

MFBF POLICY BOOK 2006-2007

MFBF policies are subject to reaffirmation every three years. Policies that have been reaffirmed are marked by *R.

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AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONS

2005-1

Whereas there are over 40 Agricultural Commissions established in the state of Massachusetts, and Whereas these are an invaluable resource to Farm Bureau, and consequently need to be fostered, encouraged and kept in close contact to Farm Bureau,

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 Farm Bureau members.

2004-1

Whereas; Local agricultural commissions are a good intermediary between the town and agriculture. And whereas; Agricultural commissions within a town provide oversight for town operations, which may impact agriculture.

Therefore let it be resolved the MFBF perform activities and pursue educational opportunities to help implement agricultural commissions within individual towns throughout the state.

Furthermore, be it resolved that MFBF support the creation of agricultural commissions in those communities and work to establish criteria and form for their creation.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

2006-1 *R

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.

2006-2

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 work with our state government to:
Support our Agriculture Department (DAR) 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.

2006-3

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 Mass Farm Bureau Federation work with whatever means possible to restore the line item in the State budget for this great organization.

2005-2 *R

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 MFBF become involved with helping the Massachusetts FFA students in two ways:

- 1 The Massachusetts Farm Bureau 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 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.

2005-3 *R

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 work on the state level to maintain Smith Vocational School agriculture.

2004-2 *R

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 MFBF work with the Mass. DAR 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.

2004-3

Whereas; the MFBF has now had its 1st agricultural commodity roundtable, currently known as ACART;

Therefore, let it be resolved that MFBF hold no less than two meetings per year inviting a representative from each agricultural commodity group, U. Mass Extension representatives, and the president of MFBF. One of which will continue to be held during the MFBF annual meeting.

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION RESTRICTIONS

2006-4 *R

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 MFBF call for a review of the APR Program with particular emphasis on the financial well being of agriculture.

2006-5 *R

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 Farm Bureau is a member of that study panel.

And;

Whereas; as always, Mass. Farm Bureau 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 MFBF 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.

2006-6 *R

Be it resolved that MFBF work to ensure that APR farms be given equal opportunity to participate in all programs of the state, such as the Farm Viability Program, and not be excluded further financial help because they are under an APR contract.

2006-7 *R

Be it resolved that MFBF 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.

2006-8

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

Be it Resolved that MFBF will work to secure language allowing for these systems to be installed on APR farms.

2005-4 *R

Whereas; the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has discontinued many of its institutional farms, and;

Whereas; the Commonwealth has been buying development rights to privately owned farmland to preserve its use for future generations;

Be it resolved: that Massachusetts Farm Bureau take whatever action is required to ensure that State Government implements APR's on their institutional farms, and;

Be it further resolved: that such agricultural lands be made available for use by private individuals for agricultural purposes.

2005-5

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. MFBF expects that MDAR will advocate for the land owner against any further restrictions, conditions or regulations of any kind imposed on APR land;
2. MFBF 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. MFBF 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.

2004-4 *R

Whereas; MFBF 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; DAR 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; DAR 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 MFBF 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 DAR cease all activities which derogate the value of APR farmland, and;

Be it further resolved that MFBF 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 DAR actions and should include agricultural impact and small business impact statements;

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

2004-5 *R

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 MFBF 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.

2004-6 *R

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 DAR 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 MFBF work to change the definition of “Agriculture” used in the APR program to the Chapter 128;1A definition.

2004-7

Whereas; the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) has taken a very aggressive position to render APR land accessible to the public.

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

ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE

2006-9

Whereas the equine industry is 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 Mass 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 industry.

2004-8 *R

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.

APIARIES

2006-10

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 proposes that the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture 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.

2005-6 *R

Whereas; honeybees are essential for Agriculture, and,
Whereas; the environment needs honeybees for pollination, and,
Whereas; there are no wild or feral honeybee colonies because of varroa mite and the tracheal mite have killed all wild hives, and,
Whereas; the only honeybee colonies are the ones maintained by beekeepers, and,
Whereas; beekeepers need educational help and assistance and training from the Extension staff from time to time, and,
Whereas; the position of Extension Apiculturist is not filled at this time, and,
Whereas; help in the past had been provided by UMass Extension,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation works to get this position filled with a full or part time qualified apiculturist to work with the Massachusetts agriculture community to provide a strong and healthy bee population for pollinating agricultural crops and the environment.

2005-7

Whereas: Honeybees are vital to crop pollination within this Commonwealth.
Whereas: Consumers are looking for and buying locally produced honey in ever greater numbers, outpacing production.
Whereas: Large losses of honeybee colonies are occurring in this state due to the parasitic mite varroa destructor and the viruses vectored by this mite.
Whereas: The miticides registered for use to control varroa mites are no longer efficacious.

Whereas: new Integrated Pest Management protocols and treatments are being developed to effectively control varroa mites, which are more labor intensive.

Whereas: Extension services for apiculture do not exist for such a small industry.

Therefore be it resolved that Farm Bureau work with UMass Extension and the Department of Agricultural Resources to appropriate funds for a seasonal extension agent to work with beekeepers in managing this destructive pest.

2004-9 *R

Whereas; honeybees are important to agriculture, and

Whereas; beekeepers manage beehives, and

Whereas; honeybees need inspection for illness and diseases, and the Plant Industries Bureau of the Department of Agricultural Resources conduct these inspections, and

Whereas; the inspection program does not start until July, and

Whereas; in July the beehives have extra equipment for honey storage,

Be it resolved that MFBB work with DAR to start the inspection program in May, when the beehives have not reached the extra weight.

AQUACULTURE

2005-8 *R

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

2005-9

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 MFBB support preemptive legislation, precluding local authorities from regulating seed and crops.

2004-10 *R

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 MFBB embraces the benefits of agro-biotech developments as positive for Massachusetts agriculture and consumers, and

Be it further resolved that MFBB 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.

COMMODITY CHECK-OFF PROGRAMS

2004-11 *R

Whereas; the beef promotion board has a mandatory \$1 per head check-off for every animal sold, and;
Whereas; bob calf prices are at all time lows, and;
Whereas; the fee collected on calves is excessive in relation to their sale price;

Be It Resolved that MFBF work to discontinue the check-off for all bob calves that sell for less than \$100.

COMMUNICATIONS

2006-11 *R

Whereas; important information is slow in reaching the farmer,
And, information transfer between individual farmers and between farmers and Massachusetts Farm Bureau 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 will work with County Farm Boards to establish better communications with individual members and boards.

2006-12 *R

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 Farm Bureau 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 Farm Bureau and to the local boards.

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

2006-13

Whereas certain members are getting AFBF newsletter and others are not,

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

2004-12

Whereas; Many of the issues facing Farm Bureau members are local issues.
And; Many resources exist at the local level to support farmers in these activities.

Therefore let it be resolved the MFBF form a speakers bureau and a listing of local resources with various problems and topics to make available to the general membership of MFBF.

2004-13

Whereas; There are many commissions, committees, and groups purporting to speak for farmers and share what's best for farms.

And whereas; Few of these commissions and committees actually involve working farmers.

Therefore be it resolved that MFBF assemble a presentation and set of common practices that can be made available to towns and municipalities on how to support agriculture.

2004-14

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

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

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION & CONSERVATION

2006-14 *R

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 MFBF 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.

2006-15 *R

Be it resolved that MFBF support state budget funding in Executive Office of Environmental Affairs for activities of the state's conservation districts to support Massachusetts agriculture.

2006-16

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

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

2005-10 *R

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

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

2005-11 *R

Whereas; the DAR is in danger of being eliminated;

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

2005-12

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 MFBF and AFBF work for increases in extension and research formula funding in the next Farm Bill.

2005-13

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 MFBF be opposed to any closing or consolidation of FSA offices.

2005-14

Whereas: NRCS develops farm conservation plans, gives technical assistance, and administers the EQUIP program among other services which are critical to keeping abreast of environmental concerns,
And whereas Norfolk and Bristol counties have 20% of the state's total farms which are enrolled in NRCS programs,

Be it resolved that MFBF work to reactivate the NRCS office located in Dighton which currently exists but is not staffed.

2005-15

Whereas Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution guarantees the right of residents of the Commonwealth to the conservation of agricultural land and it is the responsibility of the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) to preserve agricultural land, and

Whereas the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) has designated agricultural land as a critical natural resource allowing the EOEA Secretary to review agricultural land conversion under the Massachusetts Environmental Protection Act (MEPA) and this mission is accomplished by the DAR in part by discouraging the conversion of viable units of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, and

Whereas the official state policy under Executive Order 193 (E.O. 193) is that state funds and federal grants administered by the state shall not be used to encourage the conversion of state-owned agricultural land, defined as land purchased in whole or in part with state funds or federal funds administered by the state, to other uses when feasible alternatives are available, and

Whereas the Town of Falmouth has taken more than 12 acres of actively farmed cranberry bog out of production based on unsupported claims that the farming of this land is having negative environmental consequences, and

Whereas state self-help funds were used for the acquisition of this land and the Town of Falmouth plans to seek state and federal funding to convert this land in perpetuity from agricultural production,

Be it resolved that the MFBF actively get involved to encourage the Secretary of the EOEA to review the conversion of Town of Falmouth agricultural land under the policies stated in E.O. 193 and MEPA and that no state or federal funds be allocated if feasible alternatives to removing this farm land from production are available.

2005-16

Whereas as the US Congress has turned over many facets of the regulation of the Connecticut River concerning water withdrawals to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) excluding irrigation and

Whereas FERC in turn turned over its authority to Northeast Generation for the section of the river from the Northern Massachusetts border to the Turners Falls Dam, but failed to clarify that it did not have the power to regulate withdrawals for irrigation and

Whereas Northeast Generation is forcing irrigation projects on this section of the river (Turners Falls Pool) to be permitted through Northeast Generation, and in several circumstances has succeeded through threats of lawsuits, and

Whereas Northeast Utilities is seeking to sell certain power generation assets held by its subsidiary Northeast Generation in the towns of Northfield, Erving, Gill, and Montague and

Whereas Northeast Generation is asking for changes in their license to allow for increased flows, and

Whereas this may present an opportunity for a revision to their license

Therefore be it resolved Massachusetts Farm Bureau seek a change to the license to clarify that no part of their license contains the authority to regulate water withdrawals for irrigation purpose, and

Further that Massachusetts Farm Bureau ask American Farm Bureau to seek specific clarification on this issue, and that language be included in all future licenses granted by FERC across the country clarifying the issue.

2004-15 *R

Whereas; deep concern exists regarding the systematic elimination and/or reduction in agricultural support services and education offered by the University of Massachusetts and Co-Operative Extension, affecting areas including but not limited to: forestry and wood products, soil testing services, orchard products, poultry, the equine program and most recently, the drastic reduction of the UMass Dairy Program;

Be it resolved that all agricultural activities currently being offered be continued until a master plan is designed, reviewed publicly and found to be acceptable by the Commissioner of Agriculture and the State Board of Agriculture;

Be it further resolved that failure to resolve this issue satisfactorily be a cause for legislation to be filed to accomplish this goal.

CROP AND LIVESTOCK DAMAGE

2006-17 *R

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 MFBF work with DAR and the DF&G to develop a permitting process to allow farmers to purchase starlicide and bait these birds at the farmer's expense.

2006-18 *R

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 MFBF 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.

2006-19 *R

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 MFBF 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.

2005-17 *R

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 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.

2005-18 *R

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 work to reinstate the use of hounds to hunt bears in Massachusetts.

2005-19 *R

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 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.

2005-20 *R

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 Measure all or similar product on the seed.

2005-21 *R

Whereas; possession of leghold traps are illegal;

Be It Resolved that MFBF 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.

2005-22 *R

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.

2005-23 *R

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.

2004-16 *R

Whereas; Franklin County farmers have experienced excessive bear damage, and;

Whereas; the number of bear and extent of damage are increasing steadily;

Be it resolved that MFBF requests a public hearing in Franklin County with the Seven Member Fisheries and Wildlife Board to lengthen the season and to start the season earlier before significant damage is done.

2004-17 *R

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

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

2004-18

Whereas, coyotes are a predatory animal which is an increasing danger to farmer's livestock.

Whereas, the coyote population is increasing, and a limited hunting season is not sufficiently controlling their numbers.

Whereas coyotes are also becoming more of a threat to household pets and small children.

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau support the permission of farmers or their designee to hunt coyote that appear on their property throughout the year.

DAIRY

2006-20 *R

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 AFBF 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.

2006-21 *R

Whereas; the current MILC payments made to dairy farms across the U.S. is based on the class one price,

Be it resolved that any payments made to dairy farms is only made on milk that meets Grade A standards.

2006-22 *R

Whereas; the Northeast Dairy Compact has proven to be beneficial to both consumers and producers,

Be it resolved that American Farm Bureau Federation support the reauthorization and expansion of the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact, the establishment of the Southern States Dairy Compact, and further support the concept of regional dairy compacts.

2006-23 *R

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

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF work to extend the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact beyond the sunset clause.

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

2006-24

Whereas Dairy Farmers are suffering from low prices that are similar to those paid in 1981 and milk is in tight supply in the area;

Be it Resolved that MFBF work together with neighboring states to develop a regional pricing structure that exceeds federal order pricing.

2006-25

Whereas dairy production in Massachusetts and the rest of New England is experiencing difficulties (1980's prices),

Be it Resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau strive to establish relief and aid as Connecticut and Vermont have accomplished.

Be it Further Resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau take immediate action to inform its dairy members about the status of the accomplishment.

2006-26

Whereas dairy is currently not able to participate in income insurance,

Be it resolved that MFBF work to help allow dairy farmers to create an income insurance program.

2005-24

Whereas a safety net is critical to the future viability of Massachusetts dairy farmers,

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF support legislation to improve dairy farmers' income including but not limited to the National Dairy Equity Act, Regional Compacts, and/or the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) Program.

2004-19 *R

Whereas; a Massachusetts milk dealer receiving milk from non-coop milk producers must be bonded for the amount owed to said producers, which is normally a blended price;

Be It Resolved that MFBF work with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources to require Massachusetts milk dealers also be bonded for the amounts due to The Producer Settlement Fund of the MA Department of Agricultural Resources, and;

Be It Further Resolved that Massachusetts milk dealers also be bonded for amounts due to the Northeast Dairy Compact.

2004-20 *R

Be it resolved that MFBF work to ensure that appropriate action be initiated to perpetuate the nutritional benefits of dairy products.

2004-21

Be it resolved that MFBF support legislation to improve dairy farmers' income.

2004- 22

Whereas, a national dairy price system is complex with differing regional producer interest,
And, Whereas, a regional over-order price system for Class I (fluid milk) can effectively support regional dairy pricing;
And, Whereas, the proposed National Dairy Equity Program could provide an effective vehicle for establishing a nationwide regional over-order price structure

Be it resolved that MFBF support the proposed National Dairy Equity Act.

And be it further resolved that AFBF also support the proposed National Dairy Equity Act.

DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURE

2004-23 *R

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

Therefore, be it resolved that MFBF 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.

ENERGY

2006-27 *R

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.

2006-28

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

Be it Resolved that MFBF 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.

2006-29

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 MFBF 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.

2006-30

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

Be it Resolved that MFBF will work to promote local production and/or availability of ethanol and biodiesel.

2006-31

Whereas Massachusetts utility companies are required by law to promote the production of green energy, and where they allow for interconnection to renewable energy systems, and where they at this time only accept monthly net metering which provides inefficient use of energy produced during period of high production and low on-site demand,

Be it Resolved that MFBF will petition the state utility companies to implement annual net metering for agricultural properties.

2006-32

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 MFBB 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.

2005-25 *R

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 work with the Department of Public Utilities to compensate Agriculture and Industry for these burnouts.

2005-26 *R

Whereas; Massachusetts has some of the most significant sites for wind energy production in the country, and

Whereas; the use of wind power can greatly enhance farm profitability by lowering utility bills, provide farmers with a consistent source of low cost energy, decrease reliance on imported fuels, and

Whereas; farm land is well suited for constructing wind turbines due to open expanses and since wind turbines do not occupy a lot of land and can be farmed right up to the base, and

Whereas; farmers can sell surplus energy, creating an additional source of income, helping to make our farms profitable and sustainable; thus

Be it resolved that MFBB Staff research what is being realized around the country to support wind power generation on farms and report back to he Board of Directors by June 2003, and

Be it further resolved that if farm wind energy production is a promising path to pursue that the MFBB Board of Directors form a Wind Energy Committee to develop an action plan for approval at the 2004 Annual Meeting, and

Be it further resolved that the MFBB staff, working with the State Legislature and the Mass Technology Collaborative's Renewable Energy Trust, develop a grant program for farm based wind projects.

2005-27 *R

Be it resolved that MFBB file legislation to add the practice of harvesting wind for production of energy be included in MGL 128A definition as an Agricultural use.

2005-28

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 Mass Farm Bureau investigate alternative energy production and procurement techniques and technologies and possible abatements to help farms transition to alternate energy sources.

2004-24

Be it resolved that MFBB pursue regulatory changes to have farms billed at the R1 (Residential) Electric Rate.

2004-25

Whereas: an inconsistent definition of agriculture is used by utilities and other entities within the state and
Whereas: a number of different rate structures, billings, and prohibitions result from this lack of definition and

Whereas: the current rate definition for agriculture as set by the Massachusetts public services commission presents a burden to those who attempt to build new or upgraded agricultural facilities, and specifically set higher rates for those who attempt to perform value added activities.

Be it resolved that MFBF work to create and disseminate a definition of agriculture within the state to benefit farm operations with regards utility and public service rate structures;

And further let it be resolved that the MFBF lobby with the public services commission to set a non-demand metering rate, with net metering option for all agricultural activities, including value added processing.

EQUINE

2005-29 *R

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.

2004-26 *R

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

2004-27 *R

Whereas; horse farms currently amount to approximately 10% of the membership of MFBF;

Be it resolved that the MFBF 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.

2004-28 *R

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 MFBF 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.

2004-29

Whereas; there is an ongoing attempt to put slaughter houses for equines out of business by federal legislation,

Be it resolved the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation reiterate opposition to any legislative concept of this of this type and further notify the American Farm Bureau Federation of this opposition.

4-H

2006-33 *R

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 shall investigate ALL avenues, by which other states fund and operate their 4H programs,

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

2006-34 *R

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 Farm Bureau 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 work with the County Boards to bring together a concerted effort to educate and inform the public on an ongoing basis.

2006-35 *R

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

Whereas; 4-H is a part of UMass extension which provides a valuable opportunity for school children and young adults from both rural and urban communities to explore other interests outside of the classroom in an affordable manner;

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 encourages the state legislature to earmark funds for a fully funded 4-H field program.

FAIRS

2005-30 *R

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 Division of Fairs, DAR, 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

2006-36 *R

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 MFBF sponsor similar legislation in the Massachusetts legislature.

2006-37

Whereas municipalities assess real estate taxes on greenhouses as though they are permanent structures;

Let it Be Resolved that Mass Farm Bureau work toward an exemption or at least a fair method of calculation.

2005-31 *R

Whereas; the revised Massachusetts Building Code requires Greenhouses for retail to not be plastic roofed,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau work to amend the code to allow farms to be exempt from this requirement.

2004-30 *R

Whereas; farm buildings are valued at commercial real estate tax rates, and;
Whereas; agricultural buildings are considered by financial institutes to have no other use or marketability than similar agricultural practices;

Be it resolved that the Department of Revenue allows a valuation that is less than the commercial real estate tax rate;

Be it further resolved that valuations be determined by the use of financial institute appraisals.

FARM EQUIPMENT, MOTOR AND RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

2006-38 *R

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 AFBF 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 AFBF 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.

2006-39 *R

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 MFBF work towards getting the Registry of Motor Vehicles to exempt farm tractors from safety inspections.

2005-32 *R

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

Therefore let it be resolved that MFBF work with the department of registry to rectify this issue.

2005-33 *R

Be it resolved that Farm Bureau work with Mass 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.

2005-34 *R

Whereas; Many State Police officers are misinformed about farm plate usage,

Be It Resolved: That officers be thoroughly knowledgeable about farm plate rules and regulations.

2005-35 *R

Whereas; diesel fuel is the most used farm fuel, and;
Whereas; this fuel is a prime target for federal and state taxes which lead to complicated handling and usage regulations to enhance revenue collections, and;
Whereas; the farmers' main use and consumption is on his own or leased lands. This agricultural use is substantially different from public and commercial highway usage;

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF intensify their efforts through legislation to separate agricultural uses of diesel fuel from those of other consumers;

Be it further resolved that an effort be made to simplify the transportation, storage and recordkeeping (permits, decals, revenue reports, etc.) required with the use of this fuel.

2004-31 *R

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 MFBF 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.

2004-32

Be it resolved that: MFBF work to update the trailer weight statutes and regulations to allow agricultural trailers to be used with farm plates up to the manufacturers' weight specifications.

FARMERS LIVE ANIMAL MARKETING EXCHANGE (F.L.A.M.E.)

2004-33 *R

Whereas; there has been conflict between the operations at the Farmers Live Animal Market Exchange in Littleton and the Northampton Co-op Auction in Whately, and;

Whereas; the sale of beef through these auctions are a critical part of the livelihood of dairy farmers and other agriculture in Massachusetts;

Be It Resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau should do everything in their power to coordinate the activities between these two auctions that results in the successful operations of both auctions.

FARMING OPPORTUNITIES

2006-40

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.

2004-34 *R

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 MFBF 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 MFBF file legislation, if appropriate, establishing such programs.

FARM VIABILITY

2006-41 *R

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 MFBF 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

2006-42 *R

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

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

2006-43 *R

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 MFBF and AFBF aggressively oppose any rule, regulation or law that would adversely affect a producer’s ability to make and or sell unpasteurized cider.

2006-44 *R

Be it resolved that MFBF work with MADAR and UMass to support a literature review and analysis of scientific data and studies as to the published benefits from drinking cider.

2004-35 *R

Whereas; in 1996 The Food Quality Protection Act was passed by Congress and the purpose of this law was to update the evaluation of pesticides based on risk assessment practices, and;
Whereas; to support the input and development of the risk assessment practices for the interests of agriculture, an industry organization, The Minor Crop Farmer Alliance was formed, and;
Whereas; the American Farm Bureau supports this organization, and;
Whereas; there are pesticides that are continually being reviewed and going through the process of label revision and elimination, and;
Whereas; there is no current line of communication to all areas of the horticulture industry to keep all areas of the industry informed;

Be It Resolved that the American Farm Bureau develop lines of communication with all facets of the horticulture industry in order to keep all industry factions informed. This action is necessary in order that all risks and possible elimination of various pesticides are reviewed prior to final actions that terminate their use. Currently, pesticide usage is being changed without the full knowledge and input of the industry.

GRANTS AND LOANS

2006-45

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

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

2004-36

Whereas; Many grant opportunities available within the state and the region go unclaimed.
And whereas; Grants and other financial opportunities greatly facilitate the activity of farm diversification.
And whereas; Farms that diversify and pursue multiple revenue streams have greater future opportunities, and are better able to weather financial downturns and adversities.

Therefore let it be resolved that MFBF establish a central, dynamic listing of grants and sourcing opportunities, along with conditions and deadlines, and find a method of assisting farmers with the application process.

2004-37

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 MFBF will lobby or work with the Department of Agriculture Resources to streamline the grant application process within the state.

HOMELAND SECURITY

2004-38

Whereas there is an increased concern with biosecurity on farms,

Be it resolved that all state inspectors be required to have some form of official identification available when making on-farm inspections.

INSURANCE AND BANKING

2006-46 *R

Whereas; membership in a group is necessary in order to obtain reasonable rates for health insurance
And Whereas; many MFBF members need to join an additional business group in order to provide health insurance for themselves and their employees,

Be it resolved that MFBF form a health insurance group so as to provide this valuable service to our membership.

2006-47 *R

Whereas; Farm Bureau 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 MFBF 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.

2006-48

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 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.

2005-36 *R

Whereas; the legal test for determining whether an employer must pay unemployment tax has been a payroll of \$20,000 in any quarter for many years;

Be it resolved that Farm Bureau take appropriate action to bring this payroll level up to \$40,000 and each year thereafter the amount be corrected for inflation.

2004-39

Whereas, new pesticides referred to as "reduced-risk" and "biopesticides" have been registered by the US Environmental Protection Agency: and whereas, EPA and other Federal and State agencies are encouraging the use of these products as part of higher level Integrated Pest Management strategies: and whereas, there have been some problems with the effectiveness of the new pesticides:

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF support the creation of a crop insurance program related to IPM practices whereby growers can be compensated when they experience crop loss due to the use of higher level IPM practices incorporating new pesticides.

2004-40

Whereas, the current Membership List Purchase Agreement between MFBF and Farm Family Insurance no longer requires MFBF membership as a prerequisite for purchasing Farm Family Insurance past the first year; and whereas, there is the potential for loss of membership in MFBF, especially by Associate members, as a result:

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

LABOR

2006-49 *R

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 MFBF 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.

2005-37 *R

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 work to amend this outdated Blue Law on time and one-half on Sundays, to exempt farm retail operations.

2005-38 *R

Whereas; many farmers in Massachusetts rely on offshore labor for their farms, and;

Whereas; FmHA or replacement Farm Labor Housing Program prohibits loans for farm labor housing for non-domestic labor;

Be it resolved that Farm Bureau work to change FmHA or replacement agency regulations to allow farm labor housing loans to be used for any farm labor housing purpose.

2005-39

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 MFBF and AFBF work to secure needed changes to the H2A program even if comprehensive labor/immigration reforms are not part of the legislation.

2005-40

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 AFBF 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 AFBF seeks immediate passage of these reforms.

2005-41

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 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 investigate the feasibility of having a lower minimum wage for people under the age of eighteen.

2005-42

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 MFBF work with American Farm Bureau 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.

2004-41 *R

Whereas; the AFBF 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 MFBF work comprehensively with the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation and the New England Apple Council to enlist their support for this change.

2004-42

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

Be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF 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.

Be it further resolved that MFBF recommend to AFBF that policy pertaining to the H2A program within the **IMMIGRATION 84** policy should be categorized in the AFBF policy book under **FARM LABOR 136**.

LAND PRESERVATION & TRUSTS

2006-50 *R

Whereas; farms are changing;

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

MARKETING & FARM SIGNS

2006-51 *R

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

Be it resolved that MFBF investigate the feasibility of developing a cooperative processing and marketing facility.

2006-52

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

Be it Resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau 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.

2006-53

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 will work to secure funding and provide support to these local efforts.

2006-54

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 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.

2006-55

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 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.

2006-56

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 educate consumers on the true (real) price of food and its cost of production.

2005-43 *R

Whereas; the state institutions are an important sales outlet for many farmers in the Commonwealth, and;

Whereas; the buyers at the various state institutions prefer the quality and the freshness of the various commodities that are produced in the Commonwealth, and;

Whereas; the state government purchasing agency has assigned one vendor to supply all commodities to the state institutions, the following changes need to be made to assist Massachusetts producers to sell and to supply the various institutions;

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau continue to encourage state agencies to buy Massachusetts commodities in order to support the local Massachusetts economy.

2005-44

Whereas: New England is losing USDA-inspected slaughter facilities at an alarming rate,

And, whereas Massachusetts farmers rely more and more on the marketing of their meat products directly to consumers,

Be it resolved that MFBF work with AFBF to induce USDA to alter its regulations to allow for part-time supervision of the smaller, local slaughter houses.

2004-43 *R

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.

2004-44 *R

Be it resolved that MFBF will express to the Commissioner of Agriculture the need for him to convince the supermarket chains to support local agriculture.

2004-45

Whereas many local and state institutions would like to purchase Massachusetts grown produce and farm products,

And whereas Massachusetts grown may not be the lowest bid to the institution,

Be it resolved that the MFBF work to pass legislation that requires government institutions to purchase Massachusetts grown farm products from Massachusetts producers or their designated agents so long as they are not more than 10% higher than the lowest bid.

PEST MANAGEMENT

2006-57 *R

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

2005-45 *R

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 work with the proper state agencies to have a general amnesty for the purpose of the proper disposal of these chemicals.

2005-46 *R

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 MFBF 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.

2005-47

As the deciduous forests, mostly maple, oak, and ash, in many parts of Massachusetts have been infested with the forest tent caterpillar and gypsy moth 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 Mass Dept. of Conservation and Recreation and the Dept. of Agricultural Resources institute a spray program before May 6, 2006, (similar to the State of Vermont's) to eradicate these pests on both private and state lands.

2004-46 *R

Whereas; the use of pesticides are under attack from concerned citizens and the DEP;

Be it resolved that MFBB continue to support and increase efforts to promote IPM research and implementation.

2004-47 *R

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

Be it resolved that MFBB work with AFBF 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.

2004-48

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.

Be it further resolved that MFBB favor repealing the sales tax exemption for retail sales of pesticides and fertilizers as one means of generating revenue for this funding.

2004-49

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

Be it resolved that MFBB 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.

POLICY AND ORGANIZATION

2006-58 *R

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 (MFBF) be available in the MFBF office or on call during all normal MFBF business hours.

2006-59 *R

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

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

2006-60 *R

Whereas; many MFBF 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 MFBF office where they are available to other members and their attorneys in dire need of this vital information.

2006-61 *R

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 MFBF continue to promote, support and encourage the young farmers' and ranchers' program.

2006-62 *R

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 MFBF work towards strengthening the right-to-farm policy of the Commonwealth.

2006-63

Whereas, We the farming community of Massachusetts have elected a new Governor and his website does include agriculture for one of his "working groups" as part of his administration transition process.

Be it resolved: that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau make a request to Deval Patrick to form a "working group" to address issues that face agriculture in Massachusetts and include this said group on his new website patrickmurrytransitions.org so individuals can make suggestions and or comments for the new administration.

Be it further resolved: that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau make every effort to educate our new governor and his staff concerning the current state of affairs of the Dairy Industry in Massachusetts. That MFBF set up a time to meet with Deval Patrick and the dairy farmers of Massachusetts to discuss urgent issues that they face.

2006-64

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.

2006-65

Whereas, MFBF dues have been at the same level for several years,

Be it Resolved that associate dues be increased to \$60 and regular dues be increased to \$180.

2006-66

Whereas Farm Bureau needs and desires new members,

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

2006-67

Whereas numbers of farms are dropping, and every current existing and potential farm becomes more important,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau create/implement marketing devices to facilitate retention and recruitment.

2006-68

Where as FB membership & Directors are increasing in years (avg. age)

Be it resolved that every MFBF 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.

2005-48 *R

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

Whereas; Interaction with MFBF staff is a benefit that current members need and deserve, and;

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

Be It Resolved: That in an effort to meet our memberships' needs and to generate new membership, MFBF will exhibit at least five (5) agricultural commodity trade shows or meetings.

2005-49 *R

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

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

2005-50 *R

Resolved that MFBF form an Investment Committee of five people, for which one member be from the MFBF Budget Committee. The purpose of the committee will be to advise the Board of Directors as to long and short range strategies to invest monies available to Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and re-allocate the portfolio as necessary.

2005-51

Whereas Farm Bureau membership recruitment is changing and the need to be accessible to potential members is ever increasing,

Be it resolved that the state office of Mass Farm Bureau put in a toll free number to use for potential new members and as a service to existing members.

2005-52

Whereas: Membership retention and growth is essential to Farm Bureau effectiveness, And, whereas many long-time members are upset by tardy mailing of membership cards, electronic communications, incorrect inclusion on unpaid lists, unnecessarily curt wording of cover letters, and other deficiencies in the membership system,

Be it resolved that the MFBF staff and Membership Committee redouble its efforts to insure that these problems are rectified promptly and do not recur.

2005-53

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 Mass Farm Bureau explore the possibility of offering entry and beginning farms access to accounting and financial counseling resources.

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

2005-54

Whereas much of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation's success comes from working with elected officials, and further

Whereas many non-profits and special interest groups in Massachusetts are utilizing PAC's and other entities to enhance their political clout, and further

Whereas the lack of such an entity has the potential to put Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation at a significant disadvantage,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation's Board of Directors is directed to investigate this issue, and its possible remedies, including but not limited to establishing a Political Action Committee, a People's Committee, a systematic grassroots operation within the organization, or any other possible options, and further

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation's Board of Directors is authorized to act on its findings in establishing such a program or entity as it see fit to address this issue.

2004-50 *R

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

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

2006-69 *R

Whereas; many times eminent domain settlement does not reflect true losses suffered by farmers whose land has been taken;

Be it resolved that MFBF work to have "multiple damages" awarded in cases of hardship to farmers.

2006-70 *R

Whereas; there is a continuing erosion of “private property rights” by the imposition of burdensome government regulations;

Be it resolved that MFBF 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.

2006-71 *R

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 MFBF and AFBF 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.

2005-55 *R

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 MFBF 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 Mass Farm Bureau Federation work to have Public Health Regulations fall under the review of the Attorney General.

2005-56 *R

Whereas; landowners are under ever increasing risk of frivolous lawsuits and;

Whereas; landowners’ insurance premiums are increasing due to settlements and high legal expenses defending against such frivolous lawsuits;

Be it resolved that Mass Farm Bureau investigate a new effort encouraging legislation whereby a farmer is eligible to recover his or her expenses from the plaintiff if the court finds in the farmers’ favor.

2004-51 *R

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 MFBF 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 MFBF 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 AFBF.

2004-52

Whereas, the Massachusetts Farm Bureau 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.

2004-53

Be it resolved that the MFBF is opposed to the creation of multiple, thousand-plus-acre, Forest Reserves, restricting uses, and including but not limited to timber harvesting and other land uses.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

2004-54 *R

Whereas; agriculture does not always receive positive media coverage, and;
Whereas; farmers are often placed on the defensive;

Be it resolved that MFBF do more work with public relations to give agriculture a more positive image.

QUALITY OF LIFE

2004-55 *R

Whereas; there have been bills introduced by some Massachusetts legislators to extend Daylight Savings Time to include the entire year, and

Whereas; many farmers begin work early in the morning and would be negatively affected by the extension of Daylight Savings Time throughout the year,

Be it resolved that Hampshire County Farm Bureau and the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation oppose any bills that would extend Daylight Savings Time throughout the entire year.

RATITES

2004-56 *R

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

2006-72*R

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 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.

2006-73 *R

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.

2006-74 *R

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 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.

2006-75 *R

Whereas; the State, tax exempt and non profit organizations own land and sell forest products yearly,

Be it resolved to allow the collection of an eight percent stumpage fee from the sale of forest products sold from land owned by the State of Massachusetts, and by tax exempt and non profit organizations.

2006-76 *R

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 MFBF support legislation making FID fees a one-time fee.

2006-77 *R

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 MFBF, encourage a formation of a government program that farmers may secure low interest loans for buildings so that farmers can operate successfully.

2006-78 *R

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 MFBF to work aggressively to place farm houses and buildings at a true agricultural value as a necessity for the operation of the farm.

2006-79 *R

Whereas; there are significant legal questions with regard to the way the IRS is applying the Income Tax code,

And Whereas; the tax code is incredibly cumbersome and expensive to adhere to,

Be it resolved that MFBF supports the implementation of a Fair Tax system.

2006-80 *R

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.

2006-81 *R

Whereas; state-wide there are inconsistencies in real estate valuations;

Be it resolved that MFBB 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.

2006-82 *R

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 MFBB work to have the lowest tax classification rate for small or farm businesses in business zoned land.

2006-83 *R

Whereas; farm buildings are often assessed at valuations far above their agricultural values;

Be it resolved that MFBB work to establish a mechanism for fair valuation of farm buildings, similar to the Farmland Assessment Act.

Be it resolved that MFBB express to the Department of Revenue the necessity of educating said officials and the public about the Chapter 61A process.

2006-84

Whereas, the farm animal, machinery excise tax is implemented inconsistently across the Commonwealth and is burdensome to many agricultural producers,

Be it resolved that MFBB explore options to reduce these burdens on communities and producers.

2006-85

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 MFBB will work to change the language of the above law from “20 years”, to the “useful life of the system”.

2006-86

Whereas government grants are taxed as normal income;
Whereas this is effectively taxing taxes;

Be it Resolved that Mass Farm Bureau work to eliminate state and federal tax on these funds.

2006-87

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 MFBF meet with responsible decision makers to determine how IRS has been allowed to continue this apparent illegal use of the 1040 returns.

2005-57 *R

Whereas; a deficit budget is forecast and the Commonwealth will be looking to raise taxes,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau recommends against an increase in all taxes and against a resumption of the inheritance tax.

2005-58 *R

Whereas; woodland under Chapter 61(a) or (b) can be transferred to other use categories without penalty and;

Whereas; land under 61 (a) has a lower assessment than 61 and;

Whereas; recent Appellate Tax Board decisions allowed the transfer of woodland from Chapter 61 to 61 (a) without penalty;

Be it resolved that the Mass Farm Bureau work to make necessary changes to Chapter 61 to allow for woodland transfer to Chapter 61 (a) or (b) without penalty.

2005-59 *R

Whereas; there is confusion, misunderstanding and misinterpretation by many local boards of assessors and officials of the Chapter 61A *Farmland Assessment Act* in general and the Farmland Valuation Advisory Committee valuation recommendations in particular, and;

Whereas; there is need for public awareness of the value of the Chapter 61A *Farmland Assessment Act*, and;

Whereas; it is often left to the farmer to explain and defend the mechanics and value of Chapter 61A to said officials and the public;

Be it resolved that MFBF express to the Department of Revenue the necessity of educating said officials and the public about the Chapter 61A process.

2005-60 *R

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.

2005-61 *R

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 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.

2005-62 *R

Whereas; the conversion of land classified under Chapter 61A is increasingly meeting legal challenge from municipalities that can be detrimental to farmers;

Be it resolved that MFBF work with legal counsel to produce, within 4 calendar months, and keep on file a document that delineates the possible conversion strategies that farmers have.

Be it further resolved that such document state the likely economic and political outcome from each strategy, and be reviewed, and updated when necessary, on a yearly basis.

2005-63

Whereas AFBF has apparently not taken any action on their 2005 policy requiring the development of a fair tax, Plymouth County Farm Bureau requests that a review of our study of the present tax laws (26USC) and regulations (26CFR) shows that a fair tax is already in place but is not being implemented by the IRS. Individual requests to the Secretary of the Treasury have been ignored. It will take a concerted group action to force our servant government to enforce their provisions in 26 CFR which confirms that no income tax is due from US citizens living in the 50 states unless their income is from a listed taxable source.

Therefore: Be it resolved: That MFBF request that AFBF ask the Secretary of the Treasury or any other government oversight authority why taxable income, as defined in treasury regulation 26CFR 1.86 L8 (F)(I) and 26CFR 1.861-8T(d)(2)(iii), is not how the Treasury and the IRS currently define what taxable income is.

2004-57 *R

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.

2004-58 *R

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 MFBF continue to support the per acre land value recommendations provided annually by the Farmland Evaluation Advisory Commission relative to 61A values.

2004-59 *R

Whereas; owners of land parcels of less than five acres are ineligible for tax relief under Chapter 61A, and;

Whereas; many such owners or their leasees make honest livings in agriculture by combining many such parcels into a single operation, and;

Whereas; in municipalities which have adopted property tax classification, such parcels are taxed at the *commercial* rate which exceeds even that of *residential* land;

Be it resolved that MFBF:

- Continue its efforts to have such small parcels as are actively used in productive agriculture be covered by Chapter 61A, or;
- Seek legislation stipulating an additional classification called *agriculture*;
- Seek legislation mandating the classification of land actively used for agricultural purposes as *open space*.

2004-60 *R

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 MFBF take appropriate action to implement and apply the agricultural exemptions granted under M.G.L. Ch. 64H and I to all of agriculture.

2004-61 *R

Whereas; residential real-estate taxes continue to increase at alarming rates in many towns, and
Whereas; Chapter 59, Sec 8, establishes an excise tax cap of \$5/1000 valuation for farm animals, machinery and equipment,

Be it resolved; that MFBF explore ways to cap farm residence tax rates at something similar.

2004-62

Whereas many small parcels of land in Massachusetts can be convenient to farm while Chapter 61A provisions are limited to 5 acres or larger,

Be it resolved that the Massachusetts Constitution be amended to allow the minimum acreage be 3 acres to qualify for 61A tax assessment.

2004-63

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 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.

2004-64

Whereas: farmers have tax spikes in their Aggregate Gross Income (AGI) in some years caused by sales of business property, machinery, animals etc. used in the small business. Most of the population has instead income year to year with increases due to inflation Most of the farmers live in comparative poverty to the rest of the population due to long hours of work and the seasonal work they do. This is controlled by money, demand to buy supplies, weather, labor costs and inflation of costs and expenses to stay in business.

Therefore, be it resolved that MFBF and AFBF work to change the IRS regulations to exempt farmers from including sales of business property in AGI caps for retirement.

2004-65

Be it resolved MFBF supports the implementation of a fair tax system including an exploration of the IRS present legal basis used to determine the taxable income of US citizens.

TRESPASS, VANDALISM AND DESTRUCTION OF FARM PROPERTY

2005-64

Whereas Massachusetts agriculture continues to see increased activity of property destruction and criminal trespass;

Be it resolved that MFBF support increased fines and penalties beyond restitution, for crimes of violence and/or vandalism against agricultural equipment, property, livestock or crops.

2004-66-R

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 and industry representatives agree that there exists no evidence of abuse or neglect on farms in Massachusetts;

Be it resolved that MFBF continue its aggressive program of promoting agriculture's image, and;

Be it further resolved that MFBF 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.

ZONING

2006-88 *R

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.

2006-89

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 MFBB 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.

2005-65 *R

Whereas; many towns in Massachusetts have conflicting zoning regulations relating to the operation of Farm Stands;

Be it resolved that MFBB join with the Mass Department of Agricultural Resources to create a sample zoning regulation, based on state zoning regulation Chapter 40A Section 3, that offers the flexibility in products, activities, etc. to allow farm stands to operate, in order to remain competitive and profitable.

2005-66 *R

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.

2005-67 *R

Whereas; farmers continue to experience difficulties with municipal officials interpreting the agricultural exemption language of MGL Chapter 40A; 3, the Zoning Act; and
Whereas; in particular, issues of new construction, farm stand operations, and consistent definitions of agriculture continue to create confusing interpretations, and
Whereas; the 40A; 3 agricultural exemption is essential to the survival of Massachusetts agri-businesses,

Be it resolved that Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation explore and, if possible, pursue opportunities to clarify the language of 40A; 3 to benefit farmers.

2005-68 *R

Be it resolved that MFBB prepare a reference document examining zoning bylaw, and other regulatory issues, concerning farm related businesses. These issues include agricultural tourism, farm vacations, and recreational activities, on farm entertainment, processed products and related farm occupations.

2005-69

Whereas there are efforts being made to change the way zoning and/or planning boards operate in the Commonwealth,

Be it resolved that MFBB 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.