

Three County Fair Donates to Farm Relief Efforts

\$10,000 Pledged to Three Different Area Weather Related Disaster Funds to Assist Local Farmers

- Tuesday, August 22, 2023 -

Northampton, MA – The Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden Agricultural Society, the non-profit organization that manages the Three County Fair and fairgrounds, has announced that the Fair will be making financial contributions totaling \$10,000 to three different funds established to assist local farms following this year’s extreme weather events. The funds selected include the Massachusetts Resiliency Farm Fund, the CISA Emergency Farm Fund and the Local Farmer Awards Emergency Flood Relief Fund managed by the Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation.

Each fund is providing aid in valuable ways to the farms who have been impacted by the late season frost or damaging rains this summer. Current estimates have reported that the July floods affected more than 100 area farms causing more than \$15 million in crop losses and these estimates continue to rise as damage is further assessed. While the unseasonable warm temperatures followed by a deep freeze in February, and then a late frost on May 18, 2023, caused significant damage to many apple, blueberry, peach and ornamental crops.

“2023 has been a disastrous year for farmers beginning with damaging freeze in February and frost in May and continuing with the floods and excessive rainfall that has taken place over the past two months”, said Tom Smiarowski, President of the Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden Agricultural Society. “The floodwaters may have receded, but the damage experienced by farmers in the Connecticut River Valley and across Massachusetts, has been devastating and becomes increasingly more evident each passing day. Agriculture remains an important critical focal point of the Three County Fair and our Board of Directors felt it was important to show our support for the farming community and the problems they have and continue to experience this growing season. The Three County Fair is pleased to be able to contribute to the funds managed by these three organizations who have responded quickly to the needs of the farming community”, concluded Smiarowski.

The Massachusetts Farm Resiliency Farm was presented with a check for \$5,000 from the Three County Fair this week at a fundraising event at the Berkshire Brewing Company in Deerfield. The MA Farm Resiliency Fund was established by the United Way of Central Massachusetts as a partnership between philanthropic organizations, private foundations, and received unprecedented support from the Healey-Driscoll Administration, who dedicated \$20 million in state-financed aid to the Fund. The Resiliency Fund will help western and central Mass farmers, their families and their livelihoods, while also supporting food security, combating hunger and assisting farms respond to climate change. United Way of Central Massachusetts President and Tim Garvin expressed his gratitude to the Fair by stating, “Our goal with the Fund is to support farmers and communities by raising and distributing funds with urgency, as they are facing challenges right now. We are so grateful to Three County Fair and donors from all over the Commonwealth who have stepped up and joined us to address the losses for farms, food pantries and the rural communities who rely on a vibrant agricultural economy.”

The Three County Fair has also donated \$2,500 each to both the Local Farmer Awards Emergency Flood Relief Fund and the CISA Emergency Farm Fund

The CISA Emergency Farm Fund, in partnership with the Franklin County CDC, is offering zero-interest loans of up to \$25,000 for Massachusetts farms in Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties affected by this year's extreme weather events. "We are very appreciative to receive this valuable donation from a group that has supported local agriculture for over 200 years. This generous donation to CISA's Emergency Farm Fund ensures that more farmers impacted by this year's expression of climate change have the support they need to finish out the season and continue running their businesses in the years to come," said Philip Korman, Executive Director of CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture).

The Local Farmer Awards Emergency Flood Relief Fund managed by the Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation has utilized their Local Farmer Awards network to communicate with nearly 300 local farms following the mid-July flood devastation and has quickly supplied two rounds of relief checks to those impacted. "We are so pleased to partner with the Three County Fair to promptly distribute much needed checks to farmers who were affected by the recent floods. Their community support is generous and will be impactful to local farmers" expressed Cari Carpenter, Director Local Farmer Awards, Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation.

The Three County Fair's Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden Agricultural Society was first incorporated in 1818 by a group of business leaders, farmers and enthusiasts who made it the Society's mission to promote education, science and sustainability around agriculture throughout the Commonwealth. The Three County Fair is recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture as the oldest on-going agricultural Fair in continuous operation in the U.S.A, with the first Three County Fair taking place, October 14-15, 1818, and every year since without interruption.

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