

HOUSE No. 4854

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, December 31, 2025.

The committee on Agriculture and Fisheries, to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 112) of Natalie M. Blais and others relative to agricultural resilience; and the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 4430) of Kate Hogan relative to agriculture resilience and sustainability, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4854) ought to be pass [Fiscal Note: \$3,000,000.00].

For the committee,

NATALIE M. BLAIS.

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

An Act fostering agricultural resilience in Massachusetts.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 6A of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
2 section 18AA the following section:-

3 Section 18BB. The Massachusetts emergency management agency shall develop and
4 maintain a plan for supporting agricultural, seafood and processed food production in the
5 commonwealth in all emergency preparedness planning efforts in order to mitigate the impacts
6 of food supply chain disruptions. The plan shall be developed in coordination with the
7 department of agricultural resources, the department of public health and the department of
8 transitional assistance, and shall include consideration for food production, transportation,
9 storage and distribution. The plan shall be reviewed and updated every 5 years. The director of
10 the Massachusetts emergency management agency shall submit the plan, and subsequent
11 required plan revisions, to the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint
12 committee on agriculture and fisheries and the joint committee on emergency preparedness and
13 management.

14 SECTION 2. Section 23B of chapter 7 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2024
15 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 25, the figure “10” and inserting in
16 place thereof the following figure:- 20.

17 SECTION 3. Said section 23B of said chapter 7, as so appearing, is hereby further
18 amended by adding the following subsection:-

19 (d) (1) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the state purchasing
20 agent, in collaboration with the commonwealth’s 4 regional food banks, the executive office of
21 elder affairs, the department of agricultural resources, the department of transitional assistance,
22 the department of higher education and the department of elementary and secondary education,
23 shall, annually on or before October 31, report on the distribution of products grown in the
24 commonwealth or products produced in the commonwealth using products grown in the
25 commonwealth, hereafter referred to as local food, through food assistance programs that receive
26 state funding. The report shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

27 (i) the quantity of local food distributed, by dollar value and as a percentage of total food
28 distributed and, where possible, by weight;

29 (ii) a breakdown of the types of local food distributed, including, but not limited to,
30 produce, meat, dairy, seafood and processed food, including whether or not the processed food
31 includes ingredients grown, raised or caught in the commonwealth, by dollar amounts and as a
32 percentage of total food distributed and, where possible, by weight;

33 (iii) the number and names of farms from which local food is sourced for food assistance
34 programs that receive state funding;

35 (iv) the quantity of local food distributed by food assistance programs that receive state
36 funding including, but not limited to, the Massachusetts emergency food assistance program, the
37 Massachusetts healthy incentives program, universal free school meals, the hunger-free campus
38 initiative, the farm to school FRESH grant program, the senior nutrition program, the Meals on
39 Wheels Program and the senior farm share program, by dollar amounts and as a percentage of
40 total food distributed and, where possible, by weight; and

41 (v) recommendations on how the commonwealth can increase the amount of local food
42 distributed through food assistance programs that receive state funding in future fiscal years
43 while maintaining affordability and fairly valuing local food, as well as budgetary or policy
44 recommendations for implementing those recommendations.

45 (2) The report shall be made available on the operational service division’s website and a
46 copy shall be filed with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint
47 committee on agriculture and fisheries and the joint committee on children, families and persons
48 with disabilities.

49 SECTION 4. Section 6C of chapter 20 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2024
50 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 3, the figure “18” and inserting in
51 place thereof the following figure:- 20.

52 SECTION 5. Said section 6C of said chapter 20, as so appearing, is hereby further
53 amended by inserting, after the word “affairs”, in line 19, the following words:- ; 1 of whom
54 shall be the director of the division of marine fisheries of the department of fish and game, or a
55 designee; 1 of whom shall be the director of the University of Massachusetts Center for
56 Agriculture, Food, and the Environment, or a designee.

57 SECTION 6. Subsection (c) of said section 6C of said chapter 20, as so appearing, is
58 hereby amended by adding the following 4 sentences:- Subject to appropriation, advisory
59 committee members may be eligible for compensation at a rate fixed by the council, as approved
60 by the chief financial officer of the department of agricultural resources to ensure appropriate
61 funds are available to cover the costs. Advisory committee members shall be eligible for
62 compensation only to the extent otherwise permitted by chapter 268A and upon providing the
63 necessary documentation required to process any such payment. Any request for compensation
64 shall be made by the advisory committee member to the department of agricultural resources
65 within 30 days of being incurred. Requests made after this time shall be ineligible for payment.

66 SECTION 7. Section 23 of said chapter 20, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
67 inserting after the word “section,” in line 14, the following words:- ; provided, that the
68 committee or any independent appraisal to determine the fair market value of the land restricted
69 for agricultural purposes shall include in its valuation the appraised value of any easements and
70 infrastructure, including dwellings, structures, plumbing and irrigation systems, on the entire
71 parcel.

72 SECTION 8. Section 24 of said chapter 20, as so appearing, is hereby amended by adding
73 the following subsection:-

74 (e)(1) As used in this subsection, the following word shall, unless the context clearly
75 requires otherwise, have the following meaning:

76 “Agricultural preservation restriction”, agricultural preservation restriction as defined in
77 section 31 of chapter 184.

78 (2) The committee, in coordination with the department, shall create annual and long-
79 term goals for enrolling land as an agricultural preservation restriction. Said goals shall consider
80 the value of a parcel to the commonwealth by considering the following factors:

81 (i) suitability and productivity of land for agricultural use based on soil classification,
82 physical features and location;

83 (ii) the degree of threat to the continuation of agriculture on the land due to circumstances
84 including, but not limited to, owner's health, retirement, financial positions, development
85 pressure or insecurity due to rental agreements;

86 (iii) the size or composition of the land that determines if it is economically viable for
87 agricultural purposes, and the likelihood that it will remain in agricultural use in the future;

88 (iv) estimated amount and type of crop production

89 (v) soil health, water recharge areas, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and other
90 ecosystem services;

91 (vi) existing infrastructure;

92 (vii) access to markets;

93 (viii) access to land ownership for historically marginalized communities;

94 (ix) opportunities to meet or further environmental justice principles as defined by section
95 62 of chapter 30; and

96 (x) any other factors as determined by the committee.

97 (3) The committee shall post a public notice of availability of the draft goals in the
98 Environmental Monitor and provide a 60-day public comment period. The committee shall duly
99 consider and respond to comments received and finalize the goals. The goals shall be updated
100 every 3 years, or more frequently, with public review. The committee shall post the final goals,
101 and any subsequent updates to the goals, on the department of agricultural resources' website.

102 (4) The committee shall publish an annual report evaluating its progress to meet the goals
103 established pursuant to paragraph (2). Said report shall include, but shall not be limited to, the
104 following:

105 (i) the number of acres newly enrolled in an agricultural preservation restriction during
106 the past year and the total number of acres enrolled in an agricultural preservation restriction in
107 the commonwealth;

108 (ii) the total number of farms that have acquired a new agricultural preservation
109 restriction during the past year and the total number of farms holding an agricultural preservation
110 restriction in the commonwealth;

111 (iii) the geographic distribution of farms enrolled in an agricultural preservation
112 restriction;

113 (iv) challenges to enrolling new land in an agricultural preservation restriction;

114 (v) plans for the following year to meet the goals established pursuant to paragraph (2);

115 and

116 (vi) budgetary requests and statutory changes, if needed, in order to achieve the goals
117 established pursuant to paragraph (2).

118 (5) Annually, not later than March 1, the committee shall submit a copy of the report to
119 the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the house and senate committees on
120 ways and means, the joint committee on agriculture and fisheries and the joint committee on
121 environment and natural resources. The annual reports shall be posted on the department of
122 agricultural resources' website.

123 SECTION 9. Said chapter 20 of the General Laws is hereby further amended by adding
124 the following section:-

125 Section 34. Subject to appropriation, there shall be established a food security
126 infrastructure grant program to support equitable access to healthy, local food and to strengthen
127 food supply and distribution systems in all geographic regions of the commonwealth, which shall
128 be administered by the commissioner. The commissioner may award grants under the program
129 to: (i) food producers, processors and distributors; (ii) emergency food distributors; (iii)
130 community and food organizations; (iv) school meal programs and summer meal sponsors; (v)
131 urban farms and community gardens; and (vi) nonprofit food security organizations. The
132 commissioner shall award grants to fund capital improvements, including: (1) the purchase of
133 new or used equipment; (2) contracted labor costs in order to implement projects; and (3) costs
134 associated with planning and design directly related to capital projects that strengthen and
135 improve the resiliency of the commonwealth's food system while facilitating greater access to
136 fresh, local food and addressing systemic inequities.

137 SECTION 10. Chapter 21G of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the
138 following section:-

139 Section 21. Registration statements and permits for withdrawals for use in a cranberry
140 operation may be transferred to and used for mitigation by other permitted or registered users.

141 SECTION 11. Section 2WWW of chapter 29 of the General Laws is hereby amended by
142 adding the following sentence:-

143 Monies in the fund may be transferred to the fund established in section 2MMMMMM.

144 SECTION 12. Chapter 29 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
145 section 2LLLLLL the following 2 sections:-

146 Section 2MMMMMM. (a) There shall be established and set up on the books of the
147 commonwealth a separate fund to be known as the Next Generation Farmers Fund. The fund
148 shall be administered by the secretary of labor and workforce development, in consultation with
149 the secretary of energy and environmental affairs, the secretary of education and the
150 commissioner of agricultural resources.

151 (b) The fund shall be credited with: (i) \$3,000,000 annually from the Workforce
152 Competitiveness Trust Fund, established in section 2WWW; (ii) revenue from appropriations or
153 other money authorized by the general court and specifically designated to be credited to the
154 fund; (iii) funds from public or private sources, including gifts, grants, donations, rebates and
155 settlements received by the commonwealth that are specifically designated to be credited to the
156 fund; and (iv) interest earned on any money in the fund, for an agricultural workforce
157 development grant program. The program shall award grants to public institutions of higher
158 education, vocational technical schools or community-based organizations that have existing
159 programs for providing workforce development training to first-time farmers or the capacity to
160 create such programs. Priority consideration shall be given to programs that serve a high

161 percentage of historically underserved or low-income students or people with disabilities,
162 programs operated by nonprofits that house homeless veterans and include food production or
163 distribution training and programs that include hands-on training and training in agricultural
164 practices that mitigate climate change and protect the environment. Not less than \$3,000,000
165 annually from this fund shall go to programs that provide training in agriculture as defined by
166 section 1A of chapter 128; provided, that not more than \$500,000 shall be granted annually to
167 programs providing training in the growing and harvesting of forest products upon forest land.

168 (c) Annually, not later than May 30, the secretary of labor and workforce development
169 shall submit a report detailing the expenditures of the fund to the clerks of the house of
170 representatives and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint
171 committee on economic development and emerging technologies and the joint committee on
172 agriculture and fisheries.

173 Section 2NNNNNN. (a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall, unless
174 the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

175 “Vacant lot”, a property that is not being actively used or occupied and that has not been
176 actively used or occupied within at least the preceding 1 year, including, but not limited to,
177 abandoned, empty and foreclosed properties. This definition shall not apply to a property which
178 is undergoing renovations or repairs due to fire or other casualty.

179 “Urban agriculture”, an activity that meets the definition of agriculture in section 1A of
180 chapter 128 and that takes place in urban and suburban areas.

181 (b) There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate
182 fund to be known as the Vacant Lots to Urban Agriculture Fund. The fund shall be administered

183 by the department of agricultural resources. The fund shall be credited with: (i) revenue from
184 appropriations or other money authorized by the general court and specifically designated to be
185 credited to the fund; (ii) funds from public and private sources such as gifts, grants and
186 donations; and (iii) interest earned on monies in the fund. Amounts credited to the fund shall not
187 be subject to further appropriation and any money remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal
188 year shall not revert to the General Fund; provided, however, that such contributions shall not be
189 further restricted by the donor or used by the commonwealth for any other purpose.

190 (c) The purpose of the fund established in subsection (b) shall be to support the
191 conversion of vacant lots to farms, community gardens and other agricultural enterprises. Priority
192 consideration shall be given to projects located in environmental justice populations, as defined
193 in section 62 of chapter 30, that support increased economic development, food security, climate
194 and heat resilience, agricultural education, job training, donation of food to food insecure
195 residents, public engagement, utilization of controlled-climate growing infrastructure and
196 agricultural systems or other climate-smart agricultural practices. Said grants shall be awarded
197 for: (i) municipalities to collaboratively develop urban farming and gardening plans with
198 residents, local food system businesses, non-profit organizations or other organizations and a
199 regional planning agency; (ii) municipalities, urban agriculture organizations or businesses to
200 assist in the purchasing of private parcels; (iii) municipalities, urban farming businesses or
201 nonprofit organizations to purchase or lease land, renovate land, build infrastructure or assist in
202 farm, community garden and other agricultural enterprise startup costs; (iv) the purpose of
203 establishing pilot programs in environmental justice populations to transition vacant lots into
204 farms, community gardens and other agricultural enterprises; (v) the purpose of moving a city-

205 held tax land lien that was foreclosed to agricultural use; or (vi) the purpose of protecting a
206 parcel with a conservation easement.

207 (d) The department of agricultural resources shall provide outreach and application
208 materials for the grant program in multiple languages.

209 (e) The commissioner of agricultural resources shall promulgate rules and regulations for
210 the administration and implementation of this section.

211 (f) Annually, the commissioner of agricultural resources shall file a report with the house
212 and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on agriculture and fisheries and
213 the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate including, but not limited to: (i) a list of
214 grant applicants and the municipalities in which they are located; (ii) a list of grant recipients and
215 the municipalities in which they are located; (iii) the amount of funds requested by applicants;
216 (iv) the associated awarded grant amounts; and (v) the number of environmental justice
217 populations served by the awards made by the fund.

218 SECTION 13. Section 20 of chapter 30B of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2024
219 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 19, the figure “10” and inserting in
220 place thereof the following figure:- 20.

221 SECTION 14. Said section 20 of said chapter 30B, as so appearing, is hereby further
222 amended by adding the following 2 subsections:-

223 (c) Annually, on or before October 31, the office of the inspector general shall file a
224 report with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate including the names of each
225 governmental body that has, in accordance with this section, established a preference for the

226 procurement of such products of agriculture grown or produced using products grown in the
227 commonwealth. The report shall also be posted on the website of the office of the inspector
228 general.

229 (d) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, not less than every 5
230 years, the office of the inspector general shall conduct a public information campaign to notify
231 governmental bodies of their abilities pursuant to this section. As part of said campaign, the
232 office of the inspector general shall develop web-based educational materials and hold not less
233 than 3 public informational sessions; provided that at least 1 session shall be held virtually.

234 SECTION 15. Section 3 of chapter 40A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
235 amended by inserting after the first paragraph the following paragraph:-

236 Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent any of the zoning ordinance or by-
237 law exemptions under this section from applying to land on which agritourism takes place;
238 provided, that the primary use of this land and the structures thereon conform with the
239 requirements of the first paragraph of this section. For the purposes of this section, “agritourism”
240 shall be as defined in section 1B of chapter 128. In considering whether land is used for the
241 primary purpose of commercial agriculture, aquaculture, silviculture, horticulture, floriculture or
242 viticulture, the presence or lack of agritourism activities located thereon shall not be the sole
243 basis for granting or refusing to grant this consideration.

244 SECTION 16. Section 2A of chapter 61A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
245 amended by adding the following subsection:-

246 (e) (1) As used in this subsection, the following words shall, unless the context clearly
247 requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

248 “Commissioner”, the commissioner of the department of agricultural resources.

249 “Department”, the department of agricultural resources.

250 “Farmland”, land primarily and directly used for agricultural purposes pursuant to section
251 1 or land primarily and directly used for horticultural purposes pursuant to section 2.

252 “Farm viability”, the financial and environmental ability of a farm to remain in operation
253 and produce crops over the short and long term.

254 (2) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department, in
255 consultation with the department of energy resources, once every 10 years or at other such
256 frequency as determined by the commissioner, whichever is more frequent, shall review and
257 consider whether any amendments to statutory, regulatory and deed-based restrictions on the
258 amount of renewable energy allowed to be generated on farmland, including but not limited to,
259 land assessed or taxed under this chapter and land in the agricultural preservation restriction
260 program established pursuant to section 23 of chapter 20, would help preserve or improve farm
261 viability. The department shall consider whether alternative measures such as updated or
262 modernized farm management or business practices could achieve the same or similar
263 improvements in farm viability, as well as the commonwealth’s current ability to support farmers
264 in updating said practices, in their consideration of whether and which amendments to
265 recommend. The department shall additionally factor into its review and considerations the
266 impact on food production in the commonwealth, the promotion of healthy soils and
267 biodiversity, environmental sustainability and the commonwealth’s renewable energy goals
268 pursuant to the roadmap plans required under section 5 of chapter 21N. If the department
269 concludes that amendments to the restrictions on the amount of renewable energy allowed to be

270 generated on farmland are warranted, the commissioner shall include a list of the department's
271 specific recommended amendments in the department's report.

272 (3) The department shall report the findings of its review to the clerks of the house of
273 representatives and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint
274 committee on agriculture and fisheries and the joint committee on environment and natural
275 resources.

276 SECTION 17. Said chapter 61A is hereby further amended by inserting after section 14
277 the following section:-

278 Section 14A. The department of agriculture shall have a first refusal option to meet a
279 bona fide offer to purchase land proposed for sale subject to section 14 or an option to purchase
280 such land at full and fair market value in the case of conversion, which option shall be
281 subordinate to that of a town or city pursuant to section 14. Except as provided herein, the
282 department shall have all applicable rights and obligations of cities and towns under section 14,
283 including but not limited to the right of entry upon the land, provision of non-exercise notices
284 and recording of notices of exercise at the appropriate registry of deeds. The department or its
285 assignee and the town or city may cooperate for satisfaction of appraisal requirements or other
286 obligations required by section 14 or this section.

287 Any notice of intent to sell or convert required by section 14 and all required
288 accompanying materials shall be provided to the commissioner of the department of agriculture
289 in the same manner as they are conveyed by the landowner to other parties. If the notice of intent
290 to sell or convert provided to the commissioner does not contain all the required material, then

291 the department, within 30 days of receipt, shall notify the landowner and town or city in writing
292 that the notice is insufficient and does not comply.

293 A holder of a mortgage shall send written notice of a mortgage foreclosure sale to the
294 commissioner in the same manner as to other parties as required by section 14.

295 Any city or town shall provide to the commissioner any notice of public hearing, notice
296 of exercise or non-exercise, and notice of assignment in the same manner, and containing the
297 same materials, as to the landowner pursuant to section 14.

298 The department may assign its option to the department of conservation and recreation,
299 provided that a notice of assignment shall be recorded pursuant to section 14.

300 The department or its assignee shall exercise its option only after: (i) consultation with
301 the executive office of housing and livable communities and the executive office of economic
302 development; and (ii) a public hearing. Said hearing shall be held: (1) pursuant to sections 18 to
303 25, inclusive, of chapter 30A; (2) within the town or city where the land is located or 1 such
304 town or city if the land crosses a municipal boundary; and (3) prior to submission of a written
305 notice of intent to exercise an option under this section. The department or assignee, at said
306 hearing, shall disclose the reasons for exercise of the option pursuant to this section and identify
307 any assignment by the department. The department or its assignee may comply with this
308 requirement by participating in a scheduled public meeting of a town or city board or
309 commission.

310 The department or its assignee may exercise an option under this section by providing
311 written notice of its intent to the town or city and landowner prior to the end of the 120-day
312 period concurrently available to the town or city for exercise of its option pursuant to section 14.

313 An option so exercised shall be effective at such time as the town or city records a notice of non-
314 exercise with the registry of deeds or that the town's or city's option otherwise expires.

315 The department shall record its notice of assignment or notice of exercise within 30 days
316 of the earliest of: (i) receipt by the commissioner of a notice of non-exercise from the town or
317 city; (ii) expiration of a town or city option by failure to record a notice of exercise or notice of
318 assignment; or (iii) receipt by the commissioner of notice from the landowner of expiration for
319 any other reason.

320 Land acquired by the department of agricultural resources or the department of
321 conservation and recreation pursuant to this section shall be permanently dedicated for public
322 purposes specified in Article XCVII of the Amendments to the Constitution of the
323 Commonwealth.

324 SECTION 18. Said chapter 61A is hereby further amended by adding the following
325 section:-

326 Section 25. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall, unless the context
327 clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

328 "Agricultural land", land deemed to be in agricultural use pursuant to section 1.

329 "Horticultural land", land considered to be in horticultural use pursuant to section 2.

330 (b) The department of revenue, in consultation with the department of agricultural
331 resources, shall establish and maintain a central registry of all agricultural and horticultural land
332 in the commonwealth. The department of revenue shall update the registry on a biennial basis or
333 at other such frequency as determined by the commissioner of revenue, whichever is more

334 frequent. The commissioner of revenue shall facilitate information sharing among federal, state
335 and local entities. Said registry shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

336 (i) in total and in each municipality, the number of parcels and the number of acres of
337 agricultural land and horticultural land;

338 (ii) in total and in each municipality, the number of parcels and the number of acres of
339 agricultural land and horticultural land taxed pursuant to this chapter;

340 (iii) in total and in each municipality, the number of parcels and the number of acres of
341 agricultural land and horticultural land that were disqualified from taxation pursuant to this
342 chapter during the preceding tax year;

343 (iv) in total and in each municipality, the number of parcels and the number of acres of
344 agricultural land and horticultural land that are taxed pursuant to this chapter that were not taxed
345 pursuant to this chapter in the preceding tax year; and

346 (v) the percentage of all cropland in the commonwealth, as reported in the most recent
347 United States Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture, that is taxed pursuant to this
348 chapter.

349 (c) The department of revenue, in consultation with the department of agricultural
350 resources, shall integrate the data from the central registry into a publicly accessible, interactive
351 map with data shown at both the individual parcel and municipal level. The map shall be created
352 in a format that allows for comparison and overlays with existing maps of soil conditions and
353 types.

354 (d) The department of revenue shall make its data collection methodologies, findings and
355 all of the data within the central registry and map accessible to the department of agricultural
356 resources. The department shall make the central registry and the map publicly available,
357 downloadable and searchable on its website.

358 SECTION 19. Chapter 75 of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking out section
359 14D, as appearing in the 2024 Official Edition, and inserting in place thereof the following
360 section:-

361 Section 14D. There shall be within the University of Massachusetts a University of
362 Massachusetts Extension Board of Public Overseers for the purpose of advising and assisting the
363 chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in the mission, budget, operation and
364 management of University of Massachusetts Extension programs. Nothing in this section shall
365 directly affect the employment status of personnel.

366 The board shall consist of 1 member of the senate, who shall be appointed by the senate
367 president and who shall be a non-voting member; 1 member who shall be appointed by the
368 minority leader of the senate and who shall be a non-voting member; 1 member of the house of
369 representatives, who shall be appointed by the speaker of the house and who shall be a non-
370 voting member; 1 member who shall be appointed by the minority leader of the house of
371 representatives and who shall be a non-voting member; the president of the university or a
372 designee; the chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst or a designee; the
373 commissioner of food and agriculture or a designee; and the following persons to be appointed
374 by the governor: 3 members of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, Inc. chosen from a
375 list of 12 members submitted by said federation; 1 member of the Massachusetts 4-H

376 Foundation, Inc. chosen from a list of 3 members submitted by said organization; 1 member of
377 the Massachusetts Forestry Association chosen from a list of 3 members submitted by said
378 association; 1 member of the Massachusetts Audubon Society chosen from a list of 3 members
379 submitted by said society; 2 members of the Massachusetts Arborists Association chosen from a
380 list of 5 members submitted by said association; 1 member of a Buy Local organization chosen
381 from a list of 3 members submitted by said organization; 1 member of the Massachusetts Food
382 System Collaborative chosen from a list of 3 members submitted by said collaborative; 1
383 member from an organization engaged in urban farming education or practices; and 2 members
384 of organizations that support historically marginalized or new entry farmers and food producers.
385 The chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst shall appoint the chairperson from
386 among the membership of the board. Members of the board shall serve without compensation but
387 shall be reimbursed, subject to appropriation, out of any funds available for the purpose, for
388 necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties. Non-voting members
389 shall serve on the board in an advisory capacity and shall not be reimbursed for necessary
390 expenses.

391 The appointed members of the board shall serve for terms of 5 years, except for persons
392 appointed to fill vacancies, who shall serve for the unexpired term. The board shall hold an
393 annual meeting in January and at least 3 other times during the year. The University of
394 Massachusetts Extension director shall attend all meetings of the board and shall serve as
395 secretary but shall have no vote in its deliberation. A simple majority of appointed voting
396 members of the board shall constitute a quorum. The board may, by vote of its members then in
397 office, adopt a policy for the conduct of business, including constitution of board membership.
398 Policies may be amended or repealed by a two-thirds vote of its members.

399 The director shall prepare an annual budget for board consideration. Such a budget shall
400 be adopted by the board and approved by the chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at
401 Amherst. The director shall annually render a complete and detailed report of the activities,
402 outcomes, revenue and expenditures to the board.

403 The university on behalf of the board may receive, manage and disburse grants and
404 donations from governmental agencies, other colleges and universities, corporations,
405 foundations, associations and individuals for the purpose of funding the University of
406 Massachusetts Extension and agricultural research programs. Further, the university on behalf of
407 the board may establish and administer trust funds to support such programs.

408 SECTION 20. Chapter 128 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
409 section 1A the following section:-

410 Section 1B. (a) "Agritourism" shall mean an agriculturally related educational,
411 entertainment, historical, cultural, commercial or recreational activity that allows or invites
412 members of the general public to observe, participate in, experience and enjoy that activity, and
413 serves to encourage the purchase of agricultural products that are produced on the land where the
414 activity takes place, or on other land within the commonwealth that is primarily used for
415 commercial agriculture, aquaculture, silviculture, horticulture, floriculture or viticulture and that
416 is owned by the same person as the land where the activity takes place; provided, that the activity
417 is conducted on land primarily used for commercial agriculture, aquaculture, silviculture,
418 horticulture, floriculture or viticulture as provided in section 3 of chapter 40A.

419 (b) The department shall establish regulations that include minimum land and revenue
420 thresholds for agritourism activities. These regulations shall ensure that agritourism activities
421 shall not unreasonably detract or derogate from agricultural production.

422 SECTION 21. Section 7A of said chapter 128, as appearing in the 2024 Official Edition,
423 is hereby amended by inserting after the definition of “Healthy soils practices” the following
424 definition:-

425 “Regenerative agriculture”, agriculture that: (i) improves the health of soils, including,
426 but not limited to, the consideration of depth of topsoil horizons, water infiltration rate, organic
427 carbon content, bulk density, biological activity, biological diversity and bare ground; (ii) is
428 achieved through practices such as conservation tillage or no-till, cover-cropping, planned
429 grazing, integrated crop-livestock systems, synthetic chemicals reduction and other
430 methodologies; and (iii) is conducted in consultation with the commission for conservation of
431 soil, water and related resources established in section 19 of chapter 21.

432 SECTION 22. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the executive
433 office of health and human services, in consultation with the division of insurance and the
434 department of agricultural resources, shall conduct a comprehensive study to ascertain the state
435 safety net and other benefit programs available to farmers and farm workers, including migrant
436 farm workers as defined in section 2B of chapter 151 of the General Laws, identify the
437 challenges and obstacles for farmers and farm workers in applying for, qualifying for and
438 maintaining coverage under existing safety net programs and make recommendations for how
439 the state can amend current programs or create new programs to better support farmers and farm
440 workers. The secretary of health and human services shall facilitate information sharing and

441 policy synchronization among federal, state and local entities. Recommendations shall include,
442 but not be limited to, strategies and solutions for: (i) increasing access to coverage under
443 MassHealth for farmers and farm workers; (ii) increasing access to premium assistance payments
444 or point-of-service cost-sharing subsidies for farmers and farm workers through the
445 commonwealth health insurance connector authority; (iii) mitigating the MassHealth cliff effect
446 for farmers; and (iv) providing pension or state retirement coverage to farmers and farm workers,
447 including, but not limited to, through a state matching program for farmers' and farm workers'
448 retirement contributions. Said recommendations shall consider how to meet the differing needs
449 of farmer populations, including, but not limited to, urban farmers, suburban farmers, rural
450 farmers, farmers from historically underserved communities and farm workers.

451 Not later than 12 months after the effective date of this act, the executive office of health
452 and human services shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any
453 budgetary or statutory needs, to the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the
454 house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on health care financing
455 and the joint committee on agriculture and fisheries.

456 SECTION 23. Not later than 1 year following the effective date of this act, the
457 Massachusetts emergency management agency shall complete the first plan required under
458 section 18BB of chapter 6A of the General Laws.

459 SECTION 24. Not later than 120 days following the effective date of this act, the
460 department of agricultural resources shall promulgate regulations to implement section 34 of
461 chapter 20 of the General Laws.

462 SECTION 25. Not later than December 31, 2026, the department of environmental
463 protection shall establish such regulations, principles, policies and guidelines as are necessary to
464 implement section 21 of chapter 21G of the General Laws.

465 SECTION 26. Not later than 6 months following the effective date of this act, the
466 department of agricultural resources shall complete the first report required by subsection (e) of
467 section 2A of chapter 61A of the General Laws.

468 SECTION 27. Not later than 1 year following the effective date of this act, the
469 department of revenue shall establish and host on its website the registry and map required
470 pursuant to section 25 of chapter 61A of the General Laws.