

Agricultural Officials Encourage Residents to "Taste Massachusetts" this Spring Holiday Season

Local eggs, gift baskets and specialty products among holiday offerings

BOSTON - April 19, 2011- With the spring season underway, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Commissioner Scott J. Soares reminds consumers to get a "Taste of Massachusetts" - by visiting local farms and buying Massachusetts-produced eggs, gift baskets, and other products for spring holiday meals and gifts.

"Buying local promotes businesses in the Commonwealth and stimulates the state's economy," said Commissioner Soares. "Massachusetts growers and specialty food producers offer an exciting range of seasonal items, perfect for holiday gift giving and decorating."

Eggs: Local eggs are available at poultry farms across the state, which can be found by searching the DAR *MassGrown & Fresher* Google Interactive Map at <http://massnrc.org/farmlocator/map.aspx?Product=Eggs>. Make your Easter holiday tradition even more special by dyeing Massachusetts local eggs.

Find an egg *Recipe of the Month* from one of Massachusetts' egg producers by visiting http://www.mass.gov/agr/markets/culinary_tourism/docs/recipe-of-the-month.pdf 

Gift Baskets: The Massachusetts Specialty Foods Association offers "The Flavors of Massachusetts" gift baskets. Available in several sizes, assortments include Massachusetts sparkling cider, fruit jams and jellies, honey, maple syrup, local cheese and candies, and more.

Local meals: For those who would rather eat out than dine in, an increasing number of restaurants in Massachusetts have menus featuring foods featuring produce or meats that were grown or raised by on local farms.

To find a restaurant near you that utilizes Massachusetts-grown products, visit the Chefs Collaborative at <http://guide.chefscollaborative.org>. You can also visit your regional Buy Local group (www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/buy-locals.htm) for additional resources on finding farm fresh food grown in or near your neighborhood.

Agri-Tourism: If you have spring fever and need to get out of the house, this is the best time to visit an agri-tourism destination. With the warm weather approaching, agriculture in action can be seen starting this month at one of over 400 agri-tourism destinations. Find one by visiting http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/agritourism_farms.htm.

DAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of local agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions - Agricultural Development, Animal Health, Crop and Pest Services, and Technical Assistance - the DAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the Commonwealth's agricultural community, working 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 DAR's website at www.mass.gov/agr, and/or follow at twitter.com/mdarcommish

Earlier this month, the Patrick-Murray Administration launched the Massachusetts Food Policy Council to help advance the goals of bringing healthy, local foods to all residents of the Commonwealth. The council will focus on achieving: (1) increased production, sales and consumption of Massachusetts-grown foods; (2) the development and promotion of programs that deliver healthy Massachusetts-grown goods to Massachusetts residents; (3) the protection of the land and water resources required for sustained local food production; and (4) the training, retention and recruitment of farmers and providing for the continued economic viability of local food production, processing and distribution in the Commonwealth. Commissioner Soares serves as an ex-officio member of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council.