



SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS AGRICULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2016

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As this challenging growing season finishes up, I have almost completed my first year at SEMAP. And just as in the first year growing on a new piece of land, there was much to learn, some surprises and new challenges, all of which have reinforced my need to support local food production. Looking back at what we've 'harvested' is very exciting. It has been a very productive year— we have increased the size of our membership, the attendance at our events, the extent of our outreach, and the number of our programs. This is a direct result of your understanding of the value of supporting local agriculture. More of you are purchasing locally, actively learning about sustainable farming and understanding the value of local healthy foods.

With the guidance of the Board of Directors, we are looking at how to manage and sustain our growth. We have many kinds of expertise on the board, from agricultural to financial to legal and more, and are looking for community members who might want to participate in developing and guiding SEMAP's future, either as advisors,

committee members or in a seat on the board. Having a diverse working Board with strong agricultural representation as well as more traditional board roles is one of SEMAP's strengths. We are looking to expand our board in 2017. Please reach out to us if you feel inspired to help.

Our work this season is twofold. We are looking ahead to plan the next for next year: developing new membership initiatives, expanding our Beginning Farmer and Rancher program and deepening our local food promotion activities. Plans for our 10th Annual Ag & Food Conference on February 26th are well underway (save that date!) and we have a list of improvements we want to make to our 2017 Local Food Guide. We will continue supporting activities that promote local produce in underserved communities both to improve access to healthy food options to these communities as well as provide new and expanded markets for our farmers. We are also looking to expand our volunteer program with a few key individuals to help with tabling and outreach at events. This fall is also a chance to review the past year as we prepare for our Annual Meeting on November 15th. We hope you join us for a fun and informative evening celebrating local agriculture.

With the continued drought situation, our farmers have faced considerable trials this growing season. Though I am not surprised by it, I have incredible respect for the endurance they are demonstrating in the face of these additional challenges. This season is far from a total flop though. We have seen some incredible produce out of a difficult growing year. In some instances the dry weather has led to less disease and the heat to more abundant and flavorful crops, but we will see some reduced yields and size as well. This is a great time to show your support and understanding of the situation the farmers face and of the value of buying locally. Get to your local farmstand; attend one of the many harvest celebrations happening across the region or sign up for a winter CSA share. Committing to buy locally creates a more vibrant economy community. We need your help to make it work!

Karen Schwalbe
Executive Director



Apples freshly picked at The Big Apple - Read the spotlight about this Wrentham farm at semaponline.org!

This newsletter sponsored in part by:

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Interested in seeing your business in the SEMAP newsletter? Contact us about sponsorship at info@semaponline.org for more information!



SEMAP is dedicated to preserving and promoting local farming in southeastern Massachusetts

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Executive Director

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Ben Wolbach
Skinny Dip Farm

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MEET THE SEMAP BOARD



Wendy Braga - In Bloom Florist

Wendy Braga is the owner and lead designer of In Bloom Florist. Wendy has been practicing the art of floral design since 2006. Beginning with her love of nature and flowers, to her diploma in floral design from the New England School of Floral Design, and her position as a Horticulture Instructor at Silver Lake Regional High School, she has pulled all of these amazing experiences together to provide exquisite designs for weddings, events, and more. In addition to her diploma from New England School of Floral Design, Wendy also has a Bachelor's degree in Finance from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and a certificate in Horticulture from Cape Cod Community College.

Did you make it to Farm to Tapas? We had lovely flowers from Skinny Dip Farm and Wendy was responsible for the beautiful arrangements on each table!

EATING SEASONALLY - NEW ENGLAND IN THE FALL



As the weather gets cooler, a lot of folks stop buying locally. However, there are still plenty of great local foods available throughout the fall! Although you won't be able to find fresh tomatoes or blueberries, squash, potatoes, beets, and other root crops abound! Here's a sampling of what's fresh and local in the fall:

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| -Apples | -Carrots | -Potatoes |
| -Cranberries | -Cauliflower | -Pumpkins |
| -Pears | -Celery | -Radishes |
| -Arugula | -Chard | -Scallions |
| -Beets | -Garlic | -Spinach |
| -Bok Choy | -Leeks | -Sprouts |
| -Broccoli | -Lettuce | -Winter Squash |
| -Cabbage | -Mushrooms | |

and expanding access to local food and sustainable lifestyles through research and education.

Sharing the Harvest with Subsidized CSAs

In June, Mass in Motion New Bedford launched a Subsidized Farm Share program in the NB Housing Authority. This project is a collaboration with the NB Housing Authority, Apponagansett Farms, Round the Bend Farms/Ashley's Produce and the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). New Bedford is the first community in the Commonwealth to launch this type of program!

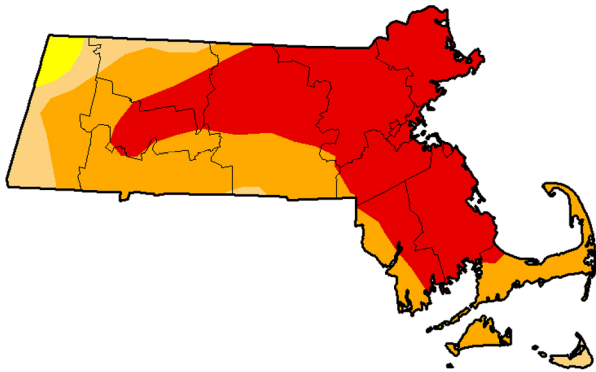
With funding from Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, families residing in Presidential Heights and Bay Village signed up to receive produce from two local farms for 20 weeks (June-Oct) for a reduced cost. In addition to the 20-week share, residents have had the opportunity to attend monthly educational workshops/cooking demonstrations.

As part of this project, there was a coordinated a Farm Visit and all of the Farm Share members were able to visit Round the Bend Farm for an opportunity to enjoy local, farm-fresh lunch, have a farm tour (including the tiny homes, Ashley's garden, and the animals) and see exactly where their food had been growing!

This was a fantastic program, an innovative way to not only get local, healthy foods into underserved communities, but also to teach recipients how to cook foods they might not be familiar with, and connect them to where their food was from with a farm visit. We hope to see more programs like this throughout the Commonwealth.



How the Drought Affected Massachusetts Agriculture



Intensity:

D0 (Abnormally Dry) D1 (Moderate Drought) D2 (Severe Drought) D3 (Extreme Drought) D4 (Exceptional Drought)

To the left is a startling image...what Massachusetts looked like as of October 4th. Red means extreme drought. One level down from extreme is severe, the dark orange color. This is the worst drought that Massachusetts has faced since 1965. While those of us who aren't farmers enjoyed the sunny summer, never having to fear if our beach days would get rained out, growers faced an incredibly challenging season.

Farmers invested a lot of time into watering crops that they might not normally need to. Laying down irrigation pipe across many fields became a drain on farmers' time. Without doing this, though, crops would not get the moisture they needed. As irrigation ponds grew drier and drier, farmers had to make sacrifices on which crops they felt were most important and water those in order to conserve water. Many crops were lost.

Some farms are done with business months earlier than expected. Roadside stands close their doors and fall CSAs have been cancelled. Stands

that are open have less to offer than usual. However, consumers are being incredibly understanding and supportive. For folks that are connected to their food, they empathize with their farmers. Buying local is still a priority and they understand farmers need their business now more than ever.

Drought assistance programs have been put in place to help farmers recover from this difficult year. The new Massachusetts Drought Emergency Loan Fund will provide affordable working capital loans to small businesses, including family farms, grappling with a downturn in business caused by this prolonged drought. MGCC will make up to \$1 million in loan funds available to provide micro-loans of \$5,000 to \$10,000 to farms located in communities impacted by the drought, particularly those in severely hit counties.

We've compiled a list of several assistance programs. More information can be found here: <http://conta.cc/2cP6G0w>



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SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Meeting

Star Store, 715 Purchase St
Downtown New Bedford

Tuesday, November 15th, 6-8pm

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