

January 2022



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.

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.

Feb. 25-28, 2022

AFBF YF&R Conference in Louisville. Details here: <https://www.fb.org/events/2022-young-farmers-ranchers-conference/>

Committee Update!

By: Heather Bonanno-Baker, MFBF YF&R Chair

The MFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R) committee is looking forward to a fun 2022. Some of us are headed to the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF's) Young Farmer and Rancher conference in Louisville, Kentucky, at the end of February. We were supposed to attend this conference in 2020, but it was cancelled due to COVID. I know I have been



anxiously waiting for this conference to happen again.

At AFBF's conference we learn about succession planning, leadership, social media, and customer engagement. I always find the breakout sessions extremely helpful and still quote some of the speakers I have listened to.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in our ice cream social over the summer and our trivia night at the annual meeting conference. The funds raised will help send our members to this conference.

As we enter this new year, we have some fun things planned. There have been talks of more socials and farm to fork dinners. If you are willing to host us at your farm for a social and tour, please reach out to me. Our group is growing and we would love to connect with the young farmers in your area!

Thank you!
Heather Bonanno-Baker

MFBF Member Heather Bonanno-Baker Appointed To National Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee

Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) is pleased to announce that Heather Bonanno-Baker from Methuen has been appointed by American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) President Zippy Duvall to AFBF's Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) committee.

"Being appointed to the American Young Farmer & Rancher Committee is something I have been dreaming about for years," Bonanno-Baker said. "I look forward to working with the other members from across the country and helping shape the way for future generations of young farmers."

While serving on the committee, Bonanno-Baker will help evaluate and update the YF&R long-term plan, assist with executing YF&R competitive events at the AFBF Annual Convention, provide programming advice for the AFBF YF&R Leadership/FUSION conference, serve on one of four subcommittees, take part in numerous committee meetings, serve as a contact for two to three state YF&R programs and be trained to speak on behalf of AFBF.

"Heather will be an asset to AFBF while serving on their national YF&R committee," said MFBF President Warren Shaw. "On a state-level, she has focused on bringing in new, younger members to our committee to help with its succession. She's also focused on creative ways to engage our current members. Her enthusiasm and positive can-do attitude will be an asset to AFBF."

Bonanno-Baker works on her family's farm, Pleasant Valley Gardens in Methuen, Massachusetts, alongside her grandfather and mother. The Century Farm raises flowers and vegetables and sells wholesale and retail to consumers.

She is president of Essex County Farm Bureau; chairs the statewide Young Farmers & Ranchers committee; and serves on the statewide Promotion and Education committee. Bonanno-Baker holds a Bachelor of Science in sustainable food and farming from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

She will be seated in February 2022 and serve a two-year term.

Congratulations, Heather!

Three Farmers Awarded MFBAPF Schipper Grants

Through a generous bequest from the late John and Liolia Schipper, the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Agricultural Preservation Foundation (MFBAPF) was able to award three Massachusetts farmers grants. These grants are focused on assisting Massachusetts farmers in becoming more economically viable and sustainable.

“It is challenging to farm in the Commonwealth as we have some of the highest costs of production in the world,” said Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) President Warren Shaw. “These grants allow our organization to assist farmers in their creative projects to diversify their on-farm income. I look forward to seeing the three projects this year’s grants fund completed and working for these farmers.”

From more than a dozen applicants, MFBAPF, selected the following three farmers for these projects:

- Thomas Farm of Sunderland – They are adding fencing to their pastures so they can rotate pasture and control parasites in their goat herd.
- Kristen Tool & Chris Wheeler of Lanesborough – They are creating metal raised beds to plant in parts of their farm that the soil is currently unsuitable for growing.
- Walker Farm at Whortleberry Hill in New Braintree – They are purchasing a freeze drier to create dog goodies using offal and bones from processed beef.

Applications for the 2023 grant program will be available next fall with a deadline in late October 2022.

Congratulations to this year’s recipients!

Business Planning Virtual Workshop Series

- Are you thinking about starting your own farm?
- Are you a beginning farmer and wonder what’s out there for assistance to fund capital improvements and upgrade your equipment?
- Where can I go to get production advice/information?
- Do you want to upgrade your marketing outlets but don’t know how to go about doing this?
- Do you want to learn how to better manage risks on your farm especially in light of recent adverse weather?
- Are you a small farmer looking to grow and expand your business?



If you answered “Yes” to any of the above then this business planning workshop can help you answer those questions. National Crop Insurance Services in conjunction with the UMass Extension Risk Management Education Program is offering this workshop series at no cost to participants. Each session will include a formal presentation on the subject topic as well as guest speakers who are farmers or agricultural service providers with experience in the topics and provide adequate time for questions. The workshop series is open to all regardless of location. All Sessions (6), will be held Thursday Evenings 7:00 – 9:00 pm – January 27, February 3, 17, 24 & March 10, 17.

This is a great opportunity to learn about a variety of topics that can benefit your farming operation.

To register, email either Tom Smiarowski: tsmiarowski@umass.edu or Paul Russell: pmrussell@umass.edu and include your name, email address and location (City/Town & State) A request has been submitted to the USDA – Farm Service Agency (FSA) to have this course certified to meet the FSA borrower training requirement.

A description of each session follows:

Description of Sessions

Session 1 (January 27): Financial Planning

This session will focus on basic financial planning and include information on preparing a Balance Sheet and Income Statement. Guest speaker is Chris Laughton, Director of Knowledge Exchange & Farm Start Program Manager, Farm Credit East, who will explain how Farm Credit East uses financial statements in making credit decisions and what you as a potential borrower should focus on.

Session 2 (February 3): Marketing Basics

This session will explain basic marketing principles including the 5 P’s (Product, Price, Place, Promotion & People). Participants will learn how to identify their audience and in turn target that audience. Guest speakers will include farmers discussing how they have gone about identifying and targeting their audience.

Session 3 (February 17): Risk Management

This session will look at the 5 areas of risk (Production, Marketing, Financial, Human Resources and Legal). Participants will learn how to complete a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) Analysis on their operation. Guest speakers will include farmers explaining how they manage risks on their farms.

Session 4 (February 24): Production Management

This session will focus on where to find information on production issues and Best Management Practices (BMP's). Guest speakers will include representatives from Extension as well as a young farmer who will explain the sources he uses to obtain production information as well as how he goes about deciding what crops to grow in his operation.

Session 5 (March 10): Government Programs/Outside Assistance

This session will focus on the availability of the plethora of Federal, State & outside assistance that is available to farmers to help address a wide range of agricultural issues. Guest speakers will include representatives from Federal, State and private organizations who will provide an overview of their programs as well as how to obtain program benefits. Extra time will be made available for questions.

Session 6 (March 17): Putting It All Together

This session will focus on taking all the information from the previous 5 sessions and putting it all together to develop your own financial, risk and marketing plans. Guest speakers will include farmers who served as previous guest speakers relaying their personal experiences in this session.

Each session will include a homework assignment in which you will take the information discussed during the session to complete your assignment. Don't worry you won't be graded and you don't have to submit the assignment! The purpose of the assignments are to get you to put to use in your operation the information covered during each session!

This workshop is supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2018-70027-28588 and open to all interested parties. UMass Extension works in partnership with National Crop Insurance Services, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center to educate Massachusetts and New England producers about Federal Crop Insurance and USDA Disaster Assistance Programs. For more information, please contact UMass Risk Management Educators Paul Russell at pmrussell@umass.edu or Tom Smiarowski at tsmiarowski@umass.edu. Additional funding provided by the University of Vermont, supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2018-70027-28584. The University of Vermont works in partnership with the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the University of Minnesota Digital Center for Risk Management Education and the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center to educate Vermont and New England producers about agricultural risk management, Federal Crop Insurance and USDA Disaster Assistance Programs. For more information, please contact UVM Agricultural Risk Management Education Coordinator Jake Jacobs at jake.jacobs@uvm.edu. The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital status.

2021 Northeast Dashboard Survey



To more effectively target the unique demands and preferences of Northeast consumers, the Northeast Beef Promotion Initiative (NEBPI), a subcontractor to the Beef Checkoff, through partnership with the *Beef. It's What's for Dinner* Market Research Team conducted the 2021 Northeast Dashboard Survey. The survey revealed important information about the Northeast metropolitan consumer.

The key findings of the survey include, unique to the Northeast consumer, health is a top factor when considering protein meals, followed by taste and safety. The survey also found that the Northeast consumes less beef on a weekly basis than the total U.S. and perceptions of beef in the Northeast are less positive overall – driven by many variables, including versatility and safety. The survey also revealed that nearly half of Northeast consumers are ordering groceries online at least monthly.

The key areas of opportunity for the Beef Checkoff to continue sharing the positive beef messaging include sharing more beef recipes that are quick and easy, as we know consumers continue to eat meals from home. These quick and easy recipes could encourage more beef consumption. We also learned that continuing to share out beef's positive story, highlighting information on how cattle are raised has the potential to raise perceptions surrounding beef. We will also continue to highlight the [Northeast Beef Directory](#) as an online resource for locating local beef producers across the region.

Please reach out directly to Kaitlyn Swope, Director of Consumer Affairs, kswope@pabeef.org to request the full report.

For more information about beef promotion in the Northeast region, visit www.nebpi.org/.

Stay connected with the Northeast Beef Promotion Initiative [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages to catch up on how the Northeast region is actively seeking to promote beef.

For more information, visit NEBPI.org or BeefBoard.org

National Poll Shows Signs of Reduced Stigma Around Farmer Mental Health

Farmers and people in rural areas are more comfortable talking about stress and mental health challenges with others, and stigma around seeking help or treatment has decreased in rural and farm communities but is still a factor, according to a new research poll from the American Farm Bureau Federation.

AFBF conducted the survey of rural adults and farmers/farmworkers to measure changes and trends in stigma, personal experiences with mental health, awareness of information about mental health resources and comfort in talking about mental health with others. The poll results were compared with previous surveys AFBF conducted in 2019 and 2020 focusing on farmer mental health, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on farmer mental health, respectively.

"Farm Bureau has been encouraging conversations to help reduce stigma around farmer stress and mental health through our Farm State of Mind campaign," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "This poll shows that we are making a difference, but we all still have work to do. It's up to each of us to keep looking out for our family, friends and neighbors and let them know they're not alone when they feel the increasing stress that comes with the daily business of farming and ranching."

Morning Consult conducted the poll on behalf of AFBF in December 2021 among a national sample of 2,000 rural adults. Key findings include:

Stigma around seeking help or treatment for mental health has decreased but is still a factor, particularly in agriculture. Over the past year, there has been a decrease in rural adults saying their friends/acquaintances (-4%) and people in their local community (-9%) attach stigma to seeking help or treatment for mental health. But a majority of rural adults (59%) say there is at least some stigma around stress and mental health in the agriculture community, including 63% of farmers/farm workers. Farmers/farm workers are more comfortable talking to friends, family and their doctors about stress and mental health than they were in 2019. Four in five rural adults (83%) and 92% of farmers/farm workers say they would be comfortable talking about solutions with a friend or family member dealing with stress or a mental health condition, and the percentage of farmers/farm workers who say they would be comfortable talking to friends and family members has increased 22% since April 2019. A majority of rural adults (52%) and farmers/farm workers (61%) are experiencing more stress and mental health challenges compared to a year ago, and they are seeking care because of increased stress. Younger rural adults are more likely than older rural adults to say they are experiencing more stress and mental health challenges compared to a year ago, and they are more likely than older rural adults to say they have personally sought care from a mental health professional. A slide deck with additional detail on the full survey results is available [here](#).

AFBF will be featuring two events focused on farmer mental health at the 103rd AFBF Convention in Atlanta, Georgia: a panel discussion with Farm Bureau representatives on Sunday, Jan. 9, at 10:45 a.m. EST, and a QPR mental health training workshop conducted by AgriSafe that offers farmers and farm

families skills to recognize and respond to mental health crises using the Question, Persuade and Refer approach, on Monday, Jan. 10, at 2:00 p.m. EST.

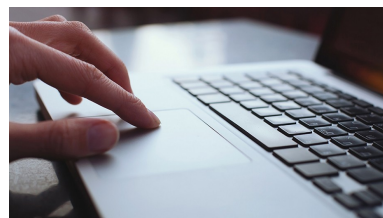
If you or someone you know is struggling emotionally or has concerns about their mental health, visit the Farm State of Mind website at farmstateofmind.org for information on crisis hotlines, treatment locators, tips for helping someone in emotional pain, ways to start a conversation and resources for managing stress, anxiety or depression.

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.

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