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USDA Rural Development (RD) Announces Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP) Funding Opportunities with Rule Changes

The USDA Rural Development (RD) agency recently announced their upcoming Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP) Funding Opportunities resulting from the recently passed Farm Bill. There will be two expected funding cycles, one to be announced approximately November 1, 2014 that will be due January 31, 2015, and the other to be announced shortly

thereafter and due by April 30, 2015. Additionally, there will be some changes to REAP through a Final Rule which is expected to be in place in November 2014.

The Final Rule will change the application process and application format, intending to make the overall process more streamlined. Even with a new Final Rule in place by November 1, 2014, a published and approved application will more than likely not be ready until late December 2014 or early January 2015. Until such time, REAP will still be accepting applications under the existing program application process and format.

Other changes also include:

- The Application will now have 3 Tiers, categorized by grant request amounts: Tier A for requests of \$20,000 or less; Tier B for requests of between \$20,001 and \$49,999; and Tier C for requests of \$50,000 or greater;
- Loan Guarantees ONLY will be funded either monthly or bi-quarterly from the national office;
- Farms with only one meter need not physically install a separate electric service and meter for the farm buildings provided an energy audit shows the farm operation historically using at least 50% of the energy; the total project cost will be prorated between the farm and residence portions.

Among items still to remain in effect includes the provision where the applicant MUST file an application BEFORE the project begins implementation in order to be eligible for any REAP funding. Therefore, given the aforementioned expected funding cycle beginning November 1, 2014 and the anticipated readiness of the new application form of late December 2014 to early-January 2015, farms wishing to begin project construction BEFORE the new form is ready need to file using the old application in order to be eligible.

For more information please contact: Anne Correia, Energy Coordinator, USDA Rural Development, 15 Cranberry Highway, West Wareham, MA, 508-295-5151, Anne.Correia@ma.usda.gov.

Final Commonwealth Solar II Rebate Block

MassCEC is pleased to announce the launch of Block 20, the final funding block of the [Commonwealth Solar II rebate program](#).

The Commonwealth Solar II rebate program helps finance the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems for residential, non-profit, public, and commercial projects up to 15kW in capacity. Funding is available for customers of investor owned utilities or [municipal light plants](#) that have opted into MassCEC's Renewable Energy Trust. Block 20 will consist of \$3 million and will last until the funds are reserved or until the end of the fourth quarter 2014, whichever occurs earlier. **Once the funds for Block 20 are expended, the Commonwealth Solar II rebate program will close to new project applications going forward.**

Block 20 program documents are available at www.masscec.com/programs/commonwealth-solar-II. Full details about the program cannot be fully captured in this email, so please read the Block 20 program documents carefully!

Participate in the MA Statewide Food Systems Planning Initiative

As you may know, the Massachusetts Food System Plan is an ongoing statewide initiative to support increased consumption of Massachusetts agricultural and food products while preserving water and land resources, to support a strong, robust food system where local and healthy foods are accessible to all residents, and job and business opportunities abound. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council is leading a team of planners to facilitate this statewide process.

Statewide forums and listening sessions are being planned across the state. Four are organized, with others soon to be announced. It's an important opportunity to weigh in on what's happening in your local food system including on the farm, the food processing arena, and in your community. These forums will provide a platform to share what is being done well, challenges, and suggestions to improve our food system. Your input is important for to better understand the major strengths and obstacles in the region, and to support the development of a well-informed plan for the Massachusetts Food System going forward. For more details, check the MAPC and MDAR websites: www.mapc.org/massfoodplan and www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/boards-commissions/food-policy-council.

- **October 11**, Greater Boston Area Forum, 1 - 3:30 pm, Reggie Lewis Center, Boston, organized by the Trust for Public Land, Hayley House, Boston Collaborative for Food & Fitness, Babson College Food Sol Program, The Real Food Challenge and MDAR
- **October 15**, Central MA Food Systems Listening Session, 5-7 pm, Worcester Public Library, organized by the Worcester Food & Active Living Policy Council and the Central MA Regional Planning Commission
- **October 22**, Northeast Regional Forum, 4 – 7 pm, Lawrence Senior Center, hosted by Groundwork Lawrence
- **October 24**, Food Day Report Back, 9 am – 12 pm, Boston Statehouse, organized by MA Department of Agricultural Resources

Food Day – October 24

The national **Food Day** campaign continues to grow, as we come together to do the grassroots work on all things FOOD, strengthening our network and positively impacting our local food system. Today, hundreds of events and activities across **Massachusetts** are being planned by

you, your neighbors, community organizations, farmers, universities, chefs, schools, youth groups...keep reading for helpful information to plan your event.

Where are Food Day events happening? Cities and towns such as Boston, Fitchburg, Worcester, Somerville, New Bedford, Lowell, Great Barrington, Brookline, Chelsea, Williamstown, Everett, Cambridge, Amherst, North Hampton...just to name a few, are having a great time building community and sharing information as they celebrate Food Day! [More here.](#)

USDA Organic Cost Share Program Applications Due

Applications are due for Organic Cost Share Reimbursement. The Department has been awarded funds from the United States Department of Agriculture through the Organic Certification Cost Share Program to reimburse certified organic farmers (crop and Livestock) and processors up to 75% (\$750 dollars maximum) of the total certification cost. For those certified organic farmers (crop and livestock) that have received a portion of their reimbursement (maximum of \$600), there is an additional \$150 if eligible.

Reimbursement is available to production and processing operations certified and/or receiving continuation of certification during the period of October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014. In order to receive reimbursement, please submit forms to the Department by no later than October 31, 2014. [Click here for reimbursement forms](#), or contact Ellen Hart, 617-626-1742, Ellen.Hart@state.ma.us.

Product Development Considerations - Beyond the Concept (2-day course)

Two program sessions available:

- **Tuesday, October 14** - Dorchester, MA, 6:00 – 9:00 pm and **Wednesday, October 15**, 6:00 – 9:00 pm. [CropCircle Kitchen PD Course Registration link.](#)
- **Thursday, November 13** - Greenfield, MA, 6:00 – 9:00 pm and **Thursday, November 20**, 6:00 – 9:00 pm. [Western MA Food Processing Center PD Course Registration link.](#)

Do you want to better understand the food safety principles behind your process? Do you need help with product development for your current or future food product?

Propel your food business to the next level by delving into product development and food safety with Amanda Kinchla, of the UMASS Food Science Department, an expert on HACCP and product development.

This 2-day course will cover the following topics:

- Principals of Food Safety
- The Product Development Process Cycle to Creating a New Food Product
- Product Development Process (including business strategy, product testing, product launch)
- HACCP Plan requirements and/or Low-acid & Acidified certification
- Determining formula, process and packaging for a safe food system
- Process Validation requirements
- Label Regulations, product claims, ingredient statements and nutrition facts
- Operational capabilities and Quality Controls

This program is sponsored by UMass Extension, CropCircle Kitchen, and Franklin County CDC Western MA Food Processing Center

Succeeding with Grass-Fed Beef: Human Health, Carbon Sequestration, and Farm Viability

Monday, November 3 – Heifer International, Rutland, MA, 9:00 am to 5:15 pm

Would you like to build the health of your soil, produce great meat, improve your family's health, and combat climate change? You can do all of this, and make a profit, by raising 100% grass-fed beef!

Join us for a one-day conference with Ridge Shinn. An expert in grass-fed-and-finished beef production, Ridge will share with us the critical lessons he has learned, including the following:

- How to produce beef with minimal capital investment (no land, no barn, no tractor.)
- How to build a beef or dairy herd that will thrive on grass and hay-no grain ever.
- How to build soil health and fertility.
- How to manage grazing and extend it through the winter.
- How to market your meat.
- Why 100% grass-feeding is the way to go for human and animal health, soil health, climate stability, and sustainable rural economies.

Benefit from Ridge's years of experience in every aspect of beef production: from herdsman, Vice President of a slaughterhouse, to importer of New Zealand breeding stock. Currently he is developing an operations model for large-scale production of 100% grass-fed-and-finished beef in the Northeast.

Cost: By Oct. 20: NOFA member \$65; Non-member \$81. By Oct. 29: NOFA member \$70; Non-member \$88. After Oct. 30: NOFA member \$75; Non-member \$94. A 100% organic lunch including 100% grass-fed beef is included in the registration price.

For more info and to register, visit www.nofamass.org/events/succeeding-grass-fed-beef.

Farmer – Landowner Mixers

Are you a...Farmer seeking land? Landowner looking for a farmer to farm your land? Farmer thinking about transitioning to the next generation or owner?

Join us for a [Farmer-Landowner Mixer](#) in North or South County, 6 - 8 pm for light supper, beer and networking.

- **Tuesday, October 28**, Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, 671 Cold Spring Rd., Williamstown
- **Wednesday, October 29**, 264 Main Street, 3rd floor, Great Barrington, (above Rubiner's) entrance stairs are to the left of Rubiner's entrance on Main Street

These mixers will connect farmers seeking land with established farmers and farmland, and provide information and resources to sustain and increase farming in the Berkshires.

To spark connections, we will begin with a panel featuring:

- Kathy Ruhf, Land For Good
- Martha Bryan, Greater Berkshire Agriculture Fund, The Carrot Project
- Virginia Kasinki and Melissa Adams, Glynwood Center, Keep Farming
- Leslie Reed-Evans, Williamstown Rural Land Foundation
- Kathy Orlando, Sheffield Land Trust (Great Barrington mixer)
- Attorney Peter Ziomek (Williamstown mixer)

[Details here.](#)

Central Mass Grown Buy Local Initiative

Central Mass Grown is now accepting memberships from farms, producers, nurseries, retail establishments, restaurants, organizations, and individuals for our inaugural year Central Mass Grown Farm Product Directory. Membership enrollments received by **November 15** will be designated as Founding Members, and receive special discounts on membership rates.

For more information and to enroll as a member, please visit our website at www.centralmassgrown.org, where you will be able to fill in an enrollment form. We accept checks at this time, and in the near future will be able to accept both PayPal and major credit cards.

*For our ongoing list of events and workshops, visit and bookmark: www.mass.gov/agr/events/coming_up.htm.



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, and/or follow at twitter.com/MDARCommish.