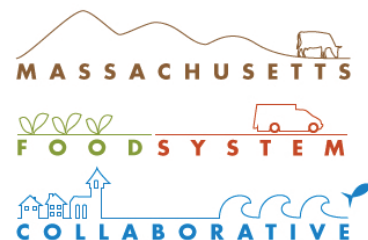


# Sustainability and Equity in the Massachusetts Food System:

Public sector progress, 2016-2018







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## The Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan

In 2015, at the request of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, more than 1,500 farm and food stakeholders — farmers, consumers, advocates, practitioners and policymakers — came together to develop the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan, a set of recommendations and guiding principles toward a sustainable and equitable food system for the Commonwealth. The Plan's goals are broad, aspirational, and the result of an inclusive and consensus process. They are:

- Increase production, sales, and consumption of Massachusetts-grown foods;
- Create jobs and economic opportunity in food and farming, and improve the wages and skills of food system workers;
- Protect the land and water needed to produce food, maximize environmental benefits from agriculture and fishing, and ensure food safety; and
- Reduce hunger and food insecurity, increase the availability of healthy food to all residents, and reduce food waste.

The Plan offers recommendations in support of these goals, and more than 600 specific action items on issues from farmland preservation to local food marketing to food waste, and everything in between. It makes clear that a dispersed model of implementation would be required, with a wide range of stakeholder organizations, agencies, and institutions, including the MA Food Policy Council, each playing a role in addressing recommendations that most align with their respective missions.

Many of the Plan's recommendations call for action on the part of state government, including the governor, the legislature, and state boards and agencies. Some suggest new laws and regulations, others propose greater enforcement of or changes to existing statutes, and some recommend increased state investments in the food system.

### State efforts toward Plan goals

Three years after the Plan's completion, some of these state government recommendations have been accomplished, many are in progress, and others have yet to be acted upon. There have been significant successes, such as increased state support for dairy farmers, statutory changes to the state estate tax to reduce farmland loss, funding to expand access to healthy foods for low-income families, and greater investment in food system infrastructure. On other recommendations, though, there has been little or no movement. These include recommendations around diversion of wasted edible food from landfills, increased spending on farmland protection, and improving marketing programs for local foods. Many more have seen incremental progress but require additional action.

This report serves as a status report on the Plan's public sector recommendations. It is also intended to remind state policymakers of the need and opportunities to elevate food system policy, regulation, and investment as a whole. The food system in Massachusetts touches everyone. Every resident of the Commonwealth eats, but not all have access to nutritious and affordable food. Fully 10% of workers are employed in food system businesses. Nearly 5% of our economy is driven by food production and consumption. Our environment and natural resources are impacted by how food is produced, and public health is deeply entwined with how food is produced and who is able to access it. Recent public sector initiatives have targeted attention, resources and a comprehensive agenda on other sectors of the state's economy — biotechnology, renewable energy, and other worthy industries — with an eye toward leveraging the strength of Massachusetts' resources in those fields to grow the state's overall prosperity. A similar focus on the food system on the part of state government is needed.



The Plan encourages state officials to address food system issues comprehensively, recognizing the many interconnections and opportunities to leverage change and improve economic, health and environmental outcomes across the food system. Nearly every state agency has some expenditure or policy related to food, yet it is rare to find that any two work together to coordinate them. Bills related to the food system were filed in at least a dozen legislative committees this session, and then each considered in isolation.

*Considering any of the issues raised in the Plan to be solely the purview of single agency or committee misses opportunities to forge solutions that efficiently and effectively build a food system that is equitable and sustainable. Protecting farmland helps keep farms in business which, in turn, allows those farms to support the local economy by creating jobs and purchasing more local goods and services. Addressing hunger reduces the burden on the public health system as low-income families can stave off preventable dietary-related diseases before they begin. Teaching school children about nutrition and cooking helps improves overall family health and can boost the local economy as they learn about the value of buying local foods. Diverting wasted food from landfills can help feed people in need, provide a renewable source of energy for farms through anaerobic digestion, and help improve soil fertility through composting. Each sector of the food system is connected to the others, and this intricate web means wise investments and comprehensive policies can have deep and broad positive impacts, and neglect can cause irreparable harm.*

## **The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative**

*"Connections in our food system are essential. For fruits and vegetables, it is the connection between seeds and Massachusetts' fertile soils. Our fish and shellfish rely on clean seawater and a healthy marine environment. Meat and dairy products depend upon livestock's access to land. And all of these foods owe their growth to the careful, expert stewardship of our state's farmers, fishermen, and other food-system workers who, in turn, owe their expertise in part to access to resources and education, and to a system that understands their work and supports it. So, too, do successful plans and initiatives require connections between people and ideas, between history and current realities, and between policy and practice."*

*– 2015 Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan*

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative, formed in 2015 in response to the Plan's recommendation that a "body of engaged stakeholders" be established to promote, monitor, and facilitate implementation of the Plan, seeks to strengthen and support those connections.

In our first three years of operation the Collaborative has worked to promote the Plan as a resource for public agencies, private organizations, funders, and practitioners. We have built relationships with and among key players in the

food system, making connections where we found opportunities to share resources and take collective action. And we have provided facilitation and coordination among stakeholder groups, leading efforts to work toward Plan recommendations that demonstrate how cross-sector connections yield the most effective and sustainable solutions to challenges in the food system.

Where the Plan offers a blueprint, a menu of options to choose from for those involved, the Collaborative offers connective tissue to link these efforts where appropriate, so that organizations and programs can share others' strengths, collectively develop solutions, and act to make them a reality. Part of that work is advocating for public sector policies, regulations, programs, and investments that support the food system, such as those listed in this report.

The Collaborative and our partners are working to shift the conversation among policymakers toward ideas that promote equity and sustainability in the food system. We know, from some of the successes listed in this report, that we have begun to have an impact. We also know that a significant amount of work remains if we are to accomplish the lofty goals of the Plan. The Collaborative remains committed to working with a broad network of food-system stakeholders to translate the needs of those who produce, process, sell, and eat food, into effective policy that supports an equitable and sustainable food system.

*Despite the importance of the food system to Massachusetts' economy and environment, a scan of a recent almanac of legislators and the priorities they chose to list in their profiles found that not one legislator out of 200 included the words 'food,' 'farm,' 'land,' or 'hunger,' only three listed 'agriculture' and only six listed 'fish' when queried about their priority issues.*

## How this report was compiled

In compiling this report, the Collaborative reviewed the Plan and identified recommendations requiring action by the governor, state agencies, and/or state legislators. With limitations on space and resources we have not attempted to report on every one of the more than 600 action items, but focused on public sector actions that have been raised as priorities by food system stakeholders since the Plan's completion. Many Plan items with implementation responsibility ascribed to the public sector are more aspirational or require further planning or significant investment to begin to address. Those are not listed here, but still stand as important recommendations for leaders to consider.

Items highlighted in this report follow the order of the sectors in the Plan (Land, Inputs, Farming, Fishing, Processing, Distribution, Marketing, and FASH (Food Access, Security, and Health)). The Plan's hierarchy of Goals, Recommendations, and Action Items is reflected in the numbering system, with Goals listed with a single number, Recommendations with two, and Action Items three.

Each item is listed here as it appears in the Plan. For each we offer a brief evaluative statement as to how well the item or items have been addressed. Our evaluation is based on reporting on the item by the named agencies, information gathered from our work, input from stakeholder and advocacy organizations, and other research.

We use "Progress," "Significant progress," and "No progress" as our nomenclature for denoting how much an issue has advanced. "Progress" is attributed to recommendations where laws have been passed, regulations have been changed, or funding has been appropriated, and concrete advancement toward the recommendation or the recommendation's intent has been made. "Significant progress" indicates items where these gains are particularly substan-

tial, or meet or exceed the recommendation's intent. "No progress" includes those items on which efforts have been made to address, such as a bill being introduced, but without a result that has a demonstrable impact in regards to the recommendation. All information in this report is as of October 19, 2018 – additional progress may have occurred since the time of publication. Visit our website at [www.mafoodsystem.org](http://www.mafoodsystem.org) for regular updates on the Plan and progress toward its goals.

For the sake of brevity, background information about the original action items and recommendations has been omitted, but can be found in the full text of the Plan, available at [www.mafoodsystem.org/plan](http://www.mafoodsystem.org/plan).

## LAND



### Spending on Department of Agricultural Resources land programs

*Land 1.4.1: Fully expend all existing bond authorizations for farm viability by 2018, and increase funding for the FVEP in subsequent authorizations.*

*Land 1.5.1: Fund the APR Improvement Program (AIP) at a level that meets program demand, and expand AIP eligibility to farmland protected with Conservation Restrictions.*

*Land 2.3.1: Fully expend existing bond authorizations provided for the APR Program in the 2008 and 2014 Environmental Bond by 2018, and establish an annual bond cap that allows maximum leveraging of federal farmland protection funds.*

*Land 3.1.2: Increase funding for the Farm Viability Enhancement Program and similar state programs focused on farm business development by fully expending over the next four years the bond authorizations for farm viability provided in the 2008 and 2014 environmental bonds, and increase this item by at least 25% in subsequent authorizations.*

*Farming 3.1.5: Fund the Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program to provide financial assistance to farmers for fencing and other structures to protect rivers from agricultural activity.*

State funding for Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) programs such as the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program, Farm Viability Enhancement Program (FVEP) and Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP) is a two-step process: The legislature first provides a bond authorization for each program, typically every five years through an environmental bond bill, and then the governor and Executive Offices of Administration and Finance and Energy and Environmental Affairs allocate a specific funding amount for each program through the governor's annual capital budget.

The last two environmental bonds (2008, 2012) provided for significant capital investments in these three programs. Yet yearly capital spending from the 2008 and 2012 bonds has been far less than the authorizations. Indeed, state spending on the APR program—the largest of the DAR bond-funded programs—has steadily decreased over the past three years, from \$5.6 million in 2016, to \$3.8 million in 2017, to \$3.7 million in 2018.

The 2008 bond authorized \$67.75 million for the APR program; only \$60.42 million was spent through the end of Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18). It authorized \$30 million for a range of programs meant to support agricultural economic and environmental sustainability, including FVEP, but just \$20.17 million was spent. An additional \$3 million was authorized through AEEP to help farms abate pollution, but only \$1.94 million of that was spent. The 2012 bond authorized new spending of more than \$37 million for the same or similar programs; not a dollar of this new authorized funding has been spent.



The legislature enacted a new environmental bond in 2018 (H.4835), and legislators again signaled their interest in robust state investments in the APR, FVEP, and AEEP programs, providing new bond authority of \$74 million. While this new bond authority is positive, it does not represent real funding until it is appropriated. Both the governor and the legislature bear responsibility in translating these theoretical investments into actual dollars spent toward protecting farmland, and helping farmers improve the environment and expand market opportunities. **No progress.**

## Updating the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program

*Land 1.6.1: Task the Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee with a review of APR regulations to consider whether regulatory or policy changes are needed to promote farm viability and allow for needed farm infrastructure.*

*Land 1.6.2: Convene a working group to develop recommendations around housing on APRs.*

*Land 2.3.2: Create dedicated APR funding specifically for projects not eligible for NRCS' Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program.*

*Land 2.3.3: Increase the APR program's current per-acre cap.*

*Land 2.3.4: Task the ALPC with reviewing current APR program policies related to housing, farm infrastructure, the 5% impervious surface limit, and limits on renewable energy production if sited away from productive agricultural lands, and recommending changes as appropriate.*

*Land 2.3.6: Allow pre-acquisitions of farmland through the ALE and APR program.*

*Land 2.3.7: Eliminate the requirement that land be in active agricultural use for 2 years to be eligible for the APR program.*

*Land 2.5.1: Task MDAR and the ALPC with convening an annual forum to evaluate progress through the APR Program and to invite stakeholder input on APR program policies.*

*Land 3.13.2: Integrate succession planning and farmland matching into MDAR's APR stewardship.*

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program has been responsible for permanently protecting more than 71,000 acres of farmland in Massachusetts since it began 40 years ago. That success has been tempered by often inconsistent and opaque processes and enforcement, and by a lack of updated regulations to reflect the changing agricultural landscape.

MDAR conducted several listening sessions in 2018 to gather feedback on the program, and the FY 19 state budget included a number of statutory changes to the program that will address some of these recommendations. The new law requires that the Department, in consultation with the Board of Agriculture and subject to the approval of the Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee (ALPC), review "all existing guidance, policies, procedures and regulations" related to the APR program, and "propose updates to the guidance, policies, procedures or regulations that are necessary to improve and modernize the management of the program." The need for these changes was reinforced by a report from the State Auditor, which pointed out deficiencies in monitoring and stewardship of the program, and the Department acknowledged a need to dedicate more resources to education around the program. **Progress.**

## Developing a farmland action plan

*Land 2.1.1: Establish a legislatively-appointed task force to develop a state Farmland Action Plan, and provide necessary funding for its development.*

The Plan identified the lack of reliable statewide data around farmland trends as preventing the development and tracking of meaningful targets around farmland retention, protection, and access. It recommended the development of a formal state Farmland Action Plan, to improve state data collection around farmland and establish formal farmland protection goals and benchmarks, providing a better roadmap for state investments in farmland protection in the future.

While legislation to establish a task force to develop a state Farmland Action Plan was introduced in several forms and ultimately included in the legislature's FY 18 budget, Governor Baker vetoed the item. MDAR subsequently established

a Farmland Advisory Panel to work on aspects of what had been envisioned for the Plan, but the group was not given a formal charge and last met in winter 2017. The 2018 environmental bond (H.4835) authorized funding for such a plan, but no funds have been appropriated. **No progress.**

## Expanding the use of Transfers of Development Rights

*Land 2.2.1: Create a statewide TDR credit bank and seek startup funding to get it established.*

*Land 2.2.2: Clarify through statute that municipalities may develop regional Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs, as has been suggested in versions of state zoning reform legislation.*

Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs) are a potentially valuable tool for farmland protection, offering municipalities a way to work with developers to protect land by transferring the land's development rights to more densely developed parts of a community. In the 2018 environmental bond (H.4835), Governor Baker proposed and the legislature approved creating a Transfer of Development Rights Revolving Fund and an accompanying program to facilitate the use of TDRs by municipalities. Money to capitalize the Fund is authorized in this bill, but will need to be appropriated through the capital budget. While advocates proposed that it do so, the environmental bond did not authorize TDR use at the regional level. **Progress.**

## Extending farmland tax benefits to smaller parcels

*Land 3.1: Reduce Chapter 61A minimum requirement to encourage farming on smaller parcels in all communities – urban, suburban, and rural.*

As large parcels of farmland become more scarce and more expensive, both urban and rural farmers are increasingly reliant on smaller parcels of farmland, often miles from each other. But limits on Chapter 61A benefits mean these parcels are often not eligible for agricultural use tax rates intended to help keep farms sustainable and farmland in active production. A bill filed in the 2017-18 legislative session to allow non-contiguous acreage within a 10-mile radius totaling at least five acres under the same ownership (H.3856) had not passed as of this writing. **No progress.**

## Reducing estate tax burden on farm families

*Land 3.8.1: Enact legislation to modify state estate tax to allow farmland to be valued according to its current use.*

High land values can mean steep state estate taxes for some farm families, forcing heirs to sell some or all of the family farm for development. The 2018 environmental bond (H.4835) included language lowering the state estate tax on farms, by allowing farmland and forestland to be taxed at the same rate as it is for property tax purposes, provided it remains in active agricultural use. This will reduce the pressure on families to sell off farmland, keeping farms more viable. Regulations must still be drafted, likely in early 2019. **Significant progress.**

## Supporting succession planning for farmers

*Land 3.8.2: Expand farm succession planning services for farmers. Consider models such as UMass' Your Forest, Your Legacy program, Land for Good and various programs the U.S. Forest Service is doing with forestland owners.*

*Land 3.13.2: Integrate succession planning and farmland matching into MDAR's APR stewardship.*

All APR staff have received training on farm succession planning resources through Land for Good (LFG). MDAR's Agricultural Business Training Program also partnered with LFG to offer additional technical assistance to farmers who completed LFG's Succession School, including follow up services provided by an attorney, financial planner, succession coach or appraiser. **Progress.**

## Supporting farmland restoration

*Land 3.9.1: Enact a farmland restoration program similar to Connecticut's Department of Agriculture's Farmland Restoration Program, which cost shares with farmers on land management and conservation practices aimed at bringing former farmland back into food production. Consider including in the program projects that would also benefit pollinators and other rare species that thrive on agricultural land*

The Stewardship Assistance and Restoration on APRs (SARA) program, launched in 2016, enables new owners of APR land to improve land previously protected through the APR program for more productive agricultural use. Funds may be used for materials and contracted labor or equipment rental costs to clear or reclaim inactive fields that are out of production at no fault of the current owner. Grant funds of up to \$25,000 are available on a cost reimbursement basis with a 15% match of total project costs required by the farm participant. **Progress.**

## Supporting urban agriculture

*Land 3.18.1: Support state and municipal tax incentives to encourage short- and long-term use of urban land and buildings for food production, such as for the installation of green roofs that include food production and the transformation of vacant lots into community gardens.*

To help overcome the high price of urban land and promote the health, economic, and environmental benefits of growing food in cities, a bill filed in the 2017-18 legislative session (H.3854) would grant municipalities with populations greater than 50,000 the authority to reduce the property tax burden on urban agriculture operations. As of this writing, the bill has not passed. **No progress.**

## Allowing Agricultural Commissions to own land

*Land 8.3.7: Change state law to give town Agricultural Commissions, at a town's discretion, authority to manage and lease suitable town-owned land for agricultural use.*

A law enacted in 2016 (MGL ch. 40 § 8L) allows municipalities to empower their Agricultural Commission to purchase, hold, and manage town-owned land for farming. **Significant progress.**

# INPUTS



## Supporting the organics waste ban

*Inputs 1.1: Effectively support the Massachusetts Commercial Food Waste Disposal Ban*

*Inputs 1.1.1: Promote and leverage the MassDEP technical assistance service, RecyclingWorks, to help food waste generators comply with the waste ban.*

A December 2016 study found that the Massachusetts Commercial Food Waste Disposal Ban had, to that date, stimulated the state's economy by creating hundreds of well-paying jobs, increasing the Gross State Product by \$77 million, and generating more than \$5 million in state and local tax revenue. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) conducts about 170 inspections per year, inspecting about 4,250 loads of trash. Through September 2018 DEP has issued 26 Notices of Non-Compliance (NONs) and one Administrative Consent Order with Penalty (ACOP) for disposal of commercial organic material. While the program has been successful, there is just a single inspector dedicated to enforcing the Ban, which is not enough for proper enforcement.

DEP and RecyclingWorks have undertaken a significant outreach and education effort, which has contributed to the success of the Ban. In 2016 DEP reported diversion of 260,000 tons, an increase of 150,000 tons since 2014. Of that waste, 160,000 tons went to composting facilities, 57,000 tons to anaerobic digesters, 22,000 tons were donated, 4,000 tons were fed to animals, and 13,000 tons were processed with wastewater. **Progress.**

## Reducing wasted edible food

*Inputs 1.2.4: Clarify expiration/sell by dates, and reduce the number of foods that require a date label.*

*Inputs 1.3.2: Implement a state tax credit for farmers and others who donate surplus food.*

*Inputs 1.3.6: Increase education and consistent implementation of public health regulations regarding food donation.*

*Farming 3.1.6: Implement a tax credit for farmers who donate their surplus crops.*

Many bills were filed in the 2017-18 legislative session addressing these issues related to reducing the amount of wasted edible food, but as of this writing none of them had passed.

The Department of Public Health (DPH) has advocated that the Conference for Food Protection, which brings together stakeholders to provide input on food safety guidance, establish a food recovery committee to, among other things, identify best practices for handling, storage, and labeling of food for donation, and recommend any necessary language changes to the FDA Food Code to ensure the safety of donated food. DPH also advocated that the Conference ask the FDA to modify the definition of 'food establishment' to include entities that distribute food to food banks or food recovery organizations. **No progress.**

## Supporting anaerobic digestion

*Inputs 1.4: Maximize anaerobic digestion and industrial uses for food waste after higher steps in the EPA's food recovery hierarchy are exhausted.*

DEP has obligated \$2.5 million in loans to four anaerobic digesters through its Recycling Loan Fund. **Progress.**

## Supporting reuse of wastewater

*Inputs 1.4.1: Facilitate reuse of non-hazardous food processing wastewater.*

*Inputs 3.3.10: Consider changes to Mass DEP's Groundwater Discharge Permitting regulations that would exempt farms from needing a groundwater discharge permit for farm waste provided they adhere to MDAR and NRCS best practices.*

DEP amended its Ground Water Discharge Permit program regulations in 2016 to exempt from permitting requirements certain types of agricultural discharges which are regulated under another program by a separate requirement.

**Progress.**

## Supporting de-packaging to facilitate composting

*Inputs 1.5.1: Expand the variety of composting site locations, capabilities (including technologies to separate packaging as well as livestock carcasses), and scales able to handle the range of compost materials.*

DEP has awarded \$950,000 in grants through the Recycling Business Development Grant (RBDG) program to support food de-packaging facilities. **Progress.**

## Supporting compost operations

*Inputs 1.5: Maximize the composting of food waste after the steps in the EPA's food recovery hierarchy are exhausted.*

Many composting sites are located on farms and operated by farmers. A legislative effort to move regulation of these operations from MDAR to DPH was vetoed by Governor Baker in 2018, leaving oversight responsibility with the agency that has more experience working with farms. At the same time, MDAR proposed new regulations regarding on-farm composting, and as of this writing is reviewing comments submitted by stakeholders. Concerns about a provision requiring that at least 50% of materials used in composting be generated on site or at least 50% of the compost produced be used on site prompted many comments, most expressing concern that these thresholds would force farms to either have to suspend their composting operations or lose the zoning and other benefits afforded to farms under MGL ch. 40a § 3.

In October 2018 MDAR issued an RFP for the Agricultural Composting Improvement Program, a new grant program to provide resources to agricultural composters for purchases of equipment and materials that will enhance their overall management of composting operations. The grantmaking capacity of the program is \$185,000. **Progress.**

## Supporting good nutrient management practices

*Inputs 2.1.1: Expand nutrient management planning and implementation technical assistance, especially in light of the new regulatory requirements. The NRCS, UMass Extension, Massachusetts' Conservation Districts, and other technical assistance providers should provide increased resources and expertise.*

MDAR has developed a website and fact sheets that stakeholders can use to get information relative to plant nutrients, and attended outreach events to present the updated rules.

UMass Extension has redirected existing resources to develop a set of fact sheets on nutrient management applicable to agriculture and horticulture areas. Specific fact sheets are available for cranberries, dairy, vegetables, and other crops. UMass Extension also produced a daylong public symposium on phosphorus use in late 2016. Hands-on support to growers on nutrient management is routinely provided to vegetable and fruit growers by the UMass Extension Fruit Program and UMass Extension Vegetable Program. **Progress.**



## Preparing farms for the effects of climate change

*Inputs 3.2.2: Provide the resources and technical assistance needed to help farmers adapt to increased impacts from flooding, drought, and other expected impacts of climate change.*

The Agricultural Climate Resiliency & Efficiencies (ACRE) Program was created as part of Governor Baker's 2016 Executive Order "Establishing an Integrated Climate Change Strategy for the Commonwealth." Administered by MDAR, the program provides reimbursement funds to agricultural operations for the implementation of practices that address the agricultural sector's vulnerability to climate change, and improve economic resiliency. In 2018 the Department awarded \$500,000 in funding to 19 operations. For FY19, \$1 million is available. **Progress.**

## Anticipating pest pressure due to climate change

*Inputs 4.1.2: Anticipate increased pest issues in light of climate change impacts. UMass Extension should monitor pest issues experienced in warmer climates that may migrate to Massachusetts under warmer and changed climate conditions.*

Monitoring existing and emerging pest and disease issues and their relationship to climate change is an important component of the work of UMass Extension agricultural teams. UMass's Plant Diagnostic Laboratory plays an important role in monitoring new developments within the state. The Lab is a member of the Northeast Plant Diagnostics Network and the National Plant Diagnostic Network, whose specific purpose is to provide a cohesive, distributed system to quickly detect and identify pests and pathogens of concern. **Progress.**

## Regulating and providing education and technical assistance on pollinators

*Inputs 4.3.1: Increase education and technical assistance to ensure the health of pollinators, including education for beekeepers, pesticide applicators, farmers, landowners, municipalities, and regulators.*

*Farming 2.2.7: Establish a committee to review state apiary laws and propose recommendations to support the growth of native pollinators.*

MDAR established two state-run apiaries in 2016 and 2017, located in Essex and Hampshire counties, to use for monthly educational events. The Department applied for and received a two-year federal grant that will allow MDAR to provide extra education and outreach relative to Varroa mites. In addition, MDAR provides a service to diagnose problems with hives and presents information relative to honey bee health to pesticide applicators, farmers, landowners and municipalities at multiple events. The benefits of the Apiary Program are promoted and encourages beekeepers to request inspections.

The MDAR Apiary Program and Legal Counsel convened a group of beekeeper stakeholders during 2017, and held a number of meetings and a public hearing. Those discussions prompted revisions to regulations intended to better benefit bee health. Preliminary changes were made, and additional stakeholder meetings and another round of revisions and a public hearing are scheduled for late 2018. **Significant progress.**

## Increasing energy efficiency on farms

*Inputs 5: Energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy will be increased, while energy costs will be reduced.*

*Inputs 5.1.1: Increase funding to the MDAR's Farm Energy Program to meet unmet demand. MDAR has been allocating \$150,000 per year in state funds; increasing the state allocation to \$350,000, as authorized in the environmental bond, would better help meet demand.*

Funding for the Ag Energy Grant Program has increased through support from the Department of Energy Resources to

\$1,000,000 annually, a significant increase from prior year funding of \$200,000. MDAR also introduced a Special Projects Ag Energy Grant which funds priority projects up to \$75,000. Special Projects include specific, higher capital cost, energy saving and energy replacement technology implementation opportunities that improve energy efficiency and facilitate alternative clean energy needs. Examples include Dual Use Solar and Heat Recovery for Anaerobic Digesters. MDAR also applied for and was awarded two consecutive USDA Rural Development grants in the past three years to provide technical assistance in the form of energy audits to all eligible MA farms. The two grants totaled \$175,000 and were allocated to MDAR's MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP) where those services were ultimately carried out. Over 80 energy audits were completed as a result, many supporting the farms' abilities to apply for state and federal grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy construction funds. While there has been a significant increase in the Ag Energy Grant Program's overall funding, support for the Farm Energy Program itself has not increased, as called for in the Plan. **Progress.**

## FARMING



### Building UMass's Center for Urban Sustainability

*Farming 1.1.3: Fully fund the 2014 bond authorization that would support the UMass Center for Urban Sustainability in Waltham. Support the Center's development as an Extension research and education resource for farmers of all types, as well as for homestead gardening and animal husbandry.*

Despite the bond authorization, no funding was ever appropriated for the Waltham facility. Due to the lack of resources, the Waltham facility fell into disrepair, and in 2018 the University announced the closing of the building as of the end of 2019. No decision has been made on the disposition of the land. The 2018 bond did not carry forward the authorization. **No progress.**

### Providing on-farm Extension assistance

*Farming 1.2.1: Provide on-farm technical assistance from UMass Extension agents.*

UMass Extension agricultural educators provide on-farm technical assistance regularly. In FY17 1,115 workshops, onsite consultations, site visits, and presentations were conducted. **Progress.**

### Conducting research and development for distilled beverage crops

*Farming 1.2.8: Support Extension research and development for crops including grapes, hops, grain, fruits (cider apples, for example), and other ingredients for distilled beverage products and other high growth food categories.*

UMass Extension has conducted extensive applied research in wine and table grape growing appropriate to our climate for many years at UMass Cold Spring Orchard in Belchertown. Extension applied research on apples and other tree fruits appropriate to beverage-making also occurs there. One faculty member has done some limited work with barley for brewing. To date Extension has not worked with hops. **Progress.**

## Updating nutrient management regulations

*Farming 2.2.2: Engage farmers and other relevant stakeholders in a review of nutrient management regulations; update as needed.*

MDAR conducted outreach following significant opposition to the original nutrient management regulations issued in 2015. The revised regulations, released in early 2018, addressed many of the concerns raised by farmers. **Significant progress.**

## Regulating raw milk sales

*Farming 2.2.6: Develop regulations to facilitate dairy farms' capacity to sell raw milk and related value-added products direct to consumers while ensuring adequate oversight to protect safety and consumer confidence.*

Legislation that would allow farmers to expand raw milk sales safely by enabling them to deliver milk to consumers and allow for the sale of raw milk by farmers on parts of the farm that are not contiguous to the land where the animals are milked was included in the legislature's 2018 environmental bond (H.4835), but was substantially revised by Governor Baker. His proposal would grant authority for oversight of raw milk deliveries to DPH, rather than MDAR which oversees on-farm sales. While these changes would provide some opportunity for progress in this area, having two different agencies with overlapping regulatory oversight of raw milk poses a significant burden for farmers. The governor's revised bill has not been enacted. **No progress.**

## Including agriculture in developing local health regulations

*Farming 2.3.1: Develop a system of checks and balances to support appropriate engagement of municipal boards of health and conservations commissions in agricultural issues and reduce unwarranted or unjustified regulations.*

A bill that would require municipal boards of health to give agricultural commissions an opportunity to provide input into regulations or regulatory changes related to agricultural issues (H.2465) was introduced in the 2017-18 legislative session, but as of this writing has not passed. **No progress.**

## Supporting dairy farmers

*Farming 3.1.7: Maintain the Massachusetts Dairy Farmer Tax Credit.*

The FY19 budget increased this program's budget from \$4 million to \$6 million. The credit was \$1.90 per 100 lbs. of milk in 2017. Conditional on the same amount of milk being produced in 2018, the credit in 2018 will be \$2.85 with the new cap. This level of support provides significant financial support to this struggling industry by bridging some of the gap between the cost of production and the federally-set price for bulk milk. **Significant progress.**

# FISHING



## Supporting aquaculture

*Fishing 1.2.1: Develop more resources for technical assistance, such as cooperative extension, for the aquaculture industry.*

The 2018 environmental bond (H.4835) authorized \$300,000 in funding for research and education at aquaculture centers around the state. The funds have not yet been appropriated. **No progress.**

## Supporting fishing industry research, training, infrastructure and collaboration

*Fishing 2.1: Improve livelihood viability and prospects for the seafood industry workforce, including fishermen, lobstermen, shellfish harvesters, aquaculturalists, seafood processors, and researchers.*

*Fishing 4.1: Build collaborative networks and ensure fishing industry representation in government and policy arenas.*

*Fishing 5.1.8: Revive and expand seafood science research and development laboratories.*

The Seaport Economic Council funded the Urban Harbors Institute at UMass-Boston to conduct a study on the local seafood system. The report, based on research of successful food and farming strategies from around the country, local interviews, and a one-day conference, reiterated many of the recommendations of the Plan, including that state encourage greater collaboration, investments in ports, and more focused assistance to the seafood industry by the campuses in the University of Massachusetts system, including incubators and research projects. No significant investments or actions have been taken, however. **No progress.**

## Marketing local seafood

*Fishing 2.3.2: Fund and ensure longevity of the DMF Seafood Marketing Program, steering committee, and coordinator position.*

In 2016 the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) established a 19-member steering committee made up of industry and government representatives to assist DMF in increasing consumer awareness and preference for local seafood. The Seafood Marketing Program is operated by a coordinator, who was hired in late 2015. The program has distributed \$105,000 in grants to marketing campaigns designed to increase awareness and demand for Massachusetts seafood products, and partnered with MA Farm to School's Harvest of the Month Program to promote local seafood purchases in schools. **Progress.**

## Connecting fisheries to new markets

*Fishing 2.3.3: Where permitted for different species, open and expand markets for local seafood including: grocery stores; community supported fisheries programs; farmers markets; public markets; institutional distribution including to universities, colleges, hospitals, prisons, public schools; and wholesale distribution.*

*Fishing 2.3.4: Create markets for diverse fish and shellfish species to encourage the harvesting of a range of fish and shellfish species to ensure stable livelihoods and ecological resiliency.*

*Fishing 2.3.5: Expand the markets for a variety of locally-abundant fish species (i.e. Mackerel and Whiting), and lesser known species (i.e. Arcadian Redfish, Dogfish, and Scup) and invasive species (i.e. Green Crab which is threatening shellfish habitat).*

*Fishing 3.1.1: Promote locally caught fish species through established seafood outlets and distribution channels such as conventional grocery, retail, and fish markets.*

*Fishing 3.1.8: Encourage sale and consumption of lower-cost, underutilized species, like Whiting, Arcadian Redfish, Dogfish, and Scup in all markets.*

The Seaport Economic Council has invested \$261,000 in the Gloucester Fresh initiative, a project aimed at opening up markets for sustainable underutilized species and by supporting businesses with new value-added product development and marketing. The grants led to the City of Gloucester launching a seafood brand marketed worldwide: Gloucester Fresh. The campaign has successfully raised awareness of consumers to ask for locally caught sustainable seafood, and has also increased the number of restaurants and institutions serving Gloucester Fresh seafood, expanded the market across the country and overseas, and increased the price per pound local fishermen receive for underutilized species featured in the campaign. The campaign is ongoing.

MDAR includes fisheries in marketing and promotion efforts with Buy Local organizations, at consumer events, and through farm to school efforts. **Progress.**

## PROCESSING



### Ensuring food processing regulations are current

*Processing 1.1: Reform food processing regulations.*

*Processing 1.3.2: Ensure that food processors are offered support when they seek support related to regulations. Provide resources, not penalties, as first line of action.*

*Processing 1.3.1: Review and clarify the language of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) regulations, which are currently vague.*

*Processing 1.1.6: Review and revise regulations relative to meat and poultry processing.*

In 2016 DPH's Food Protection Program amended the Food Processing regulation, 105 CMR 500.000, which includes provisions for meat and poultry processing and clarifies obligations of processors. **Progress.**

### Ensuring food safety regulations are current

*Processing 2.1: Maintain an updated food code in Massachusetts.*

*Processing 2.1.1: Require the Executive Office of Health and Human Services' Public Health Council to adopt the most current FDA Food Code, to bring the State up to date with the most recent science regarding food safety.*

*Processing 1.1.4: Develop streamlined regulatory processes for multi-use facilities, such as shared kitchens and food trucks.*

*Processing 1.1.5: Encourage the use of existing small production kitchens such as in Grange halls, churches and schools, where foods could be manufactured or developed in compliance with the State food code.*

*Processing 1.2.1: Increase ongoing training of local and state regulators in 21st century agricultural and food issues. Increase training of farmers, agriculture commissions, and others in public health and food safety.*

*Processing 2.1.3: Promulgate new information on FDA Food Code updates to local boards of health*

*Distribution 5.2.2: Create clear expectations and interpretation of the food code, and a mandatory public process for issuing DPH and local board of health regulations so that all stakeholders are involved in the process of crafting and reviewing proposed regulations prior to implementation.*



The Bureau of Environmental Health's Food Protection Program (FPP) has amended 105 CMR 590, the state retail food code, to incorporate the 2013 Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) model Retail Food Code and the 2015 Supplement. Two public hearings were held during the amendment process, and an extended public comment period resulted in changes and additions to address stakeholder feedback. The changes in the food code establish permits and clarify requirements for mobile food establishments, farmers markets and shared kitchens. Guidance and trainings will be made available to communicate these and other changes in order to promote consistent enforcement of food code requirements. **Significant progress.**

## Providing guidance to food processors

*Processing 3.2.1: Maintain, update and expand as necessary the MA Food Processors Resource Manual, published by MDAR.*

MDAR was awarded a USDA Specialty Crop grant of nearly \$20,000 to update the online, on-demand Manual and produce a complementary video with a focus on food safety as it relates to value added product development.

**Progress.**

## Investing in food processing infrastructure

*Processing 3.2.2: Provide food processing entrepreneurs with technical assistance, financing resources, and business plan support in the startup phase, prioritizing businesses that use Massachusetts agricultural or seafood products as primary ingredients.*

*Processing 3.2.5: Invest in food processing businesses in growing industries.*

*Processing 4.1.13: Establish and distribute funds for local food processing facilities and equipment, especially where funds support initiatives that increase local food procurement and support job growth.*

*FASH 8.2.3: Increase State, local, nonprofit, and private investments to expand the number of community kitchens including expanding the usage of existing kitchens for delivery of nutrition education and cooking courses for seniors, adults, and youth.*

The first two rounds of MassDevelopment's Collaborative Workspace Program provided \$443,000 in grants to food enterprises in seven municipalities for projects including community kitchens and a food retail incubator. Some MassWorks grants have also supported projects that touch on food system infrastructure. **Progress.**

# DISTRIBUTION



## Supporting increased healthy food access

*Distribution 1.1: Support public and private investment to capitalize and implement the Massachusetts Food Trust.*

The Massachusetts Food Trust will provide significant capital funding for projects meant to increase healthy food access in communities that are currently underserved. To date, \$1 million of the \$10 million authorized in the 2014 environmental bond has been appropriated, and \$100,000 allocated for administration. After a number of delays in launching, grant and loan criteria are currently being finalized and applications will be accepted starting in late October 2018. **Significant progress.**

## Supporting Buy Local organizations

*Distribution 1.3.2: Increase state funding for buy local organizations to at least \$500,000 annually.*

There are nine Buy Local organizations, covering the entire state, working to increase direct-to-consumer sales from Massachusetts farms. The annual earmark in support for these organizations, which had been \$300,000 for many years, was increased to \$500,000 in the FY19 budget. **Significant progress.**

## Investing in capital projects to improve food distribution

*Distribution 3: Support for, and innovations in, cost-effective local food distribution will increase.*

*FASH 7.4: Support innovative retail outlet strategies that enhance access to healthy food for at-risk residents.*

Launched in 2016, the Massachusetts Food Ventures Program (MFVP) has awarded grants totaling approximately \$2.4 million to 18 local efforts to increase access to healthy, affordable food options and improve economic opportunities for low to moderate income communities. Administered by MDAR, the MFVP provides funding of up to \$500,000 in grants to support food ventures, sited primarily in or near low- or moderate-income communities. **Progress.**

## Preparing farmers for new federal food safety rules

*Distribution 5.1.1: Expand the role and purpose of CQP as a sustainability program and a food safety certification and regulatory certainty program.*

*Distribution 5.1.5: Develop resources to provide food safety regulation information, technical assistance and training including through Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources (MDAR), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and University of Massachusetts (UMass) Extension.*

*Distribution 5.1.6: Adopt CQP as Massachusetts' farm food safety standard to meet all federal requirements.*

*Distribution 5.1.7: Establish a system of certification pre-audits that are available for producers prior to official audit.*

*Distribution 5.1.8: Ensure that MDAR has personnel resources to conduct audits or contract with third parties to audit.*

*Farming 1.3.3: Improve programs offered by MDAR and UMass Extension to aid farmers in understanding and addressing the demands of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), other federal food safety regulations, and third party audit systems, particularly as they relate to farmers' ability to sell at farmers markets and access other retail and wholesale outlets.*

Through a cooperative agreement with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), MDAR's food safety program has expanded its capacity and authority to implement the federal Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The Department obtained statutory authority to conduct on-farm inspections and has begun the planning process of rule and regulation development, with the goal to complete public hearings and final implementation in the spring of 2019.

The Department has aligned the Commonwealth Quality Program's (CQP) criteria to match those of FSMA. The program currently conducts On Farm Readiness Reviews to help farmers prepare for compliance, and additional staff have been hired and trained in order to develop the needed capacity for registrations, inspections, and audits. An IT platform is being developed to support registration and data collection and storage.

UMass Extension has also secured grants and other temporary funding to support their work in support of FSMA compliance through their Food Science Extension faculty member and their Vegetable Program, but more stable ongoing funding is needed to sustain their continued activities in this area. **Significant progress.**

# MARKETING



## Marketing local food

*Marketing 1.2.2: Dedicate funding to engage outside expertise to evaluate the effectiveness of existing MDAR brands including Mass Grown and Fresher, Made with Pride, Savor Massachusetts, Commonwealth Quality, and other local and regional brands. Based on the findings, develop funding and marketing recommendations for revived programs or for a new branding initiative. Develop program requirements to ensure that any products bearing the brands are grown, processed, and distributed following appropriate food safety standards and using environmentally sustainable practices. Develop and implement strategies to educate the public about the program's standards. Provide funding for a full time brand manager based at MDAR to oversee the program.*

Massachusetts was one of the first states to recognize the value of direct-to-consumer sales and develop programs and brands designed to help connect farms and consumers. While MDAR continues to maintain these brands, a comprehensive review to evaluate their effectiveness and consider how to strengthen them has not happened. Such an evaluation and planning process would help to build on the success of these efforts, and would help ensure that they address the changing demands of both the production and consumption of local foods. The Department has applied for federal funds to conduct such processes, but none have been approved to date. **No progress.**

## Growing the culinary tourism industry

*Marketing 1.4.4: Expand the State's culinary tourism and agritourism programs to draw visitors to farms and businesses that feature locally grown and produced products, such as dairies, wineries, distilleries, cider producers, agricultural events, festivals, and restaurants that feature local products.*

Visits to craft beverage businesses are the fastest growing sector of culinary tourism, led by beer tourists. In 2018 MDAR worked with the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) to host three Craft Beverage Workshops on how to best capitalize on the growing interest of culinary tourists in craft beverage tasting rooms and tours. MDAR also developed a new craft beverage map, as well as individual web pages for wine, hard cider, distilled spirits and beer, cross-connecting to MA Grown and Fresher and MOTT for complementary activities. **Progress.**

# FOOD ACCESS, SECURITY, AND HEALTH



## Increasing the state minimum wage

*FASH Action 1.2.1: Support the adoption of a living wage standard for Massachusetts workers, with exceptions for time-limited youth training on production farms and associated retail operations.*

*Farming Action 2.4.3: Establish a time-limited youth and training minimum wage for farm workers.*

*Farming Action 2.4.4: Allow retail farm workers to qualify for the agricultural minimum wage.*

*Processing Action 3.1.1: Ensure living wages in food processing and related industries.*

*Fishing Action 2.1.4: Provide fish and shellfish industry workforce with living wages.*

The Plan identified the need to increase the purchasing power of low-wage workers as an important component to improving public health. By increasing the minimum wage, families will be better able to afford nutritious food, helping to reduce the rate of preventable dietary-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. An increased minimum wage was also cited in the Plan as a way to improve career opportunities in the food system, both for workers, with higher wages, and employers, with a more stable and professional workforce.

The minimum wage increase signed by Governor Baker (H.4640) is a significant step toward the goals of these Plan recommendations. However, there was no action to establish training or youth wages for farm workers, or to expand the agricultural minimum wage to retail farm workers, as was called for in the Plan. While the agricultural minimum wage will remain unchanged, the increased minimum wage in other industries will make finding workers more difficult for farmers. **Significant progress.**

## Serving SNAP families

*FASH 2.1: The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) should continue to restore SNAP benefits to households improperly terminated or denied due to the business process redesign during 2014 and early 2015.*

*FASH 2.1.1: DTA should review the terminations and denials of all SNAP benefits, and where determined eligible, permit or restore benefits as soon as possible. This would not apply in cases where SNAP benefits were terminated because applicant's income exceeded the eligibility thresholds.*

*FASH 2.1.2: Ensure adequate funding to hire DTA staff for the timely, efficient, and reliable processing of SNAP applications and renewals. The DTA should renew their focus on assisting clients, particularly elders, people with disabilities, and applicants with limited English proficiency, in securing required documentation and verification.*

*FASH 2.1.3: Identify and implement best practices for SNAP administration that have been developed in other states, through research and working with the USDA. In particular, improve the existing Virtual Gateway and Beacon systems, to prevent automatic terminations or denials where submitted documents are not reviewed by DTA staff. Ensure DTA staff is trained to facilitate a streamlined application process.*

*FASH 2.1.4: Implement federal options to reduce SNAP application barriers for low-income, seniors, and elder populations. Pursue an Elder Simplified Application Pilot (ESAP) to eliminate verification and interview requirements for seniors. Expand the Bay State Combined Application pilot to reach low income elder and disabled Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients. Consider allowing community partners to conduct client interviews.*

Enrollment in SNAP has increased since 2015 as benefits to households that were improperly terminated were re-stored. Between May 2017 and May 2018 Massachusetts was one of only two states with a SNAP caseload

increase (1.3%). The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) has received federal bonuses for three years in a row for strong performance in program accuracy and quality control in administering SNAP.

DTA opened a new office in Holyoke in 2018 to assist seniors with navigating and enrolling in SNAP, and launched a new SNAP senior assistance line specifically tailored to provide a better experience for SNAP seniors, including direct access to a case manager without requiring use of automated prompts and the ability to leave voice mail messages.

DTA also received an “Excellence in Technology Award” at the 2018 Massachusetts Digital Government Summit for the DTA Connect website, a web portal that links SNAP clients across the Commonwealth to vital resources including a program application. The mobile app and web portal have been used by hundreds of thousands of SNAP clients.

In November 2015, SNAP applications were processed, on average, in 22 days. As of September 2018, SNAP applications are processed in an average of 11 days. In addition, DTA Connect phone wait times have gone down.

DTA has received approval for a policy waiver that will make it easier for seniors to apply for and maintain their SNAP benefit, called the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP). Although the title specifies the elder population, ESAP will encompass all elder and/or disabled households with no earned income. This waiver allows this population to have a 36-month certification period, waives the recertification interview requirement and does not require the household to submit an interim report. This change is anticipated to go into effect by the end of 2018. **Significant progress.**

## Integrating access to benefits programs

*FASH 2.2: Implement a common application portal for MassHealth, SNAP and other needs-based programs, that serves as an integrated, streamlined eligibility system for state-administered benefits.*

A bill that would require a common application portal (H.101) was introduced in the 2017-18 legislative session but had not passed as of this writing. The FY18 budget required that a study committee investigate feasibility of such a portal, and a contractor was engaged to assess the possibilities and develop proposals. **Progress.**

## Helping seniors claim full SNAP benefits

*FASH 2.3.1: Collaborate with DTA and agencies that assist seniors and persons with disabilities in claiming and verifying un-reimbursed, eligible medical and transportation expenses.*

DTA has implemented a policy to help ensure that seniors are able to demonstrate these un-reimbursed expenses so that such costs are not counted as income when determining SNAP eligibility. **Progress.**

## Expanding SNAP outreach partners

*FASH 2.3.4: Provide additional reimbursement to community partners that are managing more SNAP applications since the DTA's change to program administration.*

DTA expanded the number of contracted Outreach Partners from 35 in FY17 to 70 in FY19. **Significant progress.**



## Supporting the Healthy Incentives Program

*FASH 3.1.1: Leverage and maximize the FINI grant award to increase use of SNAP and complementary benefit programs at farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and for community supported agriculture (CSA) programs. Identify, support, and implement methods to sustain FINI-related healthy food purchasing incentive initiatives.*

*FASH 3.1.2: Fund the FINI-HIP Trust Fund. The FINI-HIP Trust will enable DTA to engage statewide community partners and private funders to accept financial commitments to support the HIP implementation.*

*FASH 7.4.4: Increase the availability and affordability of CSA memberships among low-income residents through such innovative measures as the statewide Healthy Incentives Program, which will allow monthly CSA share payments from SNAP debit cards.*

*Distribution 1.3.1: Provide public support to farmers markets to market local foods and expand the number of Massachusetts residents consuming local food*

*Distribution 1.4.4: Continue to support health care providers and regulators to incentivize purchase of healthy, Massachusetts-produced foods, through programs such as vegetable prescriptions and other healthy food incentive programs.*

The Healthy Incentives Program launched in April 2017. Through September 2018 more than 48,000 families earned more than \$6.7 million in incentives, and 219 Massachusetts farms recorded an equivalent amount in sales. The state has supported this program with total appropriations of \$7.5 million in FY 18 and FY 19, along with large staff and resource costs borne by DTA, MDAR, and DPH. Those resources represent a significant investment in this important program, but are still not enough to meet demand. As a result, the program is scheduled to be suspended for approximately six months in 2018-2019. **Significant progress.**

## Eliminating meal shaming

*FASH 4: Healthy food education and choices for all children and adolescents will be expanded.*

To help reduce meal shaming and the denial of school meals to students from low-income families with unpaid school meal debt, the FY 19 budget included language requiring that all municipalities publish and inform families about meal charge policies. **Progress.**

## Expanding farm-to-school

*FASH 4.2.2: Expand existing, and support new, farm-to-school programming to increase the amount of healthy and locally produced foods purchased and served by pre- and K-12 schools, childcare, and after-school facilities. Incentivize expansion and creation of farm-to-school programs with public and private funds to support school districts.*

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has begun offering farm to school trainings, and uses a monthly newsletter to highlight projects throughout the state. In 2017 the Department was awarded a USDA Team Nutrition Grant that is being used to develop online, on-demand training modules to assist Summer Food Service Programs with incorporating more local foods into their meal programs. **Progress.**

## Expanding access to school meals

*FASH 4.3.1: Maximize usage of USDA school food programs, including National School Food Lunch, School Breakfast, and Fruit and Vegetable Programs. Encourage school districts to adopt the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Support the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in efforts to develop and adopt guidance that clarifies how funding will be allocated for CEP-eligible school districts.*

*FASH 4.3.3: Support more schools and school districts in implementing programming that serves breakfast in the classroom. Support increased awareness of Massachusetts DESE guidance to school districts that breakfast is counted as "time on learning."*

The number of school breakfasts served to students in Massachusetts has increased by 7% annually over the last five school years, and in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years, Massachusetts ranked second in the nation for school breakfast participation growth among high need students.

There are 657 schools in Massachusetts with more than 60% of the student population eligible for free and/or reduced price meals. Of these 657 schools, 363 reported using an alternative breakfast model either before or after the bell. The Department has also developed, in conjunction with the Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) at Project Bread, a series of toolkits and quick guides to assist more schools in implementing after the bell breakfast models.

A bill that would require that all schools where 60% or more of the students qualify for free and reduced meals serve breakfast after the bell in the classroom has been introduced in the 2017-18 legislative session (S.2441). It has not passed as of this writing, but the publicity and outreach from the campaign has prompted some schools to enroll.

Schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which provides free lunch and breakfast to all students in high need schools, has increased from 22 districts in the 2014-15 school year, to 82 districts in 2017-18.

**Progress.**

## **Providing nutritious meals and snacks to children and adults**

*FASH 4.3.4: Support expanded use of USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program, including efforts to increase funding and participation and reduce and streamline paperwork.*

Massachusetts led the nation by increasing the number of children participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which reimburses care facilities for nutritious meals and snacks, by 19% between 2015 and 2017. The state also notched the second highest increase in the nation (13%) in the number of facilities participating in the program. The application and training process has also been streamlined, with much of it available online. **Progress.**

## **Engaging health care providers in supporting food security**

*FASH 5.1: Support actions by health care providers, hospitals and medical institutions that improve access to, and education about, healthy food, especially to people who are food insecure.*

*FASH 5.1.1: Incorporate food security screenings and referrals to food assistance resources into regular practice for visits to the doctor's office or clinic.*

*FASH 5.1.2: Support strategies to address immediate food needs of patients at doctors' offices, hospitals, and health centers including scaling of programs in which doctors write prescriptions for patients to fill for fresh fruits and vegetables - at no cost - at local farmers markets and other retail outlets.*

*FASH 5.1.3: Encourage and support nonprofit hospitals in supporting and partnering with community-based programs that promote healthy food access and nutrition education.*

DPH worked with MassHealth to ensure that new guidelines for Accountable Care Organizations included models for how healthcare providers could gain understanding about patients' food needs such as use of food security screening questions, and address these through partnership with community-based service providers. The ACO certification standards now require ACOs to report on how they assess patient needs based on a range of characteristics including food insecurity history. The Massachusetts Attorney General released updated community benefits guidelines for hospitals and HMOs in early 2018. These guidelines include consideration of access to affordable healthy foods when determining community needs. **Progress.**

## Purchasing more local food for the emergency food system

*FASH 6.1.2: Modify food procurement contract language to utilize at least 10% of MEFAP dollars to purchase locally produced, healthy food.*

The Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program provides funding to the four regional food banks to purchase food to distribute to households in need of assistance. Each year the food banks commit to spending a certain amount of that funding on produce from Massachusetts farms. This 'Mass Grown' line has increased from 6% in 2015 to 7.55% for FY19. In FY18, 41% of food purchased by the food banks was purchased from Massachusetts vendors, including in-state farms as well as MA produce brokers and other produce vendors. **Progress.**

## Supporting food access through better regional transportation

*FASH 7.1: Support municipal and regional transportation planning efforts to more fully understand and identify related access barriers and opportunities to make it easier for all residents to obtain healthy food regularly.*

Funding for regional transit authorities in the FY19 budget increased by 10% to \$88 million. **Progress.**

## Supporting Mass in Motion

*FASH 7.1.3: Continue to support and expand Mass in Motion and similar municipal programs like food policy councils, and leverage existing Mass in Motion initiatives towards a "Health in All Policies" model that integrates health-related conditions into decision-making and planning throughout municipal and State agencies.*

More than half of the 70 Mass in Motion communities have undertaken community food assessments, analyzing opportunities and barriers and identifying needed policy and practice changes to address food insecurity and the lack of healthy foods in many communities. In many communities, these assessments have led to creation of regional or municipal food policy councils; development of a regional or municipal plan focused on improving food systems; or implementation of policies such as urban/community agriculture ordinances, shared-use agreements for community kitchens. Others have studied the feasibility of opening additional retail locations like mobile markets, farmers markets, etc., and worked with community and economic development partners to increase healthy offering at neighborhood corner stores and bodegas. **Progress.**

## Expanding SNAP education

*FASH 8.2.1: Build upon existing SNAP education programs by expanding public and private support for outreach and programming of existing nutrition education programs operated by UMass Extension SNAP Education and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Programs (EFNEP) and nonprofit organizations, such as Share Our Strength, to also include people who may not be receiving or are not eligible for nutrition assistance.*

DTA has been awarded federal SNAP-Ed funding to provide nutrition education for SNAP-eligible participants to support establishing healthy eating habits and more active lifestyles. DTA's SNAP-Ed team has built a "Massachusetts Healthy Food in a SNAP" website for its SNAP-Ed initiatives.

SNAP-Ed embraces the consumption of locally grown foods by supporting Farm to School activities, Breakfast in the Classroom, and working with multiple organizations involved with gardening programs for adults and children.

SNAP-Ed has developed their State Nutrition Action Council (SNAC) by interfacing with the Healthy Eating Community of Practice (HE CoP) sponsored by MA Department of Health. The HE CoP supports activities which move toward

achieving goals of the MA Food Plan and was instrumental in the development and supportive efforts for the Food Trust's work on increasing access to healthy foods and economic development.

A majority of SNAP-Ed programming occurs within school systems statewide where SNAP-Ed nutrition educators serve as active members of School Wellness Councils/Advisory Committees to focus on the integration of local foods into lunchroom menus, raising awareness of the benefits of USDA school foods program to students and parents, and the development of school kitchen innovations through the smarter lunchrooms. **Progress.**

### Eliminating the sales tax exemption for sugar-added drinks

*FASH 8.4.1: Eliminate the sales tax exemption for sugar-added soda beverages and direct the resulting tax revenue to nutrition programs that increase the access to, and consumption of, healthy foods, including locally produced foods.*

Several bills introduced in the 2017-18 legislative session address the issue of taxation of sugary drinks, but none received significant support. **No progress.**

## WORKFORCE



## Training food system workers

*Workforce 4: Provide appropriate education and training for food system workers through modification, adaptation of existing resources, or development of new ones.*

Since 2016 the administration's Workforce Skills Cabinet has given several Workforce Skills Capital Grants to high schools, colleges and other educational institutions to invest in infrastructure and programming to prepare students for careers in culinary arts, food services, agriculture, and nutrition. **Progress.**

## IMPLEMENTATION



### Revitalizing the Massachusetts Food Policy Council

*Implementation 1.3.1: Members of the MFPC should support enacting legislation that broadens the scope of the MFPC beyond developing recommendations – currently its sole responsibility – to include actively coordinating food policy decisions and food system supports among agencies.*

*Implementation 1.3.2: Create additional seats on the MFPC to ensure representation of a broad range of public and private food system stakeholders. Consideration should be given to representatives of: The Governor's office; Division of Marine Fisheries; The EOEEA, specifically an individual representing the land interests of State agencies; MassDOT; UMass Extension; The newly-established stakeholder network recommended by this plan; An organization representing the interests of workforce development needs in the State.*

*Implementation 1.3.2: Hold more frequent meetings, to better facilitate discussion and ensure progress on tasks.*

*Implementation 1.3.2: Set priorities for actions the MFPC will take based on the Plan's recommendations, focusing on items that emphasize inter - agency collaboration around regulations and practices.*

*Implementation 1.3.2: Develop plans for member agencies and organizations to commit to taking on plan-recommended tasks that are relevant to their agencies, and coordinating these efforts with the other implementation partners.*

*Implementation 1.3.2: Set goals and establishing benchmarks for those goals to allow for measuring and reporting on progress.*

*Implementation 1.3.2: Dedicate State funding to staffing a Food Policy Coordinator position to support the work of the MFPC, housed at one of the member agencies.*

*Implementation 1.3.2: Develop an inventory of all State programs that relate to food and identifying synergistic opportunities for the allocation of State resources to best meet the goals of the Plan. This inventory could lead to further recommendations about State agency budget and administrative priorities, and more efficient coordination among State agencies.*

*Fishing 4.1.1: Create a seat for the Commissioner of The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game on the Massachusetts Food Policy Council.*

*Fishing 4.1.2: Add a position to the Massachusetts Food Policy Council Advisory Committee for a representative of the fishing industry.*

Following completion of the Plan, agencies represented on the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, along with the Council itself, identified priorities from the Plan and began meeting more frequently to explore and discuss these issues. While the Council did submit a letter of support for HIP funding to the legislature, and has had some conversations about how the body could take specific actions toward the goals of the Plan or support others' efforts, it has not yet begun to play such a role. Important structural issues such as adding representatives from the Governor's Office, Division of Marine Fisheries, UMass Extension, and others have not been addressed, nor has funding for staff support been provided. **No progress.**

### Developing comprehensive food system legislation

*Implementation 1.4.1: Members of the legislature should consider establishing a food and farm caucus to develop and introduce legislation recommended by the Plan. The caucus should also be used as an opportunity to educate legislators about food system policy issues. Participants in the caucus should include representatives from committees that consider legislation related to the food system including, but not limited to, committees on health care, agriculture, the environment, the State budget, and education.*

*Implementation 1.4.1: Allocate funds to staffing the caucus.*



As awareness of food system policy grows, more legislation is being considered that touches on how food is produced, processed, distributed, sold, and consumed in Massachusetts. These measures could be significantly strengthened if considered comprehensively by legislators through a food system caucus. No such body has been established.

**No progress.**

## Reinforcing implementation of the Plan's goals.

*Implementation 1: The goals and recommendations of the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan are implemented and the food system is strengthened.*

Since the Plan's completion, MDAR has asked that all applications for funding for their grant programs demonstrate alignment with the goals of the Plan. No other agency has done so. **Progress.**

## Conclusion

The authors of the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan made clear that implementation of its goals would “require action on the part of many public, nonprofit, and private participants in the food system.” Laws, regulations, programs, and investments on the part of the public sector are needed to create a supportive system where private sector businesses and nonprofit organizations can thrive and meet the needs of the constituencies they serve. Those private sector stakeholders, in turn, were tasked with demonstrating the efficacy of needed programs and practices that those public sector actions would support, and with advocating for those actions to be taken.

Published earlier this year, the Collaborative's report "Sustainability and Equity in the Massachusetts Food System: A Progress Report" told the stories of dozens of private sector food system stakeholders rising up to meet the recommendations of the Plan. The state government, too, has made significant strides toward some of the Plan's recommendations, and this report serves to highlight some of those, and to call out instances where more action is needed.

Taken together, these two reports document a worthy start toward implementing the Plan, but many more of the Plan's recommendations remain unaddressed. The Plan has more than 600 action items, each calling for changes that, taken together, could bring Massachusetts' food system closer to the goal of a truly sustainable and equitable food system. Collective, concerted efforts from all food system stakeholders are required to bring resources to bear to address each of them.

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative promotes, monitors, and facilitates implementation of the 2015 Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan.

The Collaborative's steering committee is:

- Cris Coffin, Eden Pond Farm
- James Harrison
- Nathan L'Etoile, American Farmland Trust/Four Star Farms
- Vivien Morris, Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition
- Valerie Nelson, Water Alliance
- Karen Schwalbe, Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership
- Liz Sheehan-Castro, Worcester County Food Bank

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