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## Plan to Attend the Draft MA Food System Unveiling at the State House, Boston, on Friday, October 23



This program will begin at the Boston State House, October 23, 2nd floor Grand staircase and Nurses Hall (9:30 – 11:30 am) and will feature an opportunity to interact with topic experts as part of the public release of draft MA Food Systems Plan at the State House. Then a discussion at the

Boston Public Market KITCHEN's "Let's Talk About Food" will follow from 12 – 1 pm.

The Massachusetts Food Policy Council and Chair Commissioner John Lebeaux, ([MDAR](http://www.mass.gov/agr)) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council ([MAPC](http://www.mapc.org)) will publicly release the draft Massachusetts Food Systems Plan on Friday, October 23 in conjunction with a celebration of Food Day. Matthew Beaton, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs will kick off the program.

This exciting event will offer a first-hand opportunity to interact with topic experts and provide feedback on a variety of the MA Food Systems goals. October 23 is the beginning of a two week public open-comment period. Goals and strategies of the MA Food Plan will be discussed including to:

- Increase production, sales and consumption of Massachusetts-grown foods;
- Create jobs and economic opportunity in food and farming, and improve the wages and skills of food system workers;
- Protect the land and water needed to produce food, maximize the environmental benefits from agriculture and fishing, and ensure food safety; and
- Reduce hunger and food insecurity, increase the availability of fresh, healthy food to all residents, and reduce food waste.

The MA Food Plan will be available at [www.mafoodplan.org](http://www.mafoodplan.org) for comments. Over the past two years, more than 1,000 people have been involved, with input from growers, food processors, consumers, food and agricultural organizations and advocates.

The Massachusetts Food Policy Council with support from MDAR and the MAPC has facilitated the development of the draft MA Food Plan in collaboration with the [Pioneer Valley Planning Commission](http://www.pioneervalleyplanningcommission.org), [Franklin Regional Council of Government](http://www.franklinregionalcouncil.org), and the [Massachusetts Workforce Alliance](http://www.massworkforcealliance.org).

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## Celebrate Farm to School Month

School districts across the Commonwealth have been celebrating the bounty of Massachusetts agriculture in their cafeterias and classrooms. Now it's official. Governor Baker has proclaimed October as Massachusetts Farm to School Month, joining a nationwide movement led by the National Farm to School Network. Farm to school programs strengthen the connections that communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers, by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools.

The Governor's [proclamation](#) recognizes the programs across the Commonwealth that work to make schools key supporters of local farms. Over 130 school districts are participating in the Harvest of the Month program led by Massachusetts Farm to School. Harvest of the Month encourages schools to highlight a different locally grown crop in the cafeteria each month and represents one of the initiatives Mass. Farm to School has developed to strengthen relationships between farms and schools in Massachusetts.

On Martha's Vineyard students are harvesting tomatoes from their school "salsa" gardens and mixing up healthy snacks. In Gloucester they are honoring the town history and serving locally caught seafood each month. In Springfield's many school gardens they are harvesting collards for school meals and planting pear trees in the schoolyard. In the Berkshires, the Berkshire Hills Regional School committee has endorsed a Farm to School Action Plan to bring local foods to the cafeteria and food education to the classroom and greater school community.

"It's encouraging that so many school districts are connecting with area farmers and serving locally grown foods in their meals programs," said DAR Commissioner John Lebeaux. "Selling to area schools is just one way Massachusetts farmers are developing new markets and diversifying their operations."

Simca Horwitz, Program Director at [Massachusetts Farm to School](#), said, "Farm to school is a win-win. Children eat healthy local foods and learn about where their food is grown, and farmers gain steady, loyal customers."

Farm to School programs in Massachusetts are expanding. What began with just a handful of districts in 2004 when Massachusetts Farm to School was launched has grown to over 75% of districts indicating that they engage in farm to school activity including local food in school meals, school gardens, and food and agriculture education. The USDA estimates that approximately 16% of Massachusetts school food budgets are spent on local purchases, representing nearly \$9 million for local farms and food businesses.

For more information about Farm to School Programs in Massachusetts, visit [www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/markets/farm-to-school](http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/markets/farm-to-school) or [www.massfarmtoschool.org](http://www.massfarmtoschool.org).



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).