to increase access points that process SNAP and HIP benefits, \$12 million for the provision of 25,000 family food boxes per week through a regional food supply system, and \$3 million in funding as an immediate relief valve to food banks.

Advocacy Organization Contacts Massachusetts Farmers Regarding 2016's Ballot Question Implementation Deadline

You may have received an email from the Americans For Family Farmers organization asking you to sign onto a letter asking the Massachusetts legislature to maintain the 2016 Ballot Question 3's current implementation deadline of Jan. 1, 2022. This organization states extending the deadline to 2024 does not benefit Massachusetts farmers. While the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) does not have policy on whether to maintain the implementation deadline or not, the organization feels farmers should be aware of the letters and can make their own informed decisions on whether to sign off on the letter or not.

As a reminder, the ballot question prohibited the sale of eggs, veal or pork of a farm animal confined in spaces that prevent the animal from lying down, standing up, extending its limbs, or turning around. Essentially this move banned veal crates, gestation crates for hogs, and made it so poultry producers had to provide 1.5 square feet of space per bird.

In Massachusetts, legislators can amend ballot questions to make them workable without changing the intent of the question. Currently this is happening with ballot question 3 from 2016 as the legislature examines how to implement this policy on imported products through HB864 that is sponsored by Representative Cahill and SB2481 sponsored by Senator Lewis. The Senate version has passed in its chamber.

It is important to note that all Massachusetts livestock producers already comply with all these requirements laid out in Question 3. There is no benefit to Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) members or other local farmers in delaying – or changing space requirements – the implementation of the question.

Interestingly, the MSPCA and HSUS have since agreed with United Egg Producers that 1 square foot of space per bird is acceptable standards – please note that there is no current, national legal standard. These two organizations are trying to establish one. As such, they have lobbied our legislature to reduce that requirement down in the two above mentioned bills. MFBF has opposed this change as we feel it

goes against the will of the voters and all of our poultry farms already compile with the 1.5 square feet minimum. Additionally, during the ballot question debate when we raised concerns about this space requirement and imported product, we were informed by HSUS that there would be no shortages in food. However, the legislature has been considering these bills to reduce the square footage. MFBF, while it opposed Question 3, is opposed to reducing the standard from 1.5 square feet to 1. This conflicts directly with the will of the voters and has the potential to undermine trust in agriculture.

Additionally, the question's implementation was delayed until Jan. 1, 2022, as the Attorney General's office felt they are not the "best suited government office to lead the regulatory effort" and would prefer the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) have the authority to put forth regulations. As questions about these standards remain up for debate in bills, there is a proposal to push the deadline to Jan. 1, 2024, to allow the regulatory agency time after the legislation is passed or defeated to determine how best to promulgate regulations.

If you have any questions on Question 3 and its implementation, please call the office at 508-481-4766.

MFBF Names Sunderland Cat 'Barn Cat of the Year'

'No working farm is complete without a working cat!' This line is straight out of Sophie-Jane's nomination for Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation's (MFBF's) barn cat of the year, which was submitted by her owner Laurie Cuevas. It showcases how important these larger-than-life purr-sonalities are to their farmers and due to Sophie-Jane's work to keep the barn at Thomas Farm & Dairy free of birds, she was awarded MFBF's Barn Cat of the Year.



"Sophie-Jane exhibited the qualities of an excellent barn cat," said MFBF Promotion and Education Chair Meg Gennings. "Not only does she keep rodents and birds out of the barn at Thomas Farm and Dairy but she also is extremely affectionate and an excellent napper. Those qualities are what make barn cats popular."

Sophie-Jane was adopted through Dakin Humane Society's barn cat program, which pairs cats who are either too feisty or too shy to live in traditional homes with working barns. These cats are spayed or neutered, and the owner is required to provide them with a warm bed (in Sophie-Jane's case that meant a cat door into the warm room where Thomas Farm and Dairy raises baby goats).

"We are so happy that Sophie-Jane found a loving home/barn and has now earned the title of Barn Cat of the Year," said Stacey Price, Dakin Humane Society director of development and marketing. "We are incredibly thankful to those who open up their barns to cats like Sophie-Jane. They are truly doing lifesaving work by making this choice. Cats like Sophie-Jane are used to being outside, some may not even like people and prefer the company of other cats making it difficult for animal shelters to sometimes find living quarters for them. And even though these cats are wild they deserve equal compassion, love and humane care within the environment for which they thrive. Congrats Sophie-Jane for representing all barn cats!"

The contest was sponsored by The Pet Food Institute, and the winners will receive a gift basket of pet-themed items. Thanks to their generosity, in addition to barn cat of the year, five other felines were selected to win awards in the following areas and receive gift baskets:

- Best napper: Thomas, who is owned by the UMass Livestock Barn and was nominated by Seana Mawhinney from Ashburnham
- Best mouser: Spinach, who is owned by Vanessa Romasco from Georgetown
- Best dressed: Peanut, who is owned by Sarah Lovett from Sherborn
- Sassiest: Hamilton, who is also owned by Sarah Lovett from Sherborn
- Chonkest: Alfalfa, who is owned by Karen Herzig from Colrain

A panel of farmers, who are used to working alongside furry aloof feline companions, reviewed 20 nominations to select the 2021 Barn Cat of the Year. Entries included written responses and photos to showcase their cat's dedication to farm life.

For farmers who are looking to adopt barn cats, here is a list of links to shelters with a barn cat adoption program:

- <https://www.dakinhumane.org/barn-cats.html>
- https://www.mspca.org/animal_care/barn-cat-program/
- <https://monadnockhumanesociety.org/adoption/barn-cat-program/>
- <https://www.plymouth-ma.gov/animal-control/pages/barnworking-cat-program>
- <https://www.catsontheweb.org/feralcatrescues.htm>

Growing Your Farm Business Planning Course

Tuesday evenings, January 11 to March 8, 2022 - Location to be determined

MDAR offers a hands-on course to help established farmers develop a business plan and financial projections for their farm business. This course covers topics including resource assessment, marketing strategy, financial management, risk management, quality of life, and goal setting. The course is taught by professional business planners with years of experience working with Massachusetts farms and guest speakers on current topics such as succession planning and online marketing. The cost is \$200 per farm. Enrollment is open to farmers who have been operating a farm business in Massachusetts for at least the two prior years. Eight weekly classes will be held on Tuesday evenings starting January 11 and ending March 8 (with one vacation week).

Plans are for in-person class. Final decision in January based on current COVID conditions. Applications will be accepted until November 19 or until the course is full.

Farmers that complete a business plan by participating in the Growing Your Farm business planning course and then apply and get accepted to MDAR's APR Improvement Program or Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture may be able to waive the business planning phase of these programs, enabling them to move to the contract phase earlier to start implementing their projects.

The Growing Your Farm business planning course has been approved as a certified USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrower training for financial management.

TO APPLY: For a Growing Your Farm application, [click here](#), or contact Michael Parker at Michael.Parker@mass.gov, 857-895-0023.

USDA Announces 2022 Application Ranking Dates For Conservation Programs In Massachusetts

Landowners and managers of agricultural land and forestland in Massachusetts, interested in technical and financial assistance to address natural resource concerns, are invited to contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) about applying for several federal conservation programs. Applications are ranked in batching periods.



In Massachusetts, NRCS will be offering four batching periods for financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) programs. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year; however, the next batching date will be **January 21, 2022**. Pending available funding, additional batching period cut-off dates for EQIP and AMA will be **March 18, May 20, and July 15** of 2022.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) will have one batching period cut-off date: **March 18, 2022**.

You may apply for NRCS conservation programs at any time; complete applications are ranked for funding in batches periodically throughout the year. All applications determined eligible and high priority by close of business on the ranking date will be considered in the current funding cycle. All NRCS programs are voluntary.

Ranking dates and the application process are subject to change Contact your local field office for the latest information. For more information on available programs, the application process, and natural resource priorities, visit the Massachusetts NRCS website at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

For more information, contact your local USDA-NRCS office:

- **Greenfield field office** – 413-772-0384, ext 3, serving **Franklin County**
- **Hadley field office** – 413-585-1000, ext 3, serving **Hampden and Hampshire counties**
- **Holden field office** – 508-829-4477, ext 3, serving **Worcester County**
- **Pittsfield field office** – 413-443-1776, ext 3, serving **Berkshire County**
- **Westford field office** – 978-692-1904, ext 3, serving **Essex, Middlesex and Suffolk counties**
- **Wareham field office** – 508-295-5151, ext 2, serving **Bristol, Norfolk and Plymouth counties**
- **West Yarmouth field office** – 508-771-6476, serving **Cape Cod and the Islands**

Farmland and forestland operators and owners should contact NRCS to begin the conservation planning process. NRCS develops conservation plans which evaluate resource concerns, while considering the land management goals of the operation. "If you operate a farm or manage forest land and want to improve your land, we can help," said Dan Wright, State Conservationist for NRCS in Massachusetts. "You can discuss your vision for your land with one of our conservation planners, who will explain the conservation planning process and how to apply for financial assistance."

The **AMA** program provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.

Massachusetts producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures and implement high tunnels to benefit plant productivity. AMA is available in 16 states where Federal Crop Insurance Program participation is historically low: Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

CSP assists agricultural producers, including operators of non-industrial private forestland, who already provide a high level of management on their land, to take their conservation activities to the next level. Producers are provided payments based on the current stewardship activities and financial assistance for the completion of additional activities enhancing their environmental stewardship. CSP is for working lands including cropland, pastureland, nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of a tribe.

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns through an array of conservation practices. Assistance is available to support private landowners and managers in addressing farm, field, forest, wildlife, water, and/or plant management issues including:

- Erosion control
- Farm and forestry conservation plans
- Fencing for grazing systems
- Forest stand improvement
- Grazing plans
- Irrigation systems
- Pasture and hayland planting
- Pollinator habitat
- Protection of heavy use areas for livestock
- Restoration and management of declining habitat
- Riparian buffers
- Seasonal high tunnels
- Soil health management plans
- Waste storage facilities
- Wildlife habitat management and development

Some of the EQIP funding will be provided to farmers and forest landowners via the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which encourages partner organizations to join in efforts with producers to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales. Through the RCPP program, NRCS and its partners help producers install and maintain conservation activities in selected project areas. Partners leverage RCPP funding in project areas and report on the benefits achieved.

NRCS is a federal agency that works hand-in-hand with conservation districts and the people of Massachusetts to improve and protect soil, water and other natural resources.

USDA Accepting Applications To Help Cover Costs For Organic Certification



Organic producers and handlers can now apply for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds to assist with the cost of receiving or maintaining organic certification. Applications for the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) are due Nov. 1, 2021.

"USDA is here to help all producers, including those who grow our nation's organic food and fiber. Many farmers have told us that cost was a barrier to their ability to get an organic certification," said Zach Ducheneaux, administrator of USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). "By assisting with the costs, this program can help organic farmers get their certification along with the benefits that come with it."

OCCSP provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent during the 2021 and any subsequent program year. Producers can be reimbursed for expenses made between Oct. 1, 2020 and Sept. 30, 2021 including application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

For 2021, OCCSP will reimburse 50% of a certified operation's allowable certification costs, up to a maximum of \$500 for each of the following categories (or "scopes"):

- crops
- wild crops
- livestock
- processing/handling
- State organic program fees

Organic farmers and ranchers may apply through an FSA county office or a participating state agency. This funding will be complemented by an additional \$20 million for organic and transitioning producers through the Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. More information on that funding will be available in the coming weeks.

Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP) Now Accepting Applications

MDAR is now accepting applications for the Ag Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP).

The goal of the AFSIP grant is to support produce and aquaculture operations that are looking to upgrade their food safety practices that work towards minimizing the risk of microbial contamination and food-borne illnesses, meet regulatory requirements, and improve market access.

AFSIP is a competitive, reimbursement grant program that funds 80% of total project costs up to \$50,000.

Applications are due by 4:00PM on Friday, November 5, 2021.

Please refer to the AFSIP website for more information and a copy of the application:

www.mass.gov/how-to/agricultural-food-safety-improvement-program-afsip



Apply Today For MFBAPF's John & Liolia Schipper Memorial Grant!



Massachusetts farmers are faced with many unique challenges and barriers as the Commonwealth is an expensive and tough business environment. Fortunately, the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation's Agricultural Preservation Foundation (MFBAPF) is looking to assist farmers with a new grant program that was made possible through a generous bequest from the late John and Liolia Schipper.

With an emphasis on new farmers, all meeting the criteria are welcome to apply.

Eligibility requirements: Applicants must be regular Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation members -or-

be sponsored by a regular Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation member at the time of application and enrolled as a regular MFBF to receive grant payments.

Grant applications will be reviewed by a committee and receipts will be notified shortly after. Maximum grant amounts for recipients will be \$3,000.

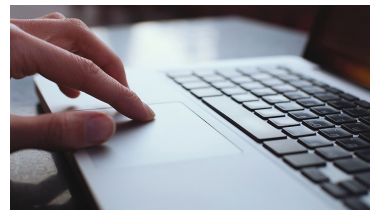
The deadline to apply is Oct. 25. For an application, please visit: <https://mfbf.net/schipper-grant-program/>.

Farm Bureau University

What is Farm Bureau University?

“Online Learning for Farm Bureau”

Learning is no longer confined to four walls and formalized training. Farm Bureau University allows Farm Bureau members to learn through interactive experiences online when and where they want. Farm Bureau members can log onto FB University from a desktop computer in their office or on an iPad in the field.



Currently available to Farm Bureau members:

- Board Essentials – Online training for county board members to develop skills and acquire knowledge as a Farm Bureau leader.
- FB Builder – An evaluation tool for your county Farm Bureau to assess on eight building blocks of organizational health.
- Pillars of Agricultural Literacy – A tool to guide you, or a group, through the Pillars of Agricultural Literacy in order to create a purposeful plan to educate consumers about agriculture.

What's new on Farm Bureau University?

Farm Bureau Board Essentials, the newest online learning program, offers resources and training to county board members to improve governance, planning, policy development and advocacy, and membership.

Whether you've been on the board for three weeks or 30 years, Farm Bureau Board Essentials sharpens your skillset and understanding as a board member.

How to register for Farm Bureau University

Any member can register for free at university.fb.org. New users need to register for an account and type in the correct code. The member code is “statefb” replacing state with the two-letter postal abbreviation. For example a New York Farm Bureau member's code is “nyfb.”

Click [here](#) to register today.

**Are you looking for industry events?
Check out MDAR's Agriculture Industry Calendar!**

[Click Here For Calendar](#)

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