

# Agricultural Officials Announce Recommendations to Preserve Massachusetts Cranberry Industry

*State's Cranberry Revitalization Task Force Releases Final Report*

BOSTON – June 13, 2016 – Government officials and stakeholders on the Cranberry Revitalization Task Force have released their final report with recommendations to preserve and strengthen Massachusetts' cranberry industry. The report, adopted unanimously by members of the Task Force, outlines the complex challenges ahead, and recommendations geared towards stabilizing and revitalizing this critical sector of agricultural production.

"Cranberries are Massachusetts' number one agricultural food product, and the cranberry industry is a vital part of the environment and economy of southeastern Massachusetts," said Governor Charlie Baker. "Through the recommendations in this plan, we can work with stakeholders and the Legislature to address the challenges the cranberry industry faces and strengthen the industry for years to come."

"The Task Force's final report represents a true collaborative effort born out of hard work by both the private and public sectors," said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. "The ideas and commitment that resulted from this Task Force will allow us to better support Massachusetts agriculture and the cranberry industry."

The Cranberry Revitalization Task Force, composed of 18 government officials and stakeholders within the cranberry industry, was created by the Legislature in July 2015 to examine the status of the industry and the complex challenges ahead, and to develop a multi-pronged action plan geared toward stabilizing and revitalizing the cranberry industry. The Task Force has met at the UMass Cranberry Station in Wareham, engaging stakeholders and members of the public in order to develop sound, well-rounded recommendations.

"The commercial cranberry industry started in Massachusetts 200 years ago this year, so it is only fitting that the Task Force complete its work in the bicentennial of cranberry production," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton. "The recommendations made in this report will help lay the framework for the next 200 years of Massachusetts cranberry production."

"Part of the revitalization effort focuses on utilizing or modifying existing state programs, the latter to better reflect the needs of today's farmer," said Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Commissioner John Lebeaux. "We are optimistic that sound programs and policy will help to sustain our cranberry farms."

The final report identifies potential strategies to support the industry, divided into three main categories. The first category, "Renovation", focuses on potential funding for cranberry growers to renovate their bogs, allowing for more efficient production and cultivation of the larger, higher-yield fruits that have gained a large percentage of the market share.

The second category, "Technology & Innovation", examines opportunities like making renewable energy options more viable to growers and implementing environmental enhancements to conserve natural resources, particularly water. The third category, "Exit Strategies", deals with developing the means and incentives to retain "retired" cranberry bogs as open, protected space.

"The Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association (CCCGA) is thankful for the dedication and commitment shown by the members of the Cranberry Industry Revitalization Task Force," said Keith Mann, President of CCCGA. "Their vision will help set the framework for Massachusetts Cranberries for years to come."

The collaboration of ideas and alternatives emanating from this Task Force will lend much needed support to the

cranberry industry, most importantly, to individual growers striving to maintain their farms,” said Susan Meharg of Cedar Meadow Cranberry Inc. “This, in turn, will help to ensure agricultural diversity within the state of Massachusetts. As a grower I can appreciate the beauty of the cranberry bogs and hope to share this with others well into the future.”

The recommendations presented in the report will require a collaborative effort to be implemented. Part of the revitalization effort focuses on utilizing or modifying existing state programs to better reflect the needs of today’s farmer. Other programs will need to be created, through legislative, executive or industry-led efforts. Some recommendations will involve the renovation of cranberry bogs and require financial assistance.

“The cranberry industry is a crucial part of the Commonwealth’s economy and has been for 200 years,” said State Senator Marc Pacheco (D-Taunton). “Our task force has been dedicated to promoting and revitalizing the cranberry farming community, and our final report represents a thoughtful framework for its long-term vitality. I look forward to the industry’s next 200 years.”

“I am convinced that the Task Force’s recommendations are a balanced list of regulatory and statutory changes, which if undertaken, would assist cranberry growers and handlers in continuing to be an important part of the Commonwealth’s heritage and economy,” said State Representative Bill Strauss (D-Mattapoissett).

“The Task Force set out to reassess the cranberry industry and present concrete solutions to the problems facing cranberry bog farmers in Massachusetts,” said State Senator Michael Rodrigues (D- Westport). “The final report celebrates 200 years of cranberry commercial production, and looks ahead to revitalizing the industry as a thriving part of the Commonwealth’s agricultural economy.”

“Cranberries have been a defining feature of the landscape of southeastern Massachusetts and a critical economic engine for generations,” said State Representative Paul Schmid (D-Westport). “As House Chairman of the Joint Committee of the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, it was an honor to be part of a public/private effort to support the family farms that produce cranberries.”

“It was a privilege to work with community leaders and industry professionals on this task force,” said State Senator Vinny deMacedo (R-Plymouth). “The cranberry industry is vital to the economic health of our region and I believe our work will be instrumental in ensuring its continued success.”

“It was an honor to be appointed to serve as a member of this Task Force and also that the UMass Cranberry Experiment Station in my home town of Wareham was chosen as the venue for our meetings,” said State Representative Susan Williams Gifford (R-Wareham). “My District, which also includes Carver and south Middleborough, is the heart of the cranberry industry in the Commonwealth and I am very proud of the work we have done.”

Massachusetts is the oldest cranberry growing region in the country. Today, there are approximately 13,500 acres of commercial cranberry bogs in the state, primarily in Plymouth, Bristol, and Barnstable counties. In 2012, the total value of utilized Massachusetts cranberry production was \$99.8 million.

The final Cranberry Revitalization Task Force report can be found [here](#) .

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