



Tuesday, March 21, 2022

Governor Maura Healey
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St., Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Agricultural Requests for FY2024 Capital Investment Plan

Dear Governor Healey:

The thousands of Massachusetts farmers that feed us each day have a reputation for innovation, perseverance, and a commitment to serving their communities, making significant contributions to the Commonwealth's food security, economy, climate change resilience, and public health. But financial sustainability is challenging for most of the Commonwealth's farms, and strategic public investments are necessary. We write today to encourage you to increase such investments in your FY2024 Capital Investment Plan.

The state's agricultural production and processing industries were offered \$5,225,000 in grants last year through the seven critical programs below, while demand was more than twice that. State investment must increase to meet this demonstrated need, particularly in programs that support farmers' contributions toward climate resilience.

The programs referred to in the chart include:

- **Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP).** Funds conservation practices that protect natural resources while supporting farm sustainability. This program is particularly critical as a tool to help farmers recover from the 2020 and 2022 droughts.
- **Farm Viability Enhancement Program (FVEP).** Provides business planning and technical assistance to farms as they innovate to compete in the marketplace. In doing so, it helps those farms protect farmland and provide greater food security for their communities.
- **Urban Agriculture.** Supports projects that grow food, teach job skills, build community, and provide nutritious food to households with limited access to fresh produce in their communities.
- **Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP).** Helps farms keep our food supply safe by supporting them in meeting the requirements imposed by the federal government and enforced by the state under the Food Safety Modernization Act.
- **Agricultural Climate Resilience Enhancement (ACRE).** Supports farms in updating aging infrastructure and adopting sustainable management practices as part of the Commonwealth's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Agricultural Compost Infrastructure Enhancement Program (ACIEP).** Supports farms that provide critical composting infrastructure, necessitated by recently lowered threshold of the

state’s Commercial Food Material Disposal Ban, the need for soil amendments to help increase food production, and ongoing efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Cranberry Bog Renovation Grant Program.** Provides reimbursement grant funding for the implementation of renovations that promote more efficient bogs both in design and production while enhancing the business and environmental sustainability of the cranberry operation.

Our requests for each of these programs are in the far-right column, following data about the FY23 program’s demonstrated demand.

		<u>FY23 Allocation</u>	<u>FY23 Awardees</u>	<u>Total FY23 Requests</u>	<u>FY23 Applicants</u>	<u>FY24 Recommendation</u>
E019	Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP)	\$600,000	16	\$1,229,193	34	\$ 1,000,000
E031	Farm Viability Enhancement Program (FVEP)	\$720,000	7	\$1,800,000	21	\$ 1,400,000
E048	Urban Agriculture	\$315,000	5	\$250,000	6	\$ 315,000
E061	Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP)	\$1,000,000	23	\$1,895,570	44	\$ 1,500,000
E083	Agricultural Climate Resilience Enhancement	\$1,405,000	42	\$2,870,482	87	\$ 2,200,000
E114	Agricultural Compost Infrastructure Enhancement Program (ACIEP)	\$185,000	10	\$527,115	18	\$ 400,000
E132	Agricultural Innovation Center (AIC) - Cranberry Bog Renovation	\$1,000,000	17	\$2,237,678	38	\$ 1,800,000
		\$5,225,000	120	\$10,810,038	248	\$ 8,615,000

Each of these requested investments represents a commitment on the part of the Commonwealth to support farms and other businesses in securing our food supply, mitigating and building resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting businesses with a proven track record of bolstering the local economy.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide this input.

Sincerely,



Winton Pitcoff
Director

CC:

Secretary Rebecca Tepper, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Commissioner Ashley Randle, Department of Agricultural Resources