

# Baker-Polito Administration Announces Infrastructure Improvement Grants for Massachusetts Farms

BOSTON – December 30, 2015 – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced five Massachusetts farms with land permanently protected from development through the state’s Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program have been awarded \$400,000 in total grant funding for infrastructure improvements.

“These agricultural investments help create jobs and make Massachusetts’ farms more competitive in the national and global marketplace,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “Our administration is committed to supporting Massachusetts’ vibrant agriculture industry, which provides fresh, healthy food for the Commonwealth’s residents.”

“The grants awarded will ensure that land protected for agriculture continues to support commercially viable farm businesses for current and future generations of Massachusetts farmers,” said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. “Through this year’s awards, farmers in the Commonwealth will be able to upgrade and expand their agricultural buildings, keeping their businesses safe and competitive.”

The APR Improvement Program (AIP), established in 2009, is funded by the federal Farm and Lands Protection Program and is administered by the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR). The program also provides recipients with technical and business planning assistance to identify the best use of funds to improve farm infrastructure and productivity.

“The Baker-Polito Administration recognizes and supports the valuable economic and dietary contributions of commercial farmers who are committed to keeping their land in agriculture,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton. “We are pleased to provide this valuable assistance to farmers across the state who work tirelessly to keep our agricultural industry thriving and produce nutritious food for Massachusetts’ residents.”

“Reinvesting in these farms has enabled these businesses to keep up with the changing dynamics of modern agriculture and demands of today’s consumers,” said DAR Commissioner John Lebeaux.

This year’s award recipients are located throughout the state in the towns of Adams, Hatfield, Sunderland, Westborough, and Westport. Grant funding will be used towards new and expanded agricultural buildings, including a packing and storage facility, a grapevine propagation facility and improved dairy infrastructure.

The following projects have been funded through this year’s grants:

<u>Farm</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Project Description</u>	<u>Award</u>
Burnett Farm	Adams	Barn expansion	\$50,000
Luther Belden Farm	Hatfield	Dairy infrastructure improvements	\$100,000
Nourse Family Farm	Westborough	Farmstand renovation & plantings	\$75,000
The Kitchen Garden	Sunderland	Produce packing & storage building	\$75,000
Westport Rivers	Westport	Grapevine propagation facility	\$100,000

“These grants provide significant funding to support farming infrastructure in our state,” said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst). “Investments in our farms help meet the demands of consumers for fresh local food while also supporting our growing agricultural industry and tourism.”

“These grants demonstrate the Baker Administration’s ongoing support of the evolving agricultural industry in our state,” said State Senator Michael J. Rodrigues (D-Westport). “Farms are an integral part of many communities across the Commonwealth and I look forward to the advancements that this funding will facilitate.”

“Farming is an industry that provides widespread economic benefits to the Commonwealth, and the Baker-Polito Administration and the Department of Agricultural Resources’ commitment to reinvesting in these farms is truly admirable,” said State Representative Paul Schmid (D-Westport).

“I want to thank Governor Baker, Secretary Beaton and Commissioner Lebeaux for their strong commitment to improving the viability of family farms in western Massachusetts,” said State Representative Peter V. Kocot (D-Northampton).

“The Russell family would like to thank the Commonwealth and in particular MDAR,” said Rob Russell, owner of Westport Rivers Winery. “The receipt of the AIP grant funding is a great help going into our 30th year. We will be using these funds to contribute to the construction of our own grapevine grafting facility. This facility will give us the luxury of a consistent supply of quality replacement vines, surely a great help mastering our next 30 years.”

Since 2009, AIP has provided more than \$3.5 million in total grants (average \$66,509 per farm) and \$330,150 in technical assistance (average \$6,229 per farm) to Massachusetts APR farms that own a combined total of more than 7,000 acres of protected farmland. For more information about AIP, visit: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/about/divisions/aip.html>

Since 1979, the Massachusetts APR program has permanently protected over 800 farms and a total land area of over 68,000 acres. The primary purpose of the APR program is to preserve and protect agricultural land from being built upon for non-agricultural purposes or used for any activity detrimental to agriculture.

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DAR’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 – DAR 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 DAR’s website at [www.mass.gov/agr](http://www.mass.gov/agr), and/or follow at [twitter.com/mdarcommish](https://twitter.com/mdarcommish).

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