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GOVERNORTIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**Media Contact**Kyle Sullivan
Becky Deusser
Kim Haberlin
(617) 725-4025Catherine Williams (EEA)
(617) 626-1809

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GOVERNOR PATRICK SWEARS IN SOARES AS AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER**State officials meet with farmers at the Commonwealth's largest dairy farm**

SHEFFIELD - Friday, April 10, 2009 - With the Commonwealth's largest dairy farm as a backdrop, Governor Patrick today administered the oath of office to Scott Soares as Commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR). Soares, who has served as the agency's assistant commissioner since November 2007, will take his post at DAR on April 13. The ceremony took place at Pine Island Farm in Sheffield, which is owned by Louis Aragi.

"I'm thrilled to swear in Scott Soares as commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources," said Governor Patrick. "I am confident that the state's agricultural industry will continue to flourish under Scott's leadership. His experience and record of commitment to the Commonwealth's farmers make him uniquely qualified for this post."

"No one could be more deserving of this position than Scott Soares," said Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Ian Bowles, who named Soares commissioner, with the approval of the Governor, last week. Soares replaces outgoing DAR Commissioner Douglas Petersen, who steps down today. "Scott has a track record of service to Massachusetts farmers, and as commissioner, he will be in a position to provide leadership for years to come."

"I am looking forward to continuing my service to the Commonwealth and to the Massachusetts agricultural community," said Commissioner Soares. "With a national focus on the benefits of locally grown produce and natural foods, it is an exciting time for agriculture. I'm looking forward to working with Governor Patrick and members of agricultural community to further the growth of this industry in Massachusetts."

After the ceremony, Governor Patrick and Commissioner Soares met with area farmers and members of statewide and community agricultural organizations to discuss some of the Commonwealth's top agricultural priorities including state-sponsored programs to boost energy efficiency on farms, enhance agricultural waste management and composting, increase awareness about food safety and help farmers expand their businesses.

Governor Patrick led an effort to aid Bay State dairy farmers with \$3.6 million of emergency aid in 2007 - the first such relief ever provided to the industry - and he supported the Dairy Farm Preservation Act passed in August 2008. Designed to preserve and strengthen the Bay State's dairy industry, among other provisions, the law enabled the Department to develop a tax credit program to help preserve the Commonwealth's dairy sector. For 2008, when high production costs and low milk prices impacted the dairy industry, the program translated to an average payout of \$18,000 per dairy farm or \$1.32 per hundred pounds for the 250 million pounds of milk produced by Massachusetts Dairy Farmers in 2008.

DAR's newly created Massachusetts Farm Energy Program has leveraged \$1 million in federal dollars for farm energy conservation and installation of solar energy systems, and is working to maximize the opportunities provided under the Green Communities Act of 2008, another Patrick Administration priority.

This year, agency efforts will also include climate change adaptation planning, exploring opportunities for young people to take up careers in farming, further promoting the adoption of water conservation and waste management strategies and the preservation of the Commonwealth's working landscapes.

As assistant commissioner of DAR, Soares served as chief of staff and legislative director and provided guidance to division directors. Serving as DAR Acting Commissioner from January to November 2007, he co-chaired the 17-member Massachusetts Dairy Farm Revitalization Task Force, whose work led to the landmark Dairy Farm Preservation Act.

Soares, a Dartmouth resident, joined the department in 1996 as Aquaculture Coordinator. In this capacity, he launched a

statewide program to provide permitting and technical assistance to existing and emerging Massachusetts aquaculture businesses and research organizations. Soares graduated Cum Laude from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth with a double major in biology and marine biology, following seven years of active and reserve service in the U.S. Army.

Commissioner Soares serves on the National Association of State Aquaculture Coordinators and the board of directors of Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom. He was honored in 1999 with a Citation for Outstanding Performance by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and last month received the 2009 Government Leadership Award from The Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, which represents 334 growers across the state.

"Farm Bureau members from across Massachusetts trust and respect Scott Soares, and we look forward to working with him," said Alex Dowse, president of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, which represents 6,300 agricultural members. "He has proven his abilities as an advocate for Massachusetts agriculture."

Agricultural sales in Massachusetts have trended up in recent years. A February 2009 report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) shows that Massachusetts agriculture expanded from 2002 to 2007, growing by 27 percent both in crop and livestock sales and in the total number of farms. The USDA's latest agricultural census states that the number of Massachusetts farms increased from 6,075 in 2002 to 7,691 farms in 2007. The market value of agricultural production also jumped during the same period, from \$384 million to \$490 million.

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