



Exploring The Small Farm Dream

Rolling Applications Determine Course Locations and Dates

*Next courses expected to be held in Fall 2016 in eastern MA and late Winter 2017 in Southeastern MA (Fall River) given enough interest ***

Are you considering starting an agricultural enterprise in Massachusetts?

In this course you will:

- Test the feasibility of your idea before you invest
- Evaluate self employment and the suitability of an agricultural lifestyle
- Investigate markets for your proposed product or service
- Identify regulations that will impact your planned enterprises
- Understand the unique risks associated with agriculture
- Determine your financial break even date
- Evaluate the realistic contribution you can expect from this piece of your livelihood
- Test whether others share your vision and want to join/support you in this pursuit
- Anticipate threats to your success
- Decide what's next in order to a) get going now, b) do more preparation, or c) avoid a big mistake!

The “*Explorer*” courses are intended for those who are considering farming as a (small) business. Its purpose is to help pre-venture, aspiring farmers learn what it will take to start and manage their own agricultural enterprise. *Explorer* makes use of four, guided group sessions and a farmer panel of those who have already done what you are contemplating. It is based on an acclaimed workbook and is presented by instructors experienced in starting farm businesses. *Explorer* was created to help you articulate the clear vision and goals you will need to guide a new agricultural venture.

Participant Quotes:

- **"It makes you very aware of all the components that make up an ag business. I was forced to develop a realistic plan which was very beneficial."**
- **"It will teach you new stuff, increase your network, confirm your intentions, etc."**

- “Absolutely the best money I have spent in a long time – really helped dispell myths and the ‘romance’ of farming, which needs to happen if an ag business is going to succeed.”
- “Makes you think about all the things that we never even considered when we were dreaming about our farm”
- “The people in the class have loads of experience to share and the structure of weekly assignments gets things done.”
- “Very grounding and lots of resources – good reality check.”

Course Structure:

This course is offered by the **Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources**, using a workbook created by the **New England Small Farm Institute**. Meetings are once per week over 5 weeks. The registration fee of **\$100** includes instruction, materials, guest speakers and a session of Q&A with a panel of varied-stage farmers.

Class size is limited to 12 prospective farms to maximize group time, with the opportunity to bring another person from your enterprise for no additional fee. *We encourage you to apply now (no payment is due until a course location and time is confirmed) so courses can be located based on the needs of participants.*

You must have email, basic word processing and spreadsheet software, and internet access to take this course! You must also agree to attend all 5 sessions.

This course is sponsored and financially supported by a Massachusetts state agency and is intended for new Massachusetts agricultural entrepreneurs.

For a Course Application form, please visit **Agricultural Business Training Program (ABTP)** on the MDAR website <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/land-use/agricultural-business-training-program-abtp.html> or contact Melissa Adams at mdarfarmviabilityprograms@gmail.com

*** Course applications are accepted on a rolling basis until a course is filled.*