

V. Cape Cod's Agriculture Community and Affiliations

A. Town Agricultural Commissions

Agricultural commissions are committees of town government that represent the farming community, encourage agricultural growth, promote economic development of local agriculture, and protect farms and farmland. Agricultural Commission members serve as advocates for farmers, farm businesses and farm interests. They aim to resolve nuisance issues and conflicts with farm abutters and other town boards to promote positive visibility for the farming community. Currently, there are 131 Agricultural Commissions in Massachusetts (MASSAGCOMM 2009); six of these commissions represent Barnstable County towns (Falmouth, Barnstable, Yarmouth, Dennis, Harwich and Brewster).

Barnstable Agricultural Commission

The Barnstable Agricultural Commission commented extensively on the 2009 update of the Regional Policy Plan of the Cape Cod Commission, urging the Commission to increase its protection of farming in Barnstable County. The Barnstable Agricultural Commission has also worked with the Town Transfer Station to create a productive composting management plan for Barnstable horse farms. The members have active roles in the Cape and Island Farm Bureau as well.

Brewster Agricultural Commission

The Brewster Agricultural Commission has focused on an emergency preparation program for barns and stables by working with Brewster Police and Fire Departments to train personnel on handling animals in emergency situations. This program also distributed emergency preparedness kits for livestock. The Brewster Agricultural Commission is interested in hosting a Brewster Farm Fest and is researching previous events to evaluate the viability of a festival. The Commission is an active member of the Cape and Island Farm Bureau.

Dennis Agricultural Commission

The Dennis Agricultural Commission has successfully advocated for passage of a right-to-farm bylaw. The group was crucial in advocating that the future of a well-known town parcel, Melpet Farm, include agriculture.

Harwich Agricultural Commission

The Harwich Agricultural Commission is the longest standing agricultural commission in Barnstable County and currently has seven members. The group hosts the highly regarded Harwich Farmfest. Their goals include creating a stable permit application, hosting weekly farmers' markets, and creating a right-to-farm bylaw.

Falmouth Agricultural Commission

The Falmouth Agricultural Commission has developed a work plan to guide the agricultural commission's activities and assisted in the successful start of the Falmouth farmers' market.

Yarmouth Agricultural Commission

The Yarmouth Agricultural Commission has utilized the Community Preservation Act to fund community gardens in the Town. Their goal is to create 50 farms in 10 years. In the short period they have been established, they have written a mission statement and a right-to-farm bylaw.

B. Regional Agricultural Affiliations

There are a variety of other governmental and nongovernmental groups on Cape Cod that promote and sustain local agriculture. These groups provide technical assistance, retail outlets and moral support to farmers.

Cape and Island Farm Bureau

The Cape and Islands Chapter of the Farm Bureau was established over 70 years ago. Their mission is to monitor and protect water resources for agricultural production and consumer use of agricultural products; support farmers' rights to employ usual and customary agricultural practices; support financial programs that aid in keeping farming a viable livelihood; and support sustainable practices that enhance farming efficiency. The Cape and Island Farm Bureau strongly advocates for the establishment of agricultural commissions and has assisted in the creation of them in some of the Cape Cod towns. They also aid in raising funds for future projects and events to showcase local agriculture.

Cape Cod Cooperative Extension

The Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, the educational division of Barnstable County government, has established a number of horticultural and natural resource-based programs for the county. They host Master Gardener classes, distribute guides on native and non-native plants, encourage and teach environmentally sound planting practices and host various local plant sales.

The Extension has taken leadership of the "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" campaign for Cape Cod. This program works to connect people with Cape Cod-grown farm products, raise awareness about the benefits of buying local, and promotes growers and buyers through the Buy Fresh Buy Local Cape Cod logo and message. The campaign's focus is based on a community tool kit originated by Food Routes (www.foodroutes.org) aiming to at least create a consistent "brand" of local agricultural products with point of sale and seasonal marketing plans. Twenty-five Cape Cod farms and markets as well as 18 restaurants are members of the Buy Fresh, Buy Local Cape Cod campaign and utilize the marketing materials provided to them.

Barnstable County Beekeepers Association

The Barnstable County Beekeepers Association (BCBA), established 35 years ago, consists of over 300 beekeepers from the Cape Cod area ranging from hobbyists to those managing several hives. The group meets regularly to discuss topics such as hive management, pests and diseases, plants and pollination, and extracting honey. The club provides basic educational courses about beekeeping on Cape Cod as well as various informational sessions about the BCBA at the Barnstable County Fair.

C. National Agricultural Programs

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary federal agency that works with private landowners to help them conserve, maintain and improve their natural resources. They assist farmers in finding sustainable methods of farming while maintaining the natural habitats found on farm property. The agency emphasizes science-based conservation, technical assistance, partnerships, incentive-based programs; and cooperative problem solving at the community level. NRCS Conservation programs include:

- conservation technical assistance programs
- environmental improvement programs
- stewardship programs
- water resource programs
- easement programs
- technical planning tools and resources
- resource inventory and assessment
- assistance with compliance, appeals, mediation, and relief
- incentive programs

Farm Service Agency

The United States Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) implements agricultural policy, provides credit and loan programs, and manages technical assistance programs through a national network of federal, state and county offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of the agricultural industry and to help farmers adjust production to meet demand. The Pilgrim Resource Conservation & Development Area Council, Inc. headquartered in Wareham, MA is the home base for the regional FSA office.

National Agricultural Statistics Service

The United States Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service serves the basic agricultural and rural data needs of the country by providing statistical information and services to farmers, ranchers, agribusinesses and public officials. These data are vital to monitoring the ever-changing agricultural sector and carrying out farm policy. The most recent census was through 2007.

D. Outlets for Farmers to Market their Goods on Cape Cod

Most farms in Barnstable County have minimal acreage and concentrate on producing specialized products to sell to consumers. The need to market these goods and services has been met by the agricultural community through various options allow that farmers to showcase their products on Cape Cod.

Farmers’ Markets

A farmers’ market is a gathering of growers and artisans who market and sell their products directly to the consumer in a community setting. The produce and goods found at farmers’ markets are typically produced locally, providing the community the opportunity to purchase ripe, healthy foods while reducing the amount of energy (shipping and packaging) required by food transported to major grocery stores. Shopping at the farmers’ market benefits the local farmer by creating an opportunity for income while strengthening the local community through support of local businesses. The number of Cape Cod farmers’ markets is growing and changing. The list below has information about some of the markets.

Bass River Farmers' Market- www.bassriverfarmmarket.com

Thursdays, 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM

5/26- Fall

307 Old Main Street, Yarmouth

Centerville/Marstons Mills Farmers' Market

Mondays, 2PM to 4PM

6/14-10/1

Fraternal (Masonic Lodge), 1987 Falmouth Road (Route 28)

Dennis Community Farmers' Market

Sundays, 11AM to 4 PM

6/12- Fall

645 Route 28, Dennisport

Falmouth Farmers' Market – www.falmouthfarmersmarket.org

Thursdays, 12PM to 6PM

5/26-Fall

Peg Noonan Park, Main Street (Next to the Public Library), Falmouth

Harwich-Brewster Farmers' Market- www.harwichhistoricalsociety.org

Thursdays, 3PM to 6PM

6/16-10/13

Brooks Academy Museum, 80 Parallel Street, Harwich

Mid-Cape Farmers' Market (Hyannis) – www.midcapefarmersmarket.com

Wednesdays, 2PM to 6PM

6/8-10/26

Barnstable Youth and Community Center, 141 Bassett Lane, Hyannis

Orleans Farmers' Market – www.orleansfarmersmarket.com

Saturdays, 8 AM to 12 PM

5/14-11/19

21 Old Colony Road, Orleans

Osterville Farmers' Market – www.ostervillefarmersmarket.org

Fridays, 9 AM to 1 PM

6/3-9/30

Osterville Historical Society, 155 West Bay Road, Osterville

Provincetown Farmers' Market

Saturdays, 11 AM to 4 PM

May - December

Intersection of Ryder Street and Commercial, Provincetown

Sandwich Farmers' Market- www.sandwichfarmersmarket.com

Tuesdays, 9 AM to 1 PM

6/7-10/25

164 Route 6A, Sandwich

Sandwich Farmers' Market Oak Crest- www.thesandwichbazaar.com

Wednesdays, 8 AM to 1 PM, 4/27-10/26

Saturdays, 8 AM to 1 PM, 6/25-10/15

34 Quaker Meetinghouse Road, Sandwich

Waquoit Farmers' Market- www.waquoitucc.org

Saturdays, 11 AM to 3 PM

March-5/28

Waquoit Congregational Church, Route 28, Falmouth

Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP)

SEMAP is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help agricultural enterprises in southeastern Massachusetts achieve economic success. SEMAP offers programs for agricultural business planning, agricultural business management, budgeting and record keeping, and diversification and marketing strategies for local farmers. SEMAP also promotes local farm products to the public, connects farms directly with businesses, and works to promote new farm establishments. Their main outlet is an online searchable directory of local growers and producers by town, product, and availability (www.farmfresh.org/food/farms). SEMAP has helped in the establishment of the Buy Fresh, Buy Local Cape Cod campaign, which is currently managed by the Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, a program of Barnstable County.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)

A CSA consists of individuals purchasing shares of crop yields from a farm operation in which the growers and consumers share the risks and benefits of food production. By establishing a CSA, a farmer receives funds that help pay for the upfront costs of a growing season. By joining a CSA, individuals are assured of receiving local and fresh foods. CSAs usually have a system of weekly delivery or pick-up of vegetables and fruits and sometimes of dairy products and meat. Table 18 identifies Cape Cod farms offering CSAs'.

Table 18. Cape Cod farms offering CSA memberships and their products.

Cape Cod farms offering CSA memberships
Cape Cod Organic Farm
Barnstable, MA
Hawk's Wing Farm
Yarmouth, MA
Tuckernuck Farm
West Dennis, MA
Eldredge Farm
Brewster, MA
Bay End Farm
Bourne, MA
Coonamesett Farm
Falmouth, MA
Miss Scarlett's Blue Ribbon Farm
Yarmouthport, MA
Cedar Spring Herb Farm
Harwich, MA
Surrey Farms
Brewster, MA

Edible Cape Cod

Created in 2002, EDIBLE COMMUNITIES, INC. establishes regional magazine publications throughout the country showcasing locally produced foods, services, and the people that produce them. Edible Communities' mission is to connect people with the farmers who produce their food on a daily basis. "Edible Cape Cod," the Cape Cod version of this national publication, highlights the farmers and artisans in Barnstable County and entices people to eat more locally-grown and locally-produced Cape Cod food items. "Edible Cape Cod" is a quarterly magazine that focuses on seasonal themes. Edible Cape Cod also hosts the annual Cape Land and Sea Harvest event that occurs each autumn.

Annual Farm and Harvest Events

Generally, farm and harvest festivals are annual celebrations that emphasize the end or beginning of a crop growing season and typically feature local historical farming practices, such as cranberry harvesting. There are several annual events that occur on Cape Cod that illustrates the agricultural heritage of the region. Activities range from farming demonstration days to special farmers' markets to community meal events. Some of these events include:

- Cape Land and Sea Harvest (CLASH), an annual three-day event highlighting local farming and food. (www.capecodclash.org)
- Harwich FarmFest, an annual weeklong event with farm tours and a special farmers' market. (www.harwichcc.com/event-farm-fest)
- Barnstable County Fair, an annual two-week agricultural fair. (www.barnstablecountyfair.org)
- Falmouth Cranberry Harvest and Farm Festival, an annual event showcasing cranberry harvesting. (www.falmouthfarms.org/cranberryharvestfarmfestival)
- Wellfleet Oyster Fest, an annual two-day event highlighting the Wellfleet oyster industry. (www.wellfleetoysterfest.org)
- Cranberry Harvest Celebration, an annual two-day event hosted by the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association. (www.cranberryharvest.org)