

Press Release:

\$400,000 IN FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDS AWARDED TO LAUNCH MASSACHUSETTS FARM ENERGY PROGRAM

AMHERST, Mass.

Some \$400,000 in federal and state funding will soon help Massachusetts farmers with energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts. A Massachusetts Farm Energy Program will be developed with funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

The two-year statewide program will develop a streamlined process for energy efficiency audits and renewable energy assessments for Massachusetts agricultural producers. It will also provide incentives for farms to adopt energy recommendations and will develop the potential for rebates and future investment in on-farm energy projects. NRCS has awarded a total of \$150,000 in Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to the Berkshire-Pioneer Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. (Berkshire-Pioneer RC&D), based in Amherst, and the Patriot Resource Conservation and Development Area Council, Inc. (Patriot RC&D), based in Westford; each will receive \$75,000 to develop and implement the program.

MDAR is providing a \$250,000 Agricultural Energy Audit and Implementation Grant to the Berkshire-Pioneer RC&D, which will provide overall program management.

"The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program is the first-ever federal-state collaborative energy initiative to be administered on a local level in the commonwealth," said Christine S. Clarke, State Conservationist for NRCS in Massachusetts. "At a time when farmers are being hit hard with skyrocketing energy bills, this program will help them save thousands of dollars a year through energy efficiency and alternative and renewable energy sources. The project also aims to reduce over 500 metric tons of CO2 emissions."

"We hope to collaborate with energy utilities, non-profit groups and private industry to determine on-farm energy needs and maximize resources," said Darlene Monds, Coordinator for the Berkshire-Pioneer RC&D and project manager. "Our first step will be to form a steering committee and working groups and we encourage anyone interested in participating to contact us."

For information on the Massachusetts Farm Energy Program, contact
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