



2026 Update

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative supports collective action toward an equitable, sustainable, resilient, and connected local food system in Massachusetts. We envision a local food system where everyone has access to healthy food, to land to grow food, to good jobs, and to the systems where policy decisions are made.

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Budget

In the late evening of June 30, 2026, the fiscal year 2027 budget conference committee report was released. This budget proposal was passed by the House and Senate on July 1, and signed by the Governor on July 9, 2026.

The final budget includes;

- \$21.5 million for HIP, plus a commitment to carry forward \$9 million of unspent funds from FY26 for a total of \$30.5 million available in FY27,
- \$1 million for food literacy (\$750,000 for the FRESH grant program, \$150,000 for the School Wellness Coaching Program, and \$100,000 for curricula and resource development),
- \$250,000 for the local food policy council grant program, and
- \$20 million for the Disaster Relief and Resiliency Fund.

The budget also includes \$55 million for MEFAP funding for food banks, and \$180 million for universal free school meals. Unfortunately, the budget includes a \$500,000 cut to MDAR's administrative budget, and significantly underfunds DTA's caseworker line item at a time when access to DTA has plummeted, decreasing access to SNAP for tens of thousands of residents.

The budget also does not include a state-funded LFPA program, despite the work of dozens of partners this spring who MAFSC organized a Lobby Day and multiple call-in days with to advocate for this funding. We are concerned about these cuts impacts on the state agencies and are working with our statewide anti-hunger partners to address the SNAP access crisis. Our collective work is powerful, and results in real progress.



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ADVOCATE

Legislative Priorities

Food Donation Bill - The Governor signed into law the Food donation tax credit in early June through a Supp Budget. The tax credit allows any farm business that donates food, meals or crops grown, manufactured, packaged, or prepared by the farm business to a nonprofit food distribution organization a refundable credit equal to the fair market value of the food donated, not to exceed \$5,000. The Collaborative has advocated for this piece of legislation with its partners for the last 6 years.

HIP_ \$100M invested!!! - HIP is a critical program to support nutrition security at a time of federal disinvestment and rising food insecurity for seniors and working families across the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is *leading the nation and has invested \$100 million since April 2017* in healthy families and sustainable farms. This \$100M has a strong economic multiplier effect which means \$188M has been recirculated in the local economy.

The formal session concludes at the end of July but there are some updates:

Farm Omnibus Bill

The FARM Omnibus bill includes; codifying FSIG in law, protecting the whole farm in the APR program, including the food system in emergency planning, defining agritourism, establishes a Next Generation Farmer Fund, establishes a Vacant Lots to Urban Agriculture Fund, creating an agricultural land registry, creating a study on state safety net programs available to farmers and farm workers, reviewing the amount of renewable energy allowed to be generated on farms every 10 years, and more. Many of the Collaborative's legislative priorities are contained within this bill. Right now, the bill at House Ways and Means; the Collaborative and its partners have asked the Committee to move it out of Committee to the floor for debate before the end of formal session.

Environmental Bond Bill

On June 17th, the House passed [H.5510](#), the Mass Ready Act, also known as the environmental bond bill. The EBB is introduced and passed by the legislature once every five years (the last one was passed in 2018). Bond bills authorize funding amounts for the state to fund capital grant programs. The EBB was first introduced by the Governor in July 2025, and hearings on the proposal were held by the Committees on Environment and Natural Resources and Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets before being referred to Senate Ways and Means in January 2026, passed by the Senate in April, and then referred to House Ways and Means.



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ADVOCATE

Environmental Bond Bill, continued:

The bond bill as released from House Ways and Means mirrors the Senate and Administration's proposal with some additions:

- \$150M authorization for the Food Security Infrastructure Grant program – a \$25M increase from the Senate and Administration
- \$26M authorization for CSAP, FVEP, urban agriculture, compost, food safety, Farmland Plan implementation, plus a commitment to carry forward \$26.3M of unspent funds from the 2018 environmental bond bill
- \$42M authorization for APR, plus a commitment to carry forward \$18M of unspent funds from the 2018 environmental bond bill
- An outside section (3) that will distribute the \$1 million milk producers security fund and subsequently close the fund.
- An outside section (5 and 6) that adds UMass Extension and the Division of Marine Fisheries to the Massachusetts Food Policy Council.
- An outside section (20) that grants MDAR a right of first refusal, positioned behind a municipality's, on agricultural land protected under Chapter 61A when it comes up for sale. This is a critical step toward slowing the rate of farmland loss.
- An outside section (48 and 49) that modernizes animal commercial feed regulations.

The House did not include specific earmarks for the Healthy Soils and Mass Food Trust Programs, unlike the Senate. The Healthy Soils program is included in general in a larger line item, it is not zero'd out.

The differences between the House and Senate bond proposals must now be worked out by a conference committee, and the proposal will then be sent to the Governor for her signature. We will share an update on how to write to the conference committee soon. Bond authorizations are then drawn down into capital budgets (or capital improvement plans), which are set by the Governor's Administration on an annual or 2 year basis.



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CONVENE

Urban Agriculture Network

The Urban Agriculture Network met monthly from January to May. Discussion topics included:

- Volunteer Engagement and Management (Eastie, BFFC, UFI)
- Season Preparation (Newhall Fields Community Farm)
- Networking
- Funding / Fundraising

The Urban Agriculture Network meetings have been small but deeply engaging. The 2 topic-based meetings featured detailed presentations and thoughtful questions demonstrating that the content was relevant and resonated with attendees. Members seem particularly interested in the progress of our urban agriculture policy priority, An act relative to urban farmland. We hope to build on this in the Fall and explore ideas for continued policy advocacy to support urban agriculture. Since January, there are 20 new listserv members including new hires, additional team members from existing network members, and newly engaged organizations.

Local Food Policy Council Network

The network met monthly from January to June. Some meeting highlights include:

- Local Food Policy Council Summit (Feb)
- Emergency Response Planning/Food System Resilience (May-July)

The LFPC network sees consistent attendance from active local food policy councils. 17 new people have joined the listserv since Jan 1 which includes some new hires, staff transitions, and new steering committee or general LFPC members interested in being more involved. Conversations suggest that members appreciate the opportunity to troubleshoot and strategize with others in similar situations. Network members often take away ideas they say they are excited to try in their context. For example, folks have been excited about sharing their Community Food Assessment methodologies and adapting them for use in their next assessment. For capacity limited food policy councils, the ability to build off existing resources is really helpful. While some LFPCs have seen staff transitions, many of the network members have been consistently attending for several years; with ongoing engagement and two annual in-person summits, a strong sense of community has been built within this network.

Local Food Policy Council Summit (Feb) - Leaders from the state's local food policy councils convened in person for a Local Food Policy Council Summit in February. We reflected on the role and work of LFPC's in 2025, brainstormed partnerships to support food system change work, and explored storytelling approaches for education and advocacy.



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CONVENE

Food Waste Reduction Network

The Food Waste Reduction Network met every other month from January to June (Jan, Mar, May). Meetings highlights have included:

- Networking
- Expanded Food Waste Ban (MassDEP)
- Evolving Landscape of Food Waste Prevention, Reduction, and Management (ReFED, CET)

The Food Waste Reduction Network is starting to see more consistent engagement, demonstrating that those who attend regularly are finding value in the meetings. Since January, 21 new people have joined the listserv and around 20 people have joined each meeting. In March, we did an activity where folks responded to prompts of “I have”, “I want”, and “I need” to support my food waste reduction work. It sparked interest in following up to review our network map together and continue making connections, which we regularly see happening in the chat when folks share or ask for emails to contact one another.

OTHER UPDATES

Data Dashboard

The Collaborative is working on a data dashboard to support our food system partners in advocacy, inspired by the [Rhode Island data dashboard](#).

Anti-Hunger Taskforce

The Collaborative has a seat on the Governor's Anti-Hunger Taskforce. The Taskforce is looking at creating recommendations in key areas including,:

- Supporting and strengthening SNAP clients and infrastructure
- Maximizing other nutrition programs
- Supporting the emergency food system
- Building rural resiliency and sustaining local food systems

The Collaborative has been working on elevating the importance of local food systems in this time of decreased federal funding and increased food insecurity. You can read the recommendations [here](#).



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OTHER UPDATES

MDARs Farmland Partnership Program

The Collaborative is working on the Massachusetts Farmland Partnership Program with World Farmers and the Nipmuc Indian Development Corporation. We are working to create an educational presentation about best practices for municipal licensing programs, with the intention of centering historically underserved farmers.

Mid-Supply Chain work

This past winter and spring, the Collaborative worked with ERG on a project examining the mid-supply chain in the food system in Massachusetts. During this process the Collaborative interviewed over 50 mid-supply chain food system partners around the state about the gaps in Massachusetts; transportation and food storage challenges rose to the top of concerns. ERG and the Collaborative wrote a report that outlined the findings.

Internship

We have established an internship with MANRRs at UMASS; the goal of the internship is to build valuable work experience, mentorship, and networking opportunities necessary for career advancement in food policy for these students who identify as BIPOC. We host one intern each semester and pay them for this work.

New England Feeding New England (NEFNE)

The Collaborative has been working on contacting distributors, manufacturers, restaurants, stores, etc. on how much local food they are purchasing. The Local Food Count required the Collaborative to reach out to people from around the state individually to fill out a survey. For more information see the Local Food Counts website.