

## 2023-24 Legislative Priorities

The Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan recommended a range of policy solutions toward a sustainable and equitable food system. Many bills have been filed in the 193<sup>rd</sup> General Court that address these recommendations. The MA Food System Collaborative and the undersigned organizations have identified these bills as priorities for passage this session.



### **An Act to promote food literacy**

S.310: Sen. Jason Lewis / H.601: Reps. Andres Vargas and Mindy Domb

To help Massachusetts children lead healthy, independent, thoughtful lives, all students in grades K-12 should have access to food system education in school. These bills will add food literacy to the list of topics that students should learn about in school, and provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) with opportunities and resources to support those lessons.



### **An Act protecting our soil and farms from PFAS contamination**

S.39: Sen. Jo Comerford / H.101: Rep. Paul Schmid

New regulations and laws related to PFAS should not jeopardize our food security, including Massachusetts farmers' ability to produce food. These bills will provide financial and liability relief should farmers' ability to grow crops be impacted by PFAS, as well as establish an account to support technical assistance and education to help farmers adapt to new practices that reduce the use and dispersion of PFAS.



### **An Act strengthening local food systems**

S.42: Sen. Jo Comerford / H.88: Rep. Natalie Blais

Farmers in Massachusetts struggle to remain sustainable, on average earning just 94 cents for every dollar they spend producing food. They must compete in the global marketplace while facing higher input costs, more restrictive regulations, and fewer supportive resources than farmers in other states. These bills will create a "circuit rider" program at MDAR to coordinate support for farmers, establish a \$3 million Next Generation Farmers Fund to provide education grants, direct MEMA to incorporate food production capacity into disaster planning, give MDAR needed tools to help protect farmland, and establish a state food system coordinator position.



### **An Act promoting equity in agriculture**

S.41: Sen. Jo Comerford / H.87: Rep. Natalie Blais

BIPOC farmers are represented on only 2.3% of the Commonwealth's farms, farms that steward just .3% of the land in farming and sell just .4% of the market value of agricultural goods in the Massachusetts, despite people of color making up 29% of the state's population. These bills will establish a commission charged with developing recommendations for MDAR to equitably serve socially disadvantaged farmers to address these disparities.



### **An Act relative to an agricultural healthy incentives program**

S.85: Sen. Anne Gobi / H.150: Rep. Mindy Domb

The Healthy Incentives Program leverages federal SNAP funds by increasing SNAP recipients' ability to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables directly from farmers, improving health outcomes for vulnerable communities and increasing sales for local farms. These bills will establish the framework for the program's long-term sustainability.

## **An act supporting the Commonwealth's food system**

H.92: Reps. Dan Donahue and Pat Duffy

Many state agencies play roles in supporting and regulating the food system, but because of limited communication between them some of these efforts are duplicative, inefficient, or even contradictory. These bills will establish a state food system coordinator position to serve in an advisory capacity to all agencies to coordinate and inventory food programs, and develop and track metrics related to food system goals.

## **An Act encouraging the donation of food to persons in need**

S.920: Sen. Jo Comerford / H.1594: Rep. Hannah Kane

Thousands of tons of edible food are sent to landfills each year because of donors' concerns about liability, and because diverting it to those who need it can be costly. These bills will provide civil liability protection for individuals and food establishments who donate food directly to consumers, and a tax credit to Massachusetts farmers in the amount of the fair market value of the donated food, with a \$5,000 annual cap per farmer.

## **Proposal for a legislative amendment to the constitution relative to agricultural and horticultural lands**

S.13: Sen. Jo Comerford / H.41: Rep. Paul Schmid

Article 99 of the Massachusetts Constitution authorizes lower tax rates for agricultural land, but only on parcels greater than five acres. Changes in management practices have made farming on smaller parcels more sustainable, the subdividing of large tracts of land means many farmers farm on multiple smaller parcels, and rising land prices put larger parcels out of reach for many farmers, particularly beginning farmers and farmers of color. This proposed amendment will remove the acreage requirement, making farmland of any size eligible for tax relief.

## **The Following Organizations Support these Priorities**

About Fresh, Boston  
Allston Brighton Health Collaborative,  
Allston/Brighton  
American Farmland Trust, Northampton  
Auburn Middle School, Auburn  
Berkshire Bounty, Berkshire County  
Berkshire Grown, Great Barrington  
Boston Area Gleaners, Acton  
Bread of Life, Malden  
Central Mass Grown, Rutland  
ChicopeeFRESH, Chicopee  
CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining  
Agriculture), South Deerfield  
Clark Organic Farm, Carlisle  
Coastal Foodshed, New Bedford  
Common Threads, National  
CommonWealth Kitchen, Boston  
Community Servings, Jamaica Plain  
Conservation Law Foundation, Boston  
Curley K-8 Schoolyard Improvement  
Committee, Jamaica Plain  
East Boston Neighborhood Health Center,  
East Boston  
Eastie Farm, Boston  
Food For Free, Cambridge  
Food Link, Arlington  
Friends of Holly Hill Farm, Cohasset  
Gardening the Community, Springfield  
Groundwork Somerville, Somerville  
Grow Food Northampton, Northampton  
Growing Places, Leominster  
Hampshire County Food Policy Council,  
Hampshire County  
Healthy Chelsea Coalition, Chelsea  
Healthy Waltham, Inc., Waltham  
Island Grown Initiative, Martha's Vineyard

Just Roots, Greenfield  
Land For Good, New England  
Lovin' Spoonfuls, Newton  
Mass Farmers Markets, Waltham  
Mass In Motion-Office of Planning and  
Economic Development, Holyoke  
Massachusetts Academy of Nutrition and  
Dietetics, Medway  
Massachusetts Cheese Guild, Foxboro  
Massachusetts Council on Aging, Statewide  
MA Farm Bureau Federation, Marlborough  
Massachusetts Farm to School, Beverly  
MA Specialty Foods Association, Groton  
Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition, Boston  
Mill City Grows, Lowell  
Mobile Ministries, Inc, New Bedford  
Natick Farmers Market, Natick  
New England Vegetable & Berry Growers  
Association, Essex  
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project,  
Beverly  
NOFA/Mass, Florence  
Northeast Harvest, Topsfield  
Nuestras Raices, Holyoke  
Our Grateful Garden, Norwell  
Project Bread, East Boston  
Project TALC, Bedford  
Quincy Farmers Market, Quincy  
Regional Environmental Council, Worcester  
Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, National  
Roots Rising, Pittsfield  
Roslindale Village Main Street, Boston  
SABURA Youth Programs, Youth SOL,  
MACOPGV, Brockton/Boston  
School Sprouts Educational Gardens,  
Belchertown

Second Chance Composting, Adams  
Seeds of Solidarity, Orange  
Sheffield Farmers Market, Sheffield  
Somerville Food Security Coalition,  
Somerville  
Somerville Winter Farmers Market,  
Somerville  
Southcoast Food Policy Council, a program of  
The Marion Institute, Marion  
Springfield Food Policy Council, Springfield  
Sustainable Business Network of  
Massachusetts, Cambridge  
Sustainable CAPE - Center for Agricultural  
Preservation & Education, Truro  
Sustainable Nantucket, Nantucket  
The Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro South,  
Taunton/Brockton  
The Farmers Market at Forest Park,  
Springfield  
The Food Bank of Western MA, Hatfield  
The Food Project, Boston/Lincoln/Lynn/  
Wenham  
The Greater Boston Food Bank, Boston  
The John C. Stalker Institute, Framingham  
The Trustees of Reservations, Boston  
The Urban Farming Institute of Boston,  
Mattapan  
Topsfield Fair, Topsfield  
Tufts Food Rescue, Medford  
Watertown Farmers' Market, Watertown  
Westfield Farmers Market, Westfield  
White Rabbit Farm, Barre  
Williamstown Ag Commission, Williamstown  
Worcester County Food Bank, Shrewsbury  
World Farmers, Lancaster  
Youth School of Liberation, Brockton