

State Officials Celebrate Agriculture Day at the State House

April 5, 2016 Declared "Massachusetts Agriculture Day"

BOSTON - April 5, 2016 –Today, state agriculture officials, farmers and students celebrated Agriculture Day at the State House. A collaborative effort between the Massachusetts Promotional Board, [Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation](#) and Federation of Massachusetts Farmers Markets, Agriculture Day brought farmers and agricultural organizations together to showcase locally-grown food and farm products they produce across the Commonwealth and to have their voices heard by legislators about issues affecting the agricultural community.

"By strengthening our agricultural sector, we are working towards healthier communities and a stronger economy," said Governor Charlie Baker. "I encourage all Massachusetts residents to support our local farmers and food producers and purchase Massachusetts grown and produced products whenever possible."

In recognition of the day, April 5, 2016 was declared "Massachusetts Agriculture Day" and honorary citations were presented to the Eastern State Exposition (The Big E) in recognition of their centennial celebration, and Norfolk Country Agricultural High School in recognition of their 100 year anniversary.

"Our administration is proud to support the Commonwealth's agricultural sector that produces nutritious fresh food all year long, while taking care of the environment and preserving open space," said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. "By declaring April 5 as 'Massachusetts Agriculture Day,' we hope to recognize and raise awareness of the importance of our many farmers and food producers."

"Agriculture Day is a great opportunity to discuss issues specific to the agricultural industry, which is a vital part of the state's economy and provides clean, healthy food to Massachusetts residents," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton. "The current continued growth of farms and movement towards buying locally-sourced ingredients will help the Commonwealth's citizens lead a better, healthier lifestyle."

There are approximately 7,700 farms in Massachusetts maintaining almost 523,000 acres of open space. These farms employ some 28,000 workers and contribute about \$492 million to the state economy. Massachusetts is ranked fifth in the United States for direct market agricultural sales.

"I feel privileged to be joined by the Baker-Polito Administration to recognize and celebrate our farmers and food producers today," said Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Commissioner John Lebeaux. "Together with many of our agricultural partners, we gather to recognize accomplishments, identify challenges and prepare for a successful growing season."

Agriculture Day awards were presented to State Representatives Keiko Orrall (R-Lakeville), Ann-Margaret Ferrante (D-Gloucester) and Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington).

"Our farmers work from sun up to sun down and deserve to be supported and celebrated in the Commonwealth," said State Representative Keiko Orrall (R-Lakeville). "I am honored to receive an Agriculture Day award and will continue to be a strong advocate for the agricultural community."

"As the daughter and granddaughter of fishermen, I have often times felt a kinship to our farmers. We should honor those who harvest and produce the food that feed our families and our Commonwealth," said State Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante (D-Gloucester). "I am truly humbled to be recognized for my efforts to elevate the status of farming and fishing families and small businesses, those whose industry built and grew our Commonwealth, for without

them, we would lack the very basics of well-being, nourishment, health and security.”

“Today, we celebrate the long-standing tradition and dedication of Massachusetts farmers and food producers who work to meet the increasing demand of consumers for more fresh, local and nutritious foods,” said State Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington). “This year, I am honored to receive the Agricultural Day Award along with Representatives Ann-Margaret Ferrante and Keiko Orrall.”

“Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is pleased that the Baker-Polito Administration has recognized today as Agriculture Day,” said Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation President Edward Davidian. “The energy and excitement surrounding our industry at the State House is infectious and we are looking forward to a productive year working with our growers and state representatives to strengthen and maintain our agricultural heritage.”

For the concluding reception in the Great Hall, culinary students and instructors from the Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School Culinary Arts & Hospitality Management Program prepared and presented a “Taste of Massachusetts” menu, using products donated from approximately 40 farms and food producers across the Commonwealth.

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

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