

## MASSACHUSETTS FARM BUREAU FEDERATION POLICY BOOK 2012

**MASSACHUSETTS FARM BUREAU FEDERATION policies are subject to reaffirmation every three years. Policies that have been reaffirmed are marked by \*R followed by the year of origin.**

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONS.....	2
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMS .....	2
AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION RESTRICTIONS .....	4
ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE.....	8
APIARIES.....	9
AQUACULTURE.....	9
BIOTECHNOLOGY .....	9
COMMUNICATIONS .....	10
CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT .....	11
CROP AND LIVESTOCK DAMAGE.....	12
DAIRY .....	15
DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURE.....	18
ENERGY .....	18
EQUINE.....	21
4-H .....	22
FAIRS .....	23
FARM BUILDINGS.....	24
FARM EQUIPMENT, MOTOR AND RECREATIONAL VEHICLES .....	24
FARMING OPPORTUNITIES .....	28
FARM VIABILITY .....	28
FOOD SAFETY.....	29
FORESTRY .....	30
GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND FUNDING .....	32
GRANTS AND LOANS.....	34
INSURANCE AND BANKING.....	36
LABOR.....	37
LAND PRESERVATION & TRUSTS .....	40
LOCAL ISSUES.....	40
MARKETING & FARM SIGNS.....	42
PEST MANAGEMENT .....	45
POLICY AND ORGANIZATION .....	46
PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS.....	50
PUBLIC RELATIONS .....	53
RATITES .....	53
TAXES, ASSESSMENTS AND FEES.....	53
TRESPASS, VANDALISM AND DESTRUCTION OF FARM PROPERTY.....	59
ZONING .....	59

## **AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONS**

### **2011-1 \*R (2005)**

Whereas there are over 148 Agricultural Commissions established in the state of Massachusetts, and

Whereas these are an invaluable resource to Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, and consequently need to be fostered, encouraged and kept in close contact to Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation assist in establishing Agricultural Commissions in towns that don't have one and encouraging county members to be active on their local town Ag Commissions;

Be it further resolved to encourage Ag Commissions to become Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation members.

## **AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMS**

### **2011-2 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; the Massachusetts FFA Organization is part of the National FFA Organization, and;

Whereas; the National FFA Organization's Federal Charter is established under Public Law 81-740, and;

Whereas; both organizations prepare students for a wide range of careers in agriculture, agribusiness and other agriculturally related occupations in Massachusetts and the nation, and;

Whereas; State funding for the full time position of State FFA Advisor/ Executive Secretary and State Supervisor of Agriculture has been deleted from the Massachusetts Department of Education, and;

Whereas; the position is now only a half time federally funded position and the funds will not be available come July 1, 1997;

Be it resolved: that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation become involved with helping the Massachusetts FFA students in two ways:

- 1 The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file legislation to establish a full time State FFA Advisor/Executive Secretary and State Supervisor of Agriculture within the Department of Education and/or the Department of Agriculture;
- 2 The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage all County Farm Bureaus to support the Massachusetts FFA Association and the Massachusetts FFA Foundation with donations to help the state FFA program continue to run.

### **2011-3 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; Smith Vocational Agricultural School has been under pressure to drop the agricultural vocational course, and;

Whereas; this is the only agricultural course offered in western Massachusetts, and;

Whereas; agriculture needs all of the exposure possible to keep young people educated about agriculture;

Be it resolved that Hampshire County Farm Bureau do all they can do to encourage Smith School to continue to keep the school farm and the courses in agriculture, and;

Be it further resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work on the state level to maintain Smith Vocational School agriculture.

## **2010-1**

Support of Federal Leadership for Agricultural Education and FFA

Few issues are more vital to the national interest than ensuring a stable, safe and affordable food supply, combating hunger, protecting natural resources, improving the academic performance of public schools and providing leadership for local community development. The national programs of Agricultural Education and the FFA contribute substantially in these areas through instructional programs that reach one million students in 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Whereas, American agriculture is concerned about successfully meeting growing domestic and global demands for food and fiber, alleviating hunger, improving nutrition and contributing to a healthy population; and

Whereas, the agriculture, food and natural resources economy accounts for one of every five American jobs and is vital to the economic health of the nation; and

Whereas, providing leadership to the education of an agricultural workforce and developing the future managers, producers, leaders and workers who will ensure the security and productivity of American agriculture is a longstanding and vital responsibility of the U.S. Department of Education; and

Whereas, local communities across the nation seek higher academic achievement among their students—especially in science, technology, math and engineering—and the highest level of accountability, rigor and relevance in public education; and

Whereas, local communities seek to cultivate leadership and secure participation from their citizens in support of economic, social and cultural growth; and

Whereas, Agricultural Education and the FFA are part of Career and Technical Education, which is an important branch within the Office of Vocational and Adult Education in the U.S. Department of Education; and

Whereas, Federal leadership through the Office of Vocational and Adult Education in the U.S. Department of Education has been instrumental in administering and increasing the effectiveness of Agricultural Education and the FFA to deliver these benefits; and

Whereas, Congress has chartered the National FFA Organization and directed the Secretary of Education to provide leadership and support to the organization as an integral part of public instruction in Agricultural Education;

Be it resolved, the American Farm Bureau and Massachusetts Farm Bureau calls on the U.S. Secretary of Education to retain the two professional staff positions providing national leadership and support for Agricultural Education and the FFA through the Office of Vocational and Adult Education in the U.S. Department of Education. Further, these positions should be maintained at their current grade level and receive the necessary support for current functions. The positions must continue to be staffed by individuals that possess the knowledge, experience and skill to provide leadership and direction promoting personal, academic and career development through Agricultural Education and the FFA.

**2010-2 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; our agricultural high schools in Bristol, Essex and Norfolk Counties provide attractive targets for large savings to county government in these increasingly urbanized areas;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and other appropriate state, county and local agencies to:

- Ensure adequate funding from all sources, public and private for these institutions, and;
- Develop new programs to serve the secondary educational needs of the entire agricultural community.

**2009-1 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; Massachusetts Legislators need to be made more intimately aware of the value of Massachusetts' agriculture,

Be it resolved that all Massachusetts Legislators be encouraged to visit farms in their counties throughout the year to become more educated about agriculture.

**2009-2 \*R (2006)**

Whereas Agriculture is an important part of the culture of Massachusetts;

Whereas Science, Math and Technology are necessary to keep our competitive edge;

Whereas we need strong school systems and good teachers;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with our state government to:

Support our Agriculture Department (Department of Agricultural Resources) more fully;

Support Agriculture in the Classroom as an important partner;

Provide legislation to support the education of the next generation of students and maintain Massachusetts as a leader in agricultural innovation.

**2009-3 \*R (2006)**

Whereas Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom (MAC) previously had a line item in the State budget of \$125,000 which was subsequently cut out in the 1980's budget crunch;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with whatever means possible to restore the line item in the State budget for this great organization.

**AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION RESTRICTIONS**

**2011-4**

Whereas the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has promoted the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program as a mutually beneficial contract between the State and a farmer, and

Where as, the APR program agreement is touted as a binding "contract" between two parties, and

Whereas, the agreement used by Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources is in no way a contract because it includes many references, by Chapter and Paragraph, to Mass General Laws, but does not include the text of those laws. The nature and terms of the agreement (not contract) can be changed arbitrarily and without notice to the farmer party, by the Legislature. This practice violates the fundamental nature of a contract, i.e. that it can not be changed without consent of both parties.

Be it resolved that until Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources changes their policy with regard to APR agreements, that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation not support the APR program in any way.

**2011-5**

**Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Per-Acre Cap**

Whereas the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) per acre purchasing cap has been set at \$10,000 for over twenty years, and

Whereas in that time frame land values have significantly increased, and

Whereas the \$10,000 per-acre cap may be creating a disincentive for farmers and land owners to enter the program, and raising it could provide greater incentives for farmers and other land owners to save their agricultural land (a much needed benefit to society as a whole);

Whereas the amount and full value of farms and properties applying for and awaiting APRs has been and continues to be far greater than the level of funding available to the APR program and,

Whereas the continuation of the cap is in response to the shortfall in funding in comparison to need; and

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to increase the cap and tie it to an index to capture subsequent increases in value while also working to increase levels of funding for the APR program to eventually eliminate the need for the cap.

**2011-6 \*R (2005)**

Whereas land protected by an APR who's restriction are held by the Commonwealth or, subdivision thereof, are subject to the "Public Purpose" provisions of Article 97 of the Articles of Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth; and

Whereas restrictions or regulations of any kind, that either further restricts the use of he APR land, that impair the continued agricultural use of the property or the agricultural enterprise conducted on the restricted land, run contrary to the declared "Public Purpose" of the APR

Be it resolved that:

1. Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation expects that Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources will advocate for the land owner against any further restrictions, conditions or regulations of any kind imposed on APR land;
2. Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file legislation that releases the APR when further restrictions, regulations or conditions imposed impair the continued operation of the enterprise conducted thereon and that such release occurs without penalty, financial or otherwise, to the landowner; and
3. Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seek legislation to further protect APR landowner rights by prohibiting any rights of the landowner from being further restricted or diminished without acquiring 2/3rds vote of the Legislature and without the landowner incurring any penalty, financial or otherwise.

**2010-3 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation acknowledges the value of and has supported the APR program since its inception, and;

Whereas; numerous members have negotiated APRs on their properties which included compensation and certain terms, and;

Whereas; Department of Agricultural Resources is attempting to change the terms of those agreements without additional compensation through a policy that has not been officially adopted as regulation, and;

Whereas; “The Commonwealth compensates the landowner for his willingness to place a permanent restriction on his land prohibiting all non-farm development and allowing only for agricultural uses. The landowner still owns the land and retains all rights of ownership such as the right to privacy, the right to sell the land, lease it, and will it to heirs.”, and;

Whereas; Department of Agricultural Resources staff is pursuing a goal of artificially restricting the growth in value of agricultural land in its quest for pursuing its definition of affordable land at the owner’s expense;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation opposes any and all actions of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which force or coerce land owners to accept conditions that are contrary or additional to those agreed to at the time of the placing of the APR, and;

Be it further resolved that Department of Agricultural Resources cease all activities which derogate the value of APR farmland, and;

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation petition the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to promulgate regulations and rules pertaining to c184 and c132a and that affected parties be included in the process. These should include but not be limited to definitions of agriculture, development rights, agricultural value, and derogation of agricultural use. Regulations should include an appeals process for those farmers aggrieved by Department of Agricultural Resources actions and should include agricultural impact and small business impact statements;

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation establish a library of APR transactions and meeting minutes of the Agricultural Land Preservation Committee.

**2010-4 \*R (2001)**

Whereas; Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seeks to protect the rights of landowners with farms enrolled in the APR program, and;

Whereas; the Department of Agricultural Resources has chosen to redirect the APR program to be an “affordable farmland” program rather than a “farmland preservation” program, thereby allowing the state to establish resale prices and to qualify or exclude potential buyers, and;

Whereas; such actions by the state short-change the landowner in the long run by providing a short-term infusion of cash, while restricting the long-term viability of the farm business because of lack of interested lenders, lack of housing opportunities for a farm owner, lack of opportunity to participate in other state government programs, and lack of incentive for farm improvements;

Therefore, be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation initiate legislation that clearly redirects the APR program back to its farmland preservation roots, establishes more detailed administrative procedures in the statute, and enhances the opportunities for farm businesses.

Be it further resolved that such legislation include protections therein that clearly protects the landowners of existing APR farms from the state's misinterpretations or distortions of the original legislative intent of the program.

**2010-5 \*R (2001)**

Whereas; the equine industry comprises a large and growing segment of Massachusetts agriculture, and

Whereas; the equine industry supports the agricultural infrastructure of feed suppliers, equipment dealers, veterinarians and others, purchases hay from local farmers, and helps to preserve substantial acreage of open land, and

Whereas; equine operations are currently discriminated against by Department of Agricultural resources relative to involvement in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program because said program only recognizes the definitions contained in Chapter 61A, and

Whereas; the equine industry is recognized as "Agriculture" in the definition contained in Mass. General Laws, Chapter 128, Section 1A, therefore

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to change the definition of "Agriculture" used in the APR program to the Chapter 128;1A definition.

**2010-6 \*R (2004)**

Whereas; some parties have taken a very aggressive position to render APR land accessible to the public,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will not support public access doctrines as a condition in APR or Farm Viability Contracts, or Chapter 61, Chapter 61A or 61B.

**2010-7 \*R (2007)**

Whereas the APR purchasing cap has been set at \$10,000 per acre for a long period,

Be it Resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to eliminate the cap.

**2009-4 \*R (2000)**

Whereas; the APR program was initiated to protect the agricultural lands for future food and fiber production and

Whereas; controversy has erupted over the off season or multiple uses of some of these lands due to the changing nature of today's agriculture and

Whereas; the stewardship of these lands influences the number of visitors in the Berkshires and

Whereas; the economic well-being of many farmers is threatened by low agricultural prices for their products and adverse weather;

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation call for a review of the APR Program with particular emphasis on the financial well being of agriculture.

**2009-5 \*R (2000)**

Whereas; there are several issues that have surfaced in Massachusetts on the enforcement of APR contracts, (such as the State having the right of future real estate price setting of APR farms), the intent of the legal language of the contracts and other matters, and;

Whereas; a study panel has been set up to study this and Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is a member of that study panel. And;

Whereas; as always, Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is concerned with the protection of the farmer and the commonwealth's fairness in the interpretation of the contracts past, present and future.

Therefore, be it resolved that it be Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation policy that the farm residence and/or alterations or new construction of dwellings for farm family members or farm labor, and other buildings associated with present or future operation of the farm be unimpeded by an APR contract.

**2009-6 \*R (2000)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to ensure that past and present APR contracts be fairly interpreted by the Commonwealth, and that the contracts not be changed or amended without comparable considerations being mutually agreed to by all parties.

**2009-7 \*R (2006)**

Whereas APR contracts have many restrictions, but the open space properties are ideal for renewable energy systems,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work to secure language allowing for these systems to be installed on APR farms.

**ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE**

**2010-8 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; the animal health programs of the Commonwealth are basic to the survival of the dairy industry and the health of the citizens;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support adequate funding of the Bureau of Animal Health.

**2010-9 \*R (2007)**

Whereas, Massachusetts livestock farmers and ranchers and equine facility operators are experiencing increased regulation regarding the disposal of aging or injured animals,

Be it resolved the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work at the local, state, and federal levels to insure that burial of deceased animals be allowed as one option.

**2009-8 \*R (2006)**

Whereas the equine and livestock industries are dependant on the movement of animals within and out of the state and,

Whereas potential health threats to the industry do exist,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation supports an animal identification program that ensures privacy for both individuals and other government entities; an easy manageable system for informational input and maintenance; and cost effectiveness with minimal expenses, for the ultimate goal of ensuring the security of the equine and livestock industries.

## **APIARIES**

### **2009-9 (2006)**

Whereas the honeybee population in North America has been devastated by Varroa and Tracheal mites for over two decades rendering the wild honeybee all but extinct, and

Whereas the number of beekeepers (many of whom are hobbyists) has also declined during the same period due to financial loss of killed or impaired colonies, and

Whereas the honeybee is absolutely essential to the effective pollination of many Massachusetts crops and has been shown to increase yields in certain crops by up to 40 percent,

Therefore, Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation proposes that the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources establish and maintain a fund beginning in January 2007 with a goal of increasing the honeybee population in Massachusetts by:

- 1.) Providing a grant for the purchase of bees and equipment to new or existing Massachusetts beekeepers to increase their colonies by up to two additional hives to be located in Massachusetts, cost not to exceed \$150.00 per hive; and
- 2.) Education for new Massachusetts beekeepers, not to exceed \$100.00 per beekeeper, and training to be provided by beekeeping organizations within Massachusetts.

## **AQUACULTURE**

### **2011-7 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; the right to farm laws apply to those who own or lease and

Whereas; aquaculture grants are licenses,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts right-to-farm laws be amended to include farmers that are licensed or otherwise control aquaculture sites.

## **BIOTECHNOLOGY**

### **2011-8\*R (2005)**

Whereas, biotechnology, in the form of genetically modified crops, is important to an increasing number of farmers, and

Whereas, there is an effort at the local level in Massachusetts to prohibit the planting of genetically modified crops,

Be it resolved, that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support preemptive legislation, precluding local authorities from regulating seed and crops.

**2010-10 \*R (2001)**

Whereas; Massachusetts is considered a world center for biotechnology research and development, and

Whereas; biotechnological advances are improving our capacity to produce foodstuffs and eliminate hunger, as well as providing considerable medical benefits,

Therefore, be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation embraces the benefits of agro-biotech developments as positive for Massachusetts agriculture and consumers, and

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation oppose state regulation of agro-biotechnology, and urge that proper oversight of such research and development rests with federal agencies such as FDA, USDA and EPA.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

**2010-11 \*R (2004)**

Whereas; There are many agricultural and commodity groups that duplicate effort within the state. And whereas; Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation's strengths lie with working at the legislative level.

Therefore let it be resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation network with other agricultural associations and commodity groups to streamline operations and eliminate duplicate efforts.

**2009-10 \*R (2006)**

Whereas; important information is slow in reaching the farmer, And, information transfer between individual farmers and between farmers and Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is too slow, by today's standards, and slows down individual responses to situations.

And Whereas; many modern communication modes, like fax and email, are widely available which are capable of disseminating this information in a timely manner for a much lower price than that of methods currently used.

Be it resolved: Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work with County Farm Boards to establish better communications with individual members and boards.

**2009-11 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; many issues confronting Agriculture in the commonwealth are issues and confrontations with local town boards and governing bodies;

Whereas; many of these issues can be resolved by informing and facilitating communication between the farming community and the local boards.

Be it resolved: That Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage and support the formation of local committees on a county level to assist in the resolution of these problems and act as a local information resource on issues, to both the members of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and to the local boards.

And further be it resolved: That Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage and support Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation members to join local town/municipal boards.

**2009-12 \*R (2006)**

Whereas certain members are getting American Farm Bureau Federation newsletter and others are not,

Be it resolved that all members are given equal access to American Farm Bureau Federation publications and newsletters.

## **CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **2011-9**

Creation and Improvement of Agricultural Land with the Use of Fill and Constructed Topsoil

Whereas, the popularity of farming in Massachusetts has led to decreased availability and increased cost of agricultural land in the Commonwealth; and

Whereas, this has had a negative impact both for established farmers looking to expand and improve their operations and new entry farmers looking to establish farms; and

Whereas, it is possible to both create agricultural land from waste property such as gravel pits and improve existing agricultural land through the selective use of unwanted fill material in combination with constructed topsoil; and

Whereas, the income generated from accepting such materials can help to establish and strengthen the financial viability of a farming operation;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support efforts, including those in the regulatory and legislative arenas, to create and improve farmland through the use of fill and constructed topsoil.

### **2011-10**

County Soil Surveys

Whereas the accuracy of county soil surveys are essential to many agricultural activities and assessing funding for them; and

Whereas some county soil surveys have significant inaccuracies; and

Whereas all county soil surveys were not analyzed to the same level of detail; and

Whereas some county soil surveys have been recently updated through testing and mapping;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to see that all counties have been soil tested and mapped to the same level of detail and accuracy, especially those not updated the last ten years, thus giving a uniform soil analysis base for all uses in all counties and that all counties be kept up to date.

### **2010-12 \*R (2007)**

Whereas several states and federal agencies have considered regulating animal manure as hazardous waste, and

Whereas manure is a valuable agricultural resource that can be properly managed,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation work to maintain farm use of livestock manure, and prevent classification of animal manure as hazardous waste.

## **CROP AND LIVESTOCK DAMAGE**

### **2011-11**

Whereas there is an overpopulation of deer in Eastern Massachusetts with limited hunting areas and increased damage to agricultural crops;

Whereas funding for deer fencing is available in some counties and not in others;

Whereas the Department of Fish and Wildlife charges fees for hunting permits but doesn't support landowners suffering damages;

Whereas the process for getting a nuisance permit can be difficult and time-consuming;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation works with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and any other state or federal agency that can assist to help offset the cost of deer fencing.

### **2011-12 \*R (2008)**

Designated hunter on nuisance permit

Whereas; many farms suffer from extensive deer damage in particular years and often qualify for a nuisance permit from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife allowing for hunting by immediate family and full time employees, but in many cases a particular farm will not have any qualified hunters among those permitted to hunt,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife to expand this qualified list to two trained and licensed hunters available for this nuisance control under the farm owner's direction.

### **2011-13 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; the damage to crops and other agricultural goods by black bears has increased

And Whereas; the current length of the state hunting season on black bears has not adequately controlled the population numbers to limit damage to agricultural and other goods;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau federation work with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to allow baiting and to extend the current hunting season on Black Bears as soon as possible.

### **2011-14 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; the black bear population in Massachusetts had been becoming more and more prevalent, and;

Whereas; the black bear population is reaching a point where it is a danger to livestock, crops and humans, and;

Whereas; the bear numbers are a direct result of a lack of hunting pressure;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to reinstate the use of hounds to hunt bears in Massachusetts.

### **2011-15 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; the beaver population in Massachusetts is growing unabated, and;

Whereas; beaver activity often threatens productive farmland, as well as some suburban areas with flooding;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to allow trappers to return to the safe use of the conibear traps to catch beaver, and thus eliminate any current restrictions on such traps.

**2011-16 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; migratory crows are causing ever larger bird pull damage to corn during the early growing season of May and June when they are protected by law;

Be it resolved that farmers be allowed special permits during this period to allow the crows to be hunted by non-farm employees.

Be it further resolved that farmers be allowed to use chemical bird repellants.

**2011-17 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; possession of leghold traps are illegal;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to amend the law to possession by permit only, and;

Be it further resolved that an amendment be proposed that there be a trap buy back program and that the Division of Fish and Wildlife hold these traps in trust.

**2011-18 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; birds and animals are causing considerable damage to crops during the growing season in Massachusetts;

Be it resolved that farmers or their agents be permitted to hunt these pesky animals throughout the growing season.

**2011-19 \*R (1999)**

Whereas; white tail deer are rapidly reproducing in all areas of Massachusetts, few hunters and a limited hunting season are not controlling the deer population, and damage to crops is a constantly increasing problem,

Be it resolved that:

1. The state establishes a fund to pay for deer damage to farms.
2. The state pay for deer fencing on farms.
3. The state pay for deer fencing installation on farms.
4. The state allow farmers to rent their land to a hunter or group of hunters to kill deer during the off season.
5. The state allow the farmer to keep the deer without having to submit a report to Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

**2010-13 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; wildlife crop damage continues to be a major problem for many Massachusetts farmers;

Be it resolved: that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with Massachusetts Sportsmen's Council and others to develop an effective crop insurance program to compensate Massachusetts farmers for wildlife crop damage and to help to maintain open land for sportsmen.

**2010-14 \*R (2007)**

Whereas it has been two years since Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife has increased the bear hunting season with virtually no increase in the harvest; and

Whereas the recommendations of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and Mass Sportsmen's Council, Inc. were ignored,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation ask for a public hearing of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board to increase the bear season to set an annual quota of harvest needed to control the bear population and to have the current September season and all other seasons open until such quota is met which would include a two (2) bear bag limit per hunter.

**2009-13**

Be it resolved that since Question 1 in 1996, that wildlife damage to farmers has increased. Currently damage is being compiled by Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game by calling (508) 389-6319 where a computer entry is made by the center. Franklin County Farm Bureau requests all farmers that have damage report the damage to this number.

**2009-14 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; many farms have encountered problems with excessive number of starlings in their barns,

And Whereas; these birds pose a serious health threat to livestock and humans as well as a persistent nuisance,

And Whereas; there is no legal and effective way of dealing with this pest,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with Department of Agricultural Resources and the Department of Fish & Game to develop a permitting process to allow farmers to purchase starlicide and bait these birds at the farmer's expense.

**2009-15\*R (2003)**

Whereas; a bacterial wilt disease named "Ralstonia Solanacearum" has recently been introduced to the United States from Kenya, Africa, and since this disease is listed as a bioterrorism organism that could have devastating effects on solanaceous crops such as potatoes, tomatoes, tobacco and geraniums.

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation continue its efforts to strengthen and not weaken any restrictions to importation of agricultural commodities from other countries especially with respect to allowing material in soil to be imported.

**2009-16 \*R (2000)**

Whereas; some rare and endangered plant species in an area of critical concern ACEC are threatened with extinction caused by habitat flooding created by beaver dams, and;

Whereas; beavers don't file environmental impact statements. Nor are they subject to orders of conditions. Yet, the results of their activities often produce a significant negative impact, and;

Whereas; the explosion in beaver population clearly demonstrates a need for new management strategies;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and others develop a strategy with two objectives:

(1) Bring the beaver population to manageable levels.

(2) Seek “by right” legislation establishing pre-existing “normal” water levels as a right upon the abandonment of a site by a beaver colony. Normal elevation, such as: floors of culverts, drainage ways or other structure established by the Commonwealth or other public bodies to protect the public and private interests.

## **DAIRY**

### **2011-20**

Whereas without immediate funding of the Dairy Tax Credit with the natural disasters that have occurred in Massachusetts that has left the agricultural community in dire straits;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to secure programs and formulas to properly implement what’s already in place.

### **2011-21**

Whereas Massachusetts consumers wish to purchase local food from local producers, and

Whereas several New England states have definitions to define and label dairy products produced in those states,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation advocate milk as “Massachusetts Fresh” or “Commonwealth Quality”.

### **2011-22**

Whereas the present dairy pricing system results in wild swings that produce prolonged periods of low prices and times of extremely high prices, resulting in instability for dairy farmers;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to encourage American Farm Bureau Federation to incorporate a market driven supply management program controlled by farmers which will eliminate the free rider problem and be World Trade Organization (WTO) compliant.

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation register a dissent with American Farm Bureau Federation if that cannot be achieved.

### **2010-15**

Whereas, national dairy policy does little to protect small dairy operations or stabilize milk prices; and

Whereas milk prices have continued at record low prices; and

Whereas a local supply of milk is of benefit to all citizens of the Commonwealth;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to implement a continuation of the Dairy Tax Credit and other support programs including those coming from recommendations of the Dairy Task Force and other sources.

**2010-16**

Whereas the dairy industries processors have been allowed to consolidate to the point where there is little competition for milk and

The current pricing structure does little to stabilize the market, resulting in wild swings with prolonged periods of low prices,

Be it resolved to incorporate supply management in the solution for new dairy policy rather than government supported margin insurance.

**2010-17**

Whereas there is increasing consumer demand for raw milk with many dairy farmers benefitting significantly from raw milk sales; and

Whereas existing laws and regulation restrict raw milk sales to the farm; and

Whereas many consumers are not able to travel to the farm to purchase raw milk; and

Whereas reasonable oversight of raw milk sales and transportation can provide significant and adequate assurances that raw milk is safe for human consumption;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation pursue changes to legislation, regulation and state policy that will allow farmers to deliver, personally or through a contractor, raw milk from their own farm directly to the customer, with DAR as the regulatory authority overseeing these activities.

**2010-18 \*R (1998)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to ensure that appropriate action be initiated to perpetuate the nutritional benefits of dairy products.

**2009-17**

Whereas dairy prices are below the cost of production for most of 2009;

Be it resolved that a two tier pricing program be implemented based on a minimum of 7 years base production with any amount produced over base be priced at a lower price.

**2009-18**

Whereas the Northeast's summer growing season resulted in significantly reduced corn silage yields on many farms, and

Whereas 2009's historically low farm milk prices have already jeopardized the sustainability of dairying in the Northeast, and

Whereas these low milk prices have limited a farm's ability to buy additional forage,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with our legislators for increased federal stimulus funding to maintain the viability of our dairy farms.

**2009-19**

Whereas the present milk pricing system results in extreme highs and lows which jeopardize the viability of dairy farms.

Be it resolved: That Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support a solution that may encompass supply control, minimize government intervention, eliminate free riders, be World Trade Organization (WTO) compliant, and recognize regional differences.

**2009-20**

Whereas approximately 20 percent of Massachusetts dairy farmers derive income from the legal sale of raw milk,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to protect farmers' right to legally sell raw milk. This includes keeping the Department of Agricultural Resources as the regulating authority.

**2009-21**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to ensure that the Dairy Farm Preservation Act remains intact and that all its programs and elements are implemented.

**2009-22 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; there is a need to ensure that the food supply is safe, and that dairy products are of good quality for the consumer,

Be it resolved that American Farm Bureau Federation work with the USDA to ensure that ALL milk marketed in the U.S. be of the same quality standards. Be it further resolved that these standards be at current Grade A levels or higher.

**2009-23 \*R (2000)**

Whereas; the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact will conclude upon completion of the Federal Farm Bill in 2001;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation work to extend the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact beyond the sunset clause.

Be it further resolved Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with other state Farm Bureaus to support and enhance the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact pricing.

**2009-24 \*R (2006)**

Whereas Dairy Farmers are suffering from low prices that are similar to those paid in 1979 and milk is in tight supply in the area;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work together with neighboring states to develop a regional pricing structure that exceeds federal order pricing.

**2009-25 \*R (2006)**

Whereas dairy production in Massachusetts and the rest of New England is experiencing difficulties (1970's prices),

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation strive to maintain and expand relief and aid as Connecticut and Maine have accomplished.

## **DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURE**

### **2010-19 \*R (2001)**

Whereas; not all statutes and state agency regulations have definitions consistent with Mass. General Laws Chapter 128, Section 1A,

Therefore, be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have all statutes and regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that define “Agriculture” be consistent with the statutory definition of “Agriculture” as said definition appears in MGL chapter 128, Section 1A.

### **2009-26**

Whereas, Farmers, since day 1, have harvested and produced energy, whether or not measured in calories from food or BTU’s from firewood, or gallons of ethanol from biomass, and

Whereas, Farmers are needed now as much as ever to produce energy to replace our dependence on fossil fuels,

Be it resolved, that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to update the definition of agriculture to include the harvest of sunlight thru solar energy, the wind thru turbines and water via hydro electric and the sequestration of carbon.

## **ENERGY**

### **2011-23**

Whereas the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation acknowledges the value of farmers, their ability to grow food and the need for energy to make this possible;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and particularly the Department of Agricultural Resources to:

1. Promote and encourage the use of renewable energy resources, such as solar and wind generated electricity, on farms;
2. Provide uniform guidelines for promoting and construction of these facilities;
3. Prevent local and state zoning, health, historic commissions, and other departments from enacting regulations which might discourage the installation of renewable energy systems on farms or make it burdensome, difficult and/or costly for farmers to install these systems.

### **2011-24**

Whereas a farmer invests capital to produce a renewable energy;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage the energy company to be responsible for all the costs of making three phase power available and subsequent inter-connections and also that all green power producers be exempt from all permits and fees.

### **2011-25**

Whereas grain prices have increased due to corn based ethanol additives in gasoline,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have American Farm Bureau Federation switch allegiance from food based ethanol to non food crops for ethanol and/or biodiesel.

**2011-26**

Whereas small engine repair bills have increased due to ethanol additives in gasoline fouling carburetors and dissolving certain plastic types of gasoline tanks,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have non ethanol gasoline available for farm equipment.

**2011-27**

Whereas in Massachusetts it is mandatory that gasoline be blended with ethanol. Ethanol does not work well with 2 stroke motors used on farms and has caused many expensive repairs to farm equipment;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seek to have the ethanol content in gasoline reduced.

**2011-28 \*R (2008)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work with the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and the Renewable Energy Trust to provide incentives for biomass use and fuel production (i.e. cord wood, wood pellets, corn and other biomass renewable energy options) and work to extend tax credits and incentives at the state and federal levels.

**2011-29 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; the Electric Companies of Massachusetts lower power at different times of the year causing older refrigeration motors and other motors to burn out from overheating;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Department of Public Utilities to compensate Agriculture and Industry for these burnouts.

**2011-30 \*R (2005)**

Whereas energy costs are currently escalating and current forecasts predict a steady long term increase in energy and fuel costs and

Whereas agricultural commodity income is not increasing proportionally with increasing costs of productions related to energy and fuel costs;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation investigate alternative energy production and procurement techniques and technologies and possible abatements to help farms.

**2010-20**

Transmission Line Costs for On-Farm Renewable Energy

Whereas many farms offer ideal sites for many renewable electricity generation projects; and

Whereas such projects offer significant benefits to the farm, the general public, and to energy providers; and

Whereas the cost of transmission lines linking on-farm electricity generators to the grid is often cost-prohibitive for the farmer;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work through legislative and non-legislative means to create a scenario where, for projects which produce more than 500 KW annually, the utility company which owns the lines to which the farm connects will be responsible for the costs of connecting the farm production to the grid. Further, the farm shall repay 50% of the costs of the connection during the subsequent 10 years, with no interest.

**2010-21 \*R (2007)**

Whereas the cost of electricity continues to rise, and

Whereas electricity costs continue to be a major expense for many agricultural operations;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to increase the agricultural discount in Massachusetts from 10% to 20% and eliminate uses charges and/or transfer farms to residential.

**2010-22 \*R (2007)**

Whereas renewable energy will continue to become more important to agricultural operations in Massachusetts, and

Whereas, new legislation includes many new beneficial concepts regarding net metering and funding opportunities,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support favorable legislation for renewable energy as determined by the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors.

**2009-27 \*R (2000)**

Whereas; the demand for all forms of energy is exceeding existing supplies and near term needs and

Whereas; the Northeast is particularly vulnerable because of its distance from coal, oil and natural gas reserves;

Therefore, be it resolved that all segments of the Northeast economy push for a regional strategy and implementation policy under the auspices of the New England Governors Conference or a similar regional entity that will help to insure a competitive position for the goods and services of our region.

**2009-28 \*R (2006)**

Whereas farmers are experiencing 30% higher energy costs in 2006,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seek energy rebates from the state and federal energy taxes.

Be it further resolved that alternative energy sources and saving techniques be subsidized or incentives offered by the state.

**2009-29 \*R (2006)**

Whereas farms provide some of the best sites for wind turbines and often have high on-site energy costs, and the town and city governments in which they are located often have no experience with interpreting the Mass General Laws exempting farm structures and equipment from local zoning bylaws,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to integrate all forms of renewable energy systems, including wind turbines, solar, hydro and Bio Mass Facilities, into the language of the Mass General Law which grants zoning exemptions to agricultural machinery and structures.

**2009-30 \*R (2006)**

Whereas we all agree that our dependence on petroleum fuels is not a healthy and sustainable practice,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work to promote local production and/or availability of ethanol and biodiesel.

**2009-31 \*R (2006)**

Whereas agricultural operations are increasingly dependent on sustainable energy resources for ongoing viability, and

Whereas investment and commitment to sustainable energy represents an important and increasing source of income for many farms,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work for a law at the state level preventing individual municipalities from adopting bylaws forbidding or hindering the use of sustainable energy systems in or on agricultural operations unless said operation present a clear and abiding danger to the community.

**EQUINE**

**2011-31 \*R (2008)**

Whereas; the federal bill HR 6598 “Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2008” will establish criminal penalties for the transport of equines for slaughter, and

Whereas; such a law would result in horse abandonment and other horse cruelty actions,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation actively oppose the “Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2008” and similar federal legislation.

**2011-32 \*R (2008)**

Whereas the equine industry has significant impact within the state,

Be it resolved that the equine committee prepares a scope of work for a technical report of the economic impact and land use of the equine industry in the state, and further that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors at their discretion takes action to compile said report and make it available to Farm Bureau Counties. The funding to be provided by Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and any grant opportunities that are available.

**2011-33 \*R (2008)**

Whereas Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation believes strongly in the classification of horses as livestock, and that this is already an American Farm Bureau Federation and Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Resolution,

Therefore be it resolved that American Farm Bureau Federation make Equine 307, (3) of the American Farm Bureau Federation Policy Book which reads in full “ (3) The classification of horses as livestock;” be made a Priority Issue for American Farm Bureau Federation.

**2011-34 \*R (1999)**

Whereas; regulations and guidelines for testing horses for Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA), using the Coggins Test, vary from state to state within New England and the state of New York; and

Whereas; testing may be required as often as every six months to enter another state, and

Whereas; horsemen in New England travel from state to state often, thus triggering even more testing, which is expensive and time-consuming;

Be it therefore resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the state farm bureaus of New England and New York, and appropriate state agencies to write regulations which either allow for one test valid in all six New England states and the state of New York, or have a reciprocal agreement between the states allowing all New England equines to be subject to the same requirements as in-state equines.

**2010-23 \*R (1998)**

Be it resolved that, notwithstanding any general or special law, rule, regulation or directive to the contrary, the Department of Conservation & Recreation is authorized and directed to allow horseback riding and equine driving on all lands which are otherwise open for public recreational use.

**2010-24 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; horse farms currently amount to significant percentage of the membership of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Equine Committee work with the insurance industry to review existing horse farm coverages and insurance programs and make recommendations to the company regarding suggested modifications.

**2010-25 \*R (2001)**

Whereas; Massachusetts and the federal government lack a comprehensive count, census or database of horses and ponies in the state, and income and expenditures of the industry,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with USDA and compile data to be published with other commodity reports. These will aid the equine community, their suppliers and related businesses to better serve the industry and to further our legislative goal.

**2009-32**

Whereas purse distribution can provide a significant incentive for investment in both thoroughbred and standardbred breeding within a state; and

Whereas such enterprises strengthen and support the infrastructure for other agricultural enterprises; and

Whereas, Massachusetts lags behind other states in total purse awards and these states have seen a marked increase in breeding associated with increased purses;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support efforts through the legislature, particular in upcoming gaming bills relative to slot machines, to increase purses for thoroughbred and standardbred horse racing in the Commonwealth for Massachusetts bred animals.

**4-H**

**2009-33 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; the 4H program in Massachusetts has been severely shortchanged;

And, 4H has been an exceedingly valuable resource in educating the youth of the commonwealth in agriculture and life skills,

And, the demise of such a program for 23,000 youths without public debate or notice is not in the best interest of the public;

Be it resolved: Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation shall investigate ALL avenues, by which other states fund and operate their 4H programs,

And further be it resolved: Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation attempt to find if federal funds exist that they might be used to restore the program in the Commonwealth.

**2009-34 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; Massachusetts Extension Service is severely limited in the services it can provide due to budget cuts,

And, 4H is in jeopardy

And Whereas; we are losing ground in both education and information services, as well as in the public's perception of what we do and the issues we confront,

And, we feel that it is necessary for Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation as an organization to ensure the public has accurate information on what we do and the issues we confront,

Be it resolved: That Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the County Boards to bring together a concerted effort to educate and inform the public on an ongoing basis.

**2009-35 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; the University of Massachusetts has dealt severe budget cuts to the UMass extension program;

Whereas; 4-H is a national program that has helped to foster leadership and life skills for young people for 100 years.

Whereas; the 4-H field program has been drastically reduced at UMass,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourages the state legislature to earmark funds for a fully funded 4-H field program.

**FAIRS**

**2011-35\*R (1996)**

Whereas; the agricultural fairs of Massachusetts are truly the *show windows* of all production agriculture, and;

Whereas; they are very frequently the only source of information and knowledge for largely urban sections of our consuming populous, and;

Whereas; the scheduling of dates for fairs needs to be properly overseen, and;

Whereas; youth fairs and youth classes at major fairs form the best possible vehicle for education and encouraging our youth to pursue agricultural vocations, and;

Whereas; all agricultural fairs should be encouraged to conduct and/or maintain agricultural-educational exhibits via the issuance of matching funds by the Division of Fairs, and;

Whereas; the youth fairs, in particular should receive financial assistance as needed, especially in areas of premium payment, and;

Whereas; all agricultural fairs in Massachusetts should join a suitable association of such fairs toward a primary goal of the exhibition and presentation of all agricultural products produced in this state;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation exert its utmost effort to fund the Department of Agricultural Resources Fairs Program, including reinstating the *Agricultural Purposes Fund* at least at its FY 1989 level and to exert every effort to prevent further disintegration of the Division;

Be it further resolved that every effort be taken to mainstream all agricultural fairs into the furtherance of an urban populace and consuming public's knowledge of the importance of Massachusetts agricultural industry in the production of safe, high-quality foodstuffs and the preservation of the land itself as well as the kind of life it represents.

## **FARM BUILDINGS**

### **2011-36 \*R (2008)**

Whereas; building codes require stamped lumber which put native lumber at a disadvantage;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seek to remove this requirement for farm buildings and housing construction.

### **2009-36 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; New York State now provides farmers with a ten year tax exemption on new farm buildings, then taxing them as depreciated, ten year old buildings;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation sponsor similar legislation in the Massachusetts legislature.

### **2009-37 \*R (2006)**

Whereas municipalities assess real estate taxes on greenhouses as though they are permanent structures; Let it be resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work toward an exemption or at least a fair method of calculation.

## **FARM EQUIPMENT, MOTOR AND RECREATIONAL VEHICLES**

### **2011-37 \*R (2008)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation lobby aggressively for laws to identify the use of all alternative energy equipment and systems as farm machinery and seek an agricultural exemption to the Department of Environmental Protection regulations governing use of biomass equipment and systems.

**2011-38 \*R (2008)**

Whereas; farm vehicle laws are somewhat confusing;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation create an effort or outreach program to educate officers on the current law (i.e. 10 mile law).

**2011-39 \*R (2008)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to allow the use of pup-trailers and like vehicles for the transport of agricultural products, using a farm plate in Massachusetts.

**2011-40 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; there is much confusion with farm plate registration and getting motor vehicle safety inspection stickers;

Therefore let it be resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Registry of Motor Vehicles to rectify this issue.

**2011-41 \*R (2002)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles to amend the Farm Plate regulation to include the use of Farm Plates on Agricultural buses used to transport farm labor.

**2010-26**

Farm Plates and Vehicle Capacity

Whereas there are a myriad of laws, regulations and policy which prevent vehicles with farm plates being able to operate to their full load capacity; and

Whereas the ability to operate a vehicle at its full load capacity is not only an efficiency issue for businesses, but also an environment efficiency issue in minimizing the amount of fuel, and related emissions, associated with the transport of agricultural goods;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to change existing rules to allow vehicles with farm plates to operate up to their full, rated capacity.

**2010-27**

Whereas there are a myriad of state laws and regulations which often prevent farmers and wood producers from using vehicles and trailers to their full capacity;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the legislature and appropriate agencies to change the laws and regulations to allow the full use of these vehicles to their full capacity.

**2010-28**

Whereas in some localities, numerous persons not eligible to utilize *FARM* vehicle license plates had been doing so with abandon for long periods, and

Whereas proper authorities were not willing to enforce existing regulation regarding use of such plates, and

Whereas; Section 5 Registry of Motor Vehicles chose to hugely, and without notice, increase the paperwork and financial burden on legitimate farmers for obtaining FARM plates as a method of weeding out the improper use of farm plates, and

Whereas farmers had a problem renewing farm plates for October 1, 2010 in that the Registry of Motor Vehicles required to have a printed document from the Internal Revenue Service that gave their Federal Identification Number. A reasonable change to the rule would be to have the farmer have a written letter from their professional tax preparer attesting to the accuracy of their Federal Identification Number for the farm plate renewal; and

Be it resolved that in 2011 and subsequent years, the Registry of Motor Vehicles be required to return to the same simple registration process used in the past.

**2010-29 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; more and more Massachusetts residents operate two, three and four-wheeled, as well as airborne recreational vehicles which are not currently required to be registered, and;

Whereas; these vehicles cause substantial economic and aesthetic damage to crops, land, livestock and wildlife, and;

Whereas; a farmer or other landowner may be subject to suit in the event of injury to the operator and/or passengers of such vehicles, even though he/she may not have given permission to the operator to use his/her land;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file legislation to require:

- That all such vehicles, including dirt bikes, three and four-wheeled RV's, balloons capable of transporting humans, ultra-light aircraft and mountain bikes be registered by the Division of Marine and Recreational Vehicles, and;
- That all such vehicles display legible registration numbers that are purchased and applied at the time of sale, and;
- That all operators of such vehicles carry appropriate insurance while operating off of their own property.

**2010-30 \*R (2007)**

Whereas Massachusetts agriculture uses plumbing to convey liquids for agriculture purposes,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seek to insert into the Massachusetts Plumbing Code the recognition that agriculture needs special exemption.

**2009-38**

Payloads:

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Commonwealth to bring regulations on trailers with divisible loads, including pup trailers and hay wagons, operating under farm plates into line with those regulations in neighboring states, and in all other ways unify regulations on farm plates with neighboring states so as to better enable users of agricultural plates in the state to compete.

**2009-39**

Whereas gasoline sold in Massachusetts currently has a 10% blend of ethanol, and

Whereas there has been pressure for Governor Patrick to increase the blend rate of ethanol in Massachusetts gas to 12 or 15%, and

Whereas ethanol is not the panacea that many think to reduce our dependency on petroleum,  
Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation petition Massachusetts Legislators and Governor Patrick to resist any increase in Massachusetts gasoline's ethanol blend rate.

**2009-40**

Whereas, it can be time consuming, expensive, and difficult to achieve,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation work towards getting an exemption to the Federal and State requirements of a USDOT Truck Inspection for trucks that do not cross state lines.

**2009-41 \*R (2000)**

Whereas; the farming community in many areas of the country have to travel the roads with their equipment to get from field to field,

and Whereas; the amount of on-road compared to off road time is relatively small,

and Whereas; the extreme hardships and impracticality of constantly changing fuels in farm equipment fuel tanks,

and Whereas; the use of off road fuel may not be enough to warrant replacement of an on-farm fuel tank and the distance to a fueling station may be a great distance causing excessive fuel consumption, time and labor losses as well as economic losses,

and Whereas; the purchase of straight on road fuel may be cost prohibitive to many small family farms,

Be it resolved, that American Farm Bureau Federation work with the EPA and the Department of Transportation and all other necessary agencies exempting farm tractors, equipment and other farm vehicles from the use of on-road fuel.

Be it further resolved, as an alternative to the treatment proposed above for farm trucks, that American Farm Bureau Federation work with EPA and all other necessary agencies to have all farm trucks exempt from the on-road fuel so long as they are within 50 miles of the farm.

**2009-42 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; farm tractors are required to have inspection stickers and;

Whereas; some farmers have problems acquiring inspection stickers because of the time and distance involved in driving to an inspection station;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work towards getting the Registry of Motor Vehicles to exempt farm tractors from safety inspections.

## FARMING OPPORTUNITIES

### **2010-31 \*R (2001)**

Whereas; land values in Massachusetts make it extremely difficult for first-time buyers to purchase farmland and establish a farm business, and

Whereas; the average age of Massachusetts farmers continues to rise.

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation study possible ways to enhance the opportunities for new farmers, expanding farm businesses, and others, through state grants, “green payments”, or other means.

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file legislation, if appropriate, establishing such programs.

### **2009-43 \*R (2006)**

Whereas, farmers can sometimes be at odds due to specific production requirements, and

Whereas, efforts have been made by some growers and grower groups to ban certain production methods,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation supports the principles of Co-existence in agriculture. Co-existence has been defined as existing together (in time or place) and to exist in mutual tolerance.

## FARM VIABILITY

### **2010-32 \*R (2007)**

Whereas the Dairy Task Force was set up to provide a long term solution for increasing the viability of dairy operations within the state; and

Whereas general food production agriculture is facing a similar “crisis in the making” due to rising costs,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation take the experience of the Dairy Task Force and extend the work and build on its results to reach to other commodities existing within Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation.

### **2010-33 \*R (2007)**

Whereas ethanol production has driven up the cost of grain for livestock production,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support an affordable grain effort to keep supplies for livestock farmers.

### **2009-44 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; since the Farm Viability Program does not accomplish the urgent tasks which were intended,

Whereas; since the Farm Viability Program is being modeled as APR with the same restrictions, the program does not give enough money and has too long restrictions for the farmer to be practiced;

Be it resolved Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work for the granting of more money and have less time committed for farmers.

Be it resolved going back to the original intention of helping farmers modernize or diversify so that the farmers can exist economically in the present time.

## **FOOD SAFETY**

### **2011-42 \*R (2008)**

Whereas food safety and environmental quality are important to the public, and

Whereas, agriculture is a mainstay in helping to secure that safety and quality,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support efforts of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, UMass Extension, and commodity groups to help growers adopt Best Management Practices, Good Agricultural Practices, Commonwealth Quality and other similar voluntary programs designed to maintain or improve food safety and environmental quality.

### **2010-34**

Whereas; the American Farm Bureau Federation has existing policy regarding food safety, and

Whereas; this policy does not address concerns of small farms to comply with food safety regulation, and

Whereas; there is significant action within Congress to implement new food safety requirements on farms,

Be it resolved; that following phrase be inserted in American Farm Bureau Policy #339, between line 86 and 87 : “( 9) Be tailored to the size, type, and capacity of the farm”.

### **2009-45**

Food Safety

Whereas, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) have been established by USDA and FDA, and

Whereas, these practices are written as general practices and are not crop specific,

Be it resolved that American Farm Bureau Federation remove the words “being crop specific” in policy 339 line 81 to now read “We support Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) standards.”

### **2009-46**

Food Safety

Whereas, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) have been established by USDA and FDA, and

Whereas, food safety concerns, retailer response, and consumer interests have resulted in an increase in the number of growers who are becoming certified in GAP and GHP, and

Whereas, certain larger grower organizations are petitioning USDA to create crop specific Federal Marketing Orders for food safety which add an extra layer of oversight, duplicate GAP and GHP

standards, increase the number of audits that growers would be subjected to, increase grower costs, and have the ultimate effect of reducing the number of growers who may market these crops, and

Whereas, these newly requested crop specific food safety marketing orders are in opposition to American Farm Bureau Federation policy 327 on Federal Marketing Orders,

Be it resolved, that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation oppose crop specific food safety Federal Marketing Orders.

**2009-47 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; cider production is extremely important to the viability of apple producers;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to preserve the right for Massachusetts apple producers to make and sell unpasteurized apple cider.

**2009-48 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; production of fresh unpasteurized cider is an important and needed product of apple producers large and small and has been since colonial times, and;

Whereas; production of fresh unpasteurized cider is a way for producers to utilize substantial portions of the apples grown on the farm, resulting in the ability to stay competitive, and;

Whereas; pressure is being put on this small and needed industry to change its product or warn consumers about E. Coli 0157:H7 concerns that very rarely exist, and;

Whereas; E. Coli 0157:H7 is responsible for 20,000 illnesses and 400 deaths annually in this country and less than 100 illnesses and 1 death have been attributed to unpasteurized cider in the last seven years, and;

Whereas; the majority of the problems associated with E. Coli 0157:H7 are from food stuffs completely unrelated to unpasteurized cider;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation aggressively oppose any rule, regulation or law that would adversely affect a producer's ability to make and or sell unpasteurized cider.

**2009-49 \*R (1997)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and UMass to support a literature review and analysis of scientific data and studies as to the published benefits from drinking cider.

**FORESTRY**

**2011-43**

Whereas the forestry industry in Massachusetts is fighting for survival in this depressed wood products market and more sawmills are laying off employees or closing every week and;

Whereas the dairy industry was greatly aided by a legislative package to help them during a similar crisis in their industry and;

Whereas the forest industry and its infrastructure is critical to the health and maintenance of the Commonwealth's 3.1 million acres of forests, including reducing the forest fire threat and;

Whereas the forest industry is a vital part of the rural economy in many parts of the western counties of Massachusetts and vital to the economies of many small towns, providing much needed employment and supporting other local businesses.

Therefore be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to create a piece of economic stimulus legislation directed at the forestry industry, such as the one proposed by Representatives Guyer and Kulik in 2008, which would include but not be limited to:

1. Conservation easements for sawmill sites as renewable energy sites.
2. Establishment of a Grant and Loan Fund for Power Supply, Green Energy, and Equipment.
3. Tax Credits with 10-year carry forward provisions for:
  - a. Development of a forest viability plan with a no-development covenant.
  - b. New technology and the modernizing of infrastructure.
  - c. Individuals starting a business in sawmilling or timber harvesting.
  - d. Forest re-planting.
  - e. Investments in biomass, combined heat and power infrastructure, and wind energy infrastructure for use in sawmilling or timber harvesting.
  - f. Massachusetts sustainable forest grown wood chips sold to biomass/biofuel plants.

#### **2010-35**

Whereas logging on state owned land provides benefits to the forestry industry as well as to the Commonwealth by providing proper management of forested land, income for the state, jobs, and economic stimulus in rural Massachusetts economies; and

Whereas; the Commonwealth, in response to misinformation and pressure from anti-forestry activists, has implemented a moratorium on commercial forestry on large tracts of state land, and

Whereas this moratorium is contrary to the interests of both the Commonwealth as a whole and the commercial forestry community,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation pursue efforts to have the moratorium on commercial forestry on state lands lifted, through efforts which may include but not be limited to legislation, education, and advocacy.

#### **2009-50**

Whereas forestry is in the doldrums as a profitable enterprise, and

Whereas forests cover two thirds of the state of Massachusetts,

Be it resolved:

1. To appoint a committee with membership from each county to promote forestry;
2. To meet in the center of the state when possible;
3. To include any other forestry organizations in the state to meet with us.

## GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND FUNDING

### **2011-44**

Massachusetts Lobbying by Charities Exempt under Massachusetts Law by the Attorney General

Whereas currently humane groups are lobbying the legislature regarding wildlife and plants managed by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife under Chapter 131;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file legislation that would make these groups lose their tax exempt status in Massachusetts if they incur costs of \$1000 or more or have any person or persons spend over 100 hours lobbying.

### **2011-45**

NRCS Resolution

Whereas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) regulations on swampbuster rules are extremely complex and can retroactively penalize farmers for violations accumulated over several years,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have the prior converted exemption date of December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1985 be abolished and replaced by any evidence of past farming be proof of exemption. Penalties should be reduced from all government payments accumulated since the violation to a portion related to the acreage affected.

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to resolve that a local committee elected by farmers be able to review and make decisions on any work done by NRCS on farms including compliance reviews.

### **2011-46 \*R (2008)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation lobby to decrease 10 acre limit for USDA funding.

### **2011-47 \*R (2008)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation investigate and implement policies which could transfer forestry programs from the Department of Conservation and Recreation to the Department of Agricultural Resources.

### **2011-48 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; UMass Extension is in danger of being further reduced in budget and staff;

Be it resolved the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the State Legislature and UMass to support the current and future funding and staffing levels of UMass Extension.

### **2011-49 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; the Department of Agricultural Resources is in danger of being eliminated;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation should vigorously work to support the continued existence of this department.

**2011-50 \*R (2005)**

Whereas changes in the upcoming Farm Bill will likely see reduction in dollars going to Ag support and commodity programs, and

Whereas Agricultural Extension and research formula funding has been almost level for several years,

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation work for increases in extension and research formula funding in the next Farm Bill.

**2011-51 \*R (2005)**

Whereas: Massachusetts farmers face increasing development pressures and declining infrastructure support, and whereas Massachusetts is at a critical mass as to FSA office and staff availability,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation be opposed to any closing or consolidation of FSA and NRCS offices.

**2010-36**

Whereas agriculture in Massachusetts has increased in size and diversity to the point where the Board of Agriculture no longer reflects this size and diversity,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Board of Agriculture to: expand the Board of Agriculture; assure that at least 2/3 of the board consists of agricultural producers; assure that the board represents the broad diversity of agriculture; assure the board represents the geographic diversity of agriculture; and adds term limits.

**2010-37**

Whereas the Service Forestry Program provides technical assistance to private landowners and municipalities in forest resource planning, forest management, and forest protection within 14 districts across the state and,

Whereas with 235,000 non-industrial private landowners in Massachusetts and approximately 78% of the Commonwealth's forest land in private ownership, private lands play a key role in sustaining clean water, protecting our soil, providing wildlife habitat and producing quality timber resource and,

Whereas forestry is defined as agriculture in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 128, Section 1A and,

Whereas the Department of Conservation and Recreation is a state agency charged with managing public assets and resources and the Department of Agricultural Resources has a long and successful record of both promoting and regulating agricultural businesses,

Therefore be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to move the Service Forestry Program, including its staff and necessary resources, into the Department of Agricultural Resources so all private natural resource based businesses in the Commonwealth are served by a single competent agency.

**2009-51**

Whereas Massachusetts is considering licensing casinos, with the state taking licensing fees and a stake in the proceeds;

Be it resolved that, regardless of any individual opinions of casinos or gambling, Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation supports establishment of an agricultural fund to receive an appropriate percentage of proceeds from gambling to support agricultural interests.

Be it further resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Government Relations Committee and Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors be instructed to develop details for such an initiative.

**2009-52**

Whereas, the names and contact information of any citizen appointed to serve on any one of hundreds of state government advisory committees is public information, and

Whereas, many departments post the information on their websites,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources to facilitate the posting of the names and contact information of the members, appointees and staff, of all advisory boards on the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources web site. (Examples include Pesticide board, Ag lands preservation committee, Ag board, Etc.)

**2009-53 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; the University of Massachusetts was established as a land grant university to teach agriculture, and;

Whereas; the university presently is inclined to de-emphasize production agriculture, both in the classroom and in its extension services, and;

Whereas; certain administrators have displayed an insensitivity to budget expenditures;

Be it resolved Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage enhancement of agricultural offerings by the University of Massachusetts from within the university or cooperatively with other universities in the northeast university programs, and;

Be it further resolved that the university reduce its expenditures, particularly in the areas of administration and direct these monies toward either teaching or tuition reduction.

**2009-54 \*R (2006)**

Whereas the state has been mandated to have conservation districts but the conservation district funding was cut several years ago,

Therefore be it resolved Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to establish state funding to county conservation districts through out the state.

**GRANTS AND LOANS**

**2011-52 \*R (2008)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation lobby for inclusion of biomass systems to existing tax incentives and grants for other sustainable energy alternatives.

**2011-53 \*R (2008)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation investigate and identify methods to buttress Farm Service and Farm Credit relative to the current and on-going financial down turn and credit crises.

**2010-38**

Whereas the development of renewable energy is important to Massachusetts and Massachusetts farms; and

Whereas Massachusetts Farms are some of the most sustainable properties in the state to develop renewable projects, which typically require large tracks of property; and

Whereas many renewable projects are under development which could qualify to direct significant federal stimulus funds to Massachusetts; and

Whereas Investment Tax Credit (ITC) cash grant, which is critical to the viability of renewable energy projects in Massachusetts, is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2010;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation contact and work with Massachusetts Federal Legislative delegation to encourage the extension of ITC cash grant beyond December 31, 2010.

**2010-39 \*R (2004)**

Whereas; Available grants in the state are more closely aligned with conservation practices than farm diversification,

And whereas; Pursuit of state administrated grants in Massachusetts involve a multiple year process, which slows or delays the implementation of desired processes and products on farms within the state.

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will lobby or work with the Department of Agriculture Resources to streamline the grant application process within the state.

**2010-40 \*R (2007)**

Whereas the '08 Federal Farm Bill includes language to support Specialty Agriculture,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation continue support Specialty Agriculture and it's funding in the Federal Farm Bill.

**2009-55**

Matching Funds:

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation work to remove matching fund requirements for public grants and loans intended to help small farmers, and in the interim allow in kind contributions like labor to be applied to matching fund considerations.

Furthermore, allow consideration of off farm income toward the calculation of loan paybacks in the same way that they are now used for grant eligibility.

**2009-56**

Whereas, like any other business sector, agricultural community needs to have a diverse lender base to encourage competitive lending and enhance the ability to obtain operating and capital improvement financing for both well-established and innovative projects.

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to promote competitive agricultural lending in the Northeast by increasing the number of lending institutions with competitive low interest rates, the ability to handle FSA guarantees, and which are willing to work with farmers and the agricultural community on short and long-term growth projects. This could include working with FSA to provide local and regional banks with additional training or other resources needed.

**2009-57 \*R (2006)**

Whereas USDA FSA loans are untimely and insufficient for modern business lending,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with this institution to streamline lending and FSA programs.

**2009-58 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; since farmers have been the backbone of the State of Massachusetts since colonial days. In today's world many of their farm buildings are not practical for their current purpose;

Whereas; since the farm houses and building have to be renovated, change structure, or rebuilt in order for farmers to exist on their farms;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage a formation of a government program that farmers may secure low interest loans for buildings so that farmers can operate successfully.

## **INSURANCE AND BANKING**

**2010-41 \*R (2004)**

Whereas, the current Membership List Purchase Agreement between Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and Farm Family Insurance no longer requires Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation membership as a prerequisite for purchasing Farm Family Insurance past the first year; and

Whereas, there is the potential for loss of membership in Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, especially by Associate Members, as a result:

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation continue to work with Farm Family Insurance to strengthen ties and to encourage a stronger bond which either requires membership in Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation every year or encourages membership in Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation through insurance discounts or some other incentive for Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Members.

**2009-59 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; membership in a group is necessary in order to obtain reasonable rates for health insurance

And Whereas; many Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation members need to join an additional business group in order to provide health insurance for themselves and their employees,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation form a health insurance group so as to provide this valuable service to our membership.

**2009-60 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation members have had to pay increased insurance premiums as a result of employees being injured during the work day but off the job site. Such cases are subrogated against third parties;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation urge the Massachusetts legislature to change the law so that when full recovery of a workers claim under a workers compensation policy can be made, no experience modification or ARAP charge be made to the employer's policy.

**2009-61 \*R (2006)**

Whereas, agriculture and rural communities need greater, more dependable access to competitive, flexible, financial resources in order to compete in a changing global economy;

Whereas, restrictions in the Farm Credit Act prevent Farm Credit institutions from serving a number of businesses that directly impact on agriculture including certain types of farm supply businesses, agricultural processing and marketing businesses and new generation cooperatives, fishing related businesses and sawmills.

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation support policy changes that would provide agricultural producers, commercial fishermen, farm and fishing-related and rural businesses and communities with broader access to financing by the cooperative Farm Credit System.

**LABOR**

**2011-54**

Whereas Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151 exempts agricultural employers from unemployment insurance provided they have fewer than 10 employees and a payroll of less than \$20,000 per quarter; and

Whereas, state law dictates that exceeding either the payroll or employee thresholds will permanently remove an agricultural employer from eligibility for exemption from unemployment insurance; and

Whereas the payroll threshold has not been increased since 1978 or otherwise adjusted for inflation; and

Whereas federal employment requirements allow for unemployment exemptions to be reinstated if an agricultural business remains below the stated thresholds for 2 years;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to change Massachusetts Unemployment Insurance requirements to:

1. Increase the quarterly threshold to \$40,000, and periodically thereafter be corrected for inflation.
2. Allow for agricultural employers to again become eligible for exemption from unemployment insurance should they remain below stated thresholds for a given period.

**2011-55 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; there is much confusion on Sunday time and one-half and the Massachusetts Blue Laws seem to be a thing of the past therefore;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to amend this outdated Blue Law on time and one-half on Sundays, to exempt farm retail operations.

**2011-56 \*R (2005)**

Whereas, the H2A program continues to be important to many growers as their primary source of labor, and

Whereas, needed changes to the H2A program are delayed because these changes are part of larger labor and immigration reform legislation,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation work to secure needed changes to the H2A program even if comprehensive labor/immigration reforms are not part of the legislation.

**2011-57 \*R (2005)**

Whereas, an important component in H2A/immigration reform deals with the limited amnesty of millions of un-documented workers working in the agricultural industry today, an important element which is necessary in developing a long term solution to this issue.

Further whereas, agriculture desperately needs comprehensive immigration and H2A reform that includes border security and access to legal foreign workers. This reform should not result in a delay in sourcing workers and causing other severe economic consequences to the agriculture industry.

Be it resolved, that American Farm Bureau Federation support Immigration and H2A reform that includes limited amnesty to the present work force and all the other reforms as outlined above.

Further resolve that in any Immigration Reform legislation passed, employers should not be put in the position of being the enforcers of immigration policy.

Further resolve that American Farm Bureau Federation seeks immediate passage of these reforms.

**2011-58 \*R (2005)**

Whereas the legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is considering an increase in the state's minimum wage, and

Whereas Massachusetts farms are indirectly affected by the minimum wage by having to compete for labor with businesses that must pay the minimum wage,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation convey to the Massachusetts legislature the effect that increasing the minimum wage has on the Commonwealth's farms, and

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation investigate the feasibility of having a lower minimum wage for people under the age of eighteen.

**2011-59 \*R (2005)**

Whereas: Some states do not enforce the regulations for all foreign workers.

Whereas: in Massachusetts the regulations are very strict and some regulations go beyond being reasonable for the land owner and it is difficult for the landowner to comply:

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with American Farm Bureau Federation to help in proper regulations. All States should be required to comply with Federal regulations. The federal law on H2A and non US citizens should be applied the same in all states.

**2010-42 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; the American Farm Bureau Federation is on record for change in the current H2A labor program because of its many problems that persist for Massachusetts and New England producers, and;

Whereas; there is presently activity in Washington to amend and change the current H2A labor program;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work comprehensively with the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation and the New England Apple Council to enlist their support for this change.

**2010-43 \*R (2004)**

Whereas, an adequate supply of offshore labor is necessary for the continuance of a profitable and viable agriculture,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation support the creation of a multi-sector temporary guest worker program that includes agriculture, but only if its requirements are no more stringent for one sector than another.

Be it further resolved that we oppose:

- a) Requiring employers to pay more than the prevailing wage rate for a particular occupation and region, if required to pay above the Fair Labor Standards Act minimum;
- b) Requiring housing or transportation, or the hiring of domestic workers after the contract period has begun;
- c) Placing a limit on the number of temporary worker visas that may be issued, or guaranteeing payment of any fraction of the temporary workers' pay for work that has not been performed;
- d) Expanding the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA) to employers of agricultural temporary workers or otherwise providing those workers with a private right of action in state or federal court; and
- e) Applying any labor law that does not currently apply H2A visa workers.

**2010-44 \*R (2007)**

Whereas the cost of agricultural labor continues to rise; and

Whereas the Massachusetts state legislature has voted to increase the minimum wage, and

Whereas the agricultural exemption for state unemployment insurance remains at \$80,000 per year or \$20,000 per quarter,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to increase the agricultural exemption for the state unemployment insurance to \$120,000 per year, and

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to eliminate the quarterly exemption cap, and only have a per year cap on the exemption.

**2009-62 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; retail farm store employees who work less than 40 hours per week but who do work on Sunday are required to be paid overtime for those Sunday hours, and;

Whereas; garden centers are exempt from these provisions;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work towards exempting retail farm store employees from overtime for any work week in which an employee has worked less than 40 hours, regardless of which day of the week that employee has worked.

## LAND PRESERVATION & TRUSTS

### **2011-60\* R (2008)**

Whereas many towns have purchased land using Land Bank or CPA funding which all carry state matching funds,

Whereas the reason for purchase of these lands was to limit development; and

Whereas the language in the Articles at Town Meeting include the term “Passive Recreation” and may not specifically include “Agriculture”; and

Whereas many towns like to license these lands for agricultural use,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work towards legislation to include agricultural use on lands purchased with intent of “Passive Recreation” and/or “Open Space”.

### **2009-63**

Whereas New England has many old barns marking the history of its agricultural heritage, and

Whereas many old barns are in poor repair and in danger of being lost, and

Whereas other New England states have incentives for owners to keep historic barns in repair;

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage the General Court to stem the loss of our history by instituting incentives for owners to keep their historic barns in repair. This could include (but not be limited to) such items as a tax abatement for barns whose owners agree to maintain an historic barn or funding of preservation efforts for such barns.

### **2009-64 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; farms are changing;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to build a bridge between land trusts and farms interested in keeping their land open and available for farming.

## LOCAL ISSUES

### **2011-61**

Whereas G.L. c111, § 143 allows Municipal Boards of Health to ban “piggeries” without any reason or proof that a nuisance might occur;

Whereas several towns have done so based solely on neighbor concerns and without evidence of nuisance or other problems;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation initiate and promulgate legislation to limit the authority of Boards of Health to prohibit the keeping of pigs absent any demonstrable and persistent impact on air or water quality, or reasonable cause to believe that such impacts will occur.

### **2011-62**

Whereas existing blue laws prohibit fairs and other events from opening prior to 1pm on Sundays without approval from the town; and

Whereas some municipalities are using this antiquated law to require exorbitant permit fees; and

Whereas there is a potential for municipalities to use this law to unfairly restrict or prohibit fairs:

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have this antiquated blue law stricken from the books as it relates to fairs and other agriculturally related events.

**2011-63**

Whereas; retail farming operations sometimes result in increased traffic on public roads during peak seasons; and

Whereas; such traffic may require individuals to help direct traffic to ensure proper traffic flow both to the farm and on public ways; and

Whereas; police details to direct traffic are often expensive and may be of limited availability in small towns; and

Whereas; some farms have been fined for attempting to direct traffic;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation initiate and promulgate legislation which will make it legal for individuals associated with farms to direct traffic on a public way to and from farms for farm business only. Further, the state may require training licensure, at a reasonable cost, for such individuals.

**2010-45**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation initiates and supports legislation that will require any local board of health regulation that affects or impacts agriculture, agricultural fairs or farmers markets be submitted for review and approval or disapproval to both the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) and Attorney General's office for review of its economic viability on agriculture or other agri-business issues.

**2010-46 \*R (2007)**

Whereas there is increasing interest among our state's farmers with intent to install wind turbines; and

Whereas there is considerable confusion and delay during the permitting/application process as town and city boards and officials struggle to handle these projects,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work closely with state government to develop minimum state standards for wind turbine siting and installation as a guide to town and city governments to allow for quicker processing of these applications, and

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation continue their efforts to provide documentation that these installations are a farmer's right when they are used as farm equipment.

**2010-47 \*R (2007)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support any proposal requiring local town boards and commissions to submit an agricultural impact statement for any regulation which might affect agriculture.

**2010-48 \*R (2007)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support efforts to limit or prevent local towns efforts to unduly regulate or prohibit the use of outdoor wood burning furnaces, remove local enforcement, and take into account future technical developments within the industry.

**2009-65**

Local Regulation

Whereas agricultural operations throughout the Commonwealth are increasingly being subjected to attempts by municipal authorities, particularly boards of health, to regulate agriculture, and

Whereas, few such authorities have the scientific or subject-matter expertise to enact or enforce such regulations, and

Whereas, such efforts pose significant challenges to the viability and growth of agriculture in the Commonwealth,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support legislation, policies and efforts that would constrain municipal authorities from unreasonably regulating agricultural operations.

**MARKETING & FARM SIGNS**

**2011-64 \*R (2008)**

Be it resolved, that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work to have a USDA slaughter facility constructed and operated in Southeastern Massachusetts.

**2011-65 \*R (2008)**

Whereas Farmers Markets are increasingly important for net agricultural income, and

Whereas lawyers are paying increased attentions to farmers markets and the farmers who attend those markets,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation pursue legislation that limits liabilities of farmers markets and farmers who attend those markets to one of gross negligence as now exists for PYO farms.

**2010-49**

Whereas there is tremendous demand for locally produced meat in Massachusetts; and

Whereas producers suffer from a shortage of slaughter and processing facilities and/or facilities which do not meet their needs, and

Whereas existing state regulations have been identified as a barrier to improving the slaughter and processing infrastructure in the Commonwealth;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation:

1. Pursue legislation which will facilitate the development of a more diverse slaughter and meat processing infrastructure including, but not limited to, Mobile Slaughter units and small-scale slaughter facilities, and
2. Continue its generous allocation of staff resources to this issue.

**2010-50**

Whereas SNAP Cards are currently not allowed to be used for the purchase of maple syrup, honey, meat & dairy; and

Whereas consumers and maple syrup producers would benefit from being able to use SNAP Cards for this purpose;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the appropriate agencies and officials to allow SNAP cards & Farmers Market Nutrition Program to be used for this purpose. Available at all direct farm outlets.

**2010-51 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; farm signs telling what products are for sale are a need but some towns are restricting or banning signs;

Be it resolved that Farm Bureau work for adequate signage for farms.

**2009-66**

Whereas, the numbers of Farmers Markets in Massachusetts is increasing, and

Whereas, local Boards of Health sometimes create conflicting, inconsistent, and unintelligent food safety regulations, policies, and practices,

Whereas, these rules can vary greatly between markets,

And Whereas, many farmers may sell at multiple markets and must follow these varying rules and regulations,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation seek legislation or other policy action that requires local BOHs to adhere to food safety standards set by the Department of Public Health, without expansion.

**2009-67 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; producers of small livestock, poultry and exotic species have limited access to markets and processing facilities;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation investigate the feasibility of developing a cooperative processing and marketing facility.

**2009-68 \*R (2006)**

Whereas the number of custom and USDA slaughterhouses in Massachusetts and neighboring states continues to decline,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with County Farm Bureaus to establish Livestock Commodity Committees to work in conjunction with similar groups and associations to: Encourage the establishment of new livestock processing facilities in parts of the state which currently need them; and

Encourage the orderly shipment of product to these facilities to ease the seasonal glut which jeopardizes their economic viability.

**2009-69 \*R (2006)**

Whereas: We all agree that the promotion of local agriculture through the efforts of the four “buy local” programs (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), Southeast Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP), Berkshire Grown and Essex County Buy Local has benefited farmers and consumers throughout the Commonwealth,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work to secure funding and provide support to these local efforts.

**2009-70 \*R (2006)**

Whereas, the Massachusetts State Building at the Big E has been a venue to showcase Massachusetts agriculture, and

Whereas, the various farm commodity groups work as non-profits with volunteer labor, and

Whereas, in the case of the Massachusetts Dairy booth, much of the revenue is gifted to worthy programs, such as the Massachusetts 4-H Dairy,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources should continue to make space available to Massachusetts farm commodity groups in the Massachusetts State Building at no charge, and

Be it further resolved that the Massachusetts State Farm Bureau works to this end.

**2009-71 \*R (2006)**

Whereas the number of wineries in Massachusetts has grown from seventeen to twenty seven in the last two years,

Whereas wine grapes and fruit wines represent among the highest value-added agricultural products,

Whereas almost all farm wineries are family owned businesses, and

Whereas the moderate consumption of wine in conjunction with family meals is increasingly understood to be part of a healthy and happy lifestyle,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation initiate legislation to create a Massachusetts Wine Council which will represent the interests of all Massachusetts wineries and grape and fruit growers. Among its goals will be the education of the legislature and public and to seek enlightened measures to promote this vital, rapidly growing segment of Massachusetts agriculture.

**2009-72 \*R (2006)**

Whereas farm gate prices are the same as in the 1970's and 80's for many agricultural commodities, and the cost of producing these goods is increasing tremendously and;

Whereas buyers are beginning to realize the advantages of buying local as opposed to subsidized long distance transport of these same commodities;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation educate consumers on the true (real) price of food and its cost of production.

## **PEST MANAGEMENT**

### **2011-66 \*R (2008)**

Whereas; there has been a serious infestation of the Asian Longhorn Beetle in Worcester County, which can be very devastating to the maple sugaring and timber harvesting industry in Massachusetts;

Whereas; this infestation was caused by products being received from China or other Asian countries on untreated wood pallets or wood products;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work on legislation to protect Massachusetts from further outbreaks of this infestation, by prohibiting the use of untreated wood pallets from other countries that we know have the Asian Longhorn Beetle.

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with American Farm Bureau Federation to strengthen inspections on wood products coming from these and other countries to protect the US forest resources.

### **2011-67 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; pesticides, herbicides and other pest controls that are no longer used or effective, and;

Whereas; the illegal disposal or dumping of such chemicals become a hazard to our environment, and;

Whereas; the cost of disposal by individual is prohibitive;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the proper state agencies to have a general amnesty for the purpose of the proper disposal of these chemicals.

### **2011-68 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; pesticides are an essential tool of modern agriculture, and;

Whereas; farmers' use of these pesticides is regulated by a *Pesticide Board*, and;

Whereas; there being only one farmer on the Board, regulation without representation is no more acceptable than taxation without representation, and;

Whereas; converting Massachusetts into one gigantic urban sprawl, an inevitable consequence of the present Board's actions, will be a monumental environmental disaster;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work for the appointment of members who shall be unbiased and objective and will include competent scientists from relevant fields and an equal number of farmers.

### **2011-69 \*R (2005)**

As the deciduous forests, mostly maple, oak, and ash, in many parts of Massachusetts have been infested with insect pests for the past few years, which could have dire economic effect on the Mass. Maple sugar industry, tourism, and the harvesting of quality forest products,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Agricultural Resources institute a spray program, (similar to the State of Vermont's) to eradicate these pests on both private and state lands.

**2010-52 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; the use of pesticides are under attack from concerned citizens and the Department of Environmental Protection;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation continue to support and increase efforts to promote IPM research and implementation.

**2010-53 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; there is currently much confusion in pesticide labeling resulting in reduced productivity and lost time to the grower;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with American Farm Bureau Federation to develop standardized labeling, including particularly a requirement that the EPA number and re-entry interval of each substance be printed in legible type size directly below its name.

**2010-54 \*R (2004)**

Whereas, the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has achieved great success in reduction of pesticide use and development of effective alternative crop protection tools for both agricultural community and the homeowner; and

Whereas, funding by the state of Massachusetts has been severely diminished resulting in insufficient funding for research, education and promotion of IPM, as well as the implementation of the Children and Families Protection Act:

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support sufficient state budgetary expenditures relating to such research and that its funding be directed to the Department of Agricultural Resources with necessary IPM funding being passed through (DAR) to UMASS Amherst Cooperative Extension Service.

**2010-55\*R (2004)**

Whereas, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts currently has an effective structure in regulating and overseeing the registration and use of pesticides administered by the Department of Agricultural Resources and the state Pesticide Board.

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support the continuation of the regulatory structure in place for the administration of any and all pesticides and their sales, storage, and applications in the Commonwealth.

**2009-73 \*R (1997)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation should continue to promote affordable and economical programs for disposing of unused or outdated pesticides.

**POLICY AND ORGANIZATION**

**2011-70**

Whereas Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee is a way for young farmers to get involved in all facets of farming, including influencing political bodies at local, state and national levels; and

Whereas, the County Farm Bureaus share many of the same goals; and

Whereas it is important for young farmers to gain knowledge to lead the future of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and to have a strong group of individuals from different counties and a wide variety of commodities to create a strong leadership committee to ensure the future;

Therefore be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage each County's Board of Directors to include at least two Young Farmers & Ranchers representatives.

**2011-71**

Whereas the current Massachusetts Farm Energy Program discount does not include propane or oil; and

Whereas many farms in rural areas cannot access natural gas and rely on propane and/or oil;

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to find discounts for propane and oil as well.

**2011-72 \*R (1999)**

Whereas; The cultivation and sale of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation membership is essential to the survival of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, and;

Whereas; Interaction with Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation staff is a benefit that current members need and deserve, and;

Whereas; Other agricultural commodity organizations have members who are not members of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation;

Be it resolved: That in an effort to meet our memberships' needs and to generate new membership, Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will exhibit at least five (5) agricultural commodity trade shows or meetings.

**2011-73 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation members are representative of the farm community and are both producers and consumers of farm products;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage the use of Massachusetts farm grown or produced products in season at all Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation functions.

**2011-74 \*R (2005)**

Whereas the availability of accounting services with an agricultural background are both expensive and of limited availability, and

Whereas the sophistication and complexity of tax and accounting laws represent an oppressive burden to the beginning farmer;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation explore the possibility of offering entry and beginning farms access to accounting and financial counseling resources.

Further let it be resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation investigates an alliance with the Farm Bureaus in other northeastern states for the purpose of instituting such a plan or service.

**2010-56**

Whereas there are numerous issues of concern in the livestock industry, including, but not limited to challenges by humane organizations, poorly drafted municipal regulations, barriers to the availability of quality slaughter and processing facilities, and regulations and policies impacting the handling of animal waste; and

Whereas the formation of the Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island Meat Producers' Association and other groups has been of benefit to these producers if only by clearly identifying issues and challenges; and

Whereas many of these issues and challenges apply also to the Dairy and Equine Committees, and include topics specific to livestock producers which are not represented on either of these committees;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation form a Livestock Committee which shall include:

1. At least one representative from each county Farm Bureau.
2. At least one representative of the Dairy, Equine, and Legislative Committees;
3. Four representatives, one of each of whom shall be involved in the production of beef, swine, poultry, and sheep or goats. Such representatives may simultaneously represent a county or another Committee.

**2010-57**

Whereas; numerous provisions of Massachusetts law relevant to agriculture have not been reviewed or changed significantly in decades, and

Whereas; in many cases such law are inconsistent with the current technology, agricultural practices, consumer demands, etc. and pose a barrier to the development and sustainability of agriculture in the Commonwealth, and

Whereas; ongoing efforts to change existing legislation are piecemeal without any overall strategy or involvement from the agricultural community as a whole,

Be it resolved; that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with other commodity and farm organizations, either through the legislature or independently, to develop a report which assesses existing Massachusetts laws impacting agriculture, identifies problematic provisions, and makes recommendations for change. The purpose of report would be to develop a "roadmap" for agricultural legislative reform which is based on the consensus among the larger agricultural community.

**2010-58\*R (1998)**

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation take the lead in coordinating and unifying the promotional, educational and political goals of all agricultural groups in Massachusetts.

**2010-59 \*R (2007)**

Whereas, Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is the largest and most respected agricultural trade organization in Massachusetts,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation move to energize its Government Affairs Committee; and

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation look to improve membership participation in the political process.

**2009-74**

Whereas there is a nationwide shortage of large animal veterinarians, and

Whereas this affects many areas of livestock agriculture (dairy, equine, beef, swine, sheep, goats, etc.) as well as those with large animal pets, and

Whereas some states have begun initiatives to attract large animal vets by repaying part or all of vet school student loans,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation along with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources work to pass legislation to repay up to 75% of student loans for large animal vets that practice in the state of Massachusetts for a minimum of 5 years.

**2009-75**

Sustainable Agriculture

Whereas there is an increasing interest in the concept of sustainable agriculture by the public, media and policy makers, and

Whereas there has long been misunderstanding of the concept of sustainable agriculture,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation adopt and support a concept of sustainable agriculture that:

1. Offers farmers a decent living.
2. Seeks to minimize or eliminate impacts on natural resources.
3. Seeks to meet the needs of the population for food, fiber, plants and fuel.

Be it further resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support a concept of sustainable agriculture encompassing the use of approved agricultural technology, and allows farmers to use or not use approved technologies as they determine what is most appropriate for their farm and market.

**2009-76 \*R (2000)**

Whereas; the problems of Agribusiness in Massachusetts can arise quickly and at any time,

Be it resolved that qualified staff person from Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation be available in the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation office or on call during all normal Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation business hours.

**2009-77 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; agriculture is increasingly at odds dealing with differing regulations and definitions;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to create a uniform definition of *farms* and *farming* so that local and state statutes are compatible.

**2009-78 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; many Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation members have had positive legal precedent setting law cases and decisions;

Be it resolved that members be encouraged to file these crucial helpful precedents in the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation office where they are available to other members and their attorneys in dire need of this vital information.

**2009-79 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; the young farmer is the next generation to continue business;

Whereas; this same farmer will have to be increasingly aware of and involved in the politics of the trade;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation continue to promote, support and encourage the young farmers' and ranchers' program.

**2009-80 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; the continuing urbanization of Massachusetts has put our farmland in jeopardy, and;

Whereas; we feel strongly that public policy should be protecting our rights as farmers is of the utmost importance;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work towards strengthening the right-to-farm policy of the Commonwealth.

**2009-81 \*R (2006)**

Whereas county farm bureaus and agricultural commissions are changing and becoming less of a nucleus for social and grassroots organizing,

Be it resolved that County Farm Bureau create yearly "Open Barn" meetings/gatherings/information sessions/round tables to inform and collaborate with members and potential members in the community.

**2009-82 \*R (2006)**

Whereas Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation needs and desires new members,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation explore and solicit grants and fund-raising possibilities for marketing, and assisting Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation policies and programs locally and statewide.

**2009-83 \*R (2006)**

Whereas numbers of farms are dropping, and every current existing and potential farm becomes more important,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation create/implement marketing devices to facilitate retention and recruitment.

**2009-84 \*R (2006)**

Where as Farm Bureau membership & Directors are increasing in years (avg. age)

Be it resolved that every Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation County Farm Bureau seek out one/more young farmer Farm Bureau person to be placed on their board and encourage and/or entice the Young Farmer to participate locally and statewide.

**PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS**

**2011-75 \*R (2008)**

Whereas; nuisance suits are becoming larger issues to farms across the Commonwealth we wish to propose protecting the rights of farmers;

Whereas; nuisance suits have no legal basis, but still must be defended against, they impose a crippling financial burden on the farmer. Presently there is no accountability for the person(s) filing illegitimate nuisance suits;

Whereas, this resolution will safeguard good agricultural practices against the misuse of nuisance suits, Therefore be it resolved: if a finding is in the farmer's favor, the person filing the nuisance suit shall pay all legal costs and treble damages for both federal and state suits.

**2011-76 \*R (2008)**

Whereas there is an increase by state and local agencies to regulate agriculture,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work towards the re-file of legislation of 1990, 30A Section 18.

**2011-77 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; local boards of health are granted statutory emergency powers, not subject to review by other boards and commissions within the cities or towns;

And Whereas; many of the issues confronted by the board of health are often the result of neighborhood disputes;

And Whereas; the action taken by the board may result in negative impacts for the whole city or town while attempting to address a site-specific issue;

Therefore be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage its members to cultivate a relationship with local boards of health personnel, to know what's going on relevant to the activities of the board and to insure that a balanced approach may be undertaken and implemented in dealing with issues within the purview of the board of health.

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have Public Health Regulations fall under the review of the Attorney General.

**2010-60 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; it is recognized that a system of independent, land-owning farmers has been a hallmark of this nation and has been enormously successful in providing all of its agricultural needs, and;

Whereas; it is recognized that land and water are fundamental to the conduct of all agricultural endeavors, and;

Whereas; it is further recognized that there is an increasing tendency today to restrict or deny farmers their historical use of these vital resources;

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation endorses as a fundamental right of all farmers the right of private property ownership of land and of water resources, to wit:

- The right to restrict access to private property;
- The right to protection of their herds, flocks, crops, pastures, timber, orchards and other agricultural products of the land from damage or destruction by vandals, trespassers, thieves, animal predators or pests.
- The right to unobstructed use of their land for reasonable or customary agricultural purposes;
- The rights of riparian ownership or use of groundwater for reasonable or customary agricultural

- needs;
- The right to sell or convey their property;
- The right to protection from unlawful seizure or taking of their property;

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will pursue an active program to defend and promote these rights for all farmers, and;

Be it finally resolved that these policies become policy of American Farm Bureau Federation.

**2010-61 \*R (2004)**

Whereas, the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation supports the protection of private property rights and land use opportunity;

Be it resolved the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation specifically opposes National Park Service administration and or involvement in the M & M Trail and the creation of a national forest of any sort in Massachusetts.

**2009-85 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; many times eminent domain settlement does not reflect true losses suffered by farmers whose land has been taken;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have “multiple damages” awarded in cases of hardship to farmers.

**2009-86 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; there is a continuing erosion of “private property rights” by the imposition of burdensome government regulations;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file state legislation that would define “taking”, under these regulations, to be a reduction or decrease in value of 25% or \$10,000 of value.

**2009-87 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; land, its ownership and its traditional rights and privileges are the basic building blocks of all agricultural endeavors and;

Whereas; this land and the buildings thereon are the financial cornerstone and security as well as the farmer’s domain and base of operations and;

Whereas; this ownership and its rights are protected by the constitution of the United States to be invaded only if required by the public health and welfare and then only with fair restitution to the owner;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation take whatever action necessary to show progress to counter the continual erosion of these rights by laws and regulations at town, county, state and federal government levels without consideration of these constitutional guarantees and particularly restitution of the financial loss to the owner by these takings. The amount of these damages to be arrived at as any other governmental annexation.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

### 2011-78

Whereas only a small percentage of the Massachusetts's population understand the importance and accomplishments of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, and

Whereas we need public support to fight our cases,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to write timely and relevant magazine articles to promote the positive things we do and to educate the general public on our accomplishments and issues.

### 2010-62 \*R (1998)

Whereas; agriculture does not always receive positive media coverage, and;

Whereas; farmers are often placed on the defensive;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation do more work with public relations to give agriculture a more positive image.

## RATITES

### 2010-63 \*R (1998)

Be it resolved that *ratites* (ostrich, emu & rhea) raised for commercial purposes be included in the definition of agriculture and farming in all relevant sections of Massachusetts law and regulations;

Be it further resolved that *ratites* raised for commercial purposes be removed from the authority with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and placed under the authority of the Department of Agricultural Resources.

## TAXES, ASSESSMENTS AND FEES

### 2011-79

Massachusetts Tax Resolution

Currently Massachusetts and Connecticut are the only states in New England that have an income tax on real estate that do not have mandatory withholding on sales by non-residents. The estimate is that Massachusetts is losing millions if not hundreds of millions in unfiled tax returns because there is no withholding at the closing by the attorney.

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation file legislation to amend Massachusetts law to make this a requirement. This will not cost current residents any tax.

### 2011-80

Whereas as state law currently allows towns to exempt farms from excise tax on farm equipment, but does not include farms that are incorporated,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have the exemption changed to include incorporated farms.

**2011-81**

Tax Assessment for Maple Production Land

Whereas, some Massachusetts tax assessors are having difficulty determining in what category to place land which is used in maple production,

Whereas, some Massachusetts tax assessors are requiring landowners who wish to place their land used in maple production in Chapter 61 under productive hardwoods to spend funds and time on a timber management plan; and

Whereas, there is no cutting of trees so a timber management plan is of no use, and just adds an unnecessary expense that will deter landowners from enrolling in Chapter 61 and Chapter 61A,

Therefore, be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue Farmland Advisory Committee to include maple production in the productive hardwood category and that a forest management plan not be required.

**2011-82 \*R (2008)**

Whereas; farms are heavily burdened with property taxes, as well as sales taxes on the many products they need to purchase for new or repairing of agricultural structures;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have property taxes delayed for ten (10) years on new agricultural structures, at which time they then would be assessed at a ten year depreciated value.

Be it further resolved that all agricultural building materials be exempt from sales tax.

**2011-83\*R (2008)**

Whereas; some neighboring states are exempting their farmers from sales tax on farm trucks;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have the sales tax removed on farm trucks that can be registered with farm plates.

**2011-84 \*R (2008)**

Property taxes on agricultural buildings

Whereas; farm buildings are assessed at full commercial rates, and

Whereas; much of the square footage of many of these structures is used for unique agricultural practices for short seasonal periods of time,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will petition the state to instruct town and city assessors to not only create a reduced agricultural rate for farm buildings, but will also pro-rate the assessment according to the "time in use".

**2011-85 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; a deficit budget is forecast and the Commonwealth will be looking to raise taxes,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation recommends against an increase in all taxes and against a resumption of the inheritance tax.

**2011-86 \*R (1996)**

Whereas; much confusion exists over the taxation of different types of horse operations;

Be it resolved that all commercial horse operations be classified as agricultural enterprises and that they enjoy the same tax exemptions as other agricultural enterprises.

**2011-87 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; public land is for use by the public, and;

Whereas; the farm community uses this land for growing of feed and crops, and;

Whereas; public land cannot be developed or improved by the farm community, and;

Be it resolved: the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work with the Department of Revenue, Inspector General's Office and cities and towns to exclude farmers from paying property taxes on public land or, as an alternative, the value of the land be based on use value.

**2010-64**

Whereas Massachusetts General law provides an exemption from sales tax for equipment used in agricultural production, and in the production of electricity to be sold, and

Whereas farms are increasingly considering installing alternative energy production facilities such as wind turbines, anaerobic digesters, etc., and

Whereas Massachusetts general law considers many agricultural pursuits, other than "production", to fall within the definition of "agriculture" that are not covered by the sales tax exemption; and

Whereas this discrepancy between sections of the law greatly complicates the ability of farms to enjoy sales tax exemptions for equipment and this discrepancy serves as a barrier to on-farm energy production, and

Whereas on-farm, alternative energy production is of benefit to both the farm owner and the Commonwealth as a whole,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation pursue changes to state law that would provide sales tax exemptions for on-farm energy equipment on farms whose activities are consistent with MGL 128 Section 1a and MGL 40a Section 3.

**2010-65 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; income tax is still levied against income on land taken by eminent domain;

Be it resolved that the income tax on land taken by the state in eminent domain proceedings be eliminated.

**2010-66 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; the Chapter 61A program has been important to Franklin County and Massachusetts farmers, and;

Whereas; there is consistent pressure from town assessors and revenue department personnel;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation continue to support the per acre land value recommendations provided annually by the Farmland Evaluation Advisory Commission relative to 61A values.

**2010-67 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; the keeping of bees is an important entity to all of agriculture and provides the consuming public with a safe, wholesome, natural sweetener, and;

Whereas; the raising, keeping, stabling and breeding of horses, ponies and all members of the equine species is important to the agricultural infrastructure and the preservation of open space;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation take appropriate action to implement and apply the agricultural exemptions granted under M.G.L. Ch. 64H and I to all of agriculture.

**2010-68 \*R (2004)**

Whereas, property values throughout the Commonwealth, especially in the southeastern portion, have increased dramatically in the past three years,

And whereas local assessors have in some cases, sharply increased the value of farms, often violating both the spirit and the letter of Chapter 61 and Chapter 61-A,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation staff continue its excellent work, both through intervention on behalf of individuals and through seminars, in protecting our members, and sustaining existing laws which protect farmland from unfair taxation.

**2009-88 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; the finances of farms are such that attracting customers with reasonable prices is important to the continuation of the farm, and;

Whereas; the tax burden on the citizens of the Commonwealth is already high;

Be it resolved the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work diligently to prevent the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or any Massachusetts city, town, or village to collect any visitor impact fee for any event organized and sponsored by any Massachusetts non-profit organization or agricultural enterprise.

**2009-89 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; a tax-exempt or non-profit status is granted to alleviate certain financial burdens, and;

Whereas; a tax-exempt or non-profit organization may sell assets that may be of high value or that may provide open space,

Be it resolved that if any church, synagogue, school, college, university, or non-profit organization sells any real estate of which they have paid no property tax, that they be subject to the tenets of chapter 61, 61A and 61B regarding repayment of back property tax and that the city, town, or village have the right of first refusal to purchase the real estate for a period of 120 days.

**2009-90 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; the vast majority of farms and businesses in Massachusetts are family owned and operated;

And State laws supporting Medicaid have made passing on of property and the family farms and businesses more difficult or impossible for those with limited insurance because of liens requiring repayment to Medicaid,

And passing on of the farms and businesses is necessary to support agriculture as it is currently practiced in the commonwealth.

Be it resolved: Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation devote resources to ensuring through legislation or other means that the farm and businesses may be passed on to future generations, without presenting an undue financial hardship to succeeding generations.

**2009-91 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; wildlife attacks on farm livestock is an increasing problem, it has become a necessity to use firearms to protect animals and people;

Whereas; The State of Massachusetts has imposed a \$100 fee every four years on Firearm Identification cards to raise revenues for the commonwealth;

Whereas; this is an excessive tax and farmers get no benefit from this expense,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation support legislation making FID fees a one-time fee.

**2009-92 \*R (2003)**

Whereas; the value of farm houses has risen in the exploding real estate and building demand, and the taxes on houses, farm buildings and farm retail operations has exploded even more, and

Whereas; Farmers have invested for generations of their families keeping open space while toiling on the farm, and

Whereas; In many cases farmers cannot afford to live in their own farm house because of higher taxes on their house forced by the demand of the land values in our farming communities.

Be it resolved that it be a priority of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation to work aggressively to place farm houses and buildings at a true agricultural value as a necessity for the operation of the farm.

**2009-93 \*R (2000)**

RE: Interest, Dividends, and Capital Gains.

Our family farms in Massachusetts are struggling to keep in existence. It is important for all of our Massachusetts citizens to protect this open space, environmental quality and resource and local food supply for all the people.

One way of keeping agriculture is for working farmers to be taxed fairly on their Massachusetts income tax form. Many farmers have invested money conservatively to help through times such as at present with record low commodity prices. Farmers are not allowed to offset losses from the farm with interest, dividends and capital gains. These columns are taxed separately. This is unfair for farmers and only will result in their demise as they are forced to liquidate assets.

To keep agriculture going a farmer should be able to use all sources of revenue to pay the expense of his farm losses.

**2009-94 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; state-wide there are inconsistencies in real estate valuations;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation act to encourage whatever action is necessary to tax silos and feed storage units as farm machinery and equipment and;

Be it further resolved to take whatever actions necessary to have land values assessed consistently according to Chapter 61A guidelines.

**2009-95 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; many farms have business zoned land and where farm buildings in business zones are often included with the same tax rate for commercial and industrial buildings;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to have the lowest tax classification rate for small or farm businesses in business zoned land.

**2009-96 \*R (1997)**

Whereas; farm buildings are often assessed at valuations far above their agricultural values;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to establish a mechanism for fair valuation of farm buildings, similar to the Farmland Assessment Act.

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation express to the Department of Revenue the necessity of educating said officials and the public about the Chapter 61A process.

**2009-97 \*R (2006)**

Whereas the M.G.L. Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 45 grants an excise tax exemption to renewable energy systems for 20 years, and whereas many of these systems have a useful life of over 30 years,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation will work to change the language of the above law from “20 years”, to the “useful life of the system”.

**2009-98 \*R (2006)**

Whereas government grants are taxed as normal income;

Whereas this is effectively taxing taxes;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to eliminate state and federal tax on these funds.

**2009-99 \*R (2006)**

Whereas, Thru the Paperwork Reduction Act the Congress required that all official government forms are mandated to have an OMB number. There are two basic forms used by government agencies to request an OMB number. One form’s criteria is for Proposed Information Collection-the form IRS inappropriately used for their 1040 request. This application has IRS’s statement that no legal requirement exists, so how can IRS pursue taxpayers who may not file and pay taxes based on the 1040 form? IRS’s request should have used the form needed to establish the legality and mandated use of the information to generate taxes from US citizens. This form requires the listing of laws/regulations which mandate the 1040 uses. IRS, Treasury and OMB have refused to discuss this issue with individuals, so we need group action.

Therefore, be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation meet with responsible decision makers to determine how IRS has been allowed to continue this apparent illegal use of the 1040 returns.

### **TRESPASS, VANDALISM AND DESTRUCTION OF FARM PROPERTY**

#### **2010-69 \*R (1998)**

Whereas; Massachusetts livestock producers and handlers have an exemplary record of providing efficient and humane care, and;

Whereas; after a 2 and 1/2 year study, the report of the Farm Animal Welfare Study Committee, which consisted of representatives of Animal Rescue League, Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and industry representatives agree that there exists no evidence of abuse or neglect on farms in Massachusetts;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation continue its aggressive program of promoting agriculture's image, and;

Be it further resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation vigorously oppose and urge prosecution of those animal rights groups and individuals who, by criminal trespass and vandalism, seek to damage and destroy the image of livestock agriculture.

#### **2009-100**

Whereas many agricultural operations have experienced a high level of theft, and

Whereas the local authorities frequently treat such theft as minor incidents, not worthy of their attention;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation encourage the General Court to refine current laws so that thefts from agricultural operations be treated exactly the same as thefts from stores and other businesses.

### **ZONING**

#### **2011-88 \*R (2002)**

Whereas; the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is concerned about the affordability of housing, and

Whereas; the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is also concerned about agriculture and open space,

Be it resolved that all housing proposals under MGL Chapter 40B shall require a one hundred (100) foot buffer zone from any adjoining property line of property that is used for agriculture, open space, or that has a conservation, forestry, or agricultural restriction,

Be it resolved that there shall also be a fence installed on the property line to safely keep any young children from coming into the agricultural area where they may become injured.

Also be it resolved that such buffer zones shall be planted in evergreen type shrubs to help reduce noise, dust, and or any odors from reaching the housing development.

**2011-89 \*R (2005)**

Whereas there are efforts being made to change the way zoning and/or planning boards operate in the Commonwealth,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation work to fight against any legislation that would:

- Do away with "form A" applications
- Change the passage of zoning/planning by-laws from 2/3 to simple majority
- Do away with attorney general oversight on by-law and regulation passage.

**2009-101 \*R (2000)**

Whereas; Chapter 61A provides for specific use of land for a residence for the owner or a parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, or brother or sister of the owner, or the surviving husband or wife of any deceased such relative, or for living quarters for any persons actively employed full time in the agricultural or horticultural use of such land;

Whereas; this provision of the State Law is used as an incentive to keep land in agricultural use and therefore open space;

Whereas; The Cape Cod Commission Act has been interpreted by its enforcers to usurp the section of Chapter 61A intended to allow for division of property for a residence as stated above without first meeting their demands for set-asides for open space, affordable housing, etc., and

Whereas; The threshold for mandatory referral to the Commission by the Town Planning Board is division of any land contiguous including non-developable land (wetlands) of presently 30 acres and being considered to be lowered to 10 acres;

Therefore, be it resolved, that, as with the Wetlands Protection Act, an exemption for owners of land being assessed under Chapter 61A shall be made from the Cape Cod Commission Act and similar regional planning statutes.

**2009-102 \*R (2006)**

Whereas there are currently significant town, county and state efforts to change local zoning regulations to decrease allowable lot densities (also known as "down-zoning"), and

Whereas there are significant changes being proposed to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A that propose the elimination of ANR (approval not required) lots and increase allowable lot sizes and densities, and

Whereas these proposals will reduce the asset value of forest farmland without compensation to the owners,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation opposes the concept of down-zoning and will work actively to assure that any and all changes to local, regional, or state laws that reduce the value of an agricultural landowners' property or diminish his rights are only for significant and legitimate public health, safety or welfare reasons.