

2025 LOCAL FARMER AWARDS IMPACT REPORT

CULTIVATING A RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE FUTURE WITH LOCAL SUPPORT

Across Western Massachusetts, improvements made possible with the help of Local Farmer Awards are allowing 116 farms to strengthen their operations through smart, practical, and impactful infrastructure improvements. The following sections highlight how farmers are putting these projects to work to meet their goals with creativity and resourcefulness.

Time and Labor Savings

From cutters to weeders, farms are using grant funds to save time and labor.

A mixer, bale breaker, pot filler allowed **Gaetano's Organic Farm** (Becket) to prepare a quality potting soil mix without the strenuous labor it previously required. "The machine provides well-mixed components and provides uniform conditions for germination with the result being an ideal crop for harvesting."

Laurenitis Farm (Sunderland) called its new rototiller for bed preparation a "game changer." Used on the pumpkin, gourd, and squash fields, it reduced deep tilling by over 50% and offered what the farmer called "a relatively easy step towards more modern planting practices."

The addition of the flail mower to **Fern Hill Farm** (Buckland) has "reduced the labor needed for weeding perennial beds, borders, and bed turnover by 50%." Additionally, it is helping with their soil fertility management by finely chopping up cover crops, old crops, and green material and depositing it back on the soil as a green manure.

A new pendulum spreader helped **Just Roots** (Greenfield) transform their soil fertility and cover-crop work. A job that once took eight hours now takes about three, saving labor and equipment time. Better calibration supports strong yields without added soil amendments. Said the farmer: "We estimate this project has enabled us to increase our total cover cropping practices by about 30%, benefiting our soil health, and increasing our farm's resilience for years to come."

With its new Tilmor finger weeder, **Brookfield Farm** (Amherst) can cultivate row crops that previously required frequent hand-weeding. Today one person can cultivate a crop quickly enough to eliminate the need for a crew of weeders.



Just Roots



Brookfield Farm



Building Climate Resilience

Creative practices help farmers adapt to a changing climate.

An irrigation pump at **Bardwell Farm** (Hatfield) will ensure consistent watering during the hotter, drier months. The farm estimates a crop savings of at least 75% this season versus what could have been drastic yield loss due to a lack of rain. Efficient irrigation, says the farmer, is “increasingly vital to keep our business sustainable and running.”

Bigfoot Farm (Williamstown) used insect netting to protect multiple beds and crops from flea and cucumber beetle pest pressure. As a result, the farm saw a 50% revenue increase of radish and mustard green sales.

A real-time weather station enhanced **Apex Orchard’s** (Shelburne Falls) management practices, crop health, and general operational efficiency. Overall, the award “strengthened our farm’s climate resiliency, improved resource efficiency, and provided critical tools to help us protect our crops in an increasingly unpredictable weather environment.”

Caretaker Farm (Williamstown) added low tunnels as part of their evolving winter growing techniques to address the impact of climate change. First intended for spinach, the tunnels were soon relied upon to keep the soybeans safe from deer during the summer, a tactic that achieved soybean crop savings of about 35%. “As we develop our plans for future years, we are now thinking about ways in which these low tunnels can help us keep evolving with the effects of global climate change.”



Bardwell Farm

Expanding Market Access

Smarter processing, higher value, more local products reaching more people.

The Kitchen Garden (Sunderland) purchased mechanical greens harvesters specifically to meet strong market demand for high value greens. The harvesters allowed them to increase production for market and improved processing efficiency. “We grow a lot of different vegetables, but it’s hard to deny the market demand and value of cut salad greens. They are hands down the most efficient use of space to create a high value crop.”

The steam honey processing uncapper purchased by **Musante Farm** (Dalton) increased the farm’s honey processing efficiency by 400%. The harvest of a bigger honey crop enabled more product availability and subsequent sales.

With its new maple cream machine, **Dufresne’s Sugar House** (Williamsburg) doubled output and improved product quality and texture, leading to increased sales and a more consistent market-ready product.



Musante Farm

Boosting Farm Capacity

Through strategic upgrades, farms are increasing their ability to improve productivity, profitability, and community access to food.

Astarte Farm (Hadley) expanded its blueberry enclosure with taller posts, new end walls for tractor access, and a custom bird net. Tractor access made weeding, mulching, and composting far more efficient, boosting plant growth and profitability. The upgrade also improved the “pick-your-own” experience for CSA members.

Cure for Boredom Farm (Cummington) is using its new three-point hitch rotary tiller to convert pasture into crop production, representing a 60% increase in cultivated land.

“Overall, the award not only provided essential equipment but also gave us the capacity to scale up production in a way that strengthens our farm’s financial viability and deepens our impact in the community.”

Cure for Boredom Farm

Agric Organics (Wilbraham) shared that the award helped them expand production and efficiency. Installation of a drip irrigation system improved water use by 40–50% and enabled more consistent soil moisture, resulting in a 25% increase in seasonal vegetable yields.

A walk-in cooler has allowed **O’Brien Farm** (Orange) to address the growth of its raw milk business by holding milk in reserve for farm stand and large-volume customers. Relieved to finally have sufficient storage space for bottled milk, the farmer said, “I don’t know what we would do without our walk-in cooler.”

Terra Flower Farm (Hampden) celebrated their “best season yet” with help from their new compost tea brewer. Their dahlias bloomed 4 weeks earlier and produced roughly double the flowers per plant, giving them extra sales weeks. Overall, crop yields and farm health improved dramatically, and “we’re thrilled with the results.”



Astarte Farm



Agric Organics



Bolduc Farm

Animal Health, Safety, & Nutrition

Investments that protect people and animals build stronger farms.

Following worker injuries, **Trumpet Hill Farm** (Sheffield) purchased a sweep tub cattle handling system to create a barrier between the cattle and handlers and create a safer and calmer environment for all. As an added benefit, the new setup requires fewer handlers to run the herd through the chute.

A gently used automatic Priefert cattle squeeze chute helped **New England Hay Supply** (Cheshire) speed up an extremely long process to safely tag and record their cows and calves; conduct timely vaccinations and pregnancy checks; and properly band the bull calves. These modified procedures have significantly improved safety for the farm workers, the veterinarian, and, most importantly, the animals.

Bolduc Farm (Westfield) purchased five new calf hutches to raise heifer calves. The new housing improved ventilation, sanitation, and individual care, thereby greatly improving calf health, comfort, and overall growth rates. In the farmer's grateful words: "The support has helped us strengthen the foundation of our herd and ensure a more sustainable future for our farm."

What stuck out to me is the resilience of the farmers and their ability to shift and adapt, given the constant variables presented each season along with the 'great unknowns'.

John Lee, President, Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, on a recent farm tour



Trumpet Hill Farm

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