



**Bills supported by the Massachusetts Farm Bureau  
2011- 2012 Legislative Session  
April 19, 2011**

An Act to promote farm viability – HB 1141 – Representative Kulik

- Creates a system by which municipal Board of Health regulations, which impact on agriculture, are submitted for review and approval to an Agricultural Review Board which includes experts in the fields of health and agriculture.
- The agricultural community has identified inappropriate BOH regulations as a major impediment to the growth and sustainability of agriculture in the Commonwealth.
- This bill does not pre-empt BOHs. It helps to ensure that municipal health regulations governing agriculture are written with a sound understanding of agriculture. This is simply good governance.

Bill to create a state meat inspection program at the Department of Agricultural Resources HB 3351 – Representative Kulik

- There is huge demand for local meat and there is sufficient production capacity on MA farms to meet this demand. However there are only 2 USDA inspected red meat processing facilities in MA (both in northern MA). There are no USDA inspected poultry processing facilities in MA.
- Regulatory uncertainty and quagmire is a major barrier to creating new meat processing facilities.
- Would combine state and federal oversight of slaughter, cutting and packing within DAR.
- USDA would pick up ½ the cost of the new program.
- Maine, Vermont and Connecticut have passed similar legislation. Maine, which is furthest along in their program, doubled the number of slaughter and processing facilities within the first few years of the program.

An act to promote economic stimulus in natural resource based small businesses – HB 3554 - Representative Dykema

- Expands an existing 3% tax credit for *incorporated* agriculture and fishing operations to those which are not incorporated.
- The vast majority of MA farms and many small fishing operations are *not* incorporated.
- This modest tax break could provide significant stimulus and tax revenue in rural communities which are currently suffering more than urban areas in the down economy. A new barn means work for carpenters and electricians and sales for lumberyards, etc.
- Farms will never pickup and move overseas! This is a sound investment for the Commonwealth and helps to build infrastructure for the local food system and food security.

An act to strengthen and expand the Board of Agriculture – HB 3221 Representative Hogan

- The Board of Agriculture provides oversight and guidance to the Department of Agricultural Resources. The current Board is too small to represent the increasing diversity of Massachusetts agriculture.
- The bill would expand the Board of Agriculture from 7 to 13 members to better represent the diversity of Massachusetts Agriculture.
- It would also set term limits to ensure fresh membership and perspectives.

An act relative to the distribution of raw milk – HB 1995 – Representative Gobi

- Farmers may currently only sell raw milk from the farm.
- The bill would allow them to deliver milk to customers, either themselves or through a contractor.
- This would expand the ability of dairy farmers to sell directly to the consumer – often a a key in Massachusetts where land, labor and regulatory costs are among the highest in the nation.
- The Farmer would maintain a contractual relationship with the end consumer.
- All existing labeling and notifications would remain in place.
- DAR would have authority to regulate storage, transportation, etc.

An Act to promote the care and well-being of livestock – SB 335 – Senator Brewer

- Creates a Livestock Care and Standards Board which consists of farmers, humane groups, veterinarians and other interested parties.
- DAR, with 2/3 concurrence of the board may promulgate guidance and/or regulations governing the keeping and care of livestock.
- As MA farmers more frequently deal directly with consumers, they want to be able to point to a local system by which humane issues are addressed in an open public forum.
- Washington-based special interest groups are active in MA trying to push their agenda through legislation and PR. The Livestock Care and Standards Board would help ensure decisions impacting local agriculture are also made locally!

An Act to promote environmentally sound transportation of agricultural products – SB 1725 – Senator Brewer

- Current law prohibits trucks and trailers with farm plates from carrying in excess of 60,000 lbs (including the weight of the trailer), even if the vehicle is rated to carry more than this.
- This limit results in increased use of fossil fuels and related emissions, as well as increased labor costs and wear on equipment.
- The bill would allow vehicles with farm plates to carry up to their rated capacity. Bridge and local road weight limits would remain in effect.

Note that as of publication of this bulletin, there may be bills that have been filed that we would support that we are not aware of yet. For an updated bulletin, please contact Brad Mitchell at 508.481.4766.