

2017 Activities of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council

January 13, 2017, MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Westborough

MA Local Food Action Plan goal: *Reduce food waste through state programs for farmers, restaurants, processors, schools and other institutions, and consumers. A current focus is to support the Commercial Food Waste Ban by developing policies and programs to divert food waste from landfills. Support for donation programs, conversion of food waste to animal feed, composting, and the development of anaerobic digestion facilities are also priorities.*

Council members agreed that measurable benchmarks are needed to achieve food waste goals. Stop & Shop's New England digester was held as a model for retail stores. The Council also discussed the impact of proposed composting legislation on issues raised by farmers. Finally, ways to reduce food waste including incentivizing food donation and changing food product labeling legislation to reflect food safety were discussed. It was concluded that a white paper based on the presentations at this meeting would be developed.

March 10, 2017, UMass Amherst, Amherst

MA Local Food Action Plan goal: *Support increased purchases of Massachusetts grown and produced foods. The current focus is to support increased purchases of local foods by state institutions, public and private educational programs, and meals programs. Increased funding for state agency and institutional food procurement and standardized contract language for state and municipal purchasers, are also priorities.*

Presentations were made on Farm to School programming in both K-12 and university settings. Successes of farm to school were covered, as were the desire to expand the programs beyond produce, and how to approach the differing schedules of harvest time and the school year. Frozen products could be a way to better match local foods produced in the summer season with schools. Greenfield Public Schools were held as an example of success, but their Director of Food Services stressed that it has taken time for key stakeholders to come on board. There is some concern about food safety and the use of produce from school gardens. Science-based regulations and procedures need to be followed. It was concluded that a Farm to Institution White Paper be developed.

May 19, 2017, MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Westborough

MA Local Food Action Plan goal: *Support and grow local food system infrastructure. The current focus is to target opportunities for growers, food processors and distributors to access capital, incentives, and technical assistance through agency partners and programs, private organizations, and universities.*

Focusing on local food infrastructure, the Council recognized the need for producers to receive technical assistance (TA) as a key for economic development. Most small businesses don't have funding for a TA consultant. The Council discussed how to increase awareness and access to available TA.

MassDevelopment spoke about the Collaborative Workspace Program, and how it is contributing to innovation and job growth. There were presentations on food safety while developing value-added

foods, MA farm compliance with the Produce Safety Rule, and pollution prevention in the Massachusetts food and beverage industry. The Council voted to accept the Food Waste White Paper.

July 21, 2017, Worcester Union Station, Worcester

MA Local Food Action Plan goal: *Support regulatory policies and practices that allow farms and other food system businesses to thrive. The current focus is to develop circuit rider positions at state regulatory agencies, subject to appropriation, to provide food business guidance in a non-enforcement capacity in an effort to aid in compliance. Additionally, circuit riders will provide support and guidance to local regulatory agencies.*

A summary of findings from the MA Local Food Action Plan Working Group on Farming & Public Health was provided, which included several recommendations for regulatory reform. In a discussion of how the Food Code should be applied to farmer's markets, a point was made that different municipalities have vastly different resources for their Boards of Health. Presentations were made on the roles of Boards of Health on farms, and the role of the MA Department of Public Health with local Boards of Health. A circuit rider position, offering technical assistance, was proposed as a possible solution.

September 15, 2017, Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston

MA Local Food Action Plan goal: *Support expanded educational opportunities for farmers and other food system workers. The current focus is to support Massachusetts higher education, UMass Extension, and vocational technical schools by developing and offering appropriate curricula to meet food system needs.*

The Council discussed ways to engage and provide economic support for new farmers. Topics included how to improve education for food processing jobs, and how to direct students toward agricultural and food science careers. A panel from UMass Extension discussed their current programming. They also considered program improvement to better meet goals identified in the Food Plan, a potential challenge with current resources. A representative from the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Schools, and the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance also shared recommendations.

November 1, 2017, State House, Boston

MA Local Food Action Plan goal: *Support programs that facilitate access to healthy foods for underserved communities. A current focus is to provide support to leverage the Department of Transitional Assistance's USDA/FINI grant award, known as the Healthy Incentives Program, which will increase use of SNAP at farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and for community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, providing fresh, healthy food for low-income families, and increasing sales for Massachusetts farmers. Additional examples include the MA Food Trust and the MA Food Ventures Program.*

The topic focus was the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). Representatives from DTA and DPH gave their department's perspectives on the success of HIP. Histories of SNAP at MA farmer's markets and the HIP

program were provided. Representatives from local organizations shared success stories and positive feedback from farmers, mobile markets and farmer's market managers were provided. The future of the HIP program was discussed. The Council voted to accept the Farm to Institution White Paper.

MASSACHUSETTS FOOD POLICY COUNCIL (Council)

(M.G.L. CHAPTER 20 § 6C)

CHAIRMAN

John Lebeaux, Commissioner, MDAR

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

STATE AGENCY MEMBERS

John Lebeaux, Commissioner, MDAR

Jay Ash, Secretary, Designee: Helena Fruscio, MEOHED

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

Martin Suuberg, Commissioner, MDEP, Designee: Danah Tench

Jeff Wulfson, Acting Commissioner, Designee: Robert Leshin, MESE

Jeff McCue, Commissioner, Designee: (to be assigned) MDTA

Legislative members:

Senator Anne Gobi

Representative Hannah Kane

Senator Ryan Fattman

Representative Steve Kulik

Industry Members (appointed by the Governor):

Vivien Morris, MS, RD, MPH, LDN, Community based nutrition and public health expert

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

Eric Stocker, Food processor and distributor

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

John Lee, Allandale Farm, Farmer

Amanda Kinchla, MS, Food Safety Extension Specialist, UMASS Amherst

John Waite, Food processor and handler