

## USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) May Be Able to Offer Assistance Due to "Sandy"

Producers should be aware that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) may be able to offer assistance to Massachusetts agricultural producers who sustained damage to crops livestock, and/or farm structures during Hurricane Sandy.

"FSA has several programs that can be of assistance to agricultural producers who have sustained damage," said Richard Burke, FSA Massachusetts State Executive Director. "They include the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), and Emergency Loan Program (ELP)."

- ECP provides emergency funding and technical assistance for farmers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters. ECP signup will be held where authorized by FSA State Committees. ECP applications will be processed subject to available funding.
- Through ELP, landowners may receive emergency farm loans to help recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding, other natural disasters, or quarantine.

Farmers should contact their local FSA office for information about farm assistance programs. General program information is available on the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## 2012 Agricultural Prevailing Wage and Practice Surveys Going Out Soon

The [Massachusetts Department of Career Services](http://www.mass.gov/dcs) (MA DCS) will be mailing out the 2012 Prevailing Wage and Prevailing Practice surveys during the first week of November. It is crucial that all agricultural employers participate. These surveys are critically important since the results will directly impact the employers that utilize the [Agricultural Recruitment System \(ARS\)](http://www.dhs.gov/ars) or the [H-2A Visa Program](http://www.dhs.gov/h2a) for their employment needs. We ask all agricultural employers to take a few minutes to accurately complete the survey forms and return it to us not later than November 30, 2012. All Massachusetts employers are encouraged to participate and complete the survey, Keep in mind that a higher level of responses will significantly improve the accuracy of the results.

For more information about the Prevailing Wage and Practices survey or to obtain copies of the survey, please e-mail Ms. Dolly Raja at [draja@detma.org](mailto:draja@detma.org) or by phone at 617-626-5078, who would be happy to answer any questions that you may have about the survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

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# MDAR Agricultural Business Planning Courses

November 2012-March 2013

MDAR offers three planning courses to serve the broad spectrum of Massachusetts residents who are thinking about, starting, or already operating Massachusetts agricultural enterprises. Our courses are not offered online or in workshop formats, because participants confirm greater benefit when they have an instructor and peer group to share the learning experience over several weeks of group meetings.

**Explorers** - For those who are just thinking about getting into farming or are expanding a hobby to an income-generating scale, "Exploring the Small Farm Dream" offers guidance and timely feedback to make informed decisions about whether or not to take the plunge - and how to proceed in the first stages of feasibility. Five sessions over 6 weeks on weekday evenings. Cost per enterprise - \$125. Marlborough 2013 course 2/19, 2/26, 3/5, 3/12 Amherst 2013 course 2/5, 2/13, 2/20, 2/27, 3/6

**Planners** – For those a step or two beyond Explorer who have access to land and a strong sense of what they are capable of doing, "Planning for Start-up" is a gut check before making significant investments of time and money. Requires completion of Explorer, or equivalent programs and experience. Planners have already made the decision to farm on a revenue generating scale, and have secured the land and financing resources to do so. Six sessions over 8 weeks on Saturday mornings. Cost per enterprise - \$175. Marlborough 2012 course 11/3, 11/10, 11/17, 12/1, 12/8, 12/15 Amherst 2013 course 1/26, 2/2, 2/9, 2/23, 3/2, 3/9

**Established Farmers** – For those already operating an agricultural enterprise with at least two years of production and sales records, and who need to develop a comprehensive business plan on paper. "Tilling the Soil of Opportunity" (praised by the 350+ farms who have taken it) offers a chance to assess, regroup, assemble key documentation for decision making, plan and finance expansion, or approach ownership transfer/succession. This course draws on extensive peer experience, instructor knowledge and guest speakers. This course is FSA certified for "Borrower Training". Graduates may qualify for targeted individual technical assistance at course conclusion. 10 sessions over 11 weeks on Tuesday evenings in Amherst. Cost per enterprise - \$225 2013: (must attend all sessions): 1/8, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, 2/5, 2/12, 2/19, 2/26, 3/5, 3/12

Courses have limited enrollment to facilitate discussion, and attendance at all scheduled sessions is required. Fees are kept low through MDAR support, and may include a partner at no additional cost. Courses fill quickly in the fall. Email information requests to [rick.chandler@state.ma.us](mailto:rick.chandler@state.ma.us) or call 413-548-1905.



MDAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – MDAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit MDAR's website at [mass.gov/agr](http://mass.gov/agr), and/or follow at [twitter.com/MDARCommish](https://twitter.com/MDARCommish). For our ongoing list of events and workshops visit and bookmark: [www.mass.gov/agr/events/coming\\_up.htm](http://www.mass.gov/agr/events/coming_up.htm).