

## Joint Committee on Agriculture

### Bill Summary

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**Bill Number:** H.111

**Title:** An Act promoting equity in agriculture

**Sponsors:** Representatives Blais of Deerfield, Domb of Amherst, Sabadosa of Northampton, Ultrino of Malden, Sena of Acton, Uytendaele of Somerville, Kane of Shrewsbury, Montañó of Boston, Elliott of Lowell, Arena-DeRosa of Holliston, Higgins of Leominster, Zlotnik of Gardner, Barrett of North Adams, Moran of Boston, Kushmerek of Fitchburg, and Gentile of Sudbury; Senator Comerford

**Hearing Date:** Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2

**Reporting Date:** Saturday, July 12, 2025

**Similar Matters:** S.53 (Senator Comerford - Identical Language)

**Prior History:**

2023-2024: Filed as H.87; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Reported favorably to House Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

2021-2022: Filed as S.2880; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied a redraft of S.495, S.502, H.860, H.967 and H.1007; Referred to Senate Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

**CURRENT LAW:**

None

## **SUMMARY:**

This bill would establish a commission on agricultural equity to develop recommendations for supporting racially equitable investments, policies and practices to promote equity in the agricultural industry in the Commonwealth.

The Commission would consist of 22 members including:

The Commissioner of Department of Agricultural Resources, or a designee;

The Chairs of the Joint Committee on Agriculture;

1 member appointed by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus;

1 member appointed by the Massachusetts House Asian caucus;

2 members appointed by the Massachusetts Food System Caucus, who shall be selected through an open nomination process pursuant to criteria developed by the caucus;

2 members appointed by the Commissioner of Agricultural Resources who shall represent Buy Local organizations funded by the Department of Agricultural Resources;

2 members appointed by the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative;

1 member appointed by the Commission on the Status of African Americans;

2 members appointed by a Massachusetts-based farming association;

2 members appointed by non-profit organizations whose primary purpose is working with farmers from socially disadvantaged groups;

1 member appointed by the Commission on the Status of Latinos and Latinas;

1 member appointed by the Commission on the Status of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders;

1 member appointed by the Commission on Indian affairs;

1 member appointed by Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation;

1 member appointed by the Massachusetts Federation of Farmers Markets; and

1 member appointed by the Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst

The Commission would be charged with studying and issuing a report on how to promote equity in agriculture. The report will include (i) data collection and dissemination; (ii) benchmark development and targeting areas of need; (iii) equitable access to grant programs and distribution of funds; (iv) generating greater equity in the legislative, regulatory and sub-regulatory processes to support agriculture in the commonwealth; (v) improving equity in programs and services offered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and (vi) the implementation and monitoring of equity goals in agriculture in the commonwealth established by the Commission. The Commission

would be required to hold at least three public hearings in different areas of the state, including at least one in an urban area and one in a rural area.