



## World Farmers

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In an effort to support our local farm and food economy in this uncertain time due to COVID-19, World Farmers requests the following items be considered for MA farmers by our State Legislature:

### **Direct Farmer Service Requests**

- Provide direct payments to small-scale producers who have lost revenue from changing local food system markets, such as farmers markets, schools, and restaurants.
  - Rationale: Congress passed \$9.5 billion in Assistance to Specialty Crop Producers, and \$14 billion for the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). Neither of these funds are expected to make an impact for small-scale farmers in the Northeast; the former has never before been implemented by USDA, and the latter has historically gone to more financially stable commodity crop producers.
- Prioritize and ensure free testing and treatment for COVID-19 for all food system workers; and offer funding to farmers to cover paid sick leave to workers testing positive.
- Support to farmers for any additional food safety measures to be put forward by MDAR or the federal government in efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### **Local Market Support Requests**

- Instruct MDAR and DTA to develop a united messaging campaign to consumers on food-safe food sourcing opportunities. Campaign should be developed with input and guidance from key stakeholders.
  - Rationale: Farmers have already begun channeling their resources into executing their crop production plans based on a market plan that is volatile due to COVID-19. The public needs assurances that CSAs, farmers' markets, farm stands, and the like are food safe food sources.
- Invest in existing emergency food programs and efforts to buy food from farmers and get it to those who need it most.
  - Example: increase funding for MEFAP (Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program) with assurances that the increase in funding is tied to efforts to expand the database of farmers from which they purchase.
- Declaration that state-run institutions still in operation should prioritize purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers.
- Monitor and maintain stable and fair markets, restricting price-gouging and unfair marketing practices which can be detrimental to both the farmer and the consumer.

### **Other Farmer Support Requests**

- Develop a new pilot Crop Insurance Program for small-scale producers based on emergency disaster assistance.
- Allow any worker or person not currently under contract or visa to qualify for H-2A program enrollment or comparable agricultural visa for farms in Massachusetts.
  - Rationale: With U.S. Consulates in other countries shut down, H-2A and other agricultural worker visas are not being processed.
- Issue a determination that community gardens are considered essential. All should be required to establish and follow rules on social distancing and cleaning of communal equipment.