

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.109
<b>Title:</b>	An Act protecting our soil and farms from PFAS contamination
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Arena-DeRosa of Holliston
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representatives Sabadosa of Northampton, Ultrino of Malden, Blais of Deerfield, Sena of Acton, Uytterhoeven of Somerville, Montaña of Boston, Elliott of Lowell, Linsky of Natick, Scarsdale of Pepperell, Domb of Amherst, Higgins of Leominster, Ramos of North Andover, Decker of Cambridge, Reid of Lynn, Sousa of Framingham, Sangiolo of Newton, Moran of Boston, Kushmerek of Fitchburg, Gentile of Sudbury, Puppolo of Springfield, Barrett of North Adams, Howitt of Seekonk, Hendricks of New Bedford, Garballey of Arlington, Davis of Great Barrington, Kassner of Hamilton, Hong of Lowell, Orrall of Lakeville, Kearney of Scituate, and LaNatra of Kingston; Senators Comerford, Rausch, and Eldridge
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	S.56 (Senator Comerford - Similar)

#### Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.101; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft H.4288; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

#### Current Law

Chapter 16 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) powers relating to waste disposal.

Chapter 20 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes the Department of Food and Agriculture (now the Department of Agricultural Resources – MDAR). It establishes the internal structure of the MDAR and includes the establishment of special funds related to agricultural activities.

Chapter 21A of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and describes its structure and duties. Section 8 of chapter 21A concerns the

powers and duties of the Bureau of Environmental Sanitation. This section lists sections from chapter 111 of the General Laws which this bureau has the power to enforce.

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

Chapter 61A regulates the assessment of lower tax assessment rates land which is over 5 acres in size, is used directly in agricultural activities, and meets minimum amounts of revenue generated from agriculture. Section 12 of chapter 61A details a conveyance tax which is applied to agricultural land when it is transferred to another owner within 10 years of its last transfer, or within 10 years of it coming into agricultural use. Section 13 of chapter 61A details roll-back taxes which are applied retroactively for the previous five years' assessments if land enrolled in the agricultural tax rate is taken out of agricultural production.

Chapter 111 of the Massachusetts General Laws contains a wide variety of sections all relating to public health. This includes environmental safety and pollution issues.

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture. Section 66 of chapter 128 concerns registration of fertilizers by the manufacturer and a license to distribute fertilizer and other soil amendments, as well as language about the application process, fees, and types of soil amendments included in these processes.

## Summary

Section 1 exempts farmers from civil liability for any claims that arise from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) present in the soil or located on agricultural land, as long as this is a result of standard agricultural practices. This exemption would include the spreading of biosolids from treated wastewater sources as fertilizer.

In this section and all others where PFAS is mentioned, PFAS is defined by chapter 182 of the Acts of 2024. This definition was recommended by the PFAS Interagency Task Force in their final report, published on June 14th, 2022.

Section 2 would create a special fund to support farmers who have incurred losses as a result of PFAS which was introduced through standard agricultural practices. The fund would be credited from public appropriations, gifts, federal grants-in-aid, interest, and from funds recovered by the Commonwealth which relate to PFAS contamination on agricultural land from biosolid application.

The fund would be managed by the Treasurer, with the commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) directing the expenditure of money. Purposes for expenditure would include soil and water testing, education, PFAS remediation, health needs, and research capacity at UMass Extension. The Commissioner of MDAR would report on the fund annually to the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, and the Joint Committee on Agriculture.

This section would also create another special fund for the purpose of assisting farmers who experience increased fertilizer costs resulting from a ban on biosolid application (section 6 in this bill). The fund would be managed by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), in consultation with the Commissioner of MDAR. Disbursements to farmers from the fund would be noncompetitive.

Sections 3 and 4 would prevent conveyance taxes or roll-back taxes assessed by Chapter 61A on enrolled land which is taken out of agricultural production due to PFAS contamination. For agricultural land, conveyance taxes are assessed when agricultural land is sold for another purpose within 10 years of its most recent change in ownership. Roll-back taxes are assessed when land is taken out of agricultural production, for a period of 5 years retroactively including the tax year when the change took place.

Sections 5 and 6 would prohibit the application of biosolids on any land in Massachusetts, as well as any fertilizer which is derived from biosolids. Fertilizer manufacturers would have to test their products for the presence of PFAS and notify the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) of the results. DEP would be responsible for the enforcement of these provisions.

Section 7 would prevent the Commissioner of MDAR from issuing any license for the retail sale of fertilizer in Massachusetts which has not been tested for PFAS or which contains any detectable levels of PFAS. Fertilizer cannot be sold in Massachusetts without such a license.

Section 8 would direct DEP to investigate ways to safely dispose of sewage sludge without causing PFAS contamination in the environment. Currently, biosolid and sludge usage as fertilizer is a major disposal method. This investigation would include public hearings and the maintenance of a master plan for managing public health and sludge disposal. It would also direct DEP to establish a grant

program to assist public wastewater treatment facilities in adopting PFAS removal and remediation strategies.

Section 9 would allow municipalities to receive full reimbursement from the Department of Revenue for any increased sludge disposal cost.

Section 10 would require that DEP's master plan (from section 8 of this bill) must be completed by the end of 2026, and directs that this plan should be submitted to the House and Senate Clerks, the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, the Joint Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources, and the Joint Committee on Agriculture.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.112
<b>Title:</b>	An Act fostering agricultural resilience in Massachusetts
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Blais of Deerfield
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representatives Sabadosa of Northampton, Domb of Amherst, Ultrino of Malden, Sena of Acton, Uytterhoeven of Somerville, Kane of Shrewsbury, Montaña of Boston, Elliott of Lowell, Gentile of Sudbury, Arena-DeRosa of Holliston, Higgins of Leominster, Zlotnik of Gardner, Moran of Boston, Connolly of Cambridge, and Scarsdale of Pepperell; Senators Comerford and Rausch
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	S.55 (Senator Comerford - Identical)

#### Prior History

New file; No prior history

#### Current Law

Chapter 6A of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to Executive Offices and their functions.

Chapter 20 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes the Department of Food and Agriculture (now the Department of Agricultural Resources – MDAR). Section 6C of chapter 20 creates, enables, and details the membership of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. Section 23 of chapter 20 relates to the agricultural preservation restriction program. Section 24 of chapter 20 relates to the agricultural lands preservation committee.

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

Chapter 30B of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to governmental bodies. Section 20 of chapter 30B relates to the preference for agricultural products produced in the Commonwealth by governmental bodies.

Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to zoning. Section 3 of chapter 40A relates to which subjects zoning may not regulate and zoning exceptions and hearings.

Chapter 61A of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to the assessment and taxation of agricultural and horticultural land. Section 2A of chapter 61A relates to land used to generate renewable energy. Section 14 of chapter 61A relates to the sale or conversion of land, notice of intent to a city or town, and option to purchase.

Chapter 75 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to the University of Massachusetts. The board consists of a designee of the president of the university, a designee of the chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the commissioner of food and agriculture or his designee and the following persons to be appointed by the governor: four members of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, Inc. chosen from a list of 12 members submitted by said federation; one member of the Massachusetts 4-H Foundation, Inc. chosen from a list of three members submitted by said organization; one member of the State 4-H advisory committee chosen from a list of three members submitted by said committee; one member of the Massachusetts Forestry Association chosen from a list of three members submitted by said association; one member of the Massachusetts Audubon Society chosen from a list of three members submitted by said society; two members of the Massachusetts Arborists Association chosen from a list of five members submitted by said association and one member of the Massachusetts Nutrition Board chosen from a list of three members submitted by said board. The chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst shall appoint the chairperson from among the membership of the board.

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture.

## Summary

Section 1 of the bill directs the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to develop an emergency preparedness plan to support agriculture, seafood and food production in all emergency preparedness planning efforts. The plan would be coordinated with the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), Department of Public Health (DPH), and Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). The plan must consider factors such as food production, storage, distribution, and transportation and it must be updated every 5 years.

Section 2 of the bill requires the Massachusetts Food Policy Council to hire a full-time food system coordinator as an employee. The food system coordinator would serve in an advisory capacity to all relevant departments to inventory existing state programs which relate to the food system across state agencies. The coordinator must submit a report 1 week prior to each council meeting with findings, progress updates and recommendations to the house and senate clerks, the council, and relevant department secretaries and commissioners.

Section 3 of the bill defines the term “local food” and declares that MDAR and DTA must maximize the amount of local food that is distributed through state food assistance programs. This section also directs that MDAR, in collaboration with the 4 regional food banks, the Executive Office Elder Affairs, DTA, the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to report on the distribution of local food through state food assistance programs annually. The report will include the quantity of local food distributed (by dollar value, percentage of food distributed, and by weight), a breakdown of the types of food distributed (ex: meat, dairy, produce), the quantity of local food distributed by state food assistance programs (ex: Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program, Healthy Incentives Program, Universal School Meals), recommendations on how Massachusetts can increase the amount of local food distributed through state food assistance programs in future fiscal years while maintaining affordability, and policy and budgetary recommendations for implementation of the report.

Section 4 of the bill requires that land being appraised for an agricultural preservation restriction is assessed at a value that includes easements and infrastructure on the parcel. Infrastructure includes dwellings, structures, plumbing and irrigation systems.

Section 5 defines the terms “agricultural preservation restriction” and “farm viability.” This section directs the agricultural lands preservation committee to create annual and long-term goals for enrolling land as an agricultural preservation restriction (APR). The goals must consider acreage, farm viability, soil health, carbon sequestration, infrastructure, access to markets, access to land ownership for historically marginalized communities, environmental justice principles, and vulnerability to being turned into a non-agricultural use. The draft goals will have a 60-day public comment period, and the goals will be updated every 5 years.

The committee will publish an additional annual report to evaluate their progress to meet the goals that are set. This report will include the number of acres and total number of farms enrolled in an APR during the past year and the total number of acres and total number of farms enrolled in an APR in the Commonwealth, the geographic distribution of farms in an APR, challenges to enrolling new land in APR, plans for the following year, budgetary, and statutory changes to meet the goals in the other aforementioned report. The committee must annually submit a copy of the report to both House and Senate Clerks, House and Senate Ways and Means Committee, the Joint Committee on Agriculture and

the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. The report will be posted on MDAR's website.

Section 6 codifies the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) program. The program grants financial assistance to food producers, processors, distributors, community and food organizations, school meal programs, urban farms, community gardens, and nonprofit food security organizations. This section allows grantees to purchase new or used equipment, cover labor costs in order to implement projects, and cover costs associated with planning and design directly related to projects that will help strengthen and improve the resiliency of the local food system.

Section 7 establishes the Next Generation Farmers Fund administered by the secretary of Labor & Workforce Development, in consultation with the secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the Secretary of Education. The fund gives grants to institutions of higher education, vocational technical schools, or community-based organizations that have existing workforce training programs for first time farmers or have the capacity to create such programs.

The fund will be credited with \$3,000,000 annually from the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund. Priority consideration will be given to programs that serve a high percentage of historically underserved or low-income students, including students with disabilities. Priority consideration will also be given to programs that include hands-on training and training in agricultural practices that protect the environment and mitigate climate change.

No less than \$3,000,000 annually will go to programs that provide training in agriculture and no more than \$1,000,000 shall be granted annually to programs providing training in the growing and harvesting of forest products.

Section 8 requires that Massachusetts governmental bodies must purchase agricultural products grown or produced in the Commonwealth unless the price of the agricultural goods exceeds 20 percent of the price of agricultural products grown or produced outside of the Commonwealth. This provision increases the percentage in the original law from 10 percent to 20 percent.

Section 9 provides that zoning ordinances and by-laws cannot prohibit or unreasonably regulate agritourism.

Section 10 inserts the word agritourism into this section and clarifies the term should be used as defined in Section 1B of chapter 128.

Section 11 allows for agritourism activities to take place on land not zoned for agritourism as long as the land's primary purpose is for the use of commercial agriculture, aquaculture, silviculture, horticulture, floriculture, or viticulture.

Section 12 defines the term "farmland" and "farm viability." The bill requires MDAR, in consultation with the Department of Energy Resources (DOER), to review the restrictions on the amount of renewable energy allowed to be generated on farmland at least every 10 years and its relation to farm viability. Farm viability is defined as the financial and environmental ability of a farm to remain in operation and produce crops over the short- and long-term. The review would consider any amendment to statutory, regulatory, and deed-based restrictions that may be needed concerning the amount of renewable energy allowed to be generated on farmland. MDAR will consider if alternatives such as modernized farm management practices could achieve the same or similar improvements in farm viability in their considerations. MDAR will also consider the promotion of healthy soils, biodiversity,



environmental sustainability, and the Commonwealth's renewable energy goals. MDAR must issue recommendations for any amendments to said restrictions, this includes land under chapter 61A and land in the APR program.

Section 13 allows MDAR the right of first refusal for purchasing agricultural and horticultural land, should a city or town not exercise its option. MDAR will have the option to purchase land at the full and fair market value as determined by a certified appraiser. Land purchased by MDAR will maintain at least 70% of the land as forest, agricultural, horticultural, or recreational land.

Section 14 directs the Department of Revenue (DOR), in consultation with MDAR, to establish and maintain a registry of all agricultural and horticultural land in the Commonwealth. DOR will ensure the data from the central registry will annually be integrated into a publicly accessible, interactive map.

The registry will include in total and in each municipality the number of parcels and acres of agricultural and horticultural land, the number of parcels and acres of agricultural and horticultural land enrolled in Chapter 61A and taxed at the reduced rate outlined in that chapter, the number of parcels of agricultural and horticultural land that are enrolled or unenrolled from Chapter 61A that year and the percentage of all cropland, as reported in the most recent United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture, that is enrolled in Chapter 61A.

DOR and MDAR will integrate the data from the central registry into a publicly accessible and interactive map. The map will have the data at the individual parcel and municipal level. The map will be able to be overlaid with existing maps of soil conditions and types.

Section 15 adds members to the UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers. These additions will be two members from the Senate (one majority and one minority), two members from the House of Representatives (one majority and one minority), one member of a Buy Local organization, one member from the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative, one member from an urban farming organization, and two members from organizations that support historically marginalized or new entry farmers and food producers. 10 members of the board will have to be present to form a quorum. Appointed members will serve a term of 5 years. A member appointed to fill vacancy will serve for the expired term. On behalf of the board, UMass may receive, manage, and disburse grants and donations for the purpose of funding UMass Extension and agricultural research programs.

Section 16 adds the definition of "agritourism." It allows agritourism to be conducted on land primarily used for agriculture, aquaculture, silviculture, horticulture, floriculture, or viticulture. It allows agritourism activities to be conducted on land not primarily used for these purposes as long as 75% of land acreage is dedicated to agriculture, 50% of the agricultural product produced on that land is utilized in agritourism activities, 25% of gross annual income results from the sale of products due to agritourism activities, at least an additional 50% of gross annual income come from products produced on the land or on land in Massachusetts which is primarily used for these purposes.

Section 17 directs the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), in consultation with the Division of Insurance and MDAR, to conduct a study to gather information on state social safety net programs available to farmers. The study will identify challenges that farmers face when applying for, qualifying for and maintaining coverage and make recommendations for how the state can amend current programs or create new programs to support farmers. Recommendations from the study will include solutions/strategies for increasing access to MassHealth coverage for farmers, increasing access to premium assistance payments or point-of-service cost-sharing subsidies for farmers through the

Commonwealth health insurance connector authority, mitigating the MassHealth cliff effect for farmers, providing pension or state retirement coverage to farmers and meeting the differing needs of farmer populations, including urban farmers, rural farmers and farmers from historically underserved communities.

Section 18 requires the emergency preparedness plan to support agriculture in Section 1 be completed no later than one year after the effective date of this act.

Section 19 requires MDAR to implement the change in the FSIG program provision in Section 6 no later than 120 days after the effective date of this act

Section 20 requires the first report regarding the amount of renewable energy allowed on farmland executed by MDAR in Section 12 of this act shall be complete and submitted no later than 6 months after the effective date of this act.

Section 21 requires that the registry and map in Section 14 will be posted on the Department of Revenue's website no later than 9 months after the effective date of this act.

## **Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries**

### **Bill Summary**

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.121
<b>Title:</b>	An Act relative to urban farmland
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Duffy of Holyoke
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representatives Sabadosa of Northampton, Domb of Amherst, Ultrino of Malden, Blais of Deerfield, Sena of Acton, Uytterhoeven of Somerville, Montaña of Boston, Elliott of Lowell, Arena-DeRosa of Holliston, González of Springfield, Higgins of Leominster, Zlotnik of Gardner, Madaro of Boston, Kassner of Hamilton, Moran of Boston, Connolly of Cambridge, Gentile of Sudbury, and Scarsdale of Pepperell; Senators Comerford and Eldridge
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	S.61 (Senator Gomez – Identical)

#### **Prior History**

New file; No prior history

#### **Current Law**

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

Chapter 30 of the Massachusetts General Laws creates many rules and requirements which must be observed in Commonwealth departments and commissions. Section 62 of chapter 30 defines several terms for the purpose of environmental justice and environmentally responsible development, including the term “environmental justice population”

## Summary

This bill establishes the Vacant Lots to Farms Grant Fund. It also defines vacant lots for use in the section. This fund will be administered by the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), and will be funded through general court appropriations, interest from the fund, and private gifts, donations and funds. 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.

The fund will be used to facilitate the establishment of agriculture on vacant lots. This includes farms, community gardens and other agricultural operations. The fund will specifically target environmental justice communities and cities. These agricultural operations must improve economic development, food security, and climate and heat resilience in urban areas. Grant applicants who support agricultural education, job training, food donation, and public engagement will be given priority.

Money from the fund will be granted to municipalities for land purchase or renovation, to organizations to create pilot programs, and to establish conservation easements.

A commissioner is required to create regulations to control the fund and create an annual report. This report would be filed with the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, the Joint Committee on Agriculture, and the House and Senate clerks. The report will include the list of applicants and their municipalities, the amount of funds requested, and the total received, and the environmental justice populations which are affected.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.126
<b>Title:</b>	An Act establishing community fridges to address food insecurity
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Gómez of Easthampton
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representative Arena-DeRosa of Holliston; Senator Eldridge
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	S.62 (Senator Gomez - Identical)

#### Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as S.44; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft S.2760; Reported favorably to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

#### Current Law

Chapter 94 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to the sale of food, drugs, and other articles. Section 328 of Chapter 94 regulates the civil liability of food donation, distribution, service, and preparation.

#### Summary

This bill defines the term “community fridge.” The bill stipulates that every community fridge will be managed by an individual, nonprofit organization, or a designated government official, who is responsible for managing the cleanliness and sanitary condition of the fridge. The bill tasks the Department of Public Health with providing advisory guidelines for the safe and sanitary storage of food.

The placement of community fridges will be prioritized in areas of high food insecurity, including disproportionately impacted areas and food deserts. The bill requires community fridges to be equitably distributed throughout each geographic region of the Commonwealth.

The bill limits liability for civil damages among food establishments that distribute food at no charge, for injury related to the condition of the food provided.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.129
<b>Title:</b>	An Act relative to the healthy incentives program
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Jones of North Reading
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representatives Ferguson of Holden, Frost of Auburn, Smola of Warren, Gallagher of Bridgewater, Kane of Shrewsbury, and Pease of Westfield; Senator Eldridge
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	None

#### Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.185; Referred to the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; Discharged to Joint Committee on Agriculture; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

2021-2022: Filed as H.233; Referred to the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; Accompanied study order H.4906.

#### Current Law

None

## **Summary**

This bill directs the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to choose a state-wide organization to conduct a survey regarding the Healthy Incentive Program (HIP) to ensure the program is meeting the needs of its users and farmers. The survey would be given to participants and non-participants of the program. The survey would collect information including the knowledge that both participants and non-participants have about the program including the frequency with which participants utilize the program, how and where participants learned about the program, any barriers that both participants and non participants experience when trying to utilize the program and feedback regarding their experiences with the program. The study would also inform future outreach efforts for the program. The commissioners of DTA and MDAR will ensure the study is conducted and make the data available on their public websites.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.136
<b>Title:</b>	An Act prohibiting the use and sale of toxic sludge
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Owens of Watertown
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representative Kassner of Hamilton; Senator Moore
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	None

#### Prior History

New file; No prior history

#### Current Law

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture.

#### Summary

This bill defines the term “sludge.” The bill states that a person cannot apply, on any land in the state, sludge that is generated from a municipal, commercial, or industrial wastewater treatment plant, compost material that was produced with sludge generated from those locations, or any other product that is intended to be used as fertilizer, soil amendment, topsoil replacement, or mulch that contain sludge from the those locations. The bill states that a person cannot sell or distribute the compost, fertilizer, soil amendment, topsoil replacement, or mulch that is derived from sludge generated from a municipal, commercial, or industrial wastewater treatment plant or sewage.

The prohibitions on application in the bill do not apply to the disposal of sludge in a landfill, the land application of compost not derived from sludge, the land application of sludge derived from calcium carbonate production, and the land application of material from composting toilets.



## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.138
<b>Title:</b>	An Act relative to the definition of livestock
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Scanlon of North Attleborough
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representatives Hawkins of Attleboro, Ashe of Longmeadow, Howard of Lowell, LeBoeuf of Worcester, Sena of Acton, and Arena-DeRosa of Holliston; Senator Moore
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	None

#### Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.95; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft H.4387; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

#### Current Law

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture. Section 1A of chapter 128 defines the terms “farming” and “agriculture.”

#### Summary

This bill changes the definition of "livestock" to explicitly exclude the breeding of dogs or cats, raising dogs or cats for commercial purposes, or the commercial grooming of dogs or cats.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.141
<b>Title:</b>	An Act prohibiting the purchase of farm land by foreign governments
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Vaughn of Wrentham
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representative Gaskey of Carver
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	None

#### Prior History

New file; No prior history

#### Current Law

Chapter 184 of the Massachusetts General Laws addresses real property law.

#### Summary

This bill provides definitions for “agricultural land,” “controlling interest,” “department,” “foreign government,” and “interest.” This bill prevents a foreign government from purchasing, acquiring, leasing, or holding any interest in agricultural land that is within a 20-mile radius of a US military base. This will not apply to land held by a foreign government before June 1, 2025, or federally recognized tribal governments.

The bill directs the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to compile an annual report to measure the amount of farmland owned by foreign owners or governments, measure the percent change in foreign ownership for the past 10 years, record what purpose the land is being used for, and record any recent changes in foreign ownership of energy production, storage and distribution facilities.

## **Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries**

### **Bill Summary**

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.1058
<b>Title:</b>	An Act relative to a cranberry water use transfer program
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Sylvia of Fairhaven
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representatives Orrall of Lakeville, LaNatra of Kingston, Flanagan of Dennis, DeCoste of Norwell, Howitt of Seekonk, Cabral of New Bedford, Gaskey of Carver, Kane of Shrewsbury, Saunders of Belchertown, Gallagher of Bridgewater, and Badger of Plymouth
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	S.602 (Senator Fernandes - Identical)

#### **Prior History**

2023-2024: Filed as H.909; Referred to the Joint Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources; Discharged to the Joint Committee on Agriculture where no further action was taken.

2021-2022: Filed as H.1017; Referred to the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft H.4599; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

2019-2020: Filed as H.881; Referred to Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture; Accompanied study order H.5078.

2017-2018: Filed as H.2151; Referred to Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture; Accompanied study order H.4530.

#### **Current Law**

Chapter 21G relates to the Massachusetts Management Water Act. This chapter authorizes The Department of Environmental Resources (DEP) to regulate the amount of water drawn from natural sources. DEP maintains a permitting program for the withdrawal of water for certain uses and industries.

## **Summary**

This bill allows the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to provide authorization for towns or registered users with existing permits for that watershed to purchase water rights from cranberry growers who no longer need their permit. Towns may apply the usage of the unused water rights as indirect mitigation toward their own water use.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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**Bill Number:** H.1059

**Title:** An Act relative to fisheries conservation gear grant program

**Sponsor:** Representative Turco of Winthrop

**Cosponsors:** None

**Hearing Date:** Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1

**Reporting Date:** Saturday, November 15th, 2025

**Similar Matters:** None

#### **Prior History:**

2023-2024: Filed as H.773; Referred to the Joint Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources; Discharged to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft H.4227; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

2021-2022: Filed as H.873; Referred to the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft H.4594; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

#### **Current Law**

None

#### **Summary**

This bill establishes the Fisheries Conservation Gear Grant Program which would provide funding for the research, development, and procurement of commercial fishing gear that limits the harm or mortality of endangered species such as the Northern Right Whale. The program will be administered by the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) who will hold annual hearings to report on the progress, updates, and effectiveness of the program. This bill requires beneficiaries of grants to be domiciled in Massachusetts and have a valid commercial fishing license. DMF may retain the intellectual property of inventions developed through this program.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.2319
<b>Title:</b>	An Act to protect animal health
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative O'Day of West Boylston
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	None
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	None

#### Prior History

New file; No prior history

#### Current Law

Chapter 129 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to animal health, the prevention of cruelty to animals, livestock disease control and the training of service animals. Section 27 of this chapter relates to the seizure, quarantine and destruction of animals brought to the Commonwealth from outside it by the Director of the Division of Animal Health in the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

#### Summary

This bill requires that nonprofits who rescue animals and make them available for adoption report the number of dogs and cats brought into the state the previous year to the Director of the Division of Animal Health. They must also identify the place of origin of these animals and the transporter, as well as any other information the Director requires. Nonprofits which are licensed by the Commonwealth to deal or auction horses, pigs, cows, or poultry, or which are licensed as a pet shop, are exempt from the requirements of this bill.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.4106
<b>Title:</b>	An Act establishing a farm-to-institution pilot program
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Davis of Great Barrington
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	Representatives Blais of Deerfield, Gaskey of Carver, Kearney of Scituate, and Paulino of Methuen; Senator Eldridge
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	None

#### Prior History

New file; No prior history

#### Current Law

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

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture.

## Summary

This bill establishes the Massachusetts Farm-To-Institution Fund. The fund will be administered by the commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR). Any money remaining in the fund at the end of the fiscal year will not revert to the general fund. The fund and the program will be administered for three years before it is repealed.

Expenditures from the fund will include, but are not limited to the implementation of the Massachusetts farm-to-institution pilot program, grants or reimbursements to institutions participating in the program to offset the cost of sourcing local food, technical assistance and grants to eligible local farms to support scaling up production or meeting institutional procurement standards, landscape analysis and strategic planning, and infrastructure improvements and capacity-building initiatives. The commissioner of MDAR is also directed to pursue additional funding from federal programs.

MDAR will report on activity of the fund no later than December 31st annually while the fund exists to the chairs of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Chairs of House and Senate Ways and Means, and the clerks of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

This bill requires MDAR to establish and administer the Massachusetts farm-to-institution pilot program in coordination with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The program's objectives should include increasing the procurement of locally grown and produced agricultural products by institutions, supporting small and medium-sized farms within the Commonwealth, providing technical and financial assistance to institutions to facilitate local procurement, and promoting educational initiatives to increase awareness of local food systems.

The program will analyze already existing farm-to-institution programs in the Commonwealth, develop a scalable farm-to-institution model, provide grants, loans and technical assistance to farmers, food hubs and institutions. implement a pilot program, and establish a regional working group to assist in program implementation.

To develop the program, MDAR will develop guidelines for participation by local farms and institutions, establish a streamlined application process for interested stakeholders, and provide resources, including training and best practices, to participating institutional food service providers. The program will prioritize small and historically underserved farms. Institutions serving underserved communities will receive additional support to ensure equitable distribution of local foods.

This bill establishes a farm-to-institution advisory committee to guide program development and implementation. The committee will consist of the commissioner of the department or their designee, the secretary of the executive office of energy and environmental affairs or their designee 2 members appointed by the commissioner, 1 of whom shall be from a farm organization in the Commonwealth and 1 of whom shall be a local farmer from the Commonwealth, 2 members appointed by the commissioner and the secretary, who shall be from an institution participating in the program and 1 member appointed by the commissioner and the secretary, who shall be an expert in public health and nutrition. The commissioner and the secretary will serve as co-chairs.

This bill requires MDAR to prepare an annual report that will include the amount of locally sourced food procured through the program, economic impacts on participating farms, feedback from institutions participating in the program and any recommendations for program improvement and



potential statewide expansion of the program. The report will be submitted no later than December 31 of each year to the Governor, the chairs of the Joint Committee on Agriculture and the Clerks of the House of Representatives and Senate.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.4430
<b>Title:</b>	An Act promoting agriculture resilience and sustainability
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Hogan of Stow
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	None
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	None

#### Prior History

New file; No prior history

#### Current Law

Chapter 29 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to state finance. Section 5G of chapter 29 pertains to excess capital gains funds. If taxes collected from capital gains income total over \$1 billion in a fiscal year, the excess above this amount is not directed to the General Fund. Instead, 90% of this excess is transferred to the Commonwealth Stabilization Fund, 5% is transferred to the State Retiree Benefits Trust and 5% is transferred to the Commonwealth Pension Liability Fund.

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture. Section 7A of chapter 128 includes definitions for terms concerning arboriculture, gardening, soil health, and other terms.

## Summary

This bill amends the existing language regarding excess tax on capital gains income. 70% of excess tax would be transferred to the Commonwealth Stabilization Fund, 10% would be transferred to the State Retiree Benefits Trust Fund, 10% would be transferred to the Commonwealth's Pension Liability Fund, and 10% would be transferred to the Disaster Relief and Resiliency Trust Fund.

This bill indemnifies farmers whose farms have been contaminated by PFAS due to historically approved soil amendment practices. This bill creates a fund for farmers impacted by PFAS contamination.

This bill inserts a definition for regenerative agriculture.

This bill requires the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to develop a program to compensate farmers who focus on environmentally friendly farming practices. MDAR is also required to prioritize funding for greenhouses and other controlled-environment agriculture systems, projects using renewable energy and sustainable materials and for the creation of a revolving loan fund offering zero interest loans for farmland purchases and supporting underserved farmers.

This bill requires MDAR to prioritize urban agriculture development by supporting the transformation of vacant lots and expanding their urban agriculture program.

This bill requires MDAR to prioritize renewable energy and sustainability by supporting agrivoltaics projects, funding research on the impact of solar installations on agriculture productivity, and expanding grants and discounts for energy efficiency improvements.

This bill requires MDAR to fund vocational agricultural programs and on-farm internships, provide student debt relief for graduates working in agriculture-related fields for at least 10 years, establish a network of advisors to provide long-term support for farmers, and fund UMass Extension.

This bill requires MDAR to simplify their grant application process, allow grant funds to be expended for used equipment purchases, and improve the equity and accessibility of grants through bridge loans and translation services for applications and outreach materials.

This bill requires MDAR to conduct a biennial agriculture survey to collect data on land use, production, and economic impact. This bill requires MDAR to establish and collaborate with UMass Extension to create a state agriculture resilience task force to oversee the implementation of these new requirements.

## Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

### Bill Summary

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<b>Bill Number:</b>	H.4437
<b>Title:</b>	An Act relative to the regulation of nutrient management and fertilizer in the town of Nantucket
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Representative Moakley of Falmouth
<b>Cosponsors:</b>	None
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
<b>Similar Matters:</b>	None

#### Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as S.2437, Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Referred to Senate Ways and Means

#### Current Law

Chapter 561 of the acts of 1973 establishes the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission.

#### Summary

This bill will extend the adoption of regulations and bylaws for nutrient management and fertilizer guidelines in the Town of Nantucket for a period of two years after the bill goes into effect. This bill requires that regulations and bylaws adopted by the town are as strict or stricter than those adopted by the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR). Writing of these regulations will be done in conjunction with UMass Extension.