



A Look at *Massachusetts* Agriculture

Capital: Boston

Population: 6,745,000

Founded: 1788 (6th)

State Bird: Chickadee

State Tree: American Elm

State Flower: Mayflower

Number of Counties: 14

Largest City: Boston - 645,966

Nickname: Bay State

Number of Farms: 7,755

Average Farm Size: 68 acres

Total Farmland: 523,000 acres

Employment in Agriculture: 68,000



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Climate & Soil

- The climate varies greatly between the eastern sea coast and the western mountains
- Massachusetts has cold winters and mild summers
- The eastern part of Massachusetts is a coastal plain with marsh, beach and ponds whose weather is modified by the Atlantic ocean and trade winds
- The middle part of Massachusetts is rolling hills and lakes
- The western part of Massachusetts includes part of the Appalachian Mountains and is affected by sub Arctic and northern Atlantic winds
- The highest temperature of record is 107° F on August 2, 1975, at New Bedford (coast) and Chester (middle). The lowest of record was -35° F on January 12, 1981, again at Chester.
- The average annual temperature ranges from about 46 degrees Fahrenheit (° F) in the western division to 49 in the central, and to around 50 in the Coastal division.
- Massachusetts is one of the few areas not to have a dry or rainy season, but precipitation year round
- Average precipitation is 40 to 50 inches, about 25 to 30 inches fall over eastern parts and 60 to 80 inches in the western part
- Massachusetts soil varies and is classified as Paxton, with very deep, well drained soil on glacial till uplands in the western part and types to sandy and mucky, loamy coarse sand and peat in the eastern parts

Crops & Livestock

- The top five agriculture outputs in Massachusetts are greenhouse & nursery products, cranberries, produce, aquaculture and dairy
- Greenhouse and nursery products are 28% of agriculture outputs with over 1,000 commercial greenhouses
- Cranberries are the second highest agriculture output (20%) with over 400 growers in the Commonwealth. 70% are family farms with bogs of 20 acres or less
- The produce sector is third in the state, and has an annual market value of \$96 million with nearly 1,600 producers, 40% growing vegetables and 60% growing fruit
- Aquaculture is the fourth largest agriculture output. Farms produced primarily oysters and quahogs on 1,000 acres of intertidal and sub-tidal land
- There are 151 remaining dairy farms, which is the fifth highest agriculture output
- Grapes is a growing agriculture industry Massachusetts and has two viticultural appellations in the mild climate of southeastern Massachusetts
- Oyster farms operate hatcheries on the coast of Massachusetts growing oysters

General

- Massachusetts farmers harvest from both the land and sea
- Massachusetts ranks #1 in the percentage of farms offering Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs
- Massachusetts is the third most densely populated state in the country and among the top three states for farmland value at \$12,000 per acre
- 80% of Massachusetts farms are family owned
- New Bedford, Massachusetts is the leading fishing port in the US (seafood value)
- Approximately half of Massachusetts is forest land
- Cranberries were first used by Native Americans in Massachusetts as early as 1550 for medicine, food and clothing dye