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**For Immediate Release: Monday, June 2, 2014**

## **Massachusetts to develop first new Food System Plan in 30+ yrs**

*Statewide team will craft new vision, issue recommendations  
for a resilient local food system*

Boston – Massachusetts will develop its first Food System Plan in more than three decades this year, thanks to a partnership of organizations working across the Commonwealth under the leadership of the state department of agriculture.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), in collaboration with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), the Franklin Region Council of Governments (FRCOG) and the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance (MWA), has been chosen by the Food Policy Council, which was created to facilitate the first Massachusetts Food System Plan since 1978. Work kicks off this month and will continue all summer and into next year.

“This is a tremendous opportunity to engage critical stakeholders in a process for identifying the options available to us that best ensure the long-term sustainability of our food system in the face of mounting economic and environmental challenges,” said Greg Watson, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

The plan will help Massachusetts to be more self-sufficient when it comes to producing and consuming our own food, to plan for more equitably distributing our food, and to prepare for climate change and other evolutions in our food system.

Responding to new innovations and dramatically-increasing interest in food systems planning during the past decade, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) and the Food Policy Council will work with MAPC and its partners to reach out to food growers, producers and other food system stakeholders throughout the Commonwealth to establish a new vision for the state’s food system.

*The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is the regional planning agency serving the people who live and work in 101 cities and towns of Greater Boston. Our mission is promoting smart growth and regional collaboration. [www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org).*

Work will include planning for an ecologically stable network of food producers, consumers, processors, retailers and distribution hubs, and will include groups working toward greater social equity, health and sustainable water use.

MAPC is taking the leading role in the project, building a collaborative group with representation from key stakeholders in the food system statewide.

“Massachusetts has a distinctive food system, and planning for its future will be critical to ensuring that both our urban and rural areas stay economically competitive,” said MAPC Executive Director Marc Draisen. “MAPC is thrilled to be working with key partners across the entire industry to promote climate resiliency, sustainable agriculture, and access to affordable, healthy local food.”

During the next 18 months, the team will meet with farmers and ranchers, food business owners and workers, distributors, waste handlers, residents and many others to produce a comprehensive assessment of the food system and to issue recommendations for strengthening the state’s food economy.

“Scaling up the production of food in Massachusetts goes hand-in-hand with local economic development and hunger relief,” said PVPC Executive Director Timothy Brennan. “There is now tremendous energy among food producers and consumers for focusing on food systems as a way to achieve these twin goals statewide, thereby allowing Massachusetts to maintain a leadership position in this realm.”

“The intersection of local food and economic opportunity, including job creation, is potent for Massachusetts. A coordinated, strategic approach to strengthening our food system will clarify what the jobs will be, how to grow them, the training and education needed and the pathways that exist and are being crafted for food system workers,” said Deborah Mutschler, Massachusetts Workforce Alliance Executive Director. “Working with the regional planning entities grounds this work in the larger contexts of economic development, food access, and environmental priorities.”

“We are pleased that our team, made up of regional planning agencies that serve the most rural and most urban areas in the state, was selected for this project,” said FRCOG Executive Director Linda Dunlavy. “Our team represents the state’s land use and economic diversities and brings the primary growing and consumer areas together. Our hope is that we will be instrumental in ensuring the plan’s implementation at the regional and local levels.”

For more information, contact MAPC Senior Environmental Planner Julie Conroy at 617-933-0749 or [jconroy@mapc.org](mailto:jconroy@mapc.org). Visit [mapc.org/massfoodplan](http://mapc.org/massfoodplan) to learn more about the plan and sign up for our project newsletter.

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