

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today Congressman John W. Olver announced that United States Department of Agriculture has awarded Four Star Farms in Northfield, Massachusetts a \$160,409 Rural Development Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement grant. The funds will be used to purchase and install an 82 kilowatt hour solar power system to supply nearly all of the farm's electrical needs.

Congressman John Olver said, "If there is one thing that this summer's high gas prices have taught us, it is that we must invest in clean, renewable energy. Four Star Farms is doing just that. The solar power system will provide 90% of the farm's electrical use, enabling Four Star to not only reduce future energy costs, but also reduce its reliance on the electrical grid." Melissa Wagoner, spokeswoman for Senator Kennedy said, "The Senator is very pleased that these funds have been approved for Four Star Farms. By encouraging our companies to invest in clean, renewable sources of energy, all of Massachusetts' residents will benefit from a healthier environment."

The total project cost is approximately \$641,000. Non-federal funding has been obtained for the remainder of the project from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and First Pioneer Farm Credit.

USDA's Rural Development Section 9006 Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements program provides financial assistance to agricultural producers and small rural businesses to support renewable energy projects. This grant was one of 639 in 43 states that will receive a total of \$35 million in grants and loan guarantees.

Four Star Farms is a 250-acre family farm that has produced sod for twenty years and recently became involved in aquaculture.

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