



2019 AG DAY WHITE PAPER

Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation • MA Association of Dairy Farmers • MA Nursery and Landscape Association (MNALA) • MA Flower Growers Association • Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts • Green Industry Alliance • Island Grown Initiative • Sustainable Nantucket • Massachusetts Cheese Guild • Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions • Northeast Harvest Buy Local • Topsfield Fair • Massachusetts Food System Collaborative • Massachusetts Maple Producers Association • Community Involved in Supporting Agriculture (CISA) • Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP) • Berkshire Grown • Eastern States Exposition • Central Mass Grown

COLLECTIVELY WE SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING:

SB 528 – An Act encouraging the use of renewable energy on agricultural land.

Sponsor – Senator Michael Rodrigues.

- Recent changes to Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 61A allow farms to produce up to 125 percent of their farm's energy needs on farmland while still allowing the land to be subject to provisions of this chapter.
- This bill would ensure that on-farm energy production which falls under this provision retain the same protection under state zoning law (MGL 40a Section 3) as other agricultural activities.
- The bill also clarifies that "dual use" - where a given parcel of land is used simultaneously for agricultural production and to produce energy – is eligible for inclusion in Chapter 61A.

Buy Local Funding – Maintain the \$500,000 dedicated to state Buy Local programs.

- Maintain the \$500,000 dedicated to state Buy Local programs. This is the same level of funding as was allocated in last year's state budget.
- The Commonwealth's Buy Local organizations boost sales of locally grown agricultural products in every corner of the state and are credited by farmers for creating significant increases in consumer awareness and sales of local agricultural products

SB 1129 – An Act relative to the growth of hemp.

Sponsored – Senator Adam Hinds.

- This bill would update Chapter 61A to include hemp in the definition of horticulture.
 - Presently, and absent this change: 1) Hemp farmers do not enjoy the benefits afforded by Chapter 61A; 2) If a farmer switches from one crop to hemp, towns could exercise their right of first refusal on the land; 3) Owners of Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) farms cannot grow hemp as APR enabling legislation points to Chapter 61A definitions.

SB 48 / HB 145 – An Act relative to an Agricultural Healthy Incentives Program (HIP).

Sponsor – Senator Anne Gobi/Representative Paul Mark

- The Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) doubles SNAP recipients' purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables directly from farmers, improving health outcomes for vulnerable communities and increasing sales for local farms.
- These bills would establish framework for the program's long-term sustainability.

HIP Funding

- We support allocating \$8.5 million in the state budget for HIP incentives to allow for year-round operation of the program and to support anticipated growth in participation.