

## **WGGB ABC40/FOX6**

**<http://www.wggb.com/2014/08/19/three-day-farm-tour-visits-valley-malt-in-hadley/>**

HADLEY, Mass. (WGGB)- In support of local agriculture, a district-wide farm tour began today. U.S. Representative Jim McGovern joined U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Edward Avalos, and other elected officials on the tour that includes stops at 16 farms.

The third stop Tuesday was at Valley Malt in Hadley.

Andrea Stanley and her husband began malting grains in the kitchen, then four years ago, their business Valley Malt was born.

It's a niche in local agriculture.

"We found this was this missing link, that grain needed to be malted in order to be brewed with so we looked around to see if there were any local Malt Houses and we discovered the closest Malt House was in Wisconsin," Andrea Stanley explains.

The crowd listened closely as they explained the basics of the malt process: apply water, time and temperature to the grain.

"It just undergoes this wonderful process where it becomes this product that is then able to be used by a brewery," Stanley adds.

Most of the malting is done in large stainless steel bins, but they are one of the only locations in the country to still incorporate old fashioned floor malting.

"Everybody is unique and has their niche in this area farmers are adapting in a way to be successful and I think it's important for us to support that," says Jim McGovern U.S. Representative.

The tour will allow elected officials to see first-hand the impact of state and federal programs and to discuss strategies to boost the local food economy.

As for Valley Malt in Hadley, business is going even better than expected.

"We started off producing 2,000 pounds of malt a week now producing 8,000 pounds a week," says Stanley.

With additional support they plan to grow even more.

The farm tour takes place over 3 days. Tomorrow, they will visit Worcester-area farms.

**Paradise City Press (Northampton Community TV blog)**

**<http://www.paradisecitypress.org/2014/08/20/agriculture-secretary-joins-three-day-food-farm-tour/>**

**AGRICULTURE UNDER SECRETARY ON THREE-DAY FOOD & FARM TOUR**

*Today, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Edward Avalos joined U.S. Representative Jim McGovern, elected officials and others on a food and farm tour (#MAFarmTour) that included seven stops in the Pioneer Valley.*

This is the first of a three-day tour across the Second Congressional District that includes stops at 16 farms and local food organizations. Tomorrow, the Congressman and Under Secretary will visit Worcester-area farms alongside MA Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Maeve Vallety Bartlett and MA Commissioner of Agriculture Greg Watson. The final day will culminate with a focus on urban agriculture.

**“More and more, people want to know where their food comes from and Massachusetts has become a national leader in the ‘Buy Local’ movement,” said U.S. Representative Jim McGovern. “Meeting with businesses and organizations that are working hard every day to expand access to local, healthy food helps inform my policy decisions in Washington. I value their input tremendously and am happy that Under Secretary Avalos could join me to hear their stories.”**

The tour highlights local and regional food initiatives that support local farms, distribution centers, and cooperative markets. Congressman McGovern and Under Secretary Avalos will meet with producers and distributors to see firsthand the impact of state and federal programs and to discuss strategies to boost local food economies. Nearly all of the farms and organizations visited in the region have benefited directly from federal USDA programs.

“We greatly appreciate Congressman McGovern’s interest and help in working with our important local farmers and helping all of us preserve our working landscapes,” said Jay Healy, State Director for USDA Rural Development.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has identified strengthening local food systems as one of the four pillars of USDA’s commitment to rural economic development, along with production agriculture (including expanding export markets and improving research), promoting conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities, and growing the biobased economy. USDA’s *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* Initiative coordinates the Department’s policy, resources, and outreach efforts related to local and regional food systems.

## Daily Hampshire Gazette

<http://www.gazettenet.com/news/townbytown/northampton/13188835-95/valley-farms-show-us-department-of-agriculture-undersecretary-local-food-systems-at-work>

Valley farms show US Department of Agriculture undersecretary local food systems at work

HATFIELD — While walking between dump trucks brimming with potatoes during a tour of Szawlowski Potato Farms Tuesday afternoon, an undersecretary for the U.S. Department of Agriculture brought up the importance of taking care of “the 1 percent.”

But Edward Avalos, the undersecretary for marketing and regulatory programs, was not talking about the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. He was referring to the fraction of the country’s population that are farmers and ranchers.

“They produce over 83 percent of the food you and I eat every day,” he said. “That 1 percent supports the other 99 percent, so it has to be a priority for the administration, for the USDA, to keep producers in business.”

The visit by Avalos to the potato farm — the biggest of its kind in New England, according to the farmers — was part of a three-day tour of farms and food-related businesses across the state.

The USDA has identified strengthening local and regional food systems as an important part of rural economic development and pledged to invest \$78 million in the cause, so the tour stops included food production, processing and distribution centers as well as farms.

Accompanying Avalos at the Hatfield farm and some other western Massachusetts stops were U.S. Rep. James McGovern, D-Worcester, state Rep. John Scibak, D-South Hadley, and others including representatives of the state Department of Agricultural Resources.

The tour Tuesday included stops at All Things Local in Amherst, Mapleline Farm and Valley Malt in Hadley, River Valley Co-op in Northampton, the Franklin County CDC Food Processing Center in Greenfield, and Four Star Farms in Northfield.

Local food systems are already important parts of the economy in the Pioneer Valley, where most producers have smaller operations compared to other parts of the country. Farmers are already finding the best ways to sell locally, Avalos said.

“I’ve seen a lot of creativity and a lot of innovation,” he said of his stops Tuesday morning at Valley Malt, which prepares malted grain for brewers and distillers, and Mapleline Farm, which bottles and sells its own milk.

“It’s absolutely critical to allow smaller producers to be successful in developing specialty and niche markets,” he said. “Because when there’s a farmer that can’t make a living off the land he owns or the land he rents, the rural community suffers.”

Avalos said that the USDA’s new Local and Regional Food Production Program, paid for through \$78 million in the 2014 Farm Bill, will be a boon to smaller farmers and related businesses.

“It’s \$15 million in grant money to address distribution, storage, transportation, and other market-specific challenges for both producers and transporters,” he said. Another \$15 million will support marketing for direct-selling venues like farmers markets.

### Selling spuds

Shelley Szawlowski, who handles sales and other tasks for Szawlowski Potato Farms, led the group through coolers and packing rooms Tuesday, explaining how potatoes are harvested, washed, cooled, bagged and shipped out. Throughout the tour, various other members of the family dropped in to talk with their visitors about everything from how they track the potatoes they sell, to the favorable weather that means a successful growing season.

“Potatoes love cool night temperatures and sunny, warm days,” Shelley Szawlowski said in a large cold storage facility packed with pallets of potatoes. “The cool nights really give them their weight.”

The farm usually harvests potatoes from early July to the end of October on 3,000 acres of owned and rented land in Hampshire and Franklin counties. When the Szawlowskis are not overwhelmed with processing and shipping their own potatoes, the family processes and distributes spuds for farmers from around the region.

While the Szawlowskis own one of the bigger farms in the state, McGovern said that is still a family affair after over 100 years. “One of the unique things we’ve seen today is that these are all family-run farms,” he said.

He said the tour is an opportunity to learn about the area’s farming industry not only for the undersecretary, but for himself. “This is a fairly new part of my district,” said McGovern, a member of the House Agriculture Committee.

“I’m on it primarily to protect (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and other nutrition programs, but I’m also becoming a big advocate of the small and medium farmers,” he said. “They could be a bigger part of the economy.”

Avalos, who hails from New Mexico, said the smaller farms he is seeing in Massachusetts this week remind him of some from his home state.

“In New Mexico there are a number of large farms and also small farms, especially in northern New Mexico,” he said. “They’re very similar to this part of the country. A lot of the challenges the smaller producers have are the same.” Those include higher overhead and production costs and being undercut price-wise by their larger competitors.

Many farms in both areas are also family-owned and multi-generational, like the Szawlowski Potato Farms. “There is a lot of family pride in these family operations,” he said. “There’s a big emphasis on keeping it in the family.”

### **The Recorder**

**<http://www.recorder.com/home/13205252-95/mcgovern-calls-mass-a-leader-in-buy-local-movement>**

#### **McGovern calls Mass. a leader in ‘buy local’ movement**

Mass. a leader in ‘buy local’ movementAs part of a three-day “food and farm” tour of his district, U.S. Rep. James McGovern led a team of officials through stops at the Franklin County Community Development Corp.’s Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center in Greenfield and Four Star Farms in Northfield.

Together with Edward Avalos, U.S. Department of Agriculture undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, the Worcester Democrat led a delegation that also included representatives from the state Department of Food and Agriculture, USDA Rural Development and members of the state House. Tuesday’s visit, with Rep. Paul Mark, D-Peru, attending the segment at the 250-acre former dairy farm that now grows sod, grains, hops and potatoes, also included stops at Real Pickles in Greenfield and Artisans Beverage Cooperative in Greenfield.

Earlier in the day, there were stops in Amherst, Hadley, Hatfield and Northampton.

Avalos, a former marketing director at the New Mexico Agriculture Department, described initiatives in the 2014 Farm Bill to encourage local and regional food production and distribution, including an expanded, \$65 million Specialty Crops Program that provides Massachusetts with \$474,000.

It also includes a new Local Food Promotion Program.

Yet John Waite, the CDC’s executive director, told McGovern that USDA’s commodity foods program, which has been expanded to include vegetables as part of an effort to boost nutrition in the schools, makes it difficult for the Food Processing Center — with

federal support as part of a Farm to Institution grant — to compete with bulk vegetables from California, because the quantities available are more limited.

Avalos said he believes there should be a way to encourage school cafeterias to procure part of their order from local producers like the Western Mass. CDC and added that he would look into the matter.

McGovern said, “More and more, people want to know where their food comes from, and Massachusetts has become a national leader in the ‘buy local’ movement.”

He encouraged future meetings to bring USDA, Department of Labor and other agencies together to discuss issues faced by local farmers trying to boost their marketing to local customers.

### **NECN**

**<http://www.necn.com/news/new-england/Congressman-Expresses-Support-for-Locally-Grown-Foods-272220171.html>**

### **Congressman Expresses Support for Locally Grown Foods**

Massachusetts Congressman Jim McGovern learned a lesson in agriculture after taking part in a three-day farm tour.

McGovern visited 16 farms and food organizations across his district. Thursday, he stopped by the YouthGROW Urban Farm in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Steven Fischer directs the Regional Environmental Council of central Massachusetts, which hires dozens of low income youth every year to run the Oread Street farm.

“They grow healthy food that they in turn sell at affordable prices to folks in food insecure neighborhoods all throughout the city,” Fischer explained.

Congressman McGovern says more than 1,500 Worcester County farms generate 81 million dollars in products. He wants to help the industry grow.

“Well, there are programs in the Farm Bill that can be of benefit to some of the farms that I visited. I've talked to people about some regulatory issues. I've

also talked to people about how we can better market what we can grow here locally,” Congressman McGovern said.

McGovern says local farms stimulate the economy and provide healthy food options to residents. He's hoping to increase access to foods and promote diverse farms like YouthGROW.

### **WWLP 22 News**

**<http://wwlp.com/2014/08/19/federal-officials-touring-wmass-farms/>**

#### **Federal Officials Touring WMass Farms**

HADLEY, Mass. (WWLP) – Agriculture is an important part of our economy. 22News found out how it was highlighted through a tour of the Pioneer Valley.

Mapleline Farm in Hadley says it is just one of three dairy farms in Western Massachusetts that process milk on the farm. It's tough work.

“The price of milk really needs to stay at a more stable level where farmers can operate and not have these up and down cycles of not making any money and then plenty, just to pay off when you did make money,” Paul Kokoski of Mapleline Farm told 22News.

That's one of many concerns Congressman Jim McGovern and Edward Avalos, USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, hope to bring back to Washington.

“The most important thing is to listen to and hear from our state farmers, from our dairy producers, from our livestock producers. It's very important to the president,” said Avalos.

On Tuesday, they toured seven farms and businesses in the Pioneer Valley. They started at All Things Local Co-Op in Amherst before heading to Mapleline Farm in Hadley, Valley Malt in Hadley, River Valley Co-Op in Northampton, Szawlowski Potato Farms in Hatfield, Franklin County CDC Food Processing Center in Greenfield and Four Star Farms in Northfield.

Farmers dedicate countless hours to growing their crops, but after they grow, then what?

Congressman McGovern wants to focus on helping farmers market their products so they end up at places like All Things Local.

“We’re kind of the nexus of where consumers and local farmers get together...We are preserving local jobs and our local economy. We’re supporting, literally supporting our neighbors,” said Al Sax, General Manager of All Things Local in downtown Amherst.

“I don’t think I could survive on a farm working for more than a few days, but I admire what our farmers do and I enjoy what they grow.”

The tour also focused on farm bill programs, including a \$66 million federal initiative to help farmers enhance the competitiveness of their specialty crops.

The tour continues Wednesday in Central Massachusetts, as they tour Valley View Farm in Templeton, Rota Spring Farm in Sterling, Meadowbrook Orchard in Sterling, Little Bit Farm in Leicester, Elmhurst Dairy in Milbury and Five Forks Farm in Upton. Thursday, they’ll focus on urban farming at YouthGrow Urban Farm in Worcester, Oread Place EAT Center Site and Orchard in Worcester and Preston Street EAT Center Site in Worcester.

#### **WHMP AM1400 FM96.9**

**<http://whmp.com/news/160061-usda-officials-tour-western-mass-farms/>**

#### **USDA Officials Tour Western Mass Farms**

(Hadley, MA) Federal officials are touring Western Mass farms and agriculture-related businesses. Congressman Jim McGovern hosted a top official with the USDA on Wednesday. They went to Mapeline Farm in Hadley, the River Valley Market, Szawlowski Potato Farm, and a food processing center in Greenfield. And that’s just the beginning. Undersecretary Edward Avalos said he would take what he had learned back to Washington.

#### **Masslive.com**

**[http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2014/08/state\\_and\\_federal\\_agriculture.html](http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2014/08/state_and_federal_agriculture.html)**

#### **State and Federal Agriculture Officials Tour Farms in the Pioneer Valley**

**NORTHAMPTON** — To be on tour Tuesday with the agriculture big-wigs, it would help to know what a sunchoke is, though it is not essential.

A sunchoke is a potato-like root that can be cut up and put in soups. It looks like a bunch of knuckles without the skin. There are sunchoke galore at **River Valley Market**.

The Northampton coop happened to be one of the stops on a three-day tour of the Pioneer Valley that will hit 16 farms and various agriculture-related business such as the coop and Valley Malt, a Hadley operation that cultivates malts for fine beers.

Among the luminaries on tour Tuesday were Edward Avalos, Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs for the U.S. Department of Agriculture,

Massachusetts congressman **James McGovern**, D-Worcester, and state representatives Peter Kocot and John Scibak.

The stop at River Valley Market included a lunch prepared mainly with local produce and a dessert of cobbler and Bart's ice cream. As an appetizer, Dorian Gregory, the chairwoman of the coop, told how River Valley started six years ago with a membership of 2,000 and an investment of \$300,000 and has grown since. This, Gregory said, has been due in large part to the coop's relationship with local farmers.

Gary Shaefer and Barbara Fingold, who started Bart's, pitched in with anecdotes about their partnership with River Valley, which has more varieties of their ice cream than any other outlet, they said.

From there the entourage drove to Szawlowski Potato Farms in Hatfield, where they got a view of cultivating and packaging potatoes from the ground up. Shell Szawlowski told the group that the key to success in 2014 is specialization.

Avalos said he liked what he saw in Massachusetts, and compared the farmland he has seen to that in the northern part of his home state of New Mexico. He added that the emphasis on local products dovetails nicely with the goals of the Obama Administration.

"There's a lot of family pride here," Avalos said, adding that the Obama administration is focused to stimulating local economies.

McGovern, who grew up in Worcester, said he has visited farms before, but never so many in so short a time.

"It's an important learning lesson," he said.

After lunch, he even joined River Valley Market.

"I want to thank you guys for what you have done here," he told coop officials, "and for making it contagious across the state."

### **Spencer New Leader**

**[https://www.facebook.com/spencernewleader/posts/654114748017673?notif\\_t=story\\_reshare](https://www.facebook.com/spencernewleader/posts/654114748017673?notif_t=story_reshare)**

**Shared Congressman McGovern's photo on Facebook at Little Bit Farm**

Congressman Jim McGovern (D-Worcester) was in Leicester yesterday afternoon as part of a three-day Farm Tour he's doing with state and federal officials.

At Little Bit Farm in Leicester, where they raise turkeys and bees and grow garlic and vegetables.

The owner, Dianna Provencher, is one of the most energetic farmers I have met on the #MAFarmTour #USDA

## **Greenfield Community TV**

**<http://gctv.org/videos/homegrown-economy>**

### **Homegrown Economy**

State and federal officials visited the Franklin County CDC today as part of a district wide farm tour which highlighted local food initiatives that are supporting local farms. (more in video)

**[http://m.thelandmark.com/news/2014-08-](http://m.thelandmark.com/news/2014-08-28/Sterling%20News/McGovern%20leads%20federal%20official%20on%20tour%20of%20local%20farms.html)**

**[28/Sterling News/McGovern leads federal official on tour of local f.html](http://m.thelandmark.com/news/2014-08-28/Sterling%20News/McGovern%20leads%20federal%20official%20on%20tour%20of%20local%20farms.html)**

### **Landmark**

August 28, 2014 Edition

## ***McGovern leads federal official on tour of local farms***

By Patricia Roy

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A scenic view of Rota Spring Farm. U.S. Rep.

James McGovern picks a peach. The farm may be best known for its homemade ice cream, but U.S. Rep. James McGovern (D-Worcester) and a contingent of state and federal officials were impressed by the flourishing acres and variety of crops during a visit to Rota Spring Farm on Thursday.

Edward Avalos, U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, joined McGovern on a three-day “food and farm” tour that highlighted local and regional food initiatives that support local farms, distribution centers and cooperative markets.

McGovern, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, said he invited Avalos on the tour because when Washington policy makers discuss farming, they tend to think of the large scale agricultural operations in the Midwest that concentrate on crops like corn, soy or wheat.

“Every farm we’ve visited on the tour is incredibly diversified,” he said.



Joyce Roberts photos Rota Spring Farm is a typical example of a multi-product New England farm. The Rota family has operated the farm since 1911, producing squash, peppers, corn, blueberries, and cultivating several varieties of fruit trees. In addition to its popular ice cream stand, the farm also sells its own grass-fed beef at the farm store and offers pick your own pumpkins in the fall. "People are very interested these days in knowing where their food comes from," McGovern said. "We hope to find ways to get more people to buy local and create a self-sustaining community."

Helping farms add to their income base by creating retail food outlets, is a priority for the state, he said. Rota Spring employee T.J. Andrews said the farm's retail segments were doing well, with the ice cream stand posting its biggest single day sales ever on Mothers Day this year.



Cutline Edward Avalos, U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, learned that New England farms may be smaller than Midwest operations but they serve important purposes. Curious goats check out visitors. According to a release prepared by McGovern's office, there are 1,547 farms in Worcester County, producing \$81 million in products. The average farm is just 69 acres and produces \$52,069 of agricultural products.

Avalos said he was happy to have the opportunity to tour Worcester County farms, having grown up in rural New Mexico.

"It's a priority for President Obama's administration to support rural communities. It's something that we take very seriously," he said.

Though farms may vary across the nation, they share a lot of the same challenges and opportunities, he said.



Joyce Roberts photos Under the 2014 Farm Bill, the

Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources is awarding over \$474,000 in grants to support specialty crops in the state, Avalos said. The state is receiving funds for the grant from the USDA, he said.

“Consumer demand for locally produced food continues to grow,” he said. “The USDA is committed to promoting local and regional initiatives to support local food enterprises like farms, warehouses and distributors.”

The USDA also supports farmers’ markets and direct marketing of locally grown products, he said, as well as strongly supporting agrotourism.

The group also had a tour of Meadowbrook Orchards owned by the Chandler family the same afternoon. McGovern said he was happy to learn about the town’s farms, since Sterling is a relatively new part of his district.

2014-08-28 /

Sunday, August 31, 2014

## Tour of farms sharpens economic options



Little Bit Farm owners Bruce (wearing the cap) and Dianna Provencher of Leicester listen to Greg Watson, state Department of Agricultural Resources commissioner. (T&G Staff Photo/CHRISTINE PETERSON)

**By James F. Russell CORRESPONDENT**

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Source: Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; T&G Staff/DON LANDGREN JR.

[Enlarge photo](#)

LEICESTER — As government officials tramped through Little Bit Farm, they were followed by a small swarm of bees.

"Don't kill the bees. Don't kill the bees," said farm co-owner Dianna Provencher. Her warning to the entourage visiting her homestead at 26 Charles St. underscored the principles of conservation inherent to those who work with nature.

"If we lose the honey bees, we are losing natural pollinators," she said.

While the bees occasionally buzzed the 20 visitors from federal, state and local governments who were checking out the assortment of organic vegetables grown by the farm, no one was stung.

Little Bit was one of many farms visited by officials in a tour Aug. 21 organized by U.S. Rep. James McGovern, D-Worcester. Attendees included industry, government, and social service leaders and farming organizations. The tour visited farms in Western and Central Massachusetts, as well as some urban farms in Worcester.

Mr. McGovern said immersing himself in the issue has made him more mindful of his diet and helped focus his appreciation of farming.

"Agriculture is an important part of our economy. We need to find ways to be supportive — for the federal government to help (family farms) be profitable," he said. "Farming is hard work."

The officials said their efforts to augment economic opportunities for the growing number of small- and medium-size farms in Central Massachusetts is nurturing a growing national movement for locally grown and consumed produce.

The officials pointed to providing subsidies, expanding farmers markets meeting the demand for fresh, locally produced food; and sprouting urban agricultural efforts to explain why, in Worcester County, there are 1,547 farms. During the tour of rural farms, retail markets and inner-city gardens, the officials said hard-working farmers benefit from subsidies — and deserve them.

- Massachusetts farmers are eligible for tax relief if they agree to keep their land in long-term agricultural use under provisions of the state Chapter 61A program. Nearly all of Little Bit Farm is covered by 61A.

- Another subsidy involves the federal government's Specialty Crop Block

Grant Program, which is part of the omnibus Farm Bill legislation. This year's allocation is \$66 million. According to Edward Avalos, U.S. Department of Agriculture undersecretary for marketing and regulatory programs, the money is geared to smaller growers of fruits and vegetables.

- About \$400,000 of the federal money is available in 2014 for Massachusetts farmers, according to the state Department of Agriculture Resources, which processes the grant applications. Small farms like Little Bit would be eligible to apply for grants, officials said.

### **Adapt and overcome**

Little Bit Farm is owned by Mrs. Provencher and her husband, Bruce Provencher. They purchased seven acres in 1986 and have expanded it to cover 49 acres.

"It was just a progressive type of thing; all this didn't happen overnight," Mr. Provencher said. They raise turkeys, ducks, geese, rabbits, fruit trees and organic vegetables on a first-generation farm, with a greenhouse and thousands of honeybees.

Their apiary uses beeswax to make honey, candles, hand cream and lip balm.

The Provenchers began dating in 1982 and married eight years later when they built their farmhouse in 1990.

"This was a lot of work," Ms. Provencher said. "We didn't go out dancing or do a lot of the fun things. We invested in the future."

"Here, you learn to adapt, overcome circumstances, people, rules, laws," her husband said.

During the tour, farmers discussed with those officials some of the regulations that slow them down.

## **Milk and the kitchen**

On the issue of allowing raw milk producers to sell at farmers markets — which is banned — Gregory C. Watson, state Department of Agricultural Resources commissioner, and Maeve Vallely Bartlett, state secretary for Energy and Environmental Affairs, said the issue is contentious, but no changes are planned to allow the sales at farmers markets.

"We continue to listen" to the arguments made by the milk producers, Mr. Watson said in an interview. Raw milk sales are regulated in tandem with the state Department of Public Health, he said.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration "is opposed to raw sales, that's a tough one" to alter the rules on, said Roger Noonan, who attended the regional tour. He is president of New England Farmers Union and operates an organic farm in New Boston, N.H.

"Our organization supports raw milk sales," Mr. Noonan said.

Another regulation that slows farmers down is one that requires a fully licensed residential kitchen to sell canned and jarred goods.

On the tour, Ms. Provencher provided her guests with garden-fresh salsa. Her version is a mix of raw tomatoes, onions and garlic. She set out a large plate of pickled beets as well as a bowl of bread butter pickles. She lamented that she cannot sell the pickles at farmers markets, because rules now in place do not allow it. The reason: She does not have a fully licensed residential kitchen to prepare them.

Her homemade organic vegetarian dishes, deemed processed foods, must meet state regulations governing preparation to qualify for sale at farmers markets.

"Processed foods sold at a farmer's market must be manufactured in a

licensed food processing facility, a licensed food establishment, or a licensed residential kitchen," the regulations state. "Copies of residential kitchen permits, retail food establishment permits or food manufacturing licenses where the food was prepared should be submitted to the local board of health along with the vendor's application."

Ms. Provencher said if the state would cut some of that red tape, small businesses like hers could sell more items at farmers markets.

### **Intersecting interests**

Tower Hill Botanic Garden hospitality services director Stephanie Hooper, who came to Little Bit Farm to observe the profession firsthand and to network, said her organization wants to return to its agricultural roots while maintaining its focus on horticulture. She said the Tower Hill's restaurant, Twigs Café, is working to bring more local produce to its menu.

"Our mission is education ... We have 134 acres of botanic gardens, of walking trails. We want to include agriculture, not just flowers and horticulture," Ms. Hooper said. Tower Hill is owned and operated by Worcester County Horticultural Society.

The government tour also took in urban farms such as YouthGROW at 63 Oread St. in Worcester. The YouthGrow garden, along with a similar enterprise, Grant Square Park on Bell Hill, are operated by the Regional Environmental Council with headquarters at 9 Castle St. They provide more than 30 youths ages 14-18 with work opportunities and skill-building in farming.

Casey Burns, director of the council's Food Justice Program, said the tour highlighted the intersections between rural and urban agriculture.

"My biggest take-away is it was really encouraging to see the recognition of agriculture being shared — between the more traditional definition of rural agriculture, to include urban agriculture, people living in cities, and the needs

of people living in cities and the potential for food production in cities themselves," she said.

The Food Justice Program that includes YouthGROW, supports a network of 60 community and school gardens in Worcester, Ms. Burns said.

Chad McClain, 18, in his third summer at YouthGROW and an assistant youth coordinator, graduated in June from South High Community School and will attend Quinsigamond Community College this fall.

"My experience here has been amazing. I fell in love with the people that work here and what they did," he said in an interview. "You have to give a lot of care and love — these plants, someone is going to be eating them."

### **Learning experience**

During the tour at Little Bit Farm, Ms. Provencher said she discovered her farm may be eligible for some federal grant funding.

"We didn't even know about that until just recently when everybody came down here," Ms. Provencher said.

"Hopefully, now that I know there are different types of grants that are out there, we will apply. The first thing on our plate is to take care of the compost area so we don't lose nutrients, that is kind of important, to have it under cover," Ms. Provencher said. "That's the No. 1 priority."

Little Bit Farm will apply for a specialty crop block grant once they have estimates on the cost, she said.



# Massachusetts farm production | By county

## Statewide

Farms: **7,691**

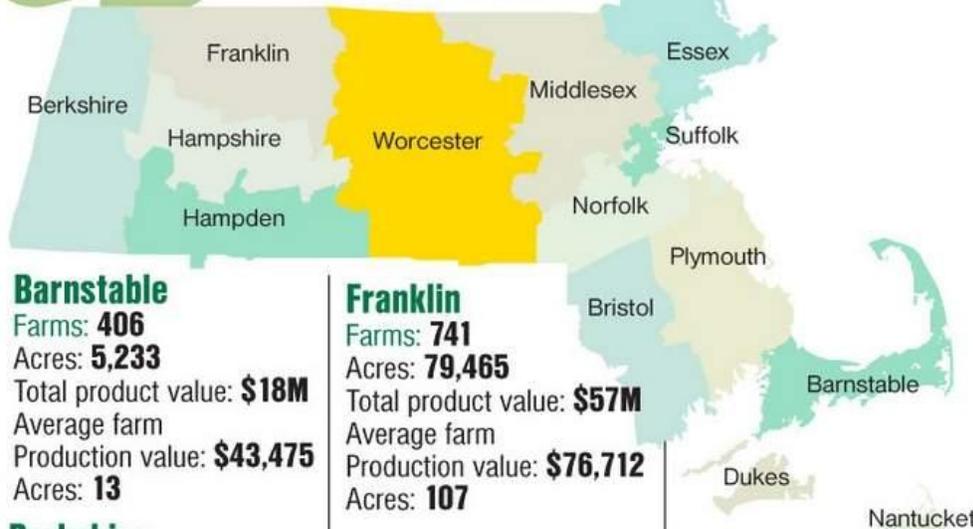
Acres: **517,879**

Total product value: **\$490M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$63,687**

Acres: **67**



## Barnstable

Farms: **406**

Acres: **5,233**

Total product value: **\$18M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$43,475**

Acres: **13**

## Berkshire

Farms: **522**

Acres: **66,352**

Total product value: **\$21M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$39,465**

Acres: **127**

## Bristol

Farms: **777**

Acres: **39,252**

Total product value: **\$44M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$56,944**

Acres: **51**

## Dukes

Farms: **81**

Acres: **7,916**

Total product value: **\$3M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$41,193**

Acres: **98**

## Essex

Farms: **531**

Acres: **27,834**

Total product value: **\$25M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$47,122**

Acres: **52**

## Franklin

Farms: **741**

Acres: **79,465**

Total product value: **\$57M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$76,712**

Acres: **107**

## Hampden

Farms: **508**

Acres: **36,841**

Total product value: **\$26M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$50,659**

Acres: **73**

## Hampshire

Farms: **711**

Acres: **52,756**

Total product value: **\$39M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$54,314**

Acres: **74**

## Middlesex

Farms: **700**

Acres: **33,893**

Total product value: **\$82M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$116,726**

Acres: **48**

## Nantucket

Farms: **14**

Acres: **615**

Total product value: **\$3M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$206,131**

Acres: **44**

## Norfolk

Farms: **264**

Acres: **11,654**

Total product value: **\$14M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$52,926**

Acres: **44**

## Plymouth

Farms: **882**

Acres: **49,612**

Total product value: **\$78M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$88,935**

Acres: **56**

## Suffolk

Farms: **7**

Acres: **99**

Total product value: **\$212K**

Average farm

Production value: **\$30,214**

Acres: **14**

## Worcester

Farms: **1,547**

Acres: **106,357**

Total product value: **\$81M**

Average farm

Production value: **\$52,069**

Acres: **69**

# Rep. McGovern stops

By ERYN DION  
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TEMPLETON — It was a day at the farm for U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., who was joined by other officials for a visit to Valley View Farm, where the group met with owner Matt LeClerc for a hands-on lesson in meatpacking and processing.

The visit kicked off the second day of a three-day Food and Farm Tour across Rep. McGovern's Second Congressional District with stops dedicated to 16 farms and local food organizations that have benefited directly from USDA programs.

"More and more, people want to know where their food comes from and Massachusetts has become a national leader in the 'Buy Local' movement," said Rep. McGovern.

"Meeting with businesses and organizations that are working hard every day to expand access to local, healthy food helps inform my policy decisions in Washington."

Also going on the tour were U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Edward Avalos and Massachusetts Commissioner of Agriculture Greg Watson.

Mr. LeClerc took the group on a tour of the farm's operations, explaining that he was a second-generation farmer and that his father originally purchased a barn on the property to craft wooden clocks. After graduating from Norfolk Agricultural High School he attended the State University of New York at Cobleskill and eventually became a lab instructor at the universi-

MCGOVERN 4

## in Templeton on farm tour



# ■ MCGOVERN

## FROM PAGE 1

ty's USDA meat plant.

"We taught volume there," he said. "We taught the tricks of the trade."

Returning to the 80-acre farm in 2002, Mr. LeClerc helped his father build what would become the cornerstone of his business — a 2,000-sq.-foot building to cut and process meat. The building helped him ramp up production and now he processes between 100 to 150 cows, 300 hogs, 3,000 turkeys, and 5,000 chickens every year, plus 250 dozen eggs a week from birds kept on the property.

"I did this all by myself," Mr. LeClerc said. "I'm pretty proud of it."

For small farmers, Mr. LeClerc said the name of the game is diversification, with farmers trying to implement as many money-making opportunities as possible in the hopes that one or two might work out and provide a solid income.

"I tried to make as many money-making ideas out of each season as I could," said Mr. LeClerc. "And I'll try anything as long as it costs me under \$10,000."

"I wear many hats as a farmer," he said. "I'm a meat cutter one day, I'm a poultry processor another, I'm the host of a pig roast another day, I'm compost guy another day."

Despite his seasonal plans, Mr. LeClerc said there was a gap between Christmas and spring where his business struggled. To address the need, he obtained a loan through the USDA to build an addition designed to house a brand new smoker for meats and bacon during the winter months.

"That smokehouse is going to take up my slack," he stated. "That was my keystone in the whole bridge."

Mr. LeClerc also stressed the importance of resourcefulness and cooperation among local farmers, explaining that he composts all the waste produced by the slaughter and processing of meat with no runoff getting into the mainstream. He then sells the compost to local farmers and gardeners and spreads it on his own field to prep the area for livestock.

While Valley View Farm may appear small building-wise, it's part of a large network of local farms both around Templeton and in the Pioneer Valley. Farms that produce a lot, such as Adams Farm in Athol and Blood Farm in Groton serve as the center, with smaller farms working together to trade services and ensure a fair deal across the board.

"I've got to make sure people are walking out of here with a warm fuzzy feeling," he commented. "Because they're going to walk out and trust me with their product."

Valley View Farm provides slaughtering and packaging for several poultry farms in the area and has the means to work through 3,000 turkeys the week of Thanksgiving. Because regulations prevent him from slaughtering and processing his own birds, Mr. LeClerc also leases farmland on the property to poultry farmers, processing them for a discount. His farm stand is stocked with fruits and vegetables from farms in the Pioneer Valley, as well as beef raised on the property. Productions like his, Mr. LeClerc explained, also contribute to the local economy with jobs, providing long-term, well-paid work while creating the next generation of farmers.

In the future, Mr. LeClerc said, he would like to venture into the newly emerging agro-tourism field, clearing space on his property for an event venue with a full kitchen designed to host events ranging from pig roasts to weekend-long wedding parties, providing meals, entertainment, and transportation for guests.

"Let people come out and have their fun," Mr. LeClerc said. Under Secretary Avalos recommended Mr. LeClerc pursue the federal grant money designed to stimulate agro-tourism through the SDA's Farmers Market Promotional Program.

After visiting Valley View Farm, Rep. McGovern and Under Secretary Avalos travelled to farms in Sterling, Leicester, Millbury and Upton. On Thursday the Food and Farm Tour wrapped up with an exploration of urban farming techniques that have taken hold in Worcester.