

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

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, Uytterhoeven 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.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.113
Title: Resolve to make America healthy again
Sponsors: Representative Boldyga of Southwick
Hearing Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date: Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters: None

Prior History:

New file; No prior history

CURRENT LAW:

None

SUMMARY:

This resolve establishes a special commission to study the safety of food additives. The Commission would consist of 16 members:

3 medical professionals with expertise in public health, nutrition, or endocrinology, appointed by the Governor,

2 registered dietitians specializing in clinical nutrition and public health nutrition, appointed by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services,

2 agricultural food scientists with knowledge of food safety and additive effects, appointed by the Commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources,

1 representative from the Department of Public Health,

1 representative from the Massachusetts Food Association,

1 consumer advocate with experience in food safety and consumer rights, appointed by the Attorney General,

1 environmental scientist with expertise on the environmental impact of food production, appointed by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs,

1 pediatrician appointed by the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health,

4 representatives from a local farmers' market or organic or regenerative farming group, with 2 appointed by the House Speaker and 2 appointed by the Senate President.

This Commission is to study the health effects of high fructose corn syrup, seed oils, artificial dyes, MSG, artificial sweeteners, trans fats, sodium nitrate and nitrite, BPA, and other substances they deem important.

The Commission is to report with an assessment of health impacts, and legislative recommendations to the Governor and the Clerks of the House and Senate. This report would also be released publicly.

The Commission would be appropriated \$2,000,000 from the General Fund over its two years in operation for expenditures.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.115

Title: An Act to create the department of marine fisheries resources

Sponsors: Representative Cabral of New Bedford

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

Reporting Date: Saturday, July 12, 2025

Similar Matters: None

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.759; Referred to the Joint Committee on Natural Resources ; Discharged to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a Study Order H.4522

2021-2022: Filed as H.863; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied a Study Order H.5041

2019-2020: Filed as H.737; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied a Study Order H.5012

2017-2018: Filed as H.2109; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied a Study Order H.4513

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 130 of the Massachusetts General Laws concerns marine fisheries. Section 1 of this chapter establishes definitions of otherwise uncommon or ambiguous terms used throughout the chapter. Section 1A of the chapter establishes the Division of Marine Fisheries under the Department of Fish and Game, creates the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission and the Shellfish Advisory Panel to advise the Division, and details the duties of the Division, which include: the licensing of fishers, the enforcement of safe harvesting and transportation guidelines for shellfish and other products, the management of marine fisheries, and the oversight of coastal streams, waterways and weirs.

SUMMARY:

This bill amends Chapter 130 by renaming the Division of Marine Fisheries to the Division of Marine Fishery Resources. The existing placement and structure of the Division would not fundamentally change, as it would remain under the Department of Fish and Game in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (the bill language and current law only reference this as the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs). The renamed division would continue to be charged with its existing duties of licensing, oversight, safety inspections, and the maintenance of marine fisheries. The only responsibility which the Division of Marine Fisheries currently holds which is removed by this bill is for the biological development of marine fish and fisheries. It would add to the existing duties a charge to promote and develop the fishing industry, investigate ways to market, pack, and distribute fish products, and collect and release data about the health of the industry and ecosystem. It would also allow for the establishment of protected areas for fish to grow.

Every reference to “the Division of Marine Fisheries” in Chapter 130 is changed by this bill to “the Division of Marine Fisheries Resources”. There is no change to other references to this Division elsewhere in the General Laws.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.116
Title:	An Act relative to the Massachusetts Food Policy Council
Sponsors:	Representatives Cabral of New Bedford and Arena-DeRosa of Holliston
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	H.130 (Representative Kane- Similar) S.52 (Senator Comerford- Similar)

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.99; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied new draft H.4387

2021-2022: Filed as H.3231; Referred to the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight; Reported favorably to House Ways and Means where no further action was taken

CURRENT LAW:

Section 6C of Chapter 20 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. The Council consists of 18 members:

2 from the House of Representatives with one appointed by the minority leader,

2 from the Senate with one appointed by the Minority Leader,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Transitional Assistance or their designee,

1 who is the Secretary of the Executive Office of Economic Development or their designee,

1 who is an expert in healthy soil practices appointed by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs,

1 farmer or representative of a farm organization appointed by the Governor,

1 to represent food distribution, processing and marketing interests appointed by the Governor,

1 to represent direct-to-consumer marketing efforts appointed by the Governor,

1 to represent a local health department addressing food safety and nutrition appointed by the Governor,

1 who is an expert in food safety appointed by the Governor,

1 who is an expert in food processing and handling appointed by the Governor,

And 1 to represent community-based efforts addressing nutrition and public health appointed by the Governor.

This section also specifies that members serve terms of 3 years or until a successor is appointed, and details how vacancies should be handled. This section also specifies that the Council should have an Advisory Committee consisting of at least 10 members, with the option for more to be added at the Council's discretion. This minimum membership must include:

2 active farmers or representatives of farmer associations,

1 to represent an organization engaged in farmland protection and conservation,

1 to represent an organization engaged in developing new farm businesses, urban and community supported agriculture, community gardening, immigrant and refugee farming or youth education through agriculture,

1 to represent the cooperative extension service at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst,

1 to represent food distribution, processing and marketing interests,

1 to represent a school of nutrition or public health,

1 to represent a community-based coalition or health care provider addressing obesity and chronic disease

1 to represent citizens in need of transitional assistance,

and to represent an anti-hunger organization.

This section charges the Council with making recommendations which will advance the food policy goals of Massachusetts, including increased production and sale of local food products, programs which encourage the consumption of healthy local foods, and land and water resource protection. The Council must send a report annually with their findings to the the governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, the chairs of the Joint Committee on Public Health, the Chairs of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (now two committees, the Joint

Committee on Agriculture and the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources), the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Clerk of the Senate.

SUMMARY:

This bill adds the Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game, or a designee, as a member serving on the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. This bill increases the total number of members on the Council from 18 to 19.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.118
Title:	Resolve providing for an investigation by a special commission relative to the strengths and sustainability of the Commonwealth's emergency food network
Sponsors:	Representatives Domb of Amherst, Vargas of Haverhill, Blais of Deerfield, Hong of Lowell, and Arena-DeRosa of Holliston; 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:	None

Prior History:

New file; No prior history

CURRENT LAW:

The Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program is not codified in the Massachusetts General Laws, but is established and managed under the authority of the Department of Agricultural Resources. The program provides funding to food banks and food pantries which are partners of Massachusetts' regional food banks. This funding is for the purpose of purchasing nutritionally important foods as well as food produced locally. The program was developed in 1995 and is typically funded through a line item in the annual budget.

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes a special commission to study the sustainability of food pantries which receive emergency food assistance program funds. The commission will make recommendations on how to improve the emergency food network in the areas of workforce development, technical assistance, and organizational stability and succession, as well as an assessment of demand, a study of how the network would react to increased demand, and an analysis of how many Massachusetts residents use the network.

The commission would consist of 14 members, including:

3 who represent food pantries from a mix of rural, suburban and urban areas,

3 who represent food banks from communities not represented by the food pantry representatives,

2 who utilize food pantries' services,

1 who is the commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources or their designee,

1 who is the commissioner of the Department of Transitional Assistance or their designee,

1 who is a member of the Massachusetts Food System Caucus and is appointed by the chairs of that caucus,

1 who is a member of the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative,

1 who is a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker,

And 1 who is a member of the Massachusetts Senate appointed by the Senate President.

Commissioners would need to be appointed within 30 days of the resolve's effective date. The commission is required to meet at least once within 45 days of the enactment of the commission and may meet further if needed. All meetings must be open to the public. The commission must file a report on their findings with the clerks of the House and Senate, the chairs of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, and the Joint Committee on elder affairs. This may include recommended legislation. The commission will dissolve 30 days after this report is produced unless two thirds of its members vote to continue the commission. In such a motion of continuance, the timeframe must be specified.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.119
Title:	An Act to address the impact of climate change on farms and fisheries
Sponsors:	Representatives Domb of Amherst, Blais of Deerfield, Hong of Lowell, and Arena-DeRosa of Holliston
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	S.60 (Senator Fernandes- Identical)

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.91; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a redraft H.4289; Reported favorably to House Ways and Means where no further action was taken

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 29 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes the General Fund and many special funds.

SUMMARY:

This bill amends Chapter 29 by inserting a new section 2RRRRR, which would establish the Agriculture and Fishery Vulnerability Preparedness Grant Fund. This fund would be managed by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), in consultation with the commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) and the commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

The fund will be given money when appropriated to it by the Legislature, interest, and other sources like gifts and donations. Any money given to the fund will not revert to the General fund if unused, and any gifts or donations cannot be conveyed with a specified use.

Money in the fund will be used to administer an agriculture and fishery vulnerability preparedness program to assist these industries with emergency preparedness for environmental changes. This includes the planning and implementation of climate change adaptation and resiliency projects. Secondary needs to support implementation can also be funded with this grant program. Applicable projects include those which mitigate the effects of climate change, prioritize clean energy or energy efficient renovations, and data collection to enable further implementation. Funds may also go to technical assistance for applications.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.120
Title:	An Act supporting the Commonwealth's food system
Sponsors:	Representatives Duffy of Holyoke, Blais of Deerfield, Donahue of Worcester, Sabadosa of Northampton, Domb of Amherst, Ultrino of Malden, Sena of Acton, Uyterhoeven of Somerville, Kane of Shrewsbury, Montaña of Boston, Elliott of Lowell, Barber of Somerville, Arena-DeRosa of Holliston, Higgins of Leominster, Moran of Boston, Kushmerek of Fitchburg, Connolly of Cambridge, and Gentile of Sudbury; Senators Comerford, Tarr, and Moore
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	None

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.92; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; reported favorably to House Ways and Means where no further action was taken

2021-2022: Filed as H.884; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied a study order H.5041

CURRENT LAW:

Section 6C of Chapter 20 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. The Council consists of 18 members:

2 from the House of Representatives with one appointed by the minority leader,

2 from the Senate with one appointed by the Minority Leader,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Transitional Assistance or their designee,

1 who is the Secretary of the Executive Office of Economic Development or their designee,

1 who is an expert in healthy soil practices appointed by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs,

1 farmer or representative of a farm organization appointed by the Governor,

1 to represent food distribution, processing and marketing interests appointed by the Governor,

1 to represent direct-to-consumer marketing efforts appointed by the Governor,

1 to represent a local health department addressing food safety and nutrition appointed by the Governor,

1 who is an expert in food safety appointed by the Governor,

1 who is an expert in food processing and handling appointed by the Governor,

And 1 to represent community-based efforts addressing nutrition and public health appointed by the Governor.

This section also specifies that members serve terms of 3 years or until a successor is appointed, and details how vacancies should be handled. This section also specifies that the Council should have an Advisory Committee consisting of at least 10 members, with the option for more to be added at the Council's discretion. This minimum membership must include:

2 active farmers or representatives of farmer associations,

1 to represent an organization engaged in farmland protection and conservation,

1 to represent an organization engaged in developing new farm businesses, urban and community supported agriculture, community gardening, immigrant and refugee farming or youth education through agriculture,

1 to represent the cooperative extension service at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst,

1 to represent food distribution, processing and marketing interests,

1 to represent a school of nutrition or public health,

1 to represent a community-based coalition or health care provider addressing obesity and chronic disease

1 to represent citizens in need of transitional assistance,

and to represent an anti-hunger organization.

This section charges the Council with making recommendations which will advance the food policy goals of Massachusetts, including increased production and sale of local food products, programs which encourage the consumption of healthy local foods, and land and water resource protection. The Council must send a report annually with their findings to the the governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, the chairs of the Joint Committee on Public Health, the Chairs of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (now two committees, the Joint Committee on Agriculture and the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources), the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Clerk of the Senate.

SUMMARY:

This bill amends Section 6C of Chapter 20 by inserting a new subsection. This subsection would compel the Food Policy Council to hire a full-time employee to facilitate the council's functions. The employee's stated tasks would be to advise state agencies who maintain programs related to the food system, facilitate communication between these agencies, develop and track metrics related to food system goals, identify programs which overlap in effect or create gaps in coverage, and advise in community outreach efforts. The employee would be required to submit a report 1 week prior to each council meeting with their work to the House and Senate clerks, the Council's members, and relevant agency officials.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.123
Title:	An Act relative to reimbursement of the marine recreational fisheries development fund
Sponsors:	Representative Ferrante of Gloucester
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	S.74 (Senator Tarr- Identical)

Prior History:

New file; No prior history

CURRENT LAW:

Section 17C of Chapter 130 of the Massachusetts General Laws requires the Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) to create a saltwater fishing permit program to comply with federal law. A permit from this program is required for recreational fin fishing in Massachusetts' costal waters, unless the fisher is in possession of a comparable, valid license granted by another costal state pursuant to this same purpose and with similar standards, the fisher is under 16 years old, the fisher is disabled, or the fisher is a passenger on a hired vessel, so long as the owner of the vessel has a valid permit. All funds generated from these permits go to the Marine Recreational Fisheries Development Fund established in Section 35NN of Chapter 10 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

Permits may be established by the Director of DMF for different categories of fisher, for reasons such as age, or vessels for-hire. In addition to individual permits, they may charge a separate fee for each permit, including making some categories free. These permits may be issued by authorized agents who may also charge a separate fee for their services.

The Director of DMF can designate two days per year as recreational saltwater fishing days, where anyone without a permit may take saltwater fish for recreational purposes without a license, as long as they comply with permit regulations while doing so.

This section also establishes the marine recreational fisheries development panel. This panel is established under DMF's authority, and it shall serve to advise the Director of DMF on saltwater fishing programs. It consists of 2 members of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission, established

in Section 1B of Chapter 130 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as well as 3 members chosen from the general public. All members are appointed by the Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game. The panel meets at least twice annually and at the request of the Commissioner or Director of DMF.

SUMMARY:

This bill amends Section 17C of Chapter 130 by inserting a new subsection which requires the Marine Recreational Fisheries Development Fund to be reimbursed from the General Fund for all money that it would have received if all categories of saltwater fishing permit required a fee to be paid and deposited in the fund.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.125
Title:	An Act establishing healthy soil performance guidelines
Sponsors:	Representatives Giannino of Revere and Ramos of North Andover; Senator Tarr
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	H.142 (Representative Vieira - Identical) S.65 (Representative Mark - Similar)

Prior History:

New file; No prior history

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture.

Section 64 of Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws contains the definitions of terms as they are used in sections 65 to 83 of this chapter. This includes the definitions of terms related to soil additives and lawns.

SUMMARY:

This bill amends Section 64 of Chapter 128 by striking the definition of “lawn” and inserting new definitions for “Functional Turf”, “Utility Turf”, and “Turf”. This bill directs the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to promulgate regulations for post-construction soil performance guidelines that must include soil depth and quality, carbon storage capacity, storm water run off, water quality, fertilizer, and nutrient input mitigation, and compaction or infiltration capacity. MDAR will work in conjunction with UMass Extension to ensure that the regulations fall in line with the goals of the healthy soils program. Regulations will be consistent with healthy soils practices defined in section 7A of Chapter 128. MDAR may establish fines for violations of these regulations not to exceed \$250 for a first offense, \$500 for a second offense, and \$1,000 for a third offense.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.127
Title:	An Act prohibiting the aquaculture of any species of octopus for the purpose of human consumption
Sponsors:	Representatives Hendricks of New Bedford and Higgins of Leominster
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	None

Prior History:

New file; No prior history

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 130 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to marine fish, fishing, fisheries, and the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF).

SUMMARY:

This bill defines the terms “aquaculture” and “octopus.” This bill would ban raising, possessing, selling, and transporting octopus that has been farmed in an aquaculture setting. This ban does not include octopuses that are wild caught, propagated, cultivated, maintained, reared or harvested only for research purposes unrelated to commercial production. Someone who violates this provision is subject to civil penalty. Allows the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) to promulgate rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this section.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.130
Title:	An Act relative to membership updates for the Massachusetts Food Policy Council
Sponsors:	Representatives Kane of Shrewsbury, Arena-DeRosa of Holliston, Ferguson of Holden, LeBoeuf of Worcester, and Sousa of Framingham; Senators Comerford and Eldridge
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	S.52 (Senator Comerford- Identical) H.116 (Representative Cabral- Similar)

Prior History:

New file; No prior history

CURRENT LAW:

Section 6C of Chapter 20 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. The Council consists of 18 members:

2 from the House of Representatives with one appointed by the minority leader,

2 from the Senate with one appointed by the Minority Leader,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection or their designee,

1 who is the Commissioner of the Department of Transitional Assistance or their designee,

1 who is the Secretary of the Executive Office of Economic Development or their designee,

1 who is an expert in healthy soil practices appointed by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs,

1 farmer or representative of a farm organization appointed by the Governor,

1 to represent food distribution, processing and marketing interests appointed by the Governor,

1 to represent direct-to-consumer marketing efforts appointed by the Governor,

1 to represent a local health department addressing food safety and nutrition appointed by the Governor,

1 who is an expert in food safety appointed by the Governor,

1 who is an expert in food processing and handling appointed by the Governor,

And 1 to represent community-based efforts addressing nutrition and public health appointed by the Governor.

This section also specifies that members serve terms of 3 years or until a successor is appointed, and details how vacancies should be handled. This section also specifies that the Council should have an Advisory Committee consisting of at least 10 members, with the option for more to be added at the Council's discretion. This minimum membership must include:

2 active farmers or representatives of farmer associations,

1 to represent an organization engaged in farmland protection and conservation,

1 to represent an organization engaged in developing new farm businesses, urban and community supported agriculture, community gardening, immigrant and refugee farming or youth education through agriculture,

1 to represent the cooperative extension service at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst,

1 to represent food distribution, processing and marketing interests,

1 to represent a school of nutrition or public health,

1 to represent a community-based coalition or health care provider addressing obesity and chronic disease

1 to represent citizens in need of transitional assistance,

and to represent an anti-hunger organization.

This section charges the Council with making recommendations which will advance the food policy goals of Massachusetts, including increased production and sale of local food products, programs which encourage the consumption of healthy local foods, and land and water resource protection. The Council must send a report annually with their findings to the the governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, the chairs of the Joint Committee on Public Health, the Chairs of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (now two committees, the Joint

Committee on Agriculture and the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources), the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Clerk of the Senate.

SUMMARY:

This bill amends section establishing statute, 6C of Chapter 20, by increasing the total number of members on the Massachusetts Food Policy Council from 18 to 20. It adds the Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries and the Director of the University of Massachusetts Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment, or their designees to the council.

It also changes the laws governing the Advisory Committee by allowing the Council to set a fixed rate of compensation (subject to approval from the Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Agricultural Resources) for members of the Advisory Council for work they undertake in their capacity as a board member.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.131
Title: An Act to open the Massachusetts lobster fishery
Sponsors: Representative Kearney of Scituate
Hearing Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date: Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters: None

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.837; Referred to the Joint Committee on Natural Resources; Discharged to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied study order H.4522

2021-2022: Filed as H.952; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied study order H.5041

CURRENT LAW:

None

SUMMARY:

This bill allows lobstermen and women with commercial lobstering permits to fish for lobster 12 months a year in state waters.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.133
Title: An Act promoting dairy farms
Sponsors: Representatives Mendes of Brockton and Plouffe of Brockton
Hearing Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date: Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters: None

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.89; referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; accompanied new draft H.4225

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 25A of the Massachusetts General Laws grants the powers and duties of the Division of Energy Resources. Section 17 of subsection (e) in Chapter 25A, enables the Clean Peak Standard Incentive Program. The current law takes into consideration farms that have been using an anaerobic digester since 2018.

SUMMARY:

This bill updates the date from 2018 to 2021 in the General Laws to include dairy farms who have started using an anaerobic digester in those 3 years to be retroactively included in the Clean Peak Standard Incentive Program.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.134
Title: An Act relative to agricultural crop and property destruction
Sponsors: Representative Orrall of Lakeville
Hearing Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date: Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters: None

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.97; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Reported favorably to House Steering, Policy, and Scheduling

2021-2022: Filed as H.1871; Referred to the Joint Committee on Judiciary; Accompanied Study Order H.4844

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 242 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to waste and trespassing on land.

Section 7B of Chapter 242 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to damage by off-highway or recreational vehicle to field crop or agricultural property.

SUMMARY:

This bill strikes subsection (a) of section 7B and replaces it with language to create a tort for a person who intentionally destroys crop land or agricultural property of another person with a vehicle. This bill also changes subsection (f) by inserting after the words “husbandry, structure” the words “or device.”

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.135
Title:	An Act protecting the viability of farms in the Commonwealth
Sponsors:	Representative Ouellette of Westport
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	None

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.98; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Redraft accompanied H.4290; Reported favorably to House Ways and Means

2021-2022: Filed as H.1006; Reported to study by the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture

2019-2020: Filed as H.867; Reported to study by the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture

2017-2018: Filed as H.2939; Reported favorably by the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Referred to House Ways and Means where no further action was taken

2013-2014: Filed as H.798; Reported to study by the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 30A Massachusetts General Laws governs laws relating to state officers and state administrative procedures.

SUMMARY:

This bill requires that before any state and regional agencies, boards and or commissions propose any rule, regulation, or regulatory requirement that will potentially have an adverse impact on agriculture, it must be made public that the rule or regulation may have an adverse impact on agriculture in the Commonwealth. If the proposal would have a potential impact on agriculture, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) and the other responsible party will conduct an impact assessment to determine the extent of the impact, including environmental and economic impacts.

If any select boards, boards of selectmen, town councils and city councils propose any rules, laws, or ordinances that may have an adverse impact on agriculture, that council or board must complete a form prescribed by MDAR and it must be made public. Only emergency rules, laws, or ordinances can take effect without the compliance of this process.

If the impact assessment reveals that a proposal will result in the loss of agricultural or horticultural lands or \$500 per year and/or 20 hours per year in labor costs, a copy of the findings will be submitted to the Board of Agriculture for suggestions to mitigate such costs.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.137
Title:	An Act clarifying the definition of agriculture
Sponsors:	Representatives Sabadosa of Northampton, Gómez of Easthampton, and LeBoeuf of Worcester; Senator Oliveira
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	S.70 (Senator Oliveira – Identical)

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.94; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Accompanied a Study Order H.4522

2019-2020: Filed as H.3519; Referred to The Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy; Accompanied Study Order H.5042

CURRENT LAW:

Section 1A of Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws defines “farming”, “agriculture” and “farmer”. The current definition for farming and agriculture includes traditional agricultural practices as well as the production of agricultural, aquacultural, floricultural, or horticultural commodities, forest products, livestock, horses, and other domesticated animals for food or fur purposes, and forestry and lumbering. Marijuana cultivation is not included in these definitions and is regulated under Chapter 94I and 94G of the General Laws.

SUMMARY:

This bill amends Section 1A of Chapter 128 by changing the definition of "agriculture" to include the farming of hemp and marijuana.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.139
Title: An Act relative to rodeos
Sponsors: Representative Scanlon of North Attleborough
Hearing Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date: Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters: None

Prior History:

New file; No prior history

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 128 Section 2B of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to horse riding schools or stables.

SUMMARY:

This bill would add section 2B1/2 to Chapter 128 to ensure that rodeos are in compliance with the rules, regulations, standards, and practices established by the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association. This bill would also add a definition of rodeos.

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.142
Title:	An Act establishing healthy soil performance guidelines
Sponsors:	Representative Vieira of Falmouth
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2
Reporting Date:	Saturday, July 12, 2025
Similar Matters:	H.142 (Representative Giannino - Identical) S.65 (Senator Mark - Similar)

Prior History:

New file; No prior history

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture.

Section 64 of Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws contains the definitions of terms as they are used in sections 65 to 83 of this chapter. This includes the definitions of terms related to soil additives and lawns.

SUMMARY:

This bill amends Section 64 of Chapter 128 by striking the definition of “lawn” and inserting new definitions for “Functional Turf”, “Utility Turf”, and “Turf”. This bill directs the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to promulgate regulations for post-construction soil performance guidelines that must include soil depth and quality, carbon storage capacity, storm water run off, water quality, fertilizer, and nutrient input mitigation, and compaction or infiltration capacity. MDAR will work in conjunction with UMass Extension to ensure that the regulations fall in line with the goals of the healthy soils program. Regulations will be consistent with healthy soils practices defined in section 7A of Chapter 128. MDAR may establish fines for violations of these regulations not to exceed \$250 for a first offense, \$500 for a second offense, and \$1,000 for a third offense.