

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



Department of Agricultural Resources

251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114
617-626-1700 fax: 617-626-1850 www.mass.gov/agr



CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO
Lt. Governor

KATHLEEN A. THEOHARIDES
Secretary

JOHN LEBEAUX
Commissioner

May 8, 2020

Governor Charles Baker
Massachusetts State House, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council ("Council"), I am pleased to provide this Annual Report pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 20, Section 6C(e) on the Council's ongoing work related to the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan ("Plan") (<http://mafoodsystem.org/plan/>). In 2019, the Council members continued to review the priorities and goals during meetings as detailed in the attached Annual Report Summary.

Please accept this letter as the Council's Annual Report. A 2019 focus was on topics relating to reducing hunger, food insecurity and waste, however meetings ran the gamut of topics in the MA Local Food Action Plan. New this year was inclusion of local food policy councils on the meeting agendas (there are at least 26 across the state) to connect local priorities and advocacy with the Council, as well as the MA Food System Caucus and the MA Food System Collaborative. Locations were planned for statewide engagement with four meetings in central MA, one at the State House and one at UMASS Amherst. The Plan is five years old, however, the recommendations continue to be very relevant. The cooperative opportunity for the Council to work with the MA Food System Caucus and the MA Food System Collaborative has been an asset to support policy recommendations. "You need to have a lot of repetitive conversations before topics are really absorbed and impactful," said Council member Representative Hannah Kane.

The Council respectfully requests that the Administration and the General Court support the Plan's broad goals and their underlying programs and link them to larger policy discussions. In many cases, agency members of the Council are already undertaking programs and projects that support the core goals of the Plan. In some situations, the Plan has provided guidance about where additional resources or efforts are needed.

The Council appreciates the Administration's and the General Court's past support of the Plan's vision of a sustainable and equitable food system. We ask that you give continued consideration to these priorities as relevant legislative and regulatory actions are developed. As always, members of the Council would be happy to meet with you or your staff to offer further detail to these priorities, as well as review any parts of the Plan or our work to implement it. Electronic versions of this Report and its attachments will also be provided to you forthwith.

Sincerely,

John Lebeaux, Commissioner
Chair, Massachusetts Food Policy Council

Attachment A

2019 Massachusetts Food Policy Council Annual Report Summary

An Act Establishing the Massachusetts Food Policy Council was signed into law on November 7, 2010, which created the 17-member Council that was tasked with developing recommendations for food system goals for the Commonwealth. Pursuant to Section 6C(e) of Chapter 277 of the Acts of 2010, the Council must submit an annual report outlining its findings, conclusions, proposals, recommendations, and progress towards reaching the goals that have been set forth. In 2019, the MA Food Policy Council (FPC) focused on six topics from the MA Local Food Action Plan, forming the meeting themes for the year. The MA Local Food Action Plan was accepted by the FPC on December 10, 2015 and was designed to increase MA-grown food; create jobs and improve wages in food and farming; protect the land and water needed to produce food; ensure food safety, reduce waste, hunger, and food insecurity while making fresh and healthy food more accessible for the residents of the Commonwealth. A new White Paper was developed and accepted on Education. Detailed minutes of all six meetings throughout the year and White Papers are available at the following link: <https://www.mass.gov/massachusetts-food-policy-council>

January 25, 2019, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Westborough

MA Local Food Action Plan focus: Reduce hunger and food insecurity - *Healthy Incentive Program (HIP)* and farmers' markets

The January meeting began with an update on the federal government shutdown. The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) worked diligently to ensure that all federal funds were disbursed January into February. If this early issuance did not occur, it would have been impossible to sustain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Many parties were affected by this shutdown, including 19 certified SNAP retailers and Meals on Wheels. An overview of selected food policy councils, structures, and their priorities was given by the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic.

A guide for lobbying and advocacy will be released in March (Please see: <https://today.law.harvard.edu/food-law-and-policy-clinic-releases-advocacy-and-lobbying-guide-for-food-policy-councils/> for final guide). The Council is interested in future discussions on roles, opportunities and new initiatives, with the guide serving as a resource. The meeting closed with a review from Representative Kane on the Massachusetts Food System Caucus that includes 52 out of 200 legislative members so far. The bipartisan Caucus was formed to address issues that impact the food system in the Commonwealth.

March 29, 2019, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Westborough

MA Local Food Action Plan focus: Reduce hunger and food insecurity - school foodservice, Breakfast After the Bell, and protect the land and water - DEP's solid waste master plan

Updates from Council members included the latest on the DEP's Solid Waste Master Plan, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) "Breakfast After the Bell" program and their transition of the direct certification system for school foodservice. The "Breakfast After the Bell" project will impact 300 schools and allows students a "second chance" breakfast. Technical assistance is being provided by Project Bread and to date half of the impacted schools have responded with a proposal. The direct certification system is a virtual gateway for students with free or reduced lunches that will replace paper applications. An update on the MA Food System Collaborative highlighted accomplishments in the creation of a "Race and Equity at Farmers' Markets" program that will address the changing demographics as a result of the HIP program. A presentation from the Everett Community Growers on their food assessment plan implementation showed that there are few food outlets and no CSAs or farmers' markets available to the community.

May 17, 2019, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Westborough

MA Local Food Action Plan focus: Reduce hunger and food insecurity – Food Trust and Food as Medicine

Council updates included an announcement of the opening of the Worcester Public Market in Kelly Square, as well as a pilot program for HIP and the mobile vending permits that will allow local boards of health to create a shared platform to lower the administrative issues for both health agents and applicants. An overview of the \$750,000 Food Trust Awards to seven businesses across six counties was shared. The Council conducted officer elections. Commissioner Lebeaux was nominated to be chair and the motion was passed unanimously. John Waite was nominated as Vice Chair and Jeff Cole as Secretary. Both unanimously passed. The Food as Medicine Plan was unveiled with 15 policy recommendations. The Franklin County Food Council shared their assessment of Plan goals. Many of the 24 local food policy councils have taken action, however support to study impact would yield a deeper analysis.

August 2, 2019, UMass Amherst

MA Local Food Action Plan Focus: Reduce hunger and food insecurity – HIP, Breakfast After the Bell, MA in Motion

Former DTA Commissioner McCue shared a HIP update with a forecasted increase of about 13% in FY19, which demonstrates increased HIP usage. “Breakfast After the Bell” Program updates included outreach success with partner Project Bread. The last USDA MA Farm to School census totaled \$10.3M in local purchases based on 68% of schools responding. A new census will be conducted later this year. The MA Food Trust was funded next year at \$1M with an additional \$100,000 for administration. The meeting program featured DPH providing insight into the work of MA in Motion and their 450 partners across the state. Strategies include food assessment and healthy food distribution. A field trip to the UMASS South Deerfield facility featured presentations on the future of farming including student farming, pollinator disease transmission, extending growth season, and tomato diversity.

September 20, 2019, Weiss Conference Center, Westborough

MA Local Food Action Plan focus: Reduce hunger and food insecurity – HIP summary, MA Food Caucus

Commissioner Lebeaux commented on MDAR’s celebration of the Big E’s 100th anniversary and a successful mobile market event in New Bedford, MA, hosted by the Coastal Foodshed. Council member updates included a discussion on the MA Food System Caucus re: proposed rule changes on eligibility for SNAP, which could have an impact on 100,000 clients in MA. The DESE will coordinate with the USDA for the 2020 Farm to School Census. The Council program focused on a summary evaluation of HIP, which provided insight into food access in MA. The local economic impact includes 53% of municipalities experiencing HIP sales. The MA Food Trust Program Team provided an annual summary, showing that in 7 months, 12 projects in 7 counties have been initiated, yielding \$108,000 in increased access including awards to minority and cooperative businesses. Some 25% of the funds are allocated through mini-grants. The meeting closed with comments from the Council subcommittee asking how a stronger connection can be made to the Governor’s Office to promote the tenants of the MA Local Food Action Plan.

November 6, 2019, Massachusetts State House, Boston

MA Local Food Action Plan focus: Climate change and the work that’s being done in the Massachusetts food system

Representative Kane from the MA Food System Caucus summarized activities from the past year including Hunger Action Month activities and communications to the USDA opposing changes in the broad-based requirements for SNAP. The MA Food System Collaborative shared that the HIP program has spent \$3.5M so far in the first quarter out of a \$6.5M budget. Several presentations were given, all focusing on the topic of climate

change. UMASS Lowell's Sustainability program shared their innovative partnerships and models to mitigate climate change with institutions, municipal partnerships and food access groups. MDAR highlighted grant and technical assistance programs available to growers that have helped to protect over 70,000 acres of land. Intersections of the MA Solid Waste Master Plan with climate change and the MA Local Food Action Plan was presented by DEP. A recycling works program was critical for a successful rollout of the ban. The agency convened five public hearings on the document (MA Solid Waste Master Plan) across the state and accepted comment through December 6, 2019. Other presentations highlighted the effects of climate change and several programs that are being put in place in order to mitigate its effects. Food is relatable in terms of climate change. Community engagement, improved access to food and space to learn and grow highlights were presented by staff from the North Shore Food Project. Senator Comerford, Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health, hosted a hearing in Western MA in September with a focus on food as public health.

MASSACHUSETTS FOOD POLICY COUNCIL (Council) (M.G.L. CHAPTER 20 § 6C)

CHAIRMAN

John Lebeaux, Commissioner, MDAR

STAFF LIAISON

Bonita Oehlke

Bonita.Oehlke@state.ma.us

(617) 626-1753

Late in 2010, Chapter 277 of the Acts of 2010 amended Massachusetts General Law Chapter 20 by inserting Section 6C, creating a 17-member Food Policy Council ("FPC"). The purpose of the council, detailed minutes and reports are at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/boards-commissions/food-policy-council.html>

State agency members:

John Lebeaux, Commissioner, MDAR

Michael Kennealy, Secretary, Designee: Helena Fruscio, EOHEd

Dr. Monica Bharel, Commissioner, Designee: Lea Susan Ojamaa, MPH

Martin Suuberg, Commissioner, MDEP, Designee: Danah Tench

Jeff Riley, Commissioner, Designee: Robert Leshin, DESE

Jeff McCue, Commissioner, MDTA

Legislative members:

Senator Jo Comerford

Representative Daniel Donahue

Senator Ryan Fattman

Representative Hannah Kane

Industry members (appointed by the Governor):

Anna Goldenheim, MD, replaced Vivien Morris, MS, RD, MPH, LDN, Community based nutrition and public health expert

Jeff Cole, Executive Director, MA farmers markets, direct to consumer marketing

Eric Stocker, Food processor and distributor

Samuel S. Wong, PhD, REHS/RS, Local health department representative

John Lee, Allandale Farm, Farmer

Amanda Kinchla, MS, Food safety extension specialist, UMASS Amherst

John Waite, Food processor and handler