PRODUCTION: LAND COMMODITIES

MASSACHUSETTS FARMING

Across the United States, the acreage of farmland decreased 1% and the number of farms decreased 4% between 2007 and 2012. Massachusetts, however, was one of only 10 states that saw an increase in both the number of farms (1%) and land in farms (1%) in the same time period.

Massachusetts is a state of small farms. Two thirds of farms in the state are smaller than 50 acres, and two thirds gross less than $10,000 in market value from their products.

31% of farmland in Massachusetts is cropland, and 85% of that is harvested cropland. Of harvested cropland, 27% is for vegetables, berries and orchards, and 30% is used for animal production.

Massachusetts is exceptional in selling direct to market. It is the birthplace of the CSA, and has the highest percentage of community supported agriculture farms in the country. Massachusetts also has a strong network of farmer’s markets and culture of “buying local.”

AGRICULTURE MARKET VALUE

Massachusetts agricultural products brought in $492,211,000 in market value 2012. 78% of the total market value was crops, and 22% was livestock. Non-edible nurseries and greenhouses contributed the most to crop sales, and milk and aquaculture contributed most to livestock sales. Food for human consumption made up 65% of total market value.

FARM OPERATORS

The average farm operator in Massachusetts is 56, white, and male. That being said, Massachusetts operators include a greater share of women and a relatively high share of beginning farmers compared to U.S.