Farm Viability Business Skills

Seeking Ways for Small Family Farms to be More Profitable and Preserve Farmland Through Working Landscapes

• Jay Healy, President, Working Landscapes
  • Former Commissioner of Agriculture, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
  • Owner-operator of family farm doing value added processing in Western Massachusetts

• Purpose: Compliment farmland preservation programs by focusing on farmer entrepreneurial business skills and farm viability to preserve farmland and create rural economic development.
Massachusetts Farm Viability Program Info

– Mechanics
  • Business Plan, Covenant & Seed Capital for Viability Plan
  • Importance of Successful Farmers being Mentors

– Successes, Statistics & Stories
  • $19,000 avg. increased profits per year
  • 14 year old girl who became a Local Hero

• Importance of Business Training Skills to Compliment Farm Viability
  – Teach Farmers to Fish - No Subsidies
  – Increase Profit Potential - Direct Marketing, Processing and other successful strategies

Farm Viability Program Info

• More Information about Massachusetts - Appendix A
• Articles about Program - Appendix B
Importance of Business Skills

• Leaders for others
  – Gordie Cook - asparagus ice cream, karaoke, and new red pick-up truck
  – Pioneer Gardens - bare root perennials, turning commodity into branded product
  – Our Family Farms - Farm Viability Cooperative

Consumer/Farmer Education

• Educate public to importance of buying locally
  – Local Hero Campaign
  – Berkshire Grown
  – Vermont Fresher

• Educate farmer to tweak his business to compete in global marketplace
  – Mapleline Farm - back to the future, own ice cream and door-to-door sales
Next Steps

• How One Might Tailor A Program to Meet Local Conditions
• Possible follow up action items
  – Tailoring buy local programs
  – Farmer marketing feasibility studies
• More Info?
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