



MASSACHUSETTS Farm Service Agency News

Vision Statement

A customer-driven agency with a diverse and multi-talented work force, dedicated to achieving an economically and environmentally sound future for American Agriculture.

August 2005



Glenn and Karen Cook's Cider Hill Farm in Amesbury, Mass.

Mid summer brings varying weather conditions, sometimes within the same county. Here in Massachusetts we have very dry conditions in some locales, while in others heavy rain and windy conditions damage crops and buildings. Despite the weather, our corn and peaches are in, local tomatoes, summer squash, green and yellow beans, peppers, and a full range of vegetables and herbs are served on our dinner tables. Blueberries, raspberries and a variety of orchard fruits are available. Buy local campaigns are in full swing, and Massachusetts farm stands are open for business.

Aquaculturists were hit by the worst Red Tide in decades, and FSA is prepared to offer emergency assistance via an Administrator's Emergency Declaration which allows the agency to offer low interest loans to eligible shellfishermen.

Thus far in 2005, our Farm Loan Team has obligated more than \$6.25 million in low interest loans; CCC payments equal more than \$6.1 million, (thus far, more than \$4.3 million for relief to farmers for disaster).

The Farm Service Agency and our sister agencies at USDA are waiting for Congress to provide us with our final budget numbers for 2006. Efforts are underway in preparation for the 2007 Farm Bill. Secretary Mike Johanns is on the road, embarking on a series of 51 listening sessions throughout the country. Secretary Johanns is speaking with farmers and ranchers about their concerns in the present and their vision for the future of Agriculture in America.

In the present, the State Directors have been asked to submit plans which would bring our employment numbers in line with Washington requests. Here in Massachusetts we will reduce our County numbers by two via targeted buyouts. The losses are attributed to county rightsizing and the loss of the EQIP program to NRCS.

Last week the Congress passed, and the President signed, the CAFTA-DR Agreement which helps ensure that "free trade is fair trade." Passage of CAFTA-DR provides a new momentum for the Doha Round and other negotiations. Exports of farm products will help boost farm prices in New England. Exports of farm products help to support 4,677 jobs both on the farm and in food processing, storage and transportation.

Massachusetts maple syrup and tobacco products will benefit from the passage by lowering existing duties. New England grown fruits, which number among the top ten sources of farm cash receipts, will benefit from the immediate elimination of duty from a gradually phased out plan for fruit producers. Apple growers are subject to 25% duties in those participating countries, and the World Trade Organization allows duties as high as 138%. Peach and pear growers will benefit from the immediate elimination of duties from all CAFTA-DR countries. Cranberry growers

would likewise benefit from immediate elimination of duty on fresh and frozen cranberries from all CAFTA-DR countries except Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. Both countries would phase out duties within five and fifteen years respectively. Finally, the removal of trade barriers between the United States and the Dominican Republic will create important new export opportunities for farmers, ranchers and processors. The American Farm Bureau Federation estimates that CAFTA-DR could boost agricultural exports by \$1.5 billion when fully implemented.

Don't forget that time is running out on getting nominations for the 2005 County Committee Elections. As you know, the election of agricultural producers to county committees is important to ALL farmers and ranchers with large or small operations. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a direct link between the agricultural community and the Department. Committee members work to make our programs serve the needs of local producers.

A reminder that the deadline to sign up for FSA's Crop Disaster Program is September 9, 2005 for the 2003 and 2004 crop years.

There are so many wonderful outdoor meetings during the summer. Farm tours, pasture walks, livestock exhibits, fairs, and producer meetings are leading up to what we all hope will be a bountiful harvest. Hope to see you in the field.

Best regards,

Sandra Adams, SED

Sandra D. Adams
Massachusetts State Executive Director
USDA Farm Service Agency

Meet our New County Office Trainee, Emily Tchorz

By Paul Fischer

County Executive Director

Emily Tchorz was hired as a Massachusetts County Operations Trainee (COT) on March 14, 2005. This 6 month intensive training program will provide Emily with the necessary management skills to direct and oversee the programs and administrative operations of the County FSA office.

"Emily, could you please tell me a little about yourself?"

I grew up on a small family farm in the town of Foster, RI with 4 sisters and 2 brothers, with whom I continue to enjoy a very close and happy relationship. I have one four year old niece (my Godchild), and recently, I was thrilled to learn that I will be an aunt again in October of this year, with the birth of my baby brother's first child. My family means the world to me. I graduated from Ponaganset High School in 1993, where I was fortunate enough to take vocational agriculture classes for all four years, while also receiving a top-notch college prep education.



Currently, I live in New Bedford, MA with my truly wonderful, supportive husband of just over a year and our 3 cats. When we can find the time, my husband (who is also my best friend) and I enjoy camping, spending time with family, traveling, and seeing the Dave Matthews Band in concert... we've been to about a dozen so far... among other things. I personally also love to dance (it's one of my passions actually), and I am an avid amateur photographer. We hope to purchase a home in the near future, in a slightly more rural setting.

“What is your agricultural background?”

Besides having just about every type of domestic farm animal on our farm at one time or another, and growing a garden and orchard large enough to provide the majority of our food for several years, I was also a member of our local 4-H club from the age of 7. When I started high school, I joined the FFA and quickly became an officer in my school's chapter. During my 4 years in FFA, I also served as RI State Secretary and Vice President, attended regional and national conferences and competitions, organized conferences for our local chapters, and many other fun things. FFA changed my life. Following high school, I attended college at URI while studying Animal Science and Communications.

I've worked for Decas Cranberry Sales as seasonal help at their processed cranberry receiving station during two consecutive harvest seasons. I've now been an employee with FSA for almost 3 years.

“What was your position and responsibilities prior to becoming a COT?”

I was hired as a temporary PT in the summer of 2002 in the Plymouth County FSA office. In November of that year, a vacancy was posted for a permanent PT in the same office. I was selected for the position and went permanent in February of 2003. In the time I spent there, I was the administrative PT as well as the GIS/CLU editor for the certification process and subsequent maintenance.

“What are your goals and objectives?”

It has taken me many years (and many different jobs) to figure out what I want to be when I grow up... this is what I've figured out so far:

1. I want to be happy (and lead a life rich with new experiences).
2. I want to share that happiness with an equally happy family that also includes my friends.
3. I want my career to provide opportunities for and support goals 1 and 2.

Working for the Farm Service Agency is a perfect fit for me. It really makes me happy to know that my primary purpose at work is to help farmers. I have always had a great respect for our agriculturists, especially in the Northeast, and to be able to provide programs and services that could potentially make life a little easier for them makes me feel that I'm really doing something worthwhile, and also for the “greater good”.

Besides the work itself, and the people we work with, FSA has so many opportunities to be involved in programs and projects that go beyond the scope of our “position of record” that it's just not possible to get bored... all you have to do is look around a little to find something new to try. I have no doubt that I will have a long and rewarding career with this agency, and with a little luck, I will be able to retire knowing that I've done my part for the future of agriculture.

“I understand that you recently completed the *USDA Graduate School's Aspiring Leader Program*; could you tell me what was involved, and what you gained from this program?”

The USDA Grad. School's ALP was a six-month intensive leadership development program intended for ANY federal government employee (not just USDA) whose pay grade is between a GS 5-7. It consisted of several components: 3 one-week “residential training” sessions, 3 manager interviews, a one week shadowing assignment, a 30 day work detail, and a few other reading and writing assignments. I began the program in April 2004.

During each of the 3 one-week sessions, all of the participants (about 120) gathered for classroom sessions covering leadership and management topics like conflict management, mediation and facilitation skills, diversity, interview skills, and many others. As part of those sessions, we were also assigned to teams for the purpose of developing a one hour presentation on a specific leadership topic of our choosing, which was our final assignment.

All of the other assignments were to be selected and arranged for by each individual participant, based on their particular developmental needs and interests. I chose to focus my development on the introduction of GIS to our agency's programs. To that end, I interviewed John St.Onge, CED for Lamoille County, VT, where our regional GIS Digitizing center is located. My next interview was with Ray Voyer, the State Geographic Information Specialist for NRCS in Maine. My third and final interview was with Shirley Hall, FSA's National GIS Coordinator.

I spent one week shadowing Jim Heald, Director of FSA's GIS Center in WDC, and following that week, I began my 30-day work assignment in the Computer

Automation Branch (CAB) of the Conservation and Environmental Programs Division (CEPD) in WDC. For that assignment, I worked directly under Martin Lowenfish, CAB Chief, and was given a special assignment involving the integration of GIS into the CRP Sign-up process, and the possibility of data sharing with NRCS in order to streamline the process of developing CRP Conservation Plans.

Overall, my participation in the 2004 ALP provided me with many opportunities for developing my own skills while networking with people already in management positions. It also gave me a well-rounded perspective on how our agency works, and increased my confidence level beyond my expectations. Once I completed the program, I felt very well equipped for my future with FSA.

Red Tide Has Shellfishermen Seeing Red in More Ways Than One

***By Dawn Wilhelmsen
Farm Loan Officer, FSA***

On an average spring day, Duxbury stands picturesque, as a quaint and quiet seaside New England town, complete with historic homes, white picket fences and lovely shorelines. That shoreline, and the normal quiet solitude of Duxbury Bay, turned tumultuous on May 20, 2005 for many of the aquaculturists whose livelihoods lie deep in the waters there. All shellfish beds were closed due to the effects of a Red Tide outbreak, the worst outbreak to hit Massachusetts in three decades. In the following weeks, shellfish beds from Maine to Martha's Vineyard were also affected and subsequently closed.

Red Tide is caused by a "population explosion" of toxic, naturally occurring microscopic plankton. The blooms of this poison-producing plankton often turn the water reddish brown and become toxic to marine animals. During these red tide blooms, certain types of shellfish that are affected, namely clams, oysters, and mussels, become extremely unsafe to eat. Eating this shellfish can cause basic shellfish poisoning, with symptoms ranging from tingling of the lips and tongue, headache, dizziness and nausea to such severe reactions such as respiratory difficulty, muscular paralysis and sometimes even death.

This phenomenon made headlines in many local newspapers and nationally televised broadcasts and it sent many of the 283 MA aquaculturists (shellfish farmers) scurrying for emergency aid. With the shellfish beds closed during their heaviest marketing season which traditionally begins on Memorial Day weekend, the industry became incapacitated. Panic ensued in the early weeks of June, when recurring water tests confirmed that the beds would probably remain closed for up to twelve weeks. Where would they obtain the monies needed to buy the seed that

required immediate planting, and how would these farmers be able to make loan payments or maintain their other daily family living expenses with no income? What would the ramifications be if the general public feared eating shellfish when the beds did reopen? How would the gravity of this environmental tragedy affect the future of the aquaculture industry on the whole?

My office, serving farmers in all of Southeastern Massachusetts, has loans with sixteen of these aquaculturists. Beside numerous calls from these farmers, our office fielded a minimum of ten to fifteen calls daily from other shellfishermen who were in a total state of panic, as they searched to find out if there was any immediate federal or state funding available to them. With so many constituents without immediate income and in truly understanding the pain that could be heard in the voices of these people who work so hard to provide us with such a bountiful annual harvest worth approximately \$4 million, I called upon State Executive Director Sandra Adams to see if there was anything that could be done to help these people.

Ms. Adams listened intently and immediately contacted sources from the MA Department of Food and Agriculture to see if there was any state aid available. There was none. Though Governor Mitt Romney sought assistance from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which would have made the state's shellfishermen eligible for unemployment benefits, FEMA rejected the state's request. Small Business Administration (SBA) was touted in many local publications as "the" Agency to contact for immediate assistance, even issuing public notice of meeting dates, to assist these people in completing applications. However, when it came right down to it,

Regional Director William Leggerio confirmed what some of our constituents had feared. "Anyone involved in agriculture was not, in fact, eligible for the disaster program loans." That is, SBA offered loans to shellfishermen, but not to shellfish growers because as a grower, these aquaculturists are considered farmers, not fishermen.

FSA's Farm Loan Chief Carrie Novak, County Executive Director Paul Russell, and County Committee Chairperson Steven Ward attended one of these SBA meetings in Wellfleet, MA on June 22nd. Upon learning that there would be no assistance available from SBA, Ms. Novak sought a declaration for emergency assistance in the form of low interest loans for those who suffered physical losses from the Red Tide. Ms. Novak, along with strong support, in voice and spirit, from the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation, wrote to FSA Administrator James Little, calling the request "of vital importance to the hard-working men and women of the aquaculture industry".

Thankfully, Mr. Little understood the severity of this Red Tide disaster and signed the declaration on June 27, 2005, giving these farmers the opportunity to apply for Emergency Loans. Furthermore, with timing so crucial, it was coincidental yet advantageous to have

another program being administered by this Agency which was already in place, that of the Crop Disaster Program. This program, as I advised so many of our farmers, had nothing to do with the Red Tide, but rather involved payments being issued to our eligible farmers for crop losses suffered in 2003 and 2004 due to severe frost and ice damages.

Many of our aquaculturists had, in fact, suffered these losses, and were thus encouraged to apply, as these monies were being disbursed during this time when they had no monies coming in. Thankfully, this program kept many of our aquaculturists "afloat".

Most of the shellfish beds are now open and some of the immediate financial worries of these aquaculturists have subsided. That which continues is the serenity and livelihood of Duxbury Bay and other grant sites like it across the state, not to mention the endless gratitude these farmers continue to express to me and my colleagues for our support during this time of crisis. In remembering that it's these hard-working people who grow the food we eat and preserve the open space we continue to crave, we feel it is simply our mission as an Agency to provide whatever assistance we can. I'm proud to be part of an Agency that can help those who serve us as Americans on a daily basis. God bless our farmers. May their future harvests be good to them!

Meet our USDA Intern, Nora Yim

By Nora Yim

As a second year college student, I am accustomed to having my hands full. Whether it is completing the painful task of writing papers that will only be shredded to pieces by the professor's red-inked sword, bicycling my way to club meetings, or dashing to my work study job, college has definitely prepared me for a busy lifestyle. Now that my first year is over, my body has been begging for that much needed break, yet my mind remains contemplative of my next step. Fortunately, I was able to return to the USDA Farm Service Agency as a second year intern, an experience that I enjoyed thoroughly last year.

My first year at the agency turned out to be a great learning experience. In my



second year, I continue to learn and familiarize myself with the greater framework of the agency as a whole. Here I am given various tasks and important responsibilities from performing data entry to meeting

with a diverse group of producers. I continue to gain an understanding of the various assistance programs offered by the agency to our producers. This year I gained a general overview of the Arcview-GIS program, a new skill that will be very useful and valuable in advancing my future career. Interning here has sharpened my skills and provided me the opportunities to utilize those skills, whether it is technological or communicative.

This fall I will return to Smith College and resume my role as a busy college student, something I both dread and look forward to. This year I am confronted with the important decision of choosing my major. I have always been attracted to the idea of travel and the exploration of different countries, cultures, and people. I will most likely major in international relations and minor in third world development, as I hope to turn my passion into a plausible career. As the daughter of a

family who has survived the genocide in Cambodia, working in the field of international relations and third world development has always been of paramount importance. Hopefully, with the determination and the right opportunities and maneuvers, I may be able to turn my passion into a reality. I feel that my experience at the USDA will direct my goals to a new level and pave my way to building a meaningful career while pursuing my various interests.

Kenyan Agriculture Meets Massachusetts Agriculture

By Carrie Novak, Farm Loan Chief

Farm Loan Chief Carrie Novak and Farm Loan Specialist Daniel Smiarowski, who cover Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island, gave a short tour to three African guests on Wednesday, June 15, 2005. Mr. Maranga and his daughter, Miss Njogu, were in Massachusetts for a short visit while attending a family wedding. While in the United States, Mr. Maranga expressed an interest in learning about American Agriculture and the role that the Federal Government plays in financing and price support.

Kenyan agriculture is largely small scale, subsistence level farming with a few large operations. Horticulture is very small scale due to disposable income limitations. Mr. Maranga discussed the many attempts the Kenyan government has made at trying to improve the income of the farmers. Price supports and

government loan programs were popular and seemed to help, but due to cost and corruption they were discontinued.

Maize is a very important crop. A maize failure could mean starvation. Most crops above those needed for subsistence are exported. The availability of a ready market in Massachusetts was very fascinating to Mr. Maranga. Turf farming was a very interesting concept for the group.

The tour centered around the Connecticut River Valley where the group saw a large greenhouse operation in Northfield, shade and field cigar tobacco in Sunderland, and potatoes, squash, pumpkins and asparagus in Montague.



From left to right: Farm Loan Specialist Daniel Smiarowski; Christopher Njogu Maranga, a Director of Nyayo Tea Zone Authority for the Ministry of Agriculture in Kenya; Edward Kibirige, world relief worker from Uganda; Elizabeth W. Njogu, attorney in Kenya; and Cindy from Five Acre Farm, Northfield, Mass.

Sign on the Door...Gone Fishing!

by Dann Stuart, Public Affairs Specialist, Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Regions

On Oct. 13, 1974, 29-year-old Richard McIntire joined what was then called the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS). He had left his store manager position at Agway in New Hampshire to put his nameplate on the desk at his new job as a county executive director at the Merrimack County office in Concord, N.H. Thirty-one years later, the sign on his desk reads "Gone fishing!"

Over the years, McIntire worked in a variety of positions at ASCS, now FSA, such as county office specialist, program tech in the Massachusetts State Office and administrative officer for the last 15 years.

"The Agency is full of wonderful people," says McIntire. "That's what I'll miss the most."

And, as evidenced by the turn out to his recent retirement luncheon, Dick will be missed by lots of folks. More than 80 people from Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and Rhode Island gathered at the Olde Hadleigh Grille in Hadley, Mass. to honor McIntire for his 31 years of friendship and service to USDA.

Former SED Ray Duda joined current SED Sandra Adams and a host of others to tell stories and praise the work of McIntire.

"Dick was not only a good employee, but he is still a good friend to this day," said Duda.

"I cannot begin to tell you what a difference Dick has made in the lives of so many people," said Adams. "He has touched a lot of us in a very professional, yet personal way."



Richard McIntire is congratulated by Massachusetts SED Sandra Adams for his many years of government service. "I cannot begin to tell you what a difference Dick has made in the lives of so many people," said Adams.



Richard McIntire holds a prize "catch." He says he will be doing a lot of fishing in the coming months.

"One of my best assignments," said McIntire, "was the work I did on the original counter skills training course. Back then every PT went through two-and-a-half days of this training. It gave them an opportunity to share some of the highs and lows of their job and also gave managers an opportunity to share their appreciation for all the hard work of employees. We don't do a lot of that today."

McIntire also fondly recalled one of the first NASCOE conventions he attended. He had attended a training session in Ohio with some folks from Kentucky. The following year the NASCOE convention was held in Louisville, Kentucky.



Richard McIntire is joined by his family at his retirement luncheon.



Frank Bouchard, District Director from Rhode Island, entertains the crowd with an Irish ballad about Richard McIntire.

"As long as you were wearing a name tag, strangers would come up and talk to you and welcome you to the convention," says McIntire. "I remember my wife commented on how friendly all the folks were and how welcomed we felt."

When asked what he plans to do in retirement, McIntire responds "I don't see myself in a rocking chair!"

McIntire has lots of hobbies to keep him busy. He is an avid fisherman. He operates a sugar house and is looking forward to working that in the day light. "I used to work late into the night to get that done before going to work the next day," said McIntire. "It would often take me until 1 or 2 a.m. to get finished. It will be nice getting a good night sleep!"

The McIntire's own what they call a camp (summer house) in Pemaquid, Maine. "I am only 28 feet from the ocean," says McIntire. "I can throw an ice cube from my porch and hit a lobster boat!"

McIntire says retirement will allow him more time to take his seven grandchildren fishing.

"Who knows, now that I have the time and with a little luck, they'll become better fishermen," McIntire added.



Richard McIntire laughs at one of the many stories being told about him and his service to FSA.





Massachusetts State Office
Farm Service Agency
445 West Street
Amherst, MA 01002