



Office of  
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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## **Massachusetts Farmers, Legislators Celebrate Agriculture Day on Beacon Hill**

### *Caucus Leaders Focus on Threats of Food Insecurity and Challenges to Supply, Highlight Priority Legislation*

**Boston (04/25/24)** – Massachusetts agriculture had a strong showing on Beacon Hill, with more than 200 farmers and agricultural students attending the annual Agricultural Day (also called “Ag Day”) at the State House in early April. The event – during which locally-grown food and farm products were showcased – was a collaborative effort between the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF), the Massachusetts Food System Caucus (FSC), Massachusetts Commodity groups, Buy Local organizations, and more than 35 agricultural organizations focused on promoting this important sector of the Commonwealth and discussing issues impacting the agricultural industry with lawmakers.

“We were honored to celebrate Massachusetts Agriculture Day at the State House to highlight the resilience, innovation, and dedication of our agricultural community,” said **MFBF President Warren Shaw**. “This yearly public event is a testament to the critical role farmers play in sustaining our economy, feeding our citizens, and stewarding our land for future generations. Ag Day remains a fantastic opportunity to showcase the collaboration between the many and varied groups representing the Commonwealth's agriculture.”

#### **Massachusetts Food System Caucus Press Conference Kicks Off Agriculture Day**

The co-chairs of the Massachusetts Food System Caucus (FSC) held a brief press conference at the State House Grand Staircase ahead of the Ag Day Speaking Program to highlight the caucus’ achievements, emphasizing the need to confront ongoing nutritional threats to families in the Commonwealth, spotlighting needed efforts to support local Massachusetts farms, and providing updates on the legislative priorities championed by the FSC. The FSC is a bipartisan, bicameral caucus that includes 160 members of the legislature, focused on strengthening Massachusetts’ food system. The Caucus’ three priority areas are food access and insecurity, farmland protection, and economic development.

“Ag Day is a great opportunity to hear from farmers and recognize the important work they do,” said **Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury)**. “Our farms are a vital part of our communities and economy, providing a wide variety of healthy food to Massachusetts residents every day. By supporting agriculture in Massachusetts, we can expand access to fresh, nutritious food, reduce food insecurity, and strengthen local economies across the Commonwealth.”

“Agriculture and fishing have been foundational elements of our Commonwealth since its earliest days, and our legislature has a long and steady history of support for these sectors as they have evolved over the years,” said **State Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester)**. “Today, as we realize a renewed appreciation for locally produced food products, that support is stronger than ever.” He added, “a new joint legislative committee focused on Agriculture, and a Food System Caucus that includes 158 legislators, are working to

recognize the innovation and productivity that is happening in our fields and on our vessels and docks, and to deliver tools and resources to the people making them happen. Together we are building a bright future on an already strong foundation, and that partnership was on full display on Agriculture Day.”

“Ag Day is the best day at the State House! It is a great opportunity to empower our farmers and students through advocacy and the Joint Committee on Agriculture is proud to welcome them to the State House,” said **Representative Paul Schmid (D-Westport)**, also Chair of the Agriculture Committee. “Many important issues were discussed, chief among them was the need to preserve as much farmland as possible and to invest in the next generation, the NOW generation, being our students which we will continue to prioritize.”

“It is an honor to serve as one of the Co-Chairs of the Food System Caucus with great colleagues,” said **Senator Jo Comerford (D-Northampton)**, also Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Agriculture. “I am grateful to the Caucus, as well as the Massachusetts Farm Bureau, for their partnerships in tackling the challenges faced by farmers and fisheries across the Commonwealth and I look forward to continuing to advance all priority work and legislation to increase food access, build a resilient food system, protect farmland and fisheries, and bolster economic development.”

### **Agriculture Day Speaking Program**

During the speaking program held at the event, Governor Maura Healey declared April 3, 2024, as Massachusetts Agriculture Day. As part of the celebration, Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll announced over \$3 million in grants to support Massachusetts farmers through programs that improve composting efforts, food safety, cranberry bog restoration, stewardship, and business planning.

“Strong, flourishing farms contribute so much more than the food that they produce. They catalyze economic benefits that go beyond the agricultural sector,” said Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll. “Providing direct funding to our farmers through these programs ensures our vibrant industry continues to produce the highest quality food. These grants demonstrate our commitment to the agricultural industry and goes a long way to ensuring this sector thrives.”

“These programs showcase our commitment to supporting our farmers at all stages in their businesses,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper. “Whether just starting out, taking the reins from a previous owner, or working to secure their continued longevity, our MDAR grant opportunities can enhance sustainability for farms.”

Building off this proclamation, MFBF President Warren Shaw spoke to attendees about the state of the Massachusetts agriculture industry and bills that the groups who managed Ag Day believed could assist farmers.

“Being a fifth-generation dairy farmer, I was fortunate to have mentors to teach, guide, and empower me. The creation of the Ag Youth Council will go further - in bringing together future Massachusetts agricultural leaders to nurture their skills so that the next generation will have the tools to succeed in this everchanging field,” said MDAR Commissioner Ashley Randle as she announced the first members of the Agricultural Youth Council. “Our administration is committed to supporting beginning farmers and providing them with resources they’ll need to start and grow an agricultural business. Youth engagement and workforce development is necessary to the future of our state’s agriculture industry, and I look forward to working with this first class of students.”

At the event, MFBF farmer members advocated for these legislative priorities:

- SB.588 – *An act studying the effect of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in commercial products*
- HB.2337 / SB.1577 – *An act relative to the use of hoisting equipment in Chapter 74 vocational technical education*

- HB.41 – *An act amending Article 99 of the Constitution*
- SB.442 / HB.2302 – *An act relative to preventing the discharge of radioactive*
- HB.3269 – *An act to enhance agricultural operations*
- SB.2264 – *An act relative to pup trailers*
- SB.216 – *An act relative to horse riding instructors*
- SB.2132 – *An act to further clean the Commonwealth's air*

The speaking program concluded with Youth Leadership Speaker Margaret Turpel of Massachusetts 4-H and the MFBF presentation of awards to long-time friends of Massachusetts agriculture.

Honorees included:

- Speaker Pro Tempore Kate Hogan
- Ag Day Farmer Award - Kate & Kevin O'Dwyer, Langwater Farm
- Senator Jo Comerford
- Kent Lage Award - Representative Paul Schmid

After the speaking program, MA commodity groups and buy local organizations showcased the breadth and depth of the locally-grown food produced by their farmers. Hundreds of attendees attended the 'Taste of Massachusetts' reception held in the Great Hall of Flags.

For a complete list of legislative priorities for the FSC, please click [here](#). For a complete list of the issues MFBF members focused on during their visit to Beacon Hill, please click [here](#).

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Additional Resources:

[www.mafoodsystemcaucus.com](http://www.mafoodsystemcaucus.com)

[www.mfbf.net](http://www.mfbf.net)

<https://www.facebook.com/MAFarmBureau/>