

The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) is a non-profit dedicated to representing and protecting the interests of farmers. It is a grassroots organization run by farmers, for farmers. All MFBF's policy is developed and approved by its farmer members.

Below are some of the legislative priorities of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation for the 2021-2022 Legislative Session:



**HB91 - An act amending article 99 of the Massachusetts constitution – Rep. Schmid**

- Chapter 61a ensures that agricultural land is taxed at a rate commensurate with the value of agricultural use.
- Several bills have been filed during the past 4 legislative session aimed at reducing the acreage threshold for Chapter 61a from 5 acres. All have failed due to language in Article 99 of the State Constitution stipulating a 5-acre minimum.
- Reducing the threshold from 5 acres would increase the amount of land available to farmers, protect open space and help farms be more financially viable.
- Such a change would benefit urban farms which often pay exorbitant property taxes, new farmers who often can't find farmland and existing farms which want to expand production.



**HD644 - An act to provide a tax deduction for charitable donations of food by farmers – Rep. Schmid**

- Mirroring relatively recent changes in federal law, this bill would allow a tax deduction to farmers for food donations to charitable organizations.



**SD2473 - An Act to promote domestic meat and poultry production – Senator Tarr  
SD1705 - An Act relative to in-state meat inspection programs – Senator Gobi**

- Both bills would have the Department of Public Health enter into a cooperative agreement with USDA to provide oversight of slaughter facilities in the Commonwealth. State oversight would facilitate the creation of new slaughter facilities which are crucial to the growth of livestock production in Massachusetts.  
between farmers and humane organizations.



**HD265 - An act to enhance agricultural operations – Rep. Blais**

ATVs have become increasingly popular for use on farms. However, many farms have fields that are separated by public roads and it is illegal to use ATVs on roads.

- This bill would allow ATVs for farm use on roads for agricultural purposes, just as tractors are allowed. It includes provisions for safety equipment and requires the farm to submit information annually to the local police chief identifying those roads they would travel upon.

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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES\*\***



### **HD453 - An act to modernize certain provisions of the agricultural preservation restriction program – Rep. Blais**

- Under current law, farms with Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APRs) must obtain a special permit from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to conduct non- and quasi-agricultural activities onsite, such as agritourism activities. The statute limits the duration of the permit to 5 years. This has become hindrance for farms where business/marketing plans and/or the note on related loans exceed 5 years.
- This bill would give MDAR the option to approve special permits for more than 5 years.



### **HD650 - An act relative to application deadlines for agricultural, horticultural or recreational land – Rep Schmid**

- Would change the deadline for applications for chapter land from Oct. 1 (preceding months are the busiest for farmers) to Feb. 1.
- Would create a process by which foresters could appeal denials for inclusion in Chapter 61.



### **SD1843 - An act relative to exemptions from taxation of structures and buildings essential to the operation of agricultural and horticultural lands – Senator Cronin**

- Where Chapter 61a ensures that agricultural land is taxed at a rate commensurate with the value of agricultural use, no such protection exists for agricultural buildings. As agritourism, retail sales and on-farm processing become more crucial to the financial viability of farms in the Commonwealth, property taxes on ag buildings have been identified as a major barrier to farm viability.
- Mirrored after a New York law, this bill would waive property taxes on new farm buildings and renovations for a 10-year period.



### **HD629 - An act establishing a commission on livestock shelter requirements – Rep Schmid**

- Determining appropriate shelter for various types of livestock is somewhat nebulous and too often a point of contention.
- This bill would create a short-term commission to establish guidelines for appropriate livestock shelter. The commission would include veterinarians, farmers and humane representatives.



### **HD2843 - An act relative to updating the plumbing code in order to accommodate agricultural uses – Rep Mirra**

- The plumbing code has long been identified by farmers as having outdated and onerous requirements. Unlike the building code, farms are held to the same standards as other commercial operations.
- The bill would create a commission of plumbers, farmers and public health experts to explore agricultural provisions to the plumbing code such as are included in the building code.

#### Contact

Brad Mitchell

Deputy Executive Director

Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation

617.413.3727