

**A STATEWIDE PLAN
FOR AGRICULTURAL POLICY
AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**SUBMITTED BY
THE MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
TO SECRETARY LEWIS RILEY**

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This strategic plan is the result of a 15-month planning process spearheaded by the Maryland Agricultural Commission in conjunction with an Advisory Committee and American Farmland Trust (AFT), which was engaged to facilitate the process and write the statewide strategic plan. It is guided and informed by the wisdom and ideas of the agricultural community. Thank you to the more than 600 farmers and agricultural and conservation leaders who attended the seven listening sessions held over the summer of 2005 and the 300 leaders who participated in the Governor's Agricultural Forum held February 13, 2006. Without their involvement, none of this would be possible. Their dedication, energy and recommendations were inspiring. This *Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management* is the next step in the effort to bring their ideas to fruition so Maryland's agriculture can continue to thrive and prosper.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION	6
ISSUE 1: ENHANCE PROFITABILITY	9
ISSUE 2: ENSURE AN ADEQUATE BASE OF WELL-MANAGED AGRICULTURAL LAND	21
ISSUE 3: ADVANCE RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND THE ADVOCACY OF AGRICULTURE	31
RECOMMENDATIONS / NEXT STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION	38
CONCLUSION	42
APPENDIX I:	PROJECT PARTICIPANTS
APPENDIX II:	ACRONYMS
APPENDIX III:	PROCESS
APPENDIX IV:	SURVEY AND SURVEY RESULTS
APPENDIX V:	INDIVIDUAL LISTENING SESSION NOTES
APPENDIX VI:	FORUM RANKINGS
APPENDIX VII:	EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR MARYLAND

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management

Maryland farmers face increasing pressures that threaten the viability of the agricultural industry and the land base that supports it. Fragmentation and high land prices, foreign competition, difficulty gaining access to markets, and efforts to reduce agriculture's impact on the health of the Chesapeake Bay are among the formidable challenges farmers face as they struggle to remain profitable.

To address these concerns, in February 2005, Governor Robert Ehrlich, Jr., asked Secretary of Agriculture Lewis R. Riley to advance Maryland's agriculture through the development of comprehensive policy recommendations. Secretary Riley delegated the Governor's request to his advisory board, the Maryland Agricultural Commission, which is comprised of 28 members representing a range of agricultural interests. The Commission appointed an Advisory Committee to guide the strategic planning process, the report, and recommendations for next steps. The Commission contracted with American Farmland Trust (AFT) to facilitate the process and to write the statewide strategic plan.

The Commission, the Advisory Committee and American Farmland Trust organized a public input process that would result in a plan that addressed the needs of the farm community and the larger group of stakeholders invested in the future of Maryland's agriculture. The process included stakeholder surveys, seven listening sessions, conference calls with experts, and the Governor's Agricultural Forum; the result of these efforts is this strategic plan.

An assessment of responses from the public input process revealed three overarching issue areas — enhance profitability, ensure an adequate base of well-managed agricultural land, and advance research, education and the advocacy of agriculture. The core of the strategic plan is centered on these three prominent issues, addressing specific goals within each issue area, as well as describing current programs in Maryland that could help further these goals.

Based on this highly collaborative process, the plan concludes with 30 policy recommendations made by the Commission and some initial next steps toward implementation that will ensure the future viability of agriculture in Maryland.

INTRODUCTION

TO ENHANCE, PROTECT, PRESERVE AND SUSTAIN THE VIABILITY AND PROFITABILITY OF MARYLAND'S AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Agriculture is vital to Maryland's quality of life and to its social, economic, and environmental well-being. One of the state's most important economic sectors, farming and forestry directly contribute more than \$2.2 billion annually and thousands of jobs both on the farm and in secondary industries that are tied to agricultural production.¹ Broiler production on the Eastern Shore is the largest single component of the state's agricultural economy. Along with traditional crops, the burgeoning nursery/greenhouse and equine industries, agritourism, and the development of niche markets point to the diversity and innovation of Maryland farmers.

Maryland agriculture covers more than 2 million acres or 33 percent of the state's land area and provides food and fiber to a fast-growing region of the United States. The state is a national leader in farmland preservation, permanently protecting 430,000 acres through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), Rural Legacy, Green Print, and county programs.² Sustaining well-managed agricultural land is critical to the long-term health of the Chesapeake Bay. Retaining viable agriculture and the land base needed to support it is directly linked to the success of efforts to improve water quality in the state.

Despite the multiple benefits farming and forestry provide to the citizens of Maryland, producers face formidable challenges and struggle to remain viable in a quickly urbanizing state. The most pressing of these include: fragmentation, high land prices, foreign competition, difficulty gaining access to markets, and onerous environmental regulations. To address these challenges, in February 2005 Governor Ehrlich asked Secretary Lewis R. Riley to spearhead the development of comprehensive policy recommendations for enhancing the state's agriculture.

Secretary Riley delegated the Governor's request to his advisory board, the Maryland Agricultural Commission (the Commission), which is comprised of 28 members (see Appendix I) representing a full range of agricultural interests. The Commission appointed an Advisory Committee to guide the development of a strategic planning process, report, and recommendations for next steps. The Advisory Committee includes representatives from the Commission, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED), Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, Inc., Maryland Farm Bureau, Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board, University of Maryland (UMD), and a representative for the environmental community

¹ The \$2.2 billion includes sales directly generated from farming and primary forest products only. It does not reflect secondary economic impacts or any type of input-output modeling. Farm sales of \$1.5 billion were reported by the USDA/NASS/Maryland Field Office. Primary forest product sales of \$720 million are cited in "The Economic Importance of the Maryland Forest Products Industry," Hilchey, Duncan and David Kay, Cornell University (2000).

² Maryland Department of Agriculture

(see Appendix I). The Commission also engaged American Farmland Trust (AFT) to facilitate the process and write the statewide strategic plan.

Highlights of this 15-month, farmer-driven effort included: a survey, seven listening sessions, the Governor's Agricultural Forum, and this strategic plan with recommendations that support farmers and farming, protect farmland, enhance environmental benefits, and, ultimately, ensure agriculture's long-term viability.

Strategic Plan Framework

This strategic plan includes several overarching criteria:

Vision – The Commission's mission for this process is to enhance, protect, preserve, and sustain the viability and profitability of Maryland agriculture. Toward this end, the plan focuses on general recommendations that serve all of agriculture, not specific industry sectors.

Horizon – The plan focuses on the future of agriculture over the next 10 years with particular attention to specific actions that can be undertaken in fewer than five years.

Scale and Scope – The plan addresses both large-scale commodity agriculture and smaller-scale specialty and value-added operations.

Chesapeake Bay and Geographic Environment – The plan recognizes that agriculture in Maryland must be environmentally sound to be truly viable in the future.

Next Generation – The strategic plan addresses current conditions in agriculture, encourages the next generation of farmers in Maryland, and promotes their success.

Be Prepared for the Unexpected – The listening sessions were extremely successful in terms of documenting the main issues and concerns that currently face farmers in Maryland. Still, the Commission felt that in addition to addressing the issues already identified and known by farmers, the plan also must help farmers prepare for the unexpected. These unexpected issues could be negative, such as natural disasters or agri-terrorism, or positive, such as new support industries or agricultural opportunities.

Organization of the Statewide Strategic Plan

The strategic plan is organized into four chapters and seven appendices:

- *Issue Areas/Recommendations* – The results of the survey and listening sessions identified three overarching issues. Initial recommendations developed at the sessions were discussed at the Governor's Agricultural Forum and then finalized by the Maryland Agricultural Commission.

The issue areas are:

1. Enhance Profitability;
2. Ensure an Adequate Base of Well-Managed Agricultural Land; and
3. Advance Research, Education and the Advocacy of Agriculture.

Individual chapters describe each issue with subsections for specific topics. Each subsection includes a discussion summary, information gathered about what is currently going on to address the problem, and recommendations on further action/strategies to be undertaken by specified state agencies.

- *Next Steps for Implementation* – This chapter looks across all three issues to provide ideas about implementation, including private as well as government actions. It also identifies the state agencies that should be directed to initiate the process and collaborate with all partners to successfully accomplish the recommendations.
- *Appendices*
 - I. Project Participants
 - II. Acronyms
 - III. Process
 - IV. Survey and Survey Results
 - V. Individual Listening Session Notes
 - VI. Forum Rankings
 - VII. Emergency Preparedness for Maryland

Please note that in an effort to keep the process that resulted in this plan as transparent as possible, the support materials that were developed over the 15-month process have been posted on the Maryland Department of Agriculture Web site at www.mda.state.md.us. Documents posted include the survey questions and tabulated responses, all the comments and write ups from the listening sessions and Governor's Agricultural Forum, as well as this final report.

ISSUE 1: ENHANCE PROFITABILITY

Profitability was one of two leading concerns identified through the surveys, listening sessions, conference calls, and Advisory Committee meetings. Many factors affect profitability: regulations, taxes, markets, labor, insurance, production costs, and wildlife damage. Farmers said they need new and higher value markets, better promotion and branding, and more diversified production. They also need more economic development assistance to help recruit new agricultural businesses, meet current needs, and develop new enterprises. Farmers indicated strong support for harmonizing regulations and increasing the transparency of these regulations, as well as adjusting the tax structure to make it more conducive to Maryland agriculture in the 21st century.

Enhancing profitability generated 17 recommendations in five categories — the most of any issue area. The categories included:

1. Improve Marketing and Access to Markets;
2. Provide Business Development Assistance;
3. Reduce the Cost of Production;
4. Clarify, Harmonize, and Improve Regulations to Encourage Profitable Agriculture; and
5. Reduce the Tax Burden on Agriculture.

IMPROVE MARKETING AND ACCESS TO MARKETS

Discussion Summary

For agriculture to remain viable, farmers must make a profit. Expanding markets and receiving adequate prices are critical to a farmer's success. Throughout the public input process, there was general consensus on the need for more outlets for both farm and forest products. Farmers suggested options including a new grain port, more local processing facilities, and more sales to local grocery stores and government-funded institutions.

With stagnant commodity prices in Maryland and across the U.S., farmers say that to stay in business they need a combination of new and higher-value markets and reduced production costs. Since soybeans are grown on as much as 25 percent of Maryland farmland, finding more profitable soybean markets is a high priority. Farmers discussed options ranging from a new grain port to the development of local grain-processing facilities. More generally, they called for more direct marketing efforts and support for new, value-added and niche ventures.

Based on the comments from the listening sessions and surveys, the Commission identified three major marketing endeavors:

Expand marketing opportunities/outlets: All sectors of Maryland agriculture need help expanding marketing opportunities and outlets for their products. Marketing services should be

designed to serve two different constituencies: large-scale commodity producers and smaller-scale producers who are more directly tied to consumers. Infrastructure must be put in place to help expand both large- and small-scale opportunities.

Improve promotion of Maryland products: Agriculture needs better promotion of its many products to local consumers.

Promote bio-energy product development and use: Ethanol and biodiesel production and the use of biomass would enhance the market for some of Maryland's agricultural products and by-products, help diversify current production, and help offset increasing energy prices.

What's Going On Now

Maryland has a framework for cooperative partnerships to address marketing and promotion. It is set up to support current and future needs of both large- and small-scale producers, and both traditional and innovative operations. MDA develops marketing opportunities and provides related agricultural development services, such as mediation and the promotion of state and federal policy to support farmers. DBED works with MDA to provide support and facilitate project financing for both agricultural and forestry industries. One of DBED's main focuses is to advance bio-fuel production. In addition to the state-level efforts, eight Maryland counties employ Agricultural Marketing Professionals (AMPs) who serve as local contacts for farmers specifically to help with marketing and to encourage agricultural enterprise development in their counties.

MDA facilitates wholesale relationships between producers and large buyers, such as sales to local grocery stores and exports of livestock genetics. It is developing a wide range of new market opportunities, including produce sales to public institutions and to specialty and ethnic markets, new and alternative grain markets including bio-energy production, and grass-fed dairy and livestock operations. MDA also is developing an ISO 65 certification program to increase markets, such as exporting organic grain to Europe. DBED's International Division is actively involved in generating foreign export opportunities for Maryland agricultural products.

MDA continues to develop and support direct marketing opportunities, which are particularly well suited to small farms in close proximity to the region's dense and diverse urban populations. These include farmers' markets, on-farm sales, agri-tourism, and wine promotion. MDA created the "Maryland's Best" brand to promote Maryland-grown products, but the lack of funds to promote the brand have limited the program's success. MDA also produces various directories on subjects such as farmers' markets, hay and straw producers, and agri-tourism venues, and offers organic certification services to farmers.

Many listening session participants called for a deep-water port or some other infrastructure to increase grain marketing opportunities. Maryland Port Administration officials are evaluating appropriate sites for the feasibility of development for this use. Staff from DBED are in discussions with various grain marketing business representatives about establishing operations in Maryland and are encouraging the private sector to demonstrate the commitment to invest in such a facility.

Policies and incentives are in place to encourage producers to invest in bio-fuel processing facilities. For example, Maryland has a Renewable Portfolio Standard that requires a percentage of the state's overall energy purchase to include fuels produced from renewable sources. The Maryland General Assembly passed the Biofuel Incentive Act in 2005 offering production tax credits for fuels produced from small grains and corn. To be eligible for the credit, the Act requires that farmers be offered the opportunity to have ownership in the facility.

An interagency work group has been formed to help advance bio-fuel and alternative energy production in the state. It includes representatives from MDA, DBED, the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA), Maryland Environmental Service (MES), and the Departments of Natural Resources (DNR), Environment (MDE), and General Services (DGS). The group is monitoring several bio-fuel and bio-mass energy projects pending across the state.

Recommendation 1: Focus Business Development on Processing

Focus business development initiatives to attract, retain, and expand primary processing and production operations, as well as export facilities, for Maryland-grown products.

Actions/strategies:

- Create model "agricultural enterprise zone" incentives that jurisdictions can use to attract value-added and processing businesses.
- Provide working capital grants for farms in transition, demonstration projects, and internships.

Responsible agencies: DBED, MARBIDCO, MDA

Recommendation 2: Advance Bio-Energy Production and Use

Support incentives that increase the production and use of bio-energy (including forest products).

Actions/strategies:

- Enact a statewide initiative to blend 2 percent biodiesel into the entire diesel supply.
- Support legislation to ban MTBEs (a gasoline additive) in Maryland.
- Require new state vehicles to be bio-fuel compatible and use alternative fuels when available.
- Provide tax credits/exemptions for bio-diesel and ethanol use.
- Provide loan guarantees and industrial bonds so farmers can own a larger portion of a biofuel facility.

Responsible agencies: MDA, MDE, DBED, DNR

Recommendation 3: Market and Brand Maryland Agricultural Products

Develop and implement a marketing and branding initiative for Maryland farm and forestry products.

Actions/strategies:

- Establish an ongoing statewide working group on agricultural marketing and branding issues.
- Initiate a “buy local” promotional campaign.
- Encourage establishment of an Agricultural Marketing Professional position with economic development focus in those counties that currently do not have this position.
- Improve product availability in Maryland grocery stores and markets.
- Increase funding for state marketing programs.
- Increase contracts with government institutions to purchase Maryland agricultural products.

Responsible agencies: MDA, DGS, Department of Corrections, Department of Education, DNR

PROVIDE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Discussion Summary

Across the state, all agricultural sectors need increased economic development assistance to help recruit new businesses, meet current needs, and develop new enterprises. Agriculture needs to be seen and treated as an important business activity as part of the state’s overall renewable natural resource based economy. State agencies should provide the same support and opportunities to agriculture that they do to other industries, such as technology and manufacturing.

What’s Going On Now

Historically, DBED resources have been directed toward attracting and retaining industry sectors that generated large-scale employment where the majority of the workforce is located. While this is still DBED’s primary mission, the agency has established a division focusing on business development in rural regions. It has personnel dedicated to serve as a liaison to resource-based industries including agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. DBED is partnering with Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit and allowing the Maryland Industrial Development Financing Authority (MIDFA) loan insurance program to be used for poultry projects. This effort is the first time this loan insurance program has been used to support agriculture. The newly created Maryland Agricultural and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) is expected to begin operation in the summer of 2006, pursuant to available funding. MARBIDCO will partner with and leverage other service providers, especially private lenders, to fund investment in agriculture.

Recommendation 1: Coordinate and Optimize Resources, Roles and Responsibilities

Identify and coordinate resources, roles, and responsibilities of various economic development partners, in concert with the University system resources, to minimize duplication of efforts and maximize opportunities.

Actions/strategies:

- Create a Center for Beginning Farmers and Enterprise Development (CBFED) as described on page 34.

Responsible agencies: MDA, DBED, UMD, MARBIDCO

Recommendation 2: Provide Business Planning Assistance

Provide technical assistance with business planning to better enable access to resources for infrastructure and capital funding.

Actions/strategies:

- Identify business planning resources available to assist farmers looking to diversify and implement value-added strategies. If necessary, provide training for Small Business Development Counselors (SBDC) on agricultural business development and lending.
- Support market studies and research on production methods, crops, and agricultural products to improve profit margins and enable diversification.
- Provide assistance through the CBFED as described on page 34.

Responsible agencies: MDA, DBED, UMD, MARBIDCO

Recommendation 3: Fund Business Development Financing

Provide resources for capital and infrastructure investment, and working capital grants for farms in transition, demonstration projects, and internships.

Actions/strategies:

- Provide funding through MARBIDCO, the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), and other agricultural economic development initiatives.

Responsible agencies: MDA, DBED, UMD, MARBIDCO

Recommendation 4: Maximize Future Opportunities for Maryland Agriculture

Coordinate and fund market studies and research on production methods, crops, and agricultural products to improve profit margins and enable diversification.

Actions/strategies:

- Study the feasibility of a business cluster in Maryland for agricultural and nutraceutical research and development, production, and distribution.
- Leverage the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) to build corporate partnerships that encourage research and product commercialization.

Responsible agencies: MDA, DBED, UMD, MARBIDCO, BARC

REDUCE THE COST OF PRODUCTION

Discussion Summary

Commodity prices are fixed by the market. Producers have little control over the prices they receive for their products. Likewise, they generally have little control over input costs, which have risen much faster than prices. As a result, escalating costs of key inputs are reducing returns on agricultural investments. Insurance, labor, and wildlife damage in particular have had major impacts on farm profitability.

Insurance: The rising costs of health insurance make it prohibitive for many farmers and their families to afford coverage. The high costs of liability and crop insurance also are increasing production costs for Maryland farmers.

Labor: The shortage of farm labor has been a problem nationwide and adds significant risk and costs to the farm operation. The steady decline in the number of American workers in agricultural jobs has led to increasing dependency on foreign labor. However, burdensome federal regulations in the H2A and H2B guest worker programs, including application requirements, wage rates, transportation and housing costs, and caps, make foreign labor a less than reliable supply. Because of all these problems, many farmers say they cannot afford to participate in these programs and remain competitive in the market.

Wildlife damage: Deer, geese, and other animals can cause significant crop damage, while predators cause significant damage to livestock. Prior to the 2004 hunting season, Maryland's deer population was estimated at 242,000. Over the past 10 years, resident Canada goose populations in the Atlantic Flyway increased an average of 1 percent/year and numbered over one million in the spring of 2005. In the Mississippi Flyway, resident Canada goose populations increased about 5 percent/year since 1996 and currently number about 1.6 million.

What's Going On Now

Insurance: At one time, Maryland Farm Bureau had a group insurance program to help farmers obtain affordable health insurance. However, when Maryland's group health insurance laws changed, the number of benefits offered through group insurance increased, thus making the insurance more expensive. In addition, these new laws required that each employee be a member of Farm Bureau. Over time, the farmers who remained in the program were the older farmers who had more health issues, which ultimately increased the program's costs until it became prohibitively expensive for everyone and was discontinued. Maryland Farm Bureau currently is working with a private health insurance company to provide health insurance for Maryland farmers.

Labor: Agriculture and other industries have put tremendous pressure on the federal government to make substantial changes to the H2A and H2B programs. Governor Ehrlich's Federal Office is organizing interested Maryland businesses to participate in Congressional debates on H2A/H2B reform.

Wildlife damage: If deer cause damage to crops, farmers can obtain a deer management permit (DMP) from the DNR. DMPs allow farmers to harvest antlerless deer on their property outside of regular state hunting seasons and bag limits. In 2004, a total of 12,690 deer were taken with DMPs. DNR has streamlined the permit process and reports that farmers are not having a problem obtaining DMPs. Deer bag limits have been expanded to harvest up to 30 deer per year during firearm, bow, and muzzleloader seasons, as well as short-term managed hunts. The short-term managed hunts have helped reduce the deer population in targeted areas but are costly and labor intensive. Community-based deer management programs, where farmers and civic groups open their land for hunting, also have helped control deer populations. Finally, the Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH) program has been effective at making venison available to food banks. FHFH works with deer processors around the state and pays the cost of processing deer donated by hunters. Since 1997, this program has resulted in 331 tons of donated meat, resulting in over 2.65 million meals for needy people in the state.

Farmers are required to obtain a federal permit to shoot geese that are causing crop damage. This permit typically takes three weeks to acquire, and DNR is trying to get a standing depredation order for the elimination of geese. The goose hunting season for Maryland residents has been expanded, but there has not been much interest in the hunting community to shoot geese in the summer, as it is typically a fall/winter activity.

Recommendation 1: Reduce Insurance Costs

Develop and implement ways to reduce insurance costs for agricultural businesses and farm families.

Actions/strategies:

- Develop and implement ways to reduce health insurance costs and increase availability for agricultural businesses and farm families.
- Increase funding levels and types of crops eligible for crop insurance including funding for technical assistance and outreach to the agricultural community.
- Undertake a business development initiative to attract underwriters who will provide affordable liability coverage.
- Work with insurance companies to help cover crop damage due to wildlife.

Responsible agencies: Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA), DBED, MDA

Recommendation 2: Increase Availability and Reduce Cost of Labor

Develop policy recommendations and coordinate resources to address labor issues and costs.

Actions/strategies:

- Streamline the application and approval process for H2A and H2B workers.
- Encourage new and expanded temporary worker programs.
- Encourage appropriate adjustments to the Federal “adverse wage rate” so Maryland

farmers can have competitive access to the H2A program.

- Find affordable housing solutions for farm employees.

Responsible agencies: Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR), DBED, MDA, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Governor's Congressional Office, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH)

Recommendation 3: Reduce Impact of Wildlife on Agriculture

Develop and implement a wildlife management program to minimize crop and livestock loss.

Actions/strategies:

- Extend the deer and geese hunting seasons throughout the state.
- Legalize retail sale of game meat and provide additional incentives/funding for donating game meat for community uses.
- Increase education and outreach to farmers and suburban community groups on existing wildlife control solutions to effectively manage deer populations.
- Establish standing depredation order so that nuisance geese can be controlled in a timely manner.
- Develop a registry of hunters willing to help farmers who have a crop damage hunting permit.

Responsible agencies: DNR, MDA, DHMH, MCE

CLARIFY, HARMONIZE, AND IMPROVE REGULATIONS TO ENCOURAGE PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE

Discussion Summary

Regulations are not applied consistently across the state, which makes them more burdensome and confusing to farmers and forest products operators. Farmers need a place for regulatory “one-stop shopping” to simplify compliance and make it more cost-effective.

Four areas of regulation were identified for priority attention:

Health regulations: Health department regulations regarding food safety protect both the public and business ventures. New value-added enterprises provide opportunities for farmers to increase revenues. Health regulations need to be revised to accommodate the scope and scale of agricultural operations.

Zoning regulations: Some planning and zoning regulations limit agricultural uses on farmland and pose similar hurdles to regulations from health departments. Regulations need to be rewritten to accommodate the scope and scale of modern operations and to allow alternative agricultural enterprises that could boost farm profitability.

Transportation regulations: Regulations on agricultural transportation and fees charged for

business expenses also impose costly restrictions on farming operations in the state and regionally. Weight restrictions and permitting may not be consistent across state lines.

Environmental regulations: The cost of agricultural compliance with environmental regulations needs to be reasonable and appropriate. The desired outcomes of environmental targets must be clear, cost effective, attainable, equitable, and quantifiable. Environmental policies also should focus comprehensively on all components of a particular resource concern.

What's Going On Now

Maryland's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) oversees the processing of food products. DHMH determines what conditions are necessary for safe food processing for everything from large industrial food processors to small-scale kitchens. DHMH recently reviewed neighboring states' health regulations that affect agriculture and reported that Maryland's are moderate — more stringent than some states, yet not as strict as others.

MDA has been working with DHMH to revise some regulations affecting agriculture. Information from counties on key health regulations was collected by MDA and considerable discrepancies among them were found. While the state regulates processing, counties regulate what foods can be sold within their jurisdictions. As a result, counties have the ability to impose more stringent regulations than existing state regulations, which accounts for the extent of regulatory variations.

In 2004, DHMH expanded farmers' options to process and market their products. After completing required training and licensing, farmers can become an "approved source," enabling them to produce a broader range of products and sell those products in farmers' markets, restaurants, grocery stores, and even across state lines. In 2005, in conjunction with MDA and UMD, DHMH conducted workshops across the state to prepare farmers for on-farm processing of non-hazardous food products, such as jams, jellies, and baked goods. They offered an additional course to provide advanced training for acidified products, such as pickles and canned vegetables.

In 2005, the Legislature passed measures that gave 14-day permits for on-farm food service facilities in conjunction with agritourism ventures. This permit allows farmers to avoid the requirement to have a commercial kitchen for short-term activities.

Inconsistent county regulations are not limited to health. Differences in zoning and right-to-farm ordinances are widespread and are being addressed. In June 2005, MDA convened a meeting of more than 100 individuals, including county officials, state agencies, and industry representatives, to discuss ways to help counties deal with concerns over agricultural-related conflicts.

MDA compiled information about local and state health, zoning, and right-to-farm regulations, which is available online at http://www.mda.state.md.us/on_web/ag_links/countyag.php. In November 2005, MDA held meetings on each of these topics and developed both short-term and

long-term recommendations, many of which have been included in this strategic plan.

Recommendation 1: Encourage On-Farm and Small Scale Processing for Maryland Products

Reform current policies and enact new policies that encourage on-farm and small scale processing for Maryland products.

Actions/strategies:

- Enact a state food policy that encourages on-farm processing, training, and certification of farmers in on-farm food processing safety. This policy should encourage certification of food safety inspectors who specialize in on-farm and small-scale processes and innovation in small batch food processing.
- Reform policies to vertically “harmonize” federal, state, and local inspections and other standards-based regulations at the legislative and departmental levels, particularly with regard to on-farm processing and meat products.
- Expedite value-added permitting and outline an easy process “roadmap.”
- Change state regulations so they honor the intent of existing regulations while developing alternative approaches that scale to farm-based and community-based processing systems.

Responsible agencies: DHMH, MDA, UMD

Recommendation 2: Provide Technical Assistance to Local Jurisdictions

Provide support and assistance to local jurisdictions related to farm-friendly zoning, regulations, and long-term community planning.

Actions/strategies:

- Develop a state guide to planning for agriculture that includes mechanisms, such as reverse setbacks, for reducing land use conflicts, and a model right-to-farm ordinance with guidelines for county officials.
- Develop a technical assistance toolbox for local officials on zoning and regulations that both support traditional agriculture and allow for alternative agricultural uses.
- Convene an ongoing statewide working group to discuss zoning issues related to agriculture and develop tangible action items.
- Encourage modification of local regulations so they honor the intent of existing regulations while developing alternative approaches that scale to farm-based and community-based processing systems.
- Convene an ongoing statewide working group to ensure transparent health regulations, consistent among local jurisdictions, that are most advantageous to the farming community.

Responsible agencies: MDA, MDP, DHMH

Recommendation 3: Require Cost-Benefit Analysis for Statutes that Affect Agriculture

Ensure that science-based, cost-benefit analysis is used for any new environmental statutes that

affect agriculture.

Actions/strategies:

- Enact a law requiring a science-based, cost-benefit analysis, including agricultural industry input, prior to the passage of any new environmental statute that impacts agriculture.

Responsible agencies: Legislative Services, UMD

Recommendation 4: Encourage Transportation Regulations that are More Supportive of Agriculture

Revise and adjust current transportation regulations that affect agriculture to make them more supportive of agriculture.

Actions/strategies:

- Review and adjust inter- and intrastate weight limit restrictions for agricultural products.
- Establish traffic study count measures/average impact numbers for certain categories of similar agricultural practices.

Responsible agencies: Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), Maryland State Police

REDUCE THE TAX BURDEN ON AGRICULTURE

Discussion Summary

Maryland was the first state in the nation to enact a differential use assessment law to value farmland at agricultural value rather than at fair market value. This “use assessment” allowed Maryland farmers to realize significant property tax savings and provided an incentive for keeping farmland in an agricultural use. As successful as this program has been, farm and forest landowners have concerns about estate and other tax laws. Between escalating land values and the decoupling of Maryland’s estate tax from the federal tax, farmers are concerned that state estate taxes will rise, resulting in a significant burden on the next generation of farmers. This tax burden could increase the likelihood that their land would be sold and developed.

What’s Going On Now

The federal Economic Growth and Tax Relief Act of 2001 reduced federal estate and gift taxes, increased exemptions, and repealed the estate tax for 2010. The exemption has increased gradually: \$2 million in 2006 to 2008 and \$3.5 million in 2009. As a result of this Act, most Maryland farm families will be exempt from federal estate taxes at least until 2011. However, a sunset provision in the law means that the estate tax effectively will be repealed *only* for 2010.

The federal tax credit, IRC 2011, is the maximum state death tax credit that is calculated under federal law. It was a state-federal revenue sharing measure from the 1920s and was phased out over four years. Maryland estates that are valued at more than \$1 million are required to pay Maryland estate tax due to the decoupling from the federal law.

Some counties offer tax credits for preserved farmland. For example, Harford County offers a property tax credit for both land in an agricultural district and for easement-protected land. Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Charles, Dorchester, and Worcester counties have similar programs that allow for property tax credits on preserved land. Whenever someone acquires farmland with an agricultural use assessment, the new owner must file a letter of intent, stating that agricultural uses will continue on the land for at least another five years.

In some cases, “homesites” on farms, which are assessed at fair market value, are eligible for a homeowner’s tax credit that limits increases in property tax to less than 10 percent annually. Finally, since agricultural buildings depreciate rapidly, some counties, such as Frederick, have created tax exemptions for agricultural buildings.

Recommendation 1: Encourage County Tax Relief for Agriculture

Encourage counties to provide additional tax relief and tax incentives for agriculture.

Actions/strategies:

- Encourage all counties to offer tax credits for preserving land.
- Waive amusement tax for agri-tourism enterprises.

Responsible agencies: MDA (Land Use Group)

Recommendation 2: Enact Statewide Tax Relief for Agriculture

Develop and implement policies that provide additional tax relief and tax incentives for agriculture.

Actions/strategies:

- Enact state tax credits for preserving land.
- Eliminate part or all of the state estate tax for agricultural enterprises.
- Develop and distribute appropriate informational materials.

Responsible agencies: Comptroller’s Office

Recommendation 3: Encourage Federal Tax Relief for Agriculture

Encourage congressional delegation to lobby for additional tax relief and tax incentives for agriculture.

Actions/strategies:

- Encourage the elimination of capital gains taxes on the sale of development rights.
- Eliminate part or all of the federal estate tax for agricultural enterprises.
- Increase threshold for agriculture from \$600 to \$2,000 for reportability and filing of Form 1099 Misc. relating to contract labor.

Responsible agencies: Governor’s Congressional Office

ISSUE 2: ENSURE AN ADEQUATE BASE OF WELL-MANAGED AGRICULTURAL LAND

The second leading concern among stakeholders was access to land. There are many ways to stem the tide of farmland loss. They range from increasing funding and identifying new funding sources for state and county farmland preservation programs, to farm-friendly zoning, to finding ways to make it easier for farmers to access the land needed for their operations. However, stakeholders were quick to point out that efforts to stabilize the land base can result in the “farmer’s paradox.” While farmers called for more land to be available and more funding for farmland preservation, they also expressed concerns about being boxed into untenable circumstances and losing the equity in their land.

Stakeholders also wanted to ensure good land management, including the use of cover crops, nutrient management, and conservation practices. Also, while many farms include forested acreage, Maryland’s farms and forests rarely are treated cohesively. Given their similar interests and concerns, better integration among farming and forestry issues is needed.

This issue generated eight recommendations in four categories. The categories included:

1. Stabilize the Land Base;
2. Encourage Agricultural Stewardship;
3. Strengthen and Protect Right-To-Farm; and
4. Advance Forestry As an Agricultural Enterprise.

STABILIZE THE LAND BASE

Discussion Summary

Maryland has a long and respected history of farmland preservation. Since purchasing its first easement in 1980, MALPF has spent more than \$333 million to purchase 1,751 agricultural conservation easements on 241,475 acres. Including Rural Legacy, Green Print, and county programs that preserve farmland, 430,000 Maryland acres have been saved for agriculture.

The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 was enacted to help direct comprehensive planning by the state and local governments. The policy is organized around seven elements, including resource conservation, that need to be included in county comprehensive plans. Many counties have enacted zoning regulations to help implement their comprehensive plans.

Four specific initiatives were identified to stabilize the agricultural land base:

Develop new options for farmland preservation: While current agricultural land preservation programs have worked well, additional programs and innovations are needed to retain the agricultural land base. New options include a statewide “critical farms program,” county transfer

of development rights (TDR) programs, and more county agricultural land preservation programs.

Fund farmland preservation: Dedicated funds for agricultural land preservation must be used for their intended purpose, and complementary programs should be fully and consistently funded to ensure that available lands are protected sooner, rather than later.

Preserve the “right farms”: Farmland preservation is widely accepted and considered important by most farmers, conservationists, and the general public. Still, many agreed that MALPF needs to become more strategic and preserve large contiguous blocks of the most productive soils. It also must ensure that public funds are used as effectively as possible by focusing preservation in areas where land use policies support agriculture. Additionally, many participants called for allowed uses on preserved farmland to be flexible enough to support profitable agriculture in the future.

Preserve water resources: In addition to the concern over the future availability of productive land for agriculture, there also was some concern about the future availability of water resources in parts of the state. This concern is primarily generated by competition for land in these areas and the growing demand for water under increased development.

What’s Going On Now

A MALPF Task Force was created in 2000 to study the program and make recommendations to improve its policies, practices, and funding. The Task Force submitted a report on August 21, 2001. Renewed during the 2002 legislative session, the Task Force submitted an interim report in January 2003. Outstanding issues were addressed in its final report submitted in December 2004.

The Task Force concluded that MALPF had two major shortcomings in its ability to achieve its legislative goals: lack of adequate support in many areas of the state for preservation goals and insufficient public funding. The Task Force estimated that projected revenues through 2022 from dedicated land preservation funds will fall roughly \$480 million short of the amount needed to achieve state goals.

To address these issues, the Task Force recommended three things:

1. Establish Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs) in counties’ comprehensive plans, and use new sources of funding to buy easements within these areas;
2. Supplement existing land preservation revenue sources, primarily by increasing taxes on real estate and real estate transactions involving non-agriculturally assessed property outside Priority Funding Areas (PFAs); and
3. Dedicate these preservation funds by committing significant portions to debt service on Installment Purchase Agreements (IPAs) with landowners.

MALPF is addressing the need to preserve the “right farms.” It has begun to allow counties to develop their own ranking systems in accordance with state-developed guidelines using the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system developed for federally funded Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) projects. About half of Maryland’s counties are using their own ranking systems, and a few have opted to use the LESA system.

In 2004, the Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, Inc., published a report written by staff at the Maryland Department of Planning. *Maximizing Return on Public Investment in Maryland’s Rural Land Preservation Programs* argues that most state farmland preservation funds should be directed to areas with either low development pressure or where local land use management measures support state investments. The Board of Public Works, which approves MALPF and Rural Legacy projects, has expressed interest in this strategy.

Lastly, Partners for Open Space (POS) is a coalition of conservation organizations that advocate for maintaining funding for all of the state’s land protection programs. POS is working to ensure that the transfer tax assessed on all state real estate transactions is used to fund land protection programs, including MALPF and Rural Legacy.

In 2003, Governor Ehrlich issued an Executive Order to create an Advisory Committee on the Management and Protection of the State’s Water Resources. This committee was established to “advise and assist the State in implementing programs and policies relating to the management, development, conservation, and protection of the State’s water resources.” The committee has up to 21 members including: the General Assembly; the Secretaries of the Departments of the Environment, Health and Mental Hygiene, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Planning; and members appointed by the Governor. The Committee is tasked with reviewing research and regulations with respect to water quality and quantity, and with recommending actions, studies, and policies to ensure sustainable use of these resources.

Recommendation 1: Fully Fund Maryland Land Protection Programs

Provide sufficient funding so that Maryland can obtain its farmland preservation goal of 1.03 million acres of productive farmland protected by 2022.

Actions/strategies:

- Ensure full funding for Maryland’s land protection programs by dedicating the real estate transfer tax and the agricultural transfer tax for their intended uses.
- Explore and adopt new funding sources for agricultural land preservation.
- Establish a revolving fund for MALPF to buy agricultural land in fee and then sell the land at auction to farmers subject to an easement. (The program could be targeted to beginning or young farmers as appropriate.)
- Fund a state-level Critical Farms program.

Responsible agency: MDA

Recommendation 2: Increase Effectiveness of Land Protection Programs

Revise existing programs to be more flexible and develop new programs that can assist in land protection efforts.

Actions/strategies:

- Improve MALPF's flexibility on what agricultural uses are allowed on preserved farms.
- Prioritize the use of state land preservation funding to encourage the preservation of large contiguous blocks of productive farmland.
- Implement a state-level Critical Farms program.
- Develop TDR and new farmland preservation programs through state and county collaboration.
- Monitor the issue of transferring water rights on MALPF protected farmland.
- Establish a permanent Commission on Agricultural Land Preservation and Zoning.
- Establish an Executive Order for state agencies to minimize the extent to which they contribute to the conversion of productive agricultural land.

Responsible agencies: MDA, MDP

ENCOURAGE AGRICULTURAL STEWARDSHIP

Discussion Summary

Maryland farmers and forest product operators lead the nation in adopting conservation practices. While they accept they need to be good stewards of the land, many say that the cost and time needed for compliance may drive them out of business.

Three major areas of land management and stewardship were identified:

Conservation practices: Conservation practices include the best management practices (BMPs) and conservation programs at the federal and state levels, as well as cropping systems.

Cover crops: Maryland's cover crop program is generally supported by farmers and is seen as an effective nutrient reduction tool. However, there is concern from farmers that the planting requirements and timeline do not fit with cropping patterns in parts of the state, particularly in western and southern Maryland.

Nutrient management: Nutrient management is an important part of responsible farming in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Nutrient management plans and programs, however, need to be tied to quantifiable improvements in environmental quality.

What's Going On Now

Maryland is a leading state in agricultural conservation activities. The Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost Share Program (MACS) provides farmers with cost-share assistance to install a wide variety of BMPs to reduce soil erosion, manage nutrients, and address water

quality. Administered through MDA's Office of Resource Conservation, the MACS program has been giving grants to Maryland farmers to comply with state and federal environmental regulations since 1984.

MAC's Cover Crop Program reimburses Maryland farmers who plant cover crops such as rye, wheat, barley, spring oats, and a rye/wheat hybrid. In 2005, the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund provided \$3.6 million to fund the program. Governor Ehrlich allocated an additional \$1.4 million so all applications to the program could be approved. This funding will allow an estimated 150,000 acres to be enrolled during the winter of 2006. It will provide up to \$50 per acre (including \$10 per acre from the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP) with a 500-acre per-farm cap. Eligible farm fields must be at least 5 acres and have a nutrient management plan.

Based on the results of an extensive farmer survey, MDA has simplified the Cover Crop Program to make it more consistent. MDA also worked to increase the per-project and per-farm cost-share caps to reflect cost increases. These changes were introduced and passed during the 2006 legislative session. Finally, twice a year, MDA mails its nutrient management newsletter to consultants and farmers who have completed a nutrient management plan.

The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Law and the Water Quality Improvement Act of 1998 also require farmers to use BMPs as part of an overall plan to protect natural resources. MACS provides up to 87.5 percent of the cost to install BMPs, such as planting trees and grasses to protect waterways from agricultural runoff, building animal waste containment systems, and installing fencing to keep livestock out of streams. Farms may qualify to receive up to \$100,000 per farm for animal waste treatment and containment projects, and up to \$35,000 per farm for all other practices. The per-farm limits for farmers with animal waste containment facilities is \$150,000 and \$75,000 for other farms.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an active conservation partner in Maryland. It provided the state with \$23 million in fiscal year 2005, up from \$15 million in 2004. The NRCS state technical committee is reviewing EQIP and working to tailor approved conservation practices to five different regions in the state. Finally, in 2005, the state had one of the highest sign-ups on the East Coast for the Conservation Security Program (CSP).

USDA has awarded several Conservation Innovation Grants (CIGs) to MDA for feed management in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The grants support efforts to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus levels in manure while retaining milk yields. UMD provides modest funding to projects to educate dairy nutritionists on feed management to help decrease nutrient levels without damaging dairy production.

In April 2005, the Maryland Senate President and House Speaker formed the Agricultural Stewardship Commission. The commission is comprised of senators and delegates as well as agricultural and conservation representatives. The commission held a series of meetings to hear

public commentary on issues relating to farming practices, particularly farm wastes, and the health of the Chesapeake Bay. The commission drafted legislation for the 2006 legislative session (House Bill 2/Senate Bill 5) that worked to meet conservation goals in a manner that supports profitable agriculture. House Bill 2 was passed by the General Assembly and signed by Governor Ehrlich in May 2006.

The state is currently in the process of implementing a pilot project on the Corsica River. The pilot will work to develop a unified and targeted watershed restoration process by committing new and currently available funds to accelerate restoration in this watershed. It is hoped that this experience can serve as a template for the selection and restoration of subsequent watersheds. Desired outcomes of this project include a system for targeting future watersheds and developing future implementation plans, and ways to track implementation, water quality, and biotic resource improvements.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) identified 12 indicators of the health of the bay in its 2005 report, *Vital Signs: Assessing the State of Chesapeake Agriculture in 2005*. The report calls for building on past commitments to protect farmland, ensuring that the Chesapeake Bay states get a fair share of farm bill dollars, increasing the economic viability of farming, investing in new technologies to reduce nutrients, and increasing state and federal funding for conservation practices. To address these concerns, CBF has called for the state to invest at least \$100 million (including money for technical assistance) annually in Maryland agriculture to help farmers implement practices such as cover crops, alternative crops for bio-energy, manure management, buffers, and wetlands.

Recommendation 1: Increase Funding for Agricultural Conservation Programs

Provide additional funding to better administer and implement conservation programs that focus on agriculture.

Actions/strategies:

- Provide additional funding for Maryland Soil Conservation Districts to better administer and implement conservation programs.
- Provide sufficient funding for the Maryland Cover Crop Program.
- Implement ways to reward farmers who already are using good stewardship practices.
- Provide additional funding to encourage maximum compliance with nutrient management requirements.
- Provide additional funding for the University system to conduct research on potential new BMPs that address the needs of agriculture and the health of the bay.
- Fund implementation and adaptation of newly developed conservation practices that result from the University system and other research.

Responsible agencies: MDA, UMD, NRCS

Recommendation 2: Promote the Implementation of Best Management Practices

Investigate and adopt strategies to improve local water resources and attain the goals of the 2000 Bay Agreement by 2010.

Actions/strategies:

- Design a two-tiered cover crop system to allow for harvesting.
- Examine the possibility of adjusting the cover crop program to reflect planting differences across the state.
- Take advantage of possible future opportunities for farmers to receive “credit” for nutrient reductions from crop management systems that foster carbon sequestration and from new income streams from alternative funding mechanisms such as nutrient trading.
- Create and dedicate a revenue stream to enable research that will support farmers in implementing best management practices to meet sediment and nutrient reduction goals that encourage water quality improvement in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Provide adequate information and practical training on BMPs to better achieve nutrient management plans to protect the health of Chesapeake Bay and its watersheds.
- Maximize compliance with Maryland’s nutrient management regulations.

Responsible agencies: MDA, MDE, DNR

STRENGTHEN AND PROTECT RIGHT-TO-FARM

Discussion Summary

Right-to-farm ordinances create a sense of security for producers, which is essential to the future of agriculture in Maryland. They are a signal of whether or not communities support farming. Ordinances must be strong enough to protect both current and anticipated farming activities, while creating a mechanism for educating new neighbors about acceptable production practices.

As important as they are, Maryland counties’ right-to-farm ordinances could be improved. Many farmers are not aware of their protections — and often, neither are attorneys. Current notification requirements for homebuyers occur too late in the process. Mediation boards only exist in about a dozen counties and services vary. Even when mediation boards do exist, individuals can circumvent them and file suits anyway.

What’s Going On Now

MDA held a meeting in June 2005 for county officials to discuss the importance of Maryland agriculture and the impacts that local decisions have on this industry. More than 100 people attended and all counties were represented. As part of this effort, MDA compiled and posted on its Web site information about local and state regulations as they relate to health, zoning, and right-to-farm issues. MDA also hosted follow-up policy meetings in November. Each of the meetings included more than 20 participants with representatives from county governments, state agencies, and agricultural producers. At every meeting, participants said that the simple act of getting together to address these concerns was helpful and they wanted to continue the discussions on a regular basis.

Maryland Farm Bureau has compiled a list of right-to-farm protections in each county and has interacted with local planning commissions. Farm Bureau is encouraging members to learn about their county ordinances to determine if farmers want or need more protections.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen State Right-to-Farm Law

Review and adjust existing Right-to-Farm law so that it provides better protection to farmers.

Actions/strategies:

- Mandate notification at the front end of real estate transactions and also make this notification legally binding as part of the closing contract.
- Amend the existing law to create a process for farmers to request the state Attorney General to review ordinances the farmer believes to be unduly restrictive.
- Create a deterrent against frivolous nuisance suits and illegal ordinances.
- Protect farmers' rights regarding trespassing on their farm.

Responsible agencies: MDA, Attorney General's Office

Recommendation 2: Require Mediation For Ag-Related Disputes

Adopt new policies that require mediation for disputes related to agriculture.

Actions/strategies:

- Expand the Farm Sense program so that MDA can adequately support counties that choose to create agricultural reconciliation boards (ARBs) with training and expert mediators.
- Authorize and encourage all counties to create ARBs and define their responsibilities.
- Create a state-level board to mediate cases in counties that elect not to create a county-level board and/or to handle more complicated cases.
- Require aggrieved parties to go through mediation before a suit can be filed

Responsible agency: MDA

ADVANCE FORESTRY AS AN AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISE

Discussion Summary

Listening session participants indicated that while many farms include forested acreage, farms and forestry typically are considered two separate enterprises and are not treated in an integrated fashion. Since they have much in common in terms of challenges and needs, it would be advantageous for them to work together.

Forest industry representatives expressed frustration that they have encouraged agricultural leaders to recognize forestry as an agricultural enterprise, but that, to date, this integration has not happened.

What's Going On Now

DBED includes forestry as part of agriculture and grants it access to its programs. MALPF allows protection of woodland as well as farmland, although most counties do not actively promote this policy. To add to these efforts, forestry representatives are working with the MDOT to treat forest equipment in a way similar to the way they treat agricultural equipment.

Two recent Executive Orders have been enacted dealing with forestry issues:

Enhanced Forestry Management on the Department of Natural Resources-Owned Forest Lands – This executive order (www.governor.maryland.gov/executiveorders/2004/0421eo.html) directs the Maryland DNR to develop and/or modify forest stewardship plans on all DNR-owned lands consistent with land use conservation goals, and to confer with the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Board to determine parameters for certifying the management of Maryland's state forests in an environmentally sustainable way.

The Governor's Commission for Protecting the Chesapeake Bay through Sustainable Forestry – This executive order (www.governor.maryland.gov/executiveorders/2004/0453eo.html) establishes a commission staffed primarily by DNR. It is responsible for the following:

- Developing a public/private land conservation vision for Maryland;
- Undertaking research and providing recommendations to Maryland's Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee for its updated *Forest Legacy Assessment of Need Plan*;
- Assessing state and local land preservation and recreation plans to determine effectiveness in protecting forestlands consistent with Forest Legacy Assessment of Needs Plan;
- Identifying federal partners/programs that could help fund Maryland's forestry efforts; and
- Pursuing other ideas where forestry could help the state meet the 2000 Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

Recommendation 1: Promote Forestry Within the Ag Community As Another Way for Farmers to Remain Profitable

Promote and support forestry as a viable economic option for farmers in the state.

Actions/strategies:

- Create a task force to examine ways to ensure that state programs and regulations are more consistent between forestry and farming.
- Include forestry as part of any agricultural outreach or marketing campaign by the state.
- Explore ways to work with the CBFED as described on page 34.

Responsible agencies: DNR, DBED, UMD, MDA

Recommendation 2: Include Outreach to Foresters as Part of the Work of Soil Conservation Districts

Integrate forestry into outreach and technical assistance targeted to farmers.

Actions/strategies:

- Include a forestry representative as part of each county Soil Conservation District.
- Encourage Soil Conservation Districts to work in conjunction with DNR to include forestry plans in farm planning.

Responsible agencies: DNR, UMD, MDA

ISSUE 3: ADVANCE RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND THE ADVOCACY OF AGRICULTURE

During both the listening sessions and the strategic planning process stakeholders called for UMD research to focus directly on improving the viability of Maryland's farms and farmers. Participants indicated that funding cuts for agricultural support systems and services have significantly reduced the availability of education and technical assistance farmers need. They called for more public education and outreach to advance a more positive image of agriculture that reflects its contributions to the state and regional economy, as well as improved production practices that result in positive environmental outcomes.

Recognizing that fewer and fewer public officials have an understanding of agriculture, stakeholders identified the need to educate officials about the multiple benefits agriculture provides to the state and the challenges producers face today and are likely to face in the future. They also suggested ways to reduce the barriers to young and beginning farmers, who are faced with so many financial and regulatory impediments that it is difficult for them to enter the profession. They need help gaining access to land as well as business training and professional development so they can take advantage of innovative opportunities in agriculture.

Advancing research, education, and the advocacy of agriculture generated five recommendations in three categories. The categories included:

1. Advance Research and Education for Future Viability of Maryland Agriculture;
2. Advocate for Agriculture; and
3. Support and Encourage the Next Generation of Farmers.

ADVANCE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOR FUTURE VIABILITY OF MARYLAND AGRICULTURE

Discussion Summary

Participants at the listening sessions stated clearly that they believe that the University system has moved away from its land grant roots and that agriculture has become a lower priority. They raised concerns about the "bleeding" of funds from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) to other parts of the University and about state funding cuts overall.

Cooperative Extension traditionally was the first line of defense for agriculture, forestry, home businesses, and rural development technical assistance. It provided support for planning and concept development as well as technical and research matters, but, with budget cuts, these services have been drastically reduced.

With MARBIDCO's new role of providing financing and with the current structure of AMPs, Regional Councils, and DBED, AGNR has an opportunity to focus on and deliver basic business management, marketing services, estate and tax planning, and cultural management practices.

Listening session participants called for a more cohesive partnership between these entities to advance agriculture and the development of value-added enterprise. They called for clearly defined roles to take the best advantage of the intellectual capital, technological assets, and other specific advantages of each of these key institutions.

Two main areas of research and education were mentioned:

Direct research to future viability: Many participants felt that University research needs to be focused on production agriculture and improving the viability of farming and farmers in Maryland. They called for research to explore and test new models and methods of farming and for funding for demonstration projects to ensure good ideas have practical merit and that new technology is transferred to the practicing farmer. Specific areas of research mentioned included the following:

- Conservation technology, including irrigation;
- Assessment of coastal aquifers;
- High-value crops for smaller acreage farms;
- Effects of air pollution on crops;
- Surface-raised oysters to help improve water quality of the Chesapeake Bay;
- Solar energy for chicken houses; and
- Benefits/impacts of nutrient management.

Provide education and assistance for farm and forest operators: Across-the-board funding cuts for agricultural support systems and services have significantly reduced the availability of education and technical assistance provided to Maryland farmers. At the same time, farmers say that University leadership has moved away from its land grant mission and agricultural roots, making it more difficult to secure the education and technical support farmers need to remain viable in the future.

What's Going On Now

AGNR is moving toward more demonstration programs and programs that focus on conservation and agricultural viability. Specific areas the University identified as promising opportunities include water quality, plant protection, value-added marketing and economic development, and food safety. For each of these areas, some background is given here along with proposed new measures.

Water Quality: University research faculty and Extension personnel have committed substantial resources over the past 20 years developing BMPs to help Maryland farmers meet the goals of the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement. Today, farmers are implementing nutrient management plans, conservation tillage, winter cover crops, and changes in poultry and livestock diets, among other examples. UMD has committed to continue focusing research and Extension faculty to work with stakeholders to fully implement these practices.

Plant Protection: UMD provides basic plant diagnostic services to citizens and agricultural producers through AGNR. However with increased threats to agriculture from new pathogens

and insects, plus the threat of foreign pathogens being introduced into the food chain, the College is refocusing existing resources and seeking additional resources to provide the enhanced plant diagnostic services farmers demand through the establishment of a Plant Protection Center. Specifically, AGNR would like to focus on the following with respect to plant protection:

- Expand and enhance services in plant diagnostics and protection as well as in pest management education;
- Deal with increased threats to the agricultural industry from new pathogens and insects and, from a homeland security perspective, the threat of foreign pathogens being introduced into our food chain;
- Collaborate with the IR-4 program (the research program dealing with new and special uses of pesticides for minor crops); and
- Build upon the faculty's expertise to develop an undergraduate and graduate program in plant diagnostics, and expand public/private partnerships with Beltsville Agriculture Research Center and industries.

AGNR's proposed Plant Protection Center will enhance the capability in plant diagnostics. Phase I of the Center emphasizes four new positions to support critical Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE) functions in the Plant Diagnostic Laboratories, the Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program, and the Pesticide Safety Education Program. In Phase II, the Center will emphasize the use of the College's expertise and public/private partnerships with Beltsville Agriculture Research Center and industries to build a leading, cooperative undergraduate and graduate program in plant diagnostics and professional training in plant diagnostics and protection.

Value-Added Marketing: The University system is addressing a variety of issues to increase profitability, including investment in value-added opportunities. AGNR, in concert with UM Eastern Shore and private industry, is taking a two-pronged approach to addressing large traditional agriculture, such as grain crops, and the growing numbers of high-value products associated with small-farm enterprises.

Currently AGNR has ongoing research with tobacco for alternative purposes, such as a source of pharmaceuticals, various fruits and vegetables for nutraceutical possibilities, targeted ethnic and organic plant production, and directed efforts to support the nursery and greenhouse industry with native species of commercially valuable crops. It also is going through the procedures to have several research centers certified for organic production. Two MCE county agricultural Extension agents received advanced training certificates in organic productions systems at the national level. Currently AGNR has research and demonstration plots in organic production at three research stations across the state.

Economic Development and Economic Analytical Services: UMD and DBED are discussing the creation of a Center for Agricultural and Environmental Biotechnology to support industry research and identify avenues for advancement. The concept for this center stems from UMD's current focus on biotechnology research and development as an industry cluster key to the

economy in Maryland and would be a spin off of the University's Biotechnology Institute. Specific research tying bio-technology to agricultural practices could increase profitability for Maryland farms and identify new directions for farming practices that had not yet been considered. These include:

- Agricultural waste conversion;
- Alternative crops and crop use;
- Agricultural enhancement;
- Phyto- and bio-remediation of pollution; and
- Food diagnostics and homeland security

The AGNR proposed creating a Center for Beginning Farmers and Enterprise Development (CBFED) to fill a gap in business planning, concept development, and marketing development that exists for new and existing farmers. CBFED would assist beginning and transitioning farmers and would serve as a point of entry into the business development process. Its efforts would complement those of DBED and MARBIDCO. Phase I would create the CBFED within AGNR with an initial focus on western Maryland counties. Phase II would garner additional resources to meet statewide needs and establish new positions to deliver the program.

Biosecurity: The Center for Agrosecurity and Emergency Management (CAEM) is a collaborative effort between AGNR and MDA to coordinate emergency communication and education efforts for the agricultural/rural community and to ensure the agricultural and food security of the state and the nation. CAEM is intended to capitalize on University research, teaching, and Extension activities, MDA plant and animal surveillance, regulatory and laboratory activities, and its many partners. CAEM is expected to provide planning and training for agencies and communities, disaster kits and materials, emergency management publications and other educational materials relating to food and agriculture, and the communication system necessary for a proactive response in case of emergency or terrorist act.

Food Safety: The University is establishing an Institute for Food Systems Security and Safety (IFS3) to provide world-class research, education, and outreach for the benefit of humanity in an integrated and efficient manner. IFS3 will seek partners in government, international authorities, food and related industries, academia and non-governmental organizations to develop and disseminate timely information. This institute will include training activities, such as seminars and workshops, the development of multidisciplinary graduate programs in Food Systems Security and Safety, basic and applied research, and public outreach through forums, Web site development, informational materials, and access to educational opportunities.

Recommendation 1: Encourage the University System to Solidify and Expand Maryland Cooperative Extension Capabilities to Assist the Broad Range of Production Agriculture

It is recognized that Maryland Cooperative Extension serves Maryland citizens in the areas of food and water safety, agro-security, health and nutrition, childcare, youth development, and leadership. However, the listening sessions clearly expressed the need for MCE to have a greater

focus on production agriculture and for the University System to remain true to its land-grant obligations of education, extension, and research for the benefit of production agriculture.

Actions/strategies:

- Fund and re-open soil testing lab or provide similar services.
- Fund LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc., program to continue to provide agricultural leaders to advance agriculture in Maryland.
- Establish the CBFED to provide concept development and business planning assistance to agricultural operations and offer specialized services to young and beginning farmers in the areas of marketing, business and financial planning, cultural practices, and policy implications that affect agriculture across the broad range of land-based enterprise.
- Establish a Plant Protection Center at the University of Maryland.

Responsible agencies: UMD Regents, Governor, Legislature, MDA

Recommendation 2: Encourage the University System to Solidify and Expand University Agricultural Research Associated with Farm Enterprises

Encourage the University System to conduct more research that would ultimately benefit Maryland farmers and farming operations.

Actions/strategies:

- Strongly support those university programs where agriculture and suburban/urban markets merge: turf, nursery, horticulture, landscaping.
- Establish a Center for Agricultural and Environmental Biotechnology within the University system to enhance and improve current agricultural practice.
- Install the University's IFS3 as a premier global authority for comprehensive research, service, and information on food and water protection, defense, and safety.

Responsible agencies: UMD Regents, Governor, Legislature, MDA

ADVOCATE FOR AGRICULTURE

Discussion Summary

As Maryland becomes increasingly suburban, its citizens are more and more divorced from the realities of production agriculture. As a result, the farm and forestry communities must educate the public and government officials about the benefits and importance of agriculture and what it takes to succeed as a commercial farmer. They need help bridging the gap so that they can take advantage of the region's large population base to develop higher value markets and more reasonable environmental regulations. Even more importantly, the agricultural community must harness public appreciation and support for the state's farm and forest lands — and the people who work those lands — because they are so important to Maryland's economy, environment, and quality of life.

Farmers at the listening sessions also made it clear that they feel that agriculture has a great story to tell to the majority of people in the state who have lost their connection to the land. Listening session participants say there is a need and an opportunity to provide the public and elected officials an understanding of what it takes to farm successfully in Maryland. They see education as a way to change public misperceptions about farming and recognize they need to be more proactive in providing this education. Agriculture's image should reflect its positive contributions to the state and regional economy and the improved environmental outcomes resulting from improved practices.

What's Going On Now

The LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc. (LEAD) identifies, trains, and provides a network of highly skilled leaders who solve problems and take leadership responsibilities in policy decision-making roles within agriculture. Participants enroll in a two-year fellowship, completing a series of seminars and study tours. Operating with 20-25 Fellows per class, to date LEAD has trained 90 Fellows and is working with its fourth class. LEAD is increasing the number and capacity of people who can help the public better understand issues from an agricultural perspective. LEAD has been very well received but has limited funding.

The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) provides quality hands-on training and creative resources to foster excellence in the classroom and to the public through agriculture education. Now in its 16th year, the program promotes the importance of agriculture in everyday life. MAEF primarily works with agriculture in the classroom. To date, MAEF has reached out to 2,000 teachers. The program also has limited funding from the Maryland agriculture license plate. Additional funding is needed so that MAEF can increase its outreach and better meet the demands for programming.

MDA has a communications director who promotes the department's work by communicating with the agricultural community, environmental organizations, and state and local governments. MDA's outreach efforts also are limited by the availability of staff and resources. MDA used to release periodic newsletters, and it is looking for funding to resume this outreach.

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA), through the auspices of the Maryland Historical Trust as an entity based in the Maryland Department of Planning, manages a funding program to encourage the preservation, promotion, and interpretation of historical and cultural resources in the State. MHAA sets priorities for the award of program funding to support implementation of board-approved local management plans. The theme of Maryland's agricultural heritage should be developed and promoted through use of this program funding.

Recommendation 1: Increase Agricultural Education in School

Provide additional funding to promote agricultural education in the school system.

Actions/strategies:

- Continue Funding MAEF as a vehicle to increase agricultural education in the K-12 school system.

Responsible agencies: MDA, MCE

Recommendation 2: Increase Awareness of Agriculture by the Public

Develop and fund projects that build a better understanding of agriculture by the public.

Actions/strategies:

- Develop a public relations campaign promoting the benefits of Maryland agriculture.
- Encourage MHAA to fund projects that promote and present the historic agricultural focus of Maryland.
- Promote agriculture as a viable career opportunity and lifestyle.

Responsible agencies: MDA, MCE

SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS

Discussion Summary

Participants at all of the listening sessions expressed deep concern over the ability of the next generation of farmers to be able or willing to farm in Maryland. Some said that they would dissuade their son or daughter from entering the profession.

Young farmers are faced with several impediments that prevent them from entering agriculture. The increasing cost of land and difficulty in financing this land are major obstacles. In addition, young or new farmers also need business training and professional development so they can take advantage of new opportunities in agriculture.

What's Going On Now

Senate Bill 392 was passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Ehrlich on April 2004. This legislation establishes the Young Farmers Advisory Board within MDA. The purpose of this board is to promote the importance of young and beginning farmers to Maryland agriculture and to identify and address issues relating to these young farmers.

Recommendation 1: Support and Encourage the Next Generation of Farmers

Provide a coordinated program of technical assistance and funding for the next generation of farmers.

Actions/strategies:

- Support reduced capital gains tax rates for land sold to young or new farmers.
- Establish and fund "next generation land acquisition" efforts.
- Utilize the CBFED as described on page 34.

Responsible agencies: MDA, MARBIDCO, UMD

NEXT STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION

This final section highlights priorities for action. To ensure that the key recommendations of this strategic plan are carried out, the Maryland Agricultural Commission asks Secretary Riley to request that the Governor develop by November 2006 an Implementation Committee. This committee should be comprised of pertinent state agencies and private organizations:

The Commission reviewed these key recommendations and identified the following areas as priorities for action:

- I. Funding;
- II. Legislative/policy;
- III. Marketing/promotion; and
- IV. University research and education.

The Commission wishes to remain an active partner in this implementation effort, and commits to using the remaining funds raised for this project toward the establishment of this implementation process.

I. FUNDING PRIORITIES

The Agricultural Commission identified four funding priorities:

1. Conservation;
2. Economic Development;
3. Education and Leadership; and
4. Land Preservation.

1. Conservation

Particular priority areas included making additional funds available for the Maryland Soil Conservation Districts to better administer and implement conservation programs and ensuring full funding for cover crop programs. In general, priorities included funding for research, crop insurance, and technical assistance so that agriculture can remain profitable while expanding conservation practices to meet sediment and nutrient reduction goals and improving water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

2. Economic Development

The topic of economic development generated a wealth of recommendations. Many of these revolved around funding MARBIDCO and the MAERDAF, as well as improving the marketing of Maryland-grown farm and forest products. Along with widespread support for export facilities and other capital investment and infrastructure, a particular area of emphasis was increasing opportunities for value-added processing — both on the farm and by focusing business development on attracting primary processing and production facilities.

3. Education and Leadership

Forum participants demonstrated strong support for funding agricultural leadership and education at the secondary school level, especially the LEAD Maryland program and MAEF.

4. Land Preservation

Participants called for full funding for Maryland's land preservation programs. They generated many important recommendations ranging from adopting new funding sources to ensuring that funds generated by the real estate transfer were dedicated to land protection. Other priorities included establishing a fund for the "next generation" to assist them in land acquisition.

II. LEGISLATIVE/POLICY PRIORITIES

Based on the extensive public input from the survey, listening sessions and Governor's Agricultural Forum, the Agricultural Commission identified three federal policy priorities and five areas of state level legislative priority. Federal priorities revolved around farm labor and tax relief. State priorities were more diverse ranging from conservation and land preservation to economic development and wildlife control.

Federal

The Maryland agricultural community was unified in its desire for a more streamlined and practical H2A and H2B process. They recommended concrete actions to give them competitive access and make it easier to hire temporary and part time workers, and to encourage new and expanded temporary workers programs.

They also were interested in eliminating federal estate tax for agricultural enterprises and supported reduced capital gains tax rates for land sold to young or new farmers.

State

The Commission identified six areas of legislative priority. They included:

1. Conservation;
2. Economic Development;
3. Insurance;
4. Land Preservation;
5. Right-to-Farm; and
6. Wildlife Management.

1. Conservation

Underlying the Commission's legislative priorities for conservation was the sentiment that the farm community should have input on environmental statutes that have impacts on agriculture, and that these laws should have a scientific basis and a process for farmers to petition for review of ordinances if they are deemed unduly restrictive. Legislative

priorities ranged from designing a two-tiered cover crop system to maximizing compliance with nutrient management regulations to rewarding farmers for using good stewardship practices.

2. Economic Development

Recommendations on what should be included varied but emphasized value-added and on-farm processing, vertically harmonizing inspections at all levels of government to adjusting inter- and intra-state weight limit restrictions on agricultural products. Other important priorities included creating a series of incentives to encourage value-added processing and the production and use of bio-energy (including forest products).

3. Insurance

Priority was placed on addressing ways to both increase the availability and reduce the cost of healthcare insurance to agricultural businesses and farm families.

Recommendations also were made to increase the types of agricultural products covered by crop insurance, as well as to work with crop insurers to cover crop losses due to wildlife damage.

4. Land Preservation

Leading legislative priorities focused on funding: both to assure full funding and to diversify funding for Maryland's land preservation programs. Several policy recommendations involved tax relief, ranging from tax credits to eliminating the state inheritance tax for agricultural enterprises and capital gains taxes on the sale of development rights. Others included creating new farmland preservation programs, such as a statewide Critical Farms program or new TDR programs. Specific recommendations were made to improve MALPF's flexibility and potentially to transfer water rights on MALPF protected land. Lastly, recommendations were made to establish a permanent Commission on Agricultural Land Preservation and Zoning and an Executive Order for state agencies to minimize their impacts on the conversion of agricultural land.

5. Right-to-Farm

The priority was to strengthen the existing state program to create more deterrents against frivolous nuisance suits and illegal ordinances, creating a process for farmers to request the state Attorney General to review unduly restrictive ordinances and protecting farmers' rights regarding trespassing on their farm to requiring mediation and even creating a state-level board to mediate cases in counties that elect not to create a county-level board and/or to handle more complicated cases.

6. Wildlife Management

Farmers asked the Legislature to take steps to minimize wildlife damage on their crops. Priorities ranged from extend the deer and geese hunting seasons to providing incentives to distribute game meat — either by sale or donation — for community uses. Others included establishing a standing depredation order to reduce permitting time,

developing a registry of hunters willing to help farmers and providing crop insurance for wildlife damage.

III. MARKETING AND OUTREACH PRIORITIES

The Commission identified widespread support to expand and improve the promotion of Maryland agriculture as well as of Maryland-grown products and agriculture as a viable career opportunity and lifestyle. Priorities fell into three major areas:

1. Institutional Purchasing;
2. Land Preservation; and
3. Marketing.

1. Institutional Purchasing

Institutional purchasing priorities included increasing government contracts to purchase Maryland agricultural products, improving product availability in Maryland grocery stores and markets, and leveraging the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center to build corporate partnerships that encourage research and product commercialization.

2. Land Preservation

Outreach priorities related to land preservation centered on providing better information for policy makers, such as developing a state guide to planning for agriculture and a technical assistance toolbox for local officials to create farm and forest friendly regulations. Including forestry in all agricultural outreach also was deemed important.

3. Marketing

Marketing priorities ranged from encouraging all counties to employ Agricultural Marketing Professionals to developing a public relations campaign to promote the benefits of Maryland agriculture. They included branding Maryland grown (like “Jersey Fresh”), initiating a powerful “buy local” campaign, and making sure that forestry was included as part of any agricultural outreach or marketing campaign by the state.

IV. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PRIORITIES

The Commission found that there were a series of recommendations specific to the University of Maryland system that should be prioritized and acted on by UMD. Many of these focused on university programs where agriculture and suburban/urban markets merge (e.g. turf, nursery, horticulture, landscaping) and the proposed CBFED. Others focused on expanding value-added opportunities, such as supporting business planning resources, market studies and research on production methods, crops, and agricultural products to improve profit margins and enable diversification. Some focused on more specific issues, such as increasing outreach to farmers and community groups on wildlife control and management or providing information and practical training on BMPs to better achieve nutrient management plans to protect the health of Chesapeake Bay and its watersheds.

CONCLUSION

Maryland agriculture is at a crossroads. Upon the request of Governor Ehrlich, the Maryland Agricultural Commission led a statewide effort to develop this strategic plan for agriculture. Based on a vision to enhance, protect, preserve, and sustain the viability and profitability of Maryland's agriculture, the process of creating the plan enjoyed strong participation by Maryland's agricultural community and other stakeholders.

This *Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management* is a testament to Maryland's agricultural community and the public who supports it. It is proof of their enthusiasm, hope, dedication, and promise. The foresight and energy it took to create this plan is now needed to implement it.

It will take shared vision and commitment to enhance profitability, ensure an adequate base of well-managed land, and advance research, education, and advocacy. It will take openness, communication, and responsiveness to prepare for unexpected challenges, and to position agriculture to capitalize on new opportunities. The Commission stands willing and eager to work toward this vision. We ask you to make this vision a reality.

APPENDIX I

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS OF THE AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION AND THEIR REPRESENTATION

Henry Allenburg, Horticulture
Roland Behnke, Direct Market
Garrett Bunting, Nursery
Jesse Burall, MD Grange
Joe Chisholm, Poultry
Breck Debnam, Field Crops
Glenn Eaves, Dairy
Dr. Mike Erskine, Veterinary
Rose Fiore, Viticulture
Julie Freeser, Livestock
Doug Green, Poultry
Ronald Green, Equine
Luke Howard, Organic
Candace Lohr, Vegetables
Ginger Myers, Consumer
Richard Price, Education
Robert Ramsburg, Dairy
Les Richardson, Farm Bureau
Gene Roberts, Turf
Tom Rogers, Food Processing
Dr. Cheing-I Wei, University
Mark Whalen, Crop Protection
Frank Wood, Tobacco

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Norman Bennett, Maryland Agricultural Statistics Service
Russell Brinsfield, Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, Inc.
Hal Clagett, Maryland Horse Breeders Association
Valerie Connelly, Maryland Farm Bureau
Bruce Gardner, University of Maryland
Doug Green, Maryland Agriculture Commission
Fran Flanagan, environmental consultant
Kathy Magruder, Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development
E. Keith Menchey, Maryland Department of Agriculture
Ginger Myers, Howard County Economic Development Authority
Jane Storrs, Maryland Department of Agriculture
Joe Tassone, Maryland Department of Planning
Eugene Roberts, Maryland Turf Industries Association, Inc.
Patrick Rodgers, Young Farmers Advisory Board

MEMBERS OF AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST'S CONSULTING TEAM

Andy Andrews, Agricultural Economic Specialist
Jennifer Dempsey, Assistant Director of Technical Assistance Services
Julia Freedgood, Director of Technical Assistance Services
Benjamin Kurtzman, Farmland Information Specialist
Doris Mittasch, Program Manager
Kevin Schmidt, Mid-Atlantic Regional Director

ADDITIONAL CONSULTANTS

Michelle Mauthe Harvey, MautheHarvey & Co.

APPENDIX II

ACRONYMS

AFT	American Farmland Trust
AGNR	College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (University of Maryland)
AMP	Agricultural Marketing Professional
ARB	Agricultural Reconciliation Board
BARC	Beltsville Agricultural Research Center
BMP	Best Management Practice
CAEM	Center for Agrosecurity and Emergency Management
CBFED	Center for Beginning Farmers and Enterprise Development
CBF	Chesapeake Bay Foundation
CIG	Conservation Innovation Grant
CSP	Conservation Security Program
DBED	Department of Business and Economic Development
DHCD	Department of Housing and Community Development
DHMH	Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
DGS	Department of General Services
DLLR	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation
DMP	Deer Management Permit
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
FHFH	Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry
FRPP	Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (USDA)
IFS3	Institute for Food Systems Security and Safety
IPA	Installment Purchase Agreement
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
LEAD	LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc.
LESA	Land Evaluation and Site Assessment system
MACS	Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost Share program
MAEF	Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation
MAERDAF	Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund
MALPF	Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation
MARBIDCO	Maryland Agricultural and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation
MCE	Maryland Cooperative Extension
MDA	Maryland Department of Agriculture
MDE	Maryland Department of Environment
MDOT	Maryland Department of Transportation
MDP	Maryland Department of Planning
MEA	Maryland Energy Administration
MES	Maryland Environmental Service
MHAA	Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
MIA	Maryland Insurance Administration
MIDFA	Maryland Industrial Development Financing Authority
MTBE	methyl tertiary-butyl ether
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)
PFA	Priority Funding Area

POS	Partners for Open Space
PPA	Priority Preservation Area
SBDC	Small Business Development Counselors
TDR	Transfer of Development Rights
UMD	University of Maryland

APPENDIX III

PROCESS

The Commission worked closely with the Advisory Committee and consultants to spearhead an open public input process that would result in a plan that truly represented the needs of the farm community and took into account the larger group of stakeholders who are invested in the future of Maryland's agriculture. The process started with a survey and culminated in May 2006 after being vetted at the Governor's Agricultural Forum in February.

Stakeholder Surveys

In May 2005, MDA conducted a mail survey of 126 agricultural leaders and 53 conservation organizations, agencies, and stakeholders. The survey, entitled *Cultivating the Future of Maryland Agriculture – What Is Your Opinion?*, was divided into four topic areas:

1. Profitability
2. Land use and management
3. Value-added, diversification and alternative enterprise opportunities
4. Bio-security

The survey had a 35 percent response rate. Respondents ranked factors in order of importance and provided recommendations on ways to address the issue that they listed as the most important for each question. They were given an opportunity to provide additional comments on issues other than those listed. Respondents indicated that their two most important concerns were access to markets and availability of land. Other concerns included food security and safety; plant pests, diseases and insects; and bio-fuels (see Appendix IV).

Listening Sessions

The Commission and the Advisory Committee believed it was essential to hear from farmers and other stakeholders about their concerns and, more importantly, to solicit their recommendations on how to improve the outlook for agriculture in the state of Maryland. The Advisory Committee organized seven "listening sessions," which were held in various locations around the state in August 2005.

At least 600 farmers, agricultural and conservation leaders, and other interested community members attended facilitated listening sessions in Frederick, Finzel (Garrett County), Hagerstown, Bel Air, Salisbury, Queenstown, and Barstow (Calvert County). The goal of these sessions was to ensure community input and to be certain people were heard. Participants were given an opportunity to prioritize their concerns and provide recommendations. A complete report from each session can be found in Appendix V or posted online at <http://www.mda.state.md.us/>.

Conference Calls with Experts

Given the enthusiasm, wealth of information, and diversity of ideas expressed at the listening sessions, and after documenting the issues and recommendations that were raised, the Advisory Committee decided to convene small groups of experts to help distill the public input. Advisory Committee and Commission members identified experts to participate in a series of 13

conference calls, which AFT organized and staffed in October and November 2005. The purpose of these calls was to clarify the issues, to identify current programs and activities addressing the issues, and to begin to develop consensus around recommendations.

Governor's Agricultural Forum

The Governor's Agricultural Forum was held on February 13, 2006, at the Prince George's County Equestrian Center. The purpose of this forum was to provide the farm community and other stakeholders an opportunity to review the initial draft of the statewide strategic plan and to comment on the draft recommendations. The 300 participants were provided an overview of each of the main issues and then were asked in small groups of 8–10 people each to prioritize the recommendations. (Please see Appendix VI for these rankings). The forum also provided stakeholders with the opportunity to participate in one final "listening session" related to preparing for the unexpected. The Commission used the feedback generated from the forum to help finalize the strategic plan and to prioritize recommendations.

APPENDIX IV

SURVEY AND SURVEY RESULTS

- **Questionnaire**
- **Summary Table of Survey Responses**
- **Summary of Survey Comments**



THE FUTURE OF MARYLAND AGRICULTURE WHAT IS YOUR OPINION?

As an industry representative or interested stakeholder, your opinions are extremely valuable to the formulation of agricultural policy for our State. Please take a few moments and respond to the questions below. Your answers will be kept in strict confidence and only used to develop and enhance our policy discussions for the upcoming Agricultural Summit. **Please return this questionnaire in the postage paid envelope provided by May 18, 2005.**

1. One key component identified as important to the future of Maryland Agriculture is **Profitability**. Please rank the following items, in order of importance (1 being the most important), as they affect Maryland farmers' management of risk and other factors that contribute to profitability.

Labor Availability

Liability and Insurance

Taxes

Access to Markets (domestic and international)

Education, Public Relations, and Promotion

Other _____

For the issue identified as most important (1), what could be done to optimize profit for our Maryland farmers? _____

2. The second key topic area, potentially affecting the future direction of agriculture in Maryland, is **Land Use and Management**. Several issues have been identified as critical to this important agricultural resource use. Once again, please rank these items in order of importance (1 being the most important) as they relate to future land use and management of agricultural land.

Land Availability and Preservation

Planning and Zoning Regulations

Right to Farm Laws

Environmental Regulations

Water Usage

Other _____

For the issue identified as most important (1), why is it the most important relative to future agricultural land use and what policy or regulatory issues need to be further addressed?

3. Maryland farmers are considering **Value Added, Diversification, and Alternative Enterprise Opportunities** to remain economically viable. Please rank the following items, in order of importance (1 being the most important), based on the potential benefit you feel they hold for our State's farmers.

☐	Bio-Fuels	☐	Access to Markets (domestic and international)
☐	Processing Facilities	☐	Education, Public Relations, and Promotion
☐	Agri-tourism and Agri-tainment	☐	Other _____
☐	Organics		

For the issue identified as most promising (1), why is it the most important (or promising) in providing economic viability for Maryland farms and what steps should be taken to develop this opportunity? _____

4. The future of Maryland farms depends strongly on our ability to adapt to stringent and consistent **Bio-Security** measures. Considering the items listed below, please rank them in order of importance (1 being the most important) as they relate to ensuring the security of our State's industry for future generations.

☐	Animal Health and Diagnostic Labs	☐	Plant Pests, Diseases, and Insects
☐	Inputs and Pesticide Management	☐	Farmer Education and Engagement
☐	Food Security/Food Safety	☐	Other _____

For the issue identified as most important (1), why is it the most important and what related steps need to be taken to ensure the security of Maryland agriculture? _____

5. Comment on any other issues you feel are critical to the future of Maryland's agricultural industry. How would you address these issues (policy, regulation, etc.)? _____

Thank you very much for your participation in crafting the future of Maryland Agriculture!

Reported By _____ **Date** _____
Organization _____

Office Use

Summary Table of Survey Responses

35% Final Survey Response Rate

63 Total Respondents

Ag groups = 35%

Conservation groups = 38%

Profitability (Ranked by First Choice)

	All	#1	%	Agriculture	#1	%	Conservation	#1	%	
1	Access to Markets	25	41%	Access to Markets	17	40%	Access to Markets	8	44%	
2	Labor Availability	11	18%	Labor Availability	7	16%	Labor Availability	4	22%	
3	Other	9	15%	Other	7	16%	Education, P.R., Promotions	3	17%	
4	Education, P.R., Promotions	8	13%	Education, P.R., Promotions	5	12%	Other	2	11%	
5	Liability & Insurance	4	7%	Liability & Insurance	4	9%	Taxes	1	6%	
6	Taxes	4	7%	Taxes	3	7%	Liability & Insurance	0	0%	
		61				43				18

Land Use & Management (Ranked by First Choice)

	All	#1	%	Agriculture	#1	%	Conservation	#1	%	
1	Land Availability & Preservation	34	54%	Land Availability & Preservation	19	44%	Land Availability & Preservation	15	75%	
2	Planning & Zoning Regulations	12	19%	Planning & Zoning Regulations	11	26%	Environmental Regulations	3	15%	
3	Environmental Regulations	8	13%	Environmental Regulations	5	12%	Planning & Zoning Regulations	1	5%	
4	Right-to-Farm	3	5%	Right-to-Farm	3	7%	Other	1	5%	
5	Water Usage	3	5%	Water Usage	3	7%	Right-to-Farm	0	0%	
6	Other	3	5%	Other	2	5%	Water Usage	0	0%	
		63				43				20

Value Added, Diversification & Alternative Enterprise Opportunities
(Ranked by First Choice)

	All	#1	%	Agriculture	#1	%	Conservation	#1	%
1	Access to Markets	17	28%	Bio-Fuels	12	28%	Access to Markets	6	33%
2	Bio-Fuels	16	26%	Access to Markets	11	26%	Bio-Fuels	4	22%
3	Processing Facilities	11	18%	Processing Facilities	9	21%	Organic	3	17%
4	Education, P.R., Promotions	9	15%	Education, P.R., Promotions	8	19%	Processing Facilities	2	11%
5	Agri-Tourism	5	8%	Agri-Tourism	3	7%	Agri-Tourism	2	11%
6	Organic	3	5%	Organic	0	0%	Education, P.R., Promotions	1	6%
7	Other	0	0%	Other	0	0%	Other	0	0%
		61				43			18

Bio-Security (Ranked by First Choice)

	All	#1	%	Agriculture	#1	%	Conservation	#1	%
1	Food Security/ Food Safety	19	33%	Food Security/ Food Safety	14	33%	Food Security/ Food Safety	5	31%
2	Plant Pests, Diseases, Insects	16	28%	Plant Pests, Diseases, Insects	13	31%	Inputs & Pesticide Management	4	25%
3	Animal Health & Diagnostic Labs	10	17%	Animal Health & Diagnostic Labs	9	21%	Plant Pests, Diseases, Insects	3	19%
4	Farmer Education & Engagement	7	12%	Farmer Education & Engagement	4	10%	Farmer Education & Engagement	3	19%
5	Inputs & Pesticide Management	5	9%	Inputs & Pesticide Management	1	2%	Animal Health & Diagnostic Labs	1	6%
6	Other	1	2%	Other	1	2%	Other	0	0%
		58				42			16

SUMMARY OF SURVEY COMMENTS

PROFITABILITY

Access to Markets:

- “Important to grow markets for all types of agriculture.” Investment is needed in domestic and international markets. Suggestions include:
 - Transportation infrastructure to move product to market – port or barge, and other export facilities (Port of Baltimore mentioned often);
 - Milk processing facility;
 - Markets for locally produced, specialty crops and/or value-added agriculture;
 - Changes in winery laws;
- Need better education, assistance and coordination from MDA and Extension to transition to these new markets/marketing opportunities;
- R & D on new markets, direct markets, entrepreneurial approaches and product development.

Labor Availability:

- Need to address immigration laws and issues to ensure that a stable and reliable work force of farm workers is available and that workers have a decent standard of living.

Liability and Insurance:

- Need to address the high costs of insurance faced by farmers (crop, liability, health care and workers compensation).

Education, Public Relations, Promotions:

- Need effective marketing campaign to educate citizens on the importance of supporting local agriculture and preserving farmland;
- Need education campaign that explains modern agriculture to the non-farming public so that it better understands the challenges and contributions of agriculture in the state.

Taxes:

- Need to examine additional ways to lower taxes paid by Maryland farmers to make them competitive with other states.

LAND USE MANAGEMENT

Land Availability and Preservation:

- “Land is being sold and developed at an alarming rate” – urban sprawl has taken most productive farmland;
- Need additional state and county funding for farmland preservation;
- Need to examine and/or enhance use of other preservation programs (e.g., TDR at the county level, additional tax incentive programs);
- Need to protect large contiguous blocks of farmland;
- Easement programs and planning and zoning have to work together;
- It’s not enough to save farmland without supporting agricultural viability;
- Right-to-farm laws are “a must”;
- Need to address high cost of buying farmland and how to help young farmers get on the land.

Planning and Zoning Regulations:

- Need to better address conflicts that arise from residential development in rural areas and ensure that county land use policies maintain agriculture as the desired use;
- Need to ensure that farmers are not-overregulated with respect to land use;
- Need zoning laws that encourage establishment of new agricultural industries and agricultural economic development opportunities;
- Individual counties need better assistance from the state in establishing goals for agricultural land use and preservation.

Environmental Regulations:

- Need to find better ways to address agriculture's impact on water quality in a way that respects the economic realities of agriculture;
- Need to minimize the financial and liability burden on farmers by providing adequate compensation for complying with regulations;
- Need additional funding for conservation incentive programs for agricultural land.

Right-to-Farm Laws:

- Need to better address conflicts that arise from residential development in rural areas and ensure that county land use policies maintain agriculture as the desired use (same as under Planning and Zoning above);
- Need education campaign that explains modern agriculture to the non-farming public so that they better understand the challenges and contributions of agriculture in the state (same as under Profitability/Education, Public Relations, Promotions above).

Water Usage:

- Need to ensure that a stable and adequate water supply is available for agriculture;
- Need to develop better water conservation incentives.

VALUE ADDED, DIVERSIFICATION AND ALTERNATIVE ENTERPRISE OPPORTUNITIES

Access to Markets:

- Need to increase market access, training and availability to help make farming more profitable;
- In particular, need to improve local markets and better tap into the millions of consumers in the "Eastern Megalopolis" nearby;
- Need infrastructure to get product to market efficiently.

Processing Facilities:

- Need to develop and attract additional processing facilities (especially for dairy, small animals, small scale processing of "alternative meat" and soybeans);
- Need to address health regulations and make them more amenable to agriculture;
- Need to encourage public/private partnerships with processors for research and new product development.

Bio-Fuels:

- Need to expand opportunities for Ethanol production and other bio-fuels;
- Need to tax bio-fuels in a way that makes them more competitive;
- Need to examine ways to link cover crops with bio-fuel production.

Agri-tourism:

- Need to have county tax policy and zoning better encourage tourism opportunities on farms.

Education, Public Relations, Promotions:

- “Many consumers would opt for ‘Maryland grown’ if such a program were actively promoted”;
- Need effective marketing campaign to build positive awareness and educate citizens on the importance of supporting farmers, farmland and farming (same as under Profitability above);
- Need education campaign that explains modern agriculture to the non-farming public so that they better understand the challenges and contributions of agriculture in the state (same as under Profitability above).
- Need better education and assistance from MDA and Extension to transition to these new markets/marketing opportunities (same as under Profitability above).

Organics:

- Need to tap into growing demand for organic products for both economic reasons and to build public support for agriculture.

BIO-SECURITY

Animal Health and Diagnostic Labs:

- Need to ensure that labs are adequately staffed and that there is sufficient capacity to provide diagnostic and inspection support and certification;
- Need to provide education and outreach to farmers (and the public) to keep them aware of procedures and where to get assistance in emergency situations;
- Need to monitor disease movements and outbreaks and provide information and updates.

Plant Pests, Diseases and Insects:

- Need to provide education and outreach to farmers (and the public) to keep them aware of procedures and where to get assistance in emergency situations (same as Animal Health and Diagnostic Labs above);
- Need to monitor disease movements and outbreaks and provide information and updates (same as Animal Health and Diagnostic Labs above);
- Need to research preventive measures for risk reduction (e.g., crops with a high tolerance for diseases, growing practices).

Food Security/Food Safety:

- Need to “improve consumer confidence” by marketing a safe/quality product and assuring the public that their food supply is safe;
- Need to examine what food security means and how this can potentially work to farmer’s advantage;
- Ensure sufficient capacity to provide certification, inspection and diagnostic support.

Inputs and Pesticide Management:

- Need to avoid appearance of threatening human or environmental health given close proximity to urban populations and the Chesapeake Bay.

Farmer Education and Engagement:

- Need to provide education and outreach to farmers (and the public) to keep them aware of procedures and where to get assistance in emergency situations (same as Animal Health and Diagnostic Labs and Plant Pest, Diseases and Insects above);
- Need to involve farmers in discussing bio-security issues and developing solutions.

APPENDIX V

INDIVIDUAL LISTENING SESSION NOTES

- **Frederick County – Summary and Comments**
- **Garrett County – Summary and Comments**
- **Washington County – Summary and Comments**
- **Harford County – Summary and Comments**
- **Wicomico County – Summary and Comments**
- **Queen Anne’s County – Summary and Comments**
- **Calvert County – Summary and Comments**

Frederick County Listening Session August 1, 2005

Participants Discussion Points

1. Profitability

- Health regs / on-farm
 - Processing regs too
 - Restrictive- need farm input
- Get \$\$ back into AG help at extension, research, univ
Traditional programs need to be funded again- worse for new
- Connecting programs for AG
- Tariffs on imported foods & ag products (maybe yes maybe no)
- Increase margins on commodity products- e.g. - \$\$ for cover crop (how to use crop bio fuels?)
- Nutrient harvesting focus -
 - Could hold soil in place in some areas
 - Need to be allowed to take to harvest
 - People don't participate because of requirements
- Crop insurance- MD could follow PA and subsidize (MD insurance admin)
- Keep \$\$ in crop ins subsidies
- Labor availability- immigration law challenges- caps
- More solutions needed
- Deep H2O port that pays for itself

Honorable Governor Ehrlich, Secretary Riley, good Commission Members,
It is a great privilege to have each of you come to Frederick County to discuss agriculture. My discussion comes from the heart, my family have been directly involved in agriculture since our ancestors settled here.

I. We need AG in MD

- A. Broiler industry is so integrated it touches almost 100% of farms and agri-business. Essential to eastern shore economy.
- B. Dairy industry – Fred. Co has long been one of the top 10 counties essential to western shore economy.
- C. As large as cities are, other large business bring to MD. AG and support our economy would be severely crippled.
- D. We cannot depend on other answers for our needs. Ill, is federal disaster area / what if they were our supplier?

II. AG in MD is headed to shock trauma

- A. It is in trouble
 - 1. Age of farmer – 57 years old
 - 2. Very few young farmers – very few next generation

3. Young farmers can't underwrite the debt to get started out as farm size increases. Even in the family farm.
4. Older generation own land mass.
 - Development – retirement.
 - Encourage all resources to AG preservation.
 - Estate relief – generation to generation.

2. Land Use & Mgt

- Buffers may be required when \$\$ run off
- COC- development focus over farming
- Support small farms as well as large farms- need help
Zoning is running them out
- Up the ante on land preservation
\$ for easement
- Need more solutions than \$\$ easements- change 25 ac rule to better support working land- look at small lots- use less land for some # of houses clustering
- Dramatically increase \$\$ for land preservation
- Zoning issues - expand into alternative such as an equip storage yard in a gran yard- non ag use = no
- Expand def of what's AG
- DEER * Geese resident
 - Add Frederick Co. back into Ag Bill- allow deer hunting on private land
 - Nutrient mgt law- moving target (Bay Fdn)
 - Get numbers to know where to head as a goal
 - Farm @ np what about others? Construction for example
- Education - conflict mgt. is what happens when education is not done
- Need AG districts to keep farms contiguous - bump up \$\$ so someone can buy farms- clusters
- Make regs balanced on fertilizer
- Pay for dur(sp?) damage to crop ins to cover damage

3. Market

- Port @ Baltimore
- More Outlets- competition among buyers
- Bio-fuels- NG
- Follow model of Loudon City in marketing local produce to DC
- Buy local market campaign
- Farmers' markets- daily markets
- Insurance- makes small farmers hesitant because of liability (health regs)
- Market campaign on buy local- schools & such at fair price

- Small butcher shops run out of business
 - Adding farmers' markets- means adding farmer's to sell
 - Ag marketing \$\$ from home sales
- Re: Louden County

4. Next generation

- Farmers need help to be profitable; get the help back for farmers has to have \$\$
- Competitive interest rates to buy land for farming
- Student Labor- \$600/yr w/o tax \$\$?
- Raise limit to keep paper work down & keep young people interested
- Reduce inheritance tax @ state level- or match federal limits- esp. harsh for farm lands
- Reduce paperwork & put \$\$ to better use, i.e. nutrient mgt \$15mm
- Don't judge good or bad- help instead- \$
- Estate planning assistance can help address land taxes
- Farm safety- Learn to respect farm machinery
- Education re: lawn fertilizer – high school education needs to look at farming of the future- greenhouses, hydroponics, new models in farming & education
- MD AG Foundation- use ag tags--- \$\$ for education--- move to high schools
- What are hurdles for young farmers- know this before \$\$
- Grants for equip safety education ad campaigns
- Ag preservation for young people- critical farms program quickly vs. 5 years
- Who can afford to buy farms- 51% of income (household income) must be farm to qualify preservation to be eligible- % needs to change

Frederick County Listening Sessions

August 1, 2005

7:00 – 9:00 pm

#1 concern about sustaining Agriculture in Maryland

1. Profitability

Agricultural profitability is #1 and we recognize many factors influence this including market access (fewer terminal markets).

To address we need:

- more market access.
- more research from the University of Maryland Department of Agriculture
- less regulation
- i – urban counties we need increased deer population management.
- higher value for preservation easements.

Profitability, profitable operations keep Agriculture Land Farming Profit means increased sales at higher margins plus reduced or contained costs. Direct marketing for increased margins. Reduced cost by reduced regulations, allow increased ceiling for employers to not pay taxes to \$2,000 currently \$600.00, allows for more student hires), better financing to buy more land for Agriculture (competitive loan rates not farm credit rates).

Need to support small farms as well as large farms.

- 1) Protect small farms so that new, young farmers or those who must work a second job to finance heir farm enterprise start-up can do so.
- 2) Protect small farms from zoning changes that allow the farm land to be swallowed up by development.
- 3) Protect the right to farm of those who work small farms.

Right to farm on small farms as well as large.

Protect farm land from housing development.

High cost of land.

Getting non-farm people to understand the importance of livestock and land to the Farmer.

More education fro city people about farming.

Continue present practices.

Tax breaks

Cover crop program

Cost sharing

Etc.

Generational change is important to the long term surgical of Agriculture. To facilitate this the state should eliminate state death taxes.

How can the local and state governmental entities as representatives of the agricultural community and general public, adopt policies and programs that will enhance profitability of agriculture production in the State. Appropriate decisions related to land use and management, value added opportunities, bio-security (including general public health and consumer agriculture produce preference), must be made to enhance this most fundamental objective.

Make farming profitable enough that farmers can make a decent living without government subsidies.

Access to markets investment in processing facilities to allow value-added increased to be captured by the local producers.

If arms are profitable, the land use will follow naturally.

Profitability

Increase opportunities to market “production” or “commodity” agriculture to the every-growing “local” (regional) population.

- Effects the large land owners.
- Effects the low-margin products.
- Effects major source of agriculture economy.

Affordable access to grain markets in central Maryland and enough land preserved to farm.

Make sure we have good markets to sell our products in need more than one place to price and sell grain.

Not enough locally grown produce gets sold in grocery stores. (Giant, Superfresh...)

Having a market for the products that are grown in this region. Doing this at a cost or profit greater than what the cost or other markets now give.

Labor Availability:

- Small dairy farm
- profit margin slim
- hard to compete with other industry
- such as: 40 hour week
- health insurance
- housing
- fair wage (\$15 - \$20 hour and up for labors)
- vacation and holidays

P.S. sons left farm for “other industries

Labor: As a representative of the green industry (SOD) we have a high need for labor. It is getting increasingly hard to obtain this and I for see greater problems in our future.

Improvement in H@A Laws could possibly be a solution.

Remove the death tax at Maryland and Nation. This will keep cash needed to run the farm on the farm not spent on lawyers and bankers. It will also help keep farms and other small businesses from going out of business as they are handled down from one generation to the next. It will also help prevent farms from being sold for development.

Cost of inputs (fuel, machine cost, labor costs, insurance, etc.) rising at a greater rate than price of Agriculture products.

Only input under State control is taxes.

“Homesite” portion of property taxes is skyrocketing in Central Maryland Counties and should be addressed with legislation.

Business planning assistance to help farmers process new markets and direct new investment in production agriculture.

Most of us who farm for a living buy retail and sell wholesale...This needs to change so that next profit is obtainable. Changes need to be less government influence, is (health dept. – DHMH – EPA, etc), without profit, the next generation will not enter agriculture as their livelihood!

Access to markets

Curtail county and state health department regulations, put the farmers in charge and permit more farm process and sales.

2. Land Use and Management

To create a simple cost-share program that encourages sound land uses that are directed (or guided) toward profit. This program could offer bonus cost-shares (at intervals in the future) to those who follow the land use guidelines set forth at the outset. Of course penalties are not following agreed-to guidelines should be considered.

Program could be paid for by those who do not participate (i.e. taxes).

Agriculture land for farming.

Agriculture land preservation funding.

Farmland preservation funding and land owners' equity.

Agricultural land preservation.

Residential growth cutting up farms and taking prime farm land.

Land is too expensive for new farmers to start.

Leading, prompting, encouraging, supporting community & neighborhood efforts to participate in responsible land managements, and cooperative efforts to navigate through varied environmental permitting processes in order to accomplish stewardship goals.

In other words, to promote improved land management while minimizing regulator needs, in order to sustain profitable agriculture.

The enactment of zoning regulations that reduce the value of farmland. Also, the State's efforts to encourage counties to modify zoning regulations that lower the value of farmland (i.e. Department of Planning's Certification process for Agriculture Preservation Funding).

The conversion of working farms to residential development.

Identifying solutions is challenging since one idea is to limit the ability to convert prime farmland to residential uses. This often drives a wedge between farmers interested in sustaining agriculture in perpetuity versus farmers who want to farm but also want the option to see their land.

New neighbors move in and complain about the farmer next door – i.e. cow-tractor noise, and judges siding with them to control operation time.

Urban encroachment on farmland.

It is really difficult to make a profit with all the ever increasing costs. Land use is critical and urbanization continues to remove land from production agriculture.

Cost and availability of farmland (urban sprawl)

Non-Sensical over-regulations

- board planning & zoning & environmental.
- continued cut backs in funding the cooperative extension service.

Need to find funding sources for farmers to implement management practices that protect water quality.

Soil quality

Environmental management

Land preservation in order to ensure that land is available.

Need to dramatically increase dedicated sources of state and county funding.

Zoning ordinances that reward land preservation – not discourage it.

Additional incentive needed to bring farm land into Agriculture present. So we can create farm districts where the farms are contiguous to allow more product use. A patch work of farm land is not going to save farming.

Developer pressure

Government needs to provide funding for land preservation to compete with the developer and others to get farmer to participate in the programs – than provide funding for these programs.

3. Bio-Security

The service from the Animal Diagnostic Labs for us on numerous occasions has been unsatisfactory. It would seem there are too many labs all doing inferior work. We suggest that funds need to address bringing one central lab up to date, so that the accuracy and turn around allow the farmers to address a disease problem promptly. Now disease diagnosis is two (2) weeks in coming out of the lab. I understand the labs aren't even accredited. Funding of the base is crucial to get them accredited, employ the qualified technicians and purchase state of the art equipment. Every farmer needs to know immediately what to do if a foreign disease shows up.

4. New Ideas

The key to the future of Agriculture in Maryland will be keeping and attracting young farmers. They will need to make enough profit to stay in business and provide enough money to pay living expenses. This means freedom from being over taxed, over regulated and overcharged with too many fees. They need to be able to afford paying for a farm at today's future market prices.

The lack of agricultural drawing young people to choose a career in agriculture.

Making farming available for the young person.

Safety for moving equipment.

Preserving farmers and their farms.

Devise a comprehensive plan that will allow a young person to enter production agriculture with success.

Conceptualizing sustainable agriculture within the context of a sustainable environment that will result in today's children being able to farm in Frederick County (or neighbors) 83 years from now.

Being regulated to death

Environmental regulations as soon as we comply with one concern, another appears on the agriculture seems to catch all the blame for every environmental horizon crisis.

...the ability to effectively communicate to the general public, the consumer, the value of sustaining agriculture in Maryland.

...that they understand the issues.

...that they care

...that they respond affirmatively

Educating suburban/urban citizens about the importance of open space and farmland on the environmental quality of our natural resources

Farming must be both profitable and ecologically compatible with our water resources for this to be possible.

Agriculture education at the high school level!

More emphasizes on agriculture education at the University of Maryland, College Park!

Real education for local government officials and decision makers on land use planning and consequences of different discussions – most land use decisions are conflict management. Need education.

I feel extension and Department of Agriculture (University of Maryland) needs to be expanded and not cut back. The educational information provided to us in new and sustaining practices may make the difference between profit and loss. Thru their educational programs we are introduced to alternative crops and practices. I feel soil tests, soil types etc., give use the information we need to not only produce the crop, but do it at lowest cost and comply with best environmental practices. If we don't have a state soil lab, the farmer should be assisted in payment of the test. Cover crops are again very important and need to be supported.

Being accused of polluting the Bay and no one being able to prove it.

Hoped for: Sensible environmental management
Reasonable nutrient management program
Reasonable Herbicide and Insecticide regulation
Sensible water availability for agriculture even in drought periods

Nutrient management and regulation what and what not you can do on your own property.

Control wildlife – deer and resident geese continue to ruin large areas of growing crops each year.

Work with DNR to better manage their populations.

Allow all means of reduction of the deer herds and resident goose numbers.

Implement Sunday hunting for deer on private land in Frederick County. This was rejected for Frederick County in 2003. It needs to be implemented at the soonest opportunity.

Garrett County Listening Session August 3, 2005

Participants Discussion Points

1. Profitability

- Allegany County- Part time farmers (95%) but programs are full time people – cost share won't be available
- Improve prices for products or off set costs of doing business – OR BOTH
- MD/ WV Cooperation- no infrastructure approach- marketing efforts, etc., financial support
- Identify opportunities to help people work together- can't do it on their own
- \$4 helped Garrett County w' jobs and tourists- help AG do the same thing
- Health department regs restrict ability to market goods- small butcher shops, baked goods, fees are too high
- Econ. Dev- get funding from MARBIDCO
- Many agencies to deal with to do "value added" activities on farms- make it simple & make costs reasonable
- Other states & regions should be considered – standardize across states to even playing field
- If you have to buy land, can't afford farm
- Success planning how to keep family farming long-term leases
- Link young farmers w/absentee landowners – local effort in AG
- No parallel to finding renters for vacant buildings

2. Land Use- Management

- Ag land preservation – different in different counties for dev rights - \$300/a Garrett vs \$1000/a Allegany – transfer lose tax \$ from county need to be equitable (tie to FMV)
- Development encroaching on Farm land, but comps aren't local- can't find valuation that's fair but in lower cost areas
- Land use issues are local- what's needed is professional help on what to do – have "circuit rider" to guide planning for AG – have it for new business
- Farm land tax assessment- limited to certain districts local issue/ tax district designation
- Lack of tax break for farmers can further hurt profitability, especially when tax bills catch up w/ value
- Clean & green Act (PA)- tax based on land productivity to balance tax burden – Ag pres in MD- only for prod soils
- Wooded portions of farms are sought fro dev – need help marketing timber, using fiber locally to increase forest product value- need help finding timber prices for landowners
Share info w/ landowners – help plan for timber
- To protect current land, need financial help & info to hold and break productivity

Need county industry that uses local forests and other products locally produced (take advantage of state forests, too) reforestation regs are favorable in Allegany & Garrett

3. Value Added

- Protect current farm exemptions at the state/ tax level – same as in manuf. – no tax until product sold & taxed – (not just farms are ‘exempt’ – present in perspective
Active programs to help get young people into farming – land preservation support by keeping farms in farming for new farmers
- Tax on sale of development rights – make this exempt
Farmers markets –more ways to direct market – get more \$\$ back to farmers by increasing markets – some markets needed for niche farming (not during summer season)
- Obstacle – Dept. of environment regs on waste water & categorized as industrial facility rather than ag – stops new enterprises
Loss of grant funds for demo. projects from state needs to be maintained
Marketing to groceries for vegetables from G. & A. county – ‘Buy Local’ space in produce
- Labor costs are a real issue – need solutions to help make farm jobs desirable employment – if low-cost labor is supported in other job areas, ag needs to be supportive, too.
Tax breaks for new employers – help farmers w/ same type of efforts
Link young people to ag jobs to show what farming is like –Comm. Service
- Education through hands on internships to try farming – develop programs to support this – make it worth while for both sides
AG is Economic Development, too! Many models work for Ag just as well as other economic dev. Plans.
People need to stand up for Ag –too much energy on reg rather than promoting ag (Dev. Infrastructure)
- Off-set bad press w/ facts & benefits of MD Agriculture
- It’s #1 industry & no one knows it
- Educate the public
- Balance food security scares on the news –show that food supplies are safe & healthy
Deep Creek Lake effort is working because of collective effort, farmers should work together
- What about value-added farmers to work together –invest in leadership advance MD farms together * Poultry industry can be a model to consider –what can others do to get some of same benefits -*need steady consistent state support to groups who support farmers
Farms don’t cost \$\$ -they’re a good investment
- Need more support from G & A county – advocates & supporters –not just regulators

Garrett County

August 3, 2005

1:00 – 3:00 PM

#1 Concern about sustaining Agriculture in Maryland

1. Profitability

State government needs to provide legislation in the areas of taxes – funding mandates – program's – insurance (crop etc.) estate tax to help make farming more profitable – land preservations.

Developing an active program to assist young people to establish agriculture enterprises.

It is difficult to operate a farm and have that be your sole sources of income.

Profitability and an agricultural infrastructure that will support and promote agricultural efforts.

Keeping young people in farming through:

- 1) succession planning
- 2) affordable land
- 3) pairing young farmers with absentee landowners

Viability/profitability

Part time and small scale farmers / agriculture producers need to feel they are part of agricultural production in the county/region/state.

Rules – regulations – lack of common sense.

Profitability – cost of operation.

How will Farm Bill 2007 affect Maryland Agriculture?

Renewal Fuels – Bio Levels

Conservation Programs

Direct and CC payments

Principal Institutions that support Agriculture in Maryland are being weakened, diminished and defunded.

University of Maryland Agriculture programs are getting de-emphasized. Extension is almost not recognized as a University Mission. Whatever happened to the concept of the Land Grant University?

The Maryland Department of Agriculture is losing people and is not able to refill the positions. Programs that were once robust are a shadow of their former selves. It takes research and leadership to remain profitable in a competitive industry.

Profitable prices for your farm products.

Part time and small scale farming should have more emphasis.

Loss of prime farm land to develop.

Excessive regulation

- 1) maintaining a competitive production environment in our region.
- 2) Steady and reasonable to funding for education, agriculture support agencies and product development.
- 3) Slow but steady changes in regulation.

2. Land Use and Management

Keeping farm land in agriculture

Land use – controlling sprawl.

Finding affordable agriculture ground

Land use management

Preservation

Environment

Protect

3. Value Added Opportunities

Help the establishment of small meat/food processing facilities by easing environmental regulations such as wastewater discharge, creating funding for this type of facility and assistance with marketing of products produced by such a facility.

Washington County Listening Session August 3, 2005

Participants Discussion Points

1. Profitability

- Can't buy farm land at current prices
7mm affluent consumers –Ag only gets 5% -how do farmers get closer to 100%?
BETTER MARKETING
- City farm maps –corn mazes
- Niche markets can't save everything
More coops
More emphasis on what can be done to help commodities look in other places
Independent farmers don't want to know how to work together
Change the way people farm –think outside the box
- Lower health care costs for independent families get expenses down
10-12k/ yr for health care
- Tax free accounts could help
- Crop pricing –best before 'help' started –lower costs in US for food
- Low costs hold farmers caught in the middle –subsidies don't help –other countries help more

2. Land Use

- Rezoning –driving zoning towards farming 20ac/ 30ac changed zoning to move development toward best ag lands –needs to be consistent across country
- Preservation easements trigger charges
- At state level, need to have ENV/ MDP work together
- Farms are carved up between generation transfer-
 1. success in planning
 2. incentives
- Conservation measures need \$\$ to support H2O quality improvements
- Focus on more than farmers re: fertilizers, pesticides, etc. –home owners, chemo lawn, golf courses, etc
- Dramatically increase land for farm preservation – farmers will buy land, but need help
RE: transfer tax –dedicated to pos funds
Ag transfer tax -5% to 20% MALF
- PR problem –must convince the public that MD needs Ag & legislators –farmers are only 2% -need the rest @ all levels of government
- People who don't participate, have farms go on sale, so Ag preservation is not always an effective solution
- Ag needs longer term (TDR w/look back) but flexible program

3. Support for Farmers

- Have UMD start testing soil again –need a lab don't ask me to test & pay reduce paperwork
- Programs that support Ag are being defunded & redirected away from Ag public institutions aren't providing needed support

PA is funding programs to increase dairy –need to follow that model

- More education
 - Ag in the high school internships; qualified applicants are needed
 - Direct marketing as education/ out reach to consumers
 - Non-farm –ag in the classroom across a grade –reach everyone
- Financial planning assistance for farmers –as a business
- Support Ag tags to fund MALF for public education
- Farm field day for all kids –be positive –there is an answer
Nutrient loading for the Bay
- TMDL's kick in & farms become pt source
- Pt source –big concern & needs attention & efforts now
- Growth control & planning –slow new housing in the country
Be more strategic on farm preservation –more contiguous farming

To preserve land, have cluster of houses together - really need to slow growth

Washington County

August 3, 2005

7:00 – 9:00 PM

#1 Concern about sustaining Agriculture in Maryland

1. Profitability

Value added – Access to local markets – county regulations

Lower % on mortgages for farms (8% is robbery)

Health care insurance

Education of public about farming methods and importance to the community well being.

Taxes – being able to pass a farm on to the next generation.

State and County Government need to provide legislation where necessary and funding

Taxes

Funding programs and mandates

Land preservation

- 1) pay better prices for preservation of farmland
- 2) be competitive with developer

Estate taxes – death tax

Insurance – pay part of premiums

The absolute necessity to find funding sources to help farmers implement management practices that protect water quality and for those funds to not come out of the farmer's pocket!

All the institutions that are designed to help agriculture (University Extension, MDA) are being down sized and defunded.

We need research, innovation, and information.

Land availability for as including equity preservation and capital appreciation and many more.

Fund and support for MDA turf and seed division.

2. Land Use and Management

Being able to obtain farm land needed to allow for next generation to enter operation which means to expand from “one” to family partnership of several.

Farm preservation, need state money for farm easements.

Zoning to manage urban sprawl.

Improve farm practices to preserve clear water!

Preservation of our prime agriculture soils.

Our county commissioners by passing the present zoning regulations are fragmenting our prime ag zones by requiring five (5) acres lots and requiring 20 and 30 acres per lot in nearly all of the total acres in the conservation and environmental zones.

There is a shortage of farm land in the area.

Farmers are looking to purchase farm land are willing to compete with development prices.

In order to purchase land the farmer needs land preservation funds to help offset the cost to purchase land.

Counties and states must dramatically increase land preservation funds so farmers can purchase land at \$10-\$12,000 per acre and then receive \$5,000-\$7,000 acres for a land preservation easement.

Preserving prime farm land (developing our best soils).

Public relations: impacts preservation, land use, markets environmental and planning & zoning regulations, agriculture tourism.

Farm land preservation funding.

Protecting large blocks or contiguous farm land.

Water usage and quality more funding for cover crops and stream buffers.

Development pressures and the governmental policies that add to the pressures. (example of policy: Nutrient loading limits placed on counties by MDE for their sewer systems (result of EPA Mandates). This give us limited sewer to encourage growth in urban growth areas and makes it difficult to develop effective TDR Plan).

Maryland state assistance not hiding

Stop the harsh “you must” attitude from within Washington County zoning office.

Tell us (farmers) a list of what is available.

Really tired of searching

Most Washington County offices seem to hold/have a palatable disdain when asked questions about farm policy.

Comprehensive approach to land use

Stop squandering our best agriculture land for short term economic gains.

Once land is in houses, it uses up more dollars than it contributes and this does not generate long-term sustainable economic rent which farming does.

Shrinking good agricultural land and high cost of production of agriculture products.

3. Value Added Opportunities

Connecting directly with seven (7) million of the most affluent consumers in the world. I want 100% of their food dollars not 5%.

Farmers have no control of prices received for their products.

Why was parity eliminated?

4. Bio-Security

Need to provide education to public

Need to staff labs and extension

Need to have food safe steps

5. New Ideas

Insufficient agriculture education in schools and communities

Harford County Listening Session August 8, 2005

Participants Discussion Points

1. Land Use

- More money for farm land preservation / conservation easements
Viable TDR for market prices for farmers
- Relax restrictions for farm alternatives – hunting leases, boarding state “not AG related”
- Green payments – more money for more environment actions
- Tax credits for organic farming (Union County is doing it)
- County zoning favorable to farming, i.e. setbacks for wells, new development, more than we have etc.
- Domesticated deer – So it can be exported, do something
- More preservation money targeting young farmers
- MDA needs to let DNR & others know that AG is a good citizen
 - Not the only source of pollution
 - Support the image of farmers
 - Know what’s really happening on farms
- Money for stream buffers, other than H2O BMPs, increase farm support
- Need more grass-fed beef to promote health (market good health)
- Fully funded voluntary environmental programs for H2O quality (make part of 07 budget)
- Make regulations workable
- Farmers will do the best job they can to improve land
- More voluntary land protection programs – enough to meet needs
- County zoning offices need to re-think how they measure success
 - Metrics for land use accomplishments
- AG preservation has to be supported by meeting other needs for farms & farmers

2. Markets

- State sponsored direct marketing to promote MD AG & produce more money / support
- Funding to expand marketing for AG horses, farm park, + slots to increase horse awards.
- Raise taxes rather than gambling
 - Need outside income to keep farms going
- Working capital grants for farms transiting from one to another
- Get part of Baltimore back to improve grain markets

- Health regulations – inconsistent county / country
 - All state employees working from same regulations – can't get help to enterprise to farm
- All regulations to be consistent state to state
- Good laws – bad regulations written by different people
- Marketing to consumers to buy local
- Help people to diversify
 - Funding education, marketing (direct marketing to increase margins & improve profitability)
- Prices are up but AG is not seeing comparable increases compared to other costs (parity?)
- Bio-diesel plants – a new market
- When a price is met, keep it there

3. Support

- Marketing – revisit how this is regulated, marketing your own
- Change cover crop program
- October plant date not right for corn
- Allow cover crops to be harvested
- Go to green payments & move away from commodity specific payments – whole farm
- Need state government to restore AG funding levels for all programs, some down to half of legislated level
- Maintaining budget for Maryland
 - Extension – Pathology, entomology (bio-security issues)
- Strong, consistent right to farm laws
- Restore soil testing lab at the University of Maryland
- Have AG research on what grows
- Figure out what to do with the thistles, deer etc.
- State needs to enforce its laws on its own land, i.e. thistle control
- State vet to check herds for mastitis – need better treatments
- Avoid factory farms in Harford County
- Water use – let people have the H2O that they need
- Government should be less involved in farming, relax regulations, look at what PA is doing

4. New ideas

- AG education is an awareness tool – to promote markets, to reach consumers-increase AG education – ex. AG tags
- AG needs to be more active in promoting AG – need fully funded PR program to advance AG
- Need infrastructure to use Mid-Atlantic import / export
- Communication – economic development should have a thirty year plan to promote Maryland AG
- Have sessions again in five years – to talk about new ideas – not the same things
- Don't have zoning result in loss of value – don't de-value –AG land
- Make sure down zoning is the right thing – know it is the right thing or wrong thing to do, educate people on the outcomes
- Get the state out of AG – make things simpler
- How do we interest future generations in farming – has to be profitable
- Give CBF a chance
- States should form a mid-Atlantic cooperation that could improve markets over all, sell to everyone, try to build a local structured relationship
- State programs may limit you too much, stop you from AG related options, lessen value

Harford County

August 8, 2005

7:00 – 9:00 PM

1 Concern about sustaining Agriculture in Maryland

1. Profitability

Access to markets and low cost credit to achieve some vertical integration
(Co-owning went / chicken ex: processing plant) + more economies.

Too short sighted – need to create, endorse, fund and manage 30 year growth plan for AG. Include economic development, infrastructure, communications, transportation, marketing, education, building awareness, flexibility and sustainability.

Labor availability.

My family and I make all of our income from dairy farming. I want to be able to make a good living for myself and my family. Since I literally have millions of dollars invested in land, equipment, and animals I would like to be able to live like other successful business owners do. I have a degree in AG EC. From U/O and I have many friends making a very comfortable living in the regular world. The reason I farm is for the independence. If you take that away there is no reason to work the long hours (or in extreme conditions). Goals: Retirement plan, occasional nice family vacation, college for my kids, and more free time.

Education, extension, & water usage.

All the institutions that traditionally support agriculture are being diminished: University, extension, 4-h support, & MDA. All of Maryland needs to realize that farmers are key to achieving our environmental objectives.

Ability of small to medium size farms to compete for a profitable niche; involving market access, land availability, support infrastructure, and regulatory relief. To maintain a viable rural economy we need to keep a volume of active farms, not just continued concentration of large commodity producers.

Viability: reduce, simplify, eliminate regulations. Planning, storm water, nutrient management, corporate taxes / fees, immigration laws / assistance, right to farm regs.

Marketing opportunities of products including local and national addition to international exports through the port of Baltimore i.e. grain etc.

Infrastructure to support agriculture seems to be moving to other states. It seems like the farms are being saved by saving the land, but will there be anything left to support the farmers. Will the farmers be able to farm?

Access to markets, build a horse auction pavilion as part of the Maryland horse park.

Agriculture is not attracting young, bright, motivated people because of enormous initial investment, and lack of economic return.

Rare is a business attractive to future business owners (family heirs) unless it is financially rewarding. The necessary time spent taking care of the farm must equate into enough income to justify the effort. Our home farm has been in the family for 141 years. My son is the sixth generation to live on the farm. We have deep roots in Harford County. Both sides of my genealogy go back more than 200 years. However, I am more concerned about keeping my descendants in agriculture, than I am about staying in Maryland.

The loss of a support infrastructure both for production and marketing.

Profitability relies on having a critical land mass in order to retain the AG infrastructure. State and county land use regs & programs need to reflect this fact.

Lower property taxes. Farmers need to do something different than other farmers and market that difference to a niche market and charge a premium. Land prices will never be low enough to farm unless farmers sell their product or service for higher prices.

Access to markets: We must be able to get into markets that ensure maximum profit from the crops that we currently are producing; thus, this would be the best way to preserve traditional AG ways of life. Smaller farmers or even would have better chances, would become capable of making a living on the farm.

Access to markets: From the prospective of a horse breeder, the international marketing efforts of the state are most important. I can raise a good animal but need assistance in reaching the buyer. Specific recommendations: Increase marketing department at MDA just as important as any other department. Maintain sales facility in Maryland. Pass expanded gambling that would allow increase in awards available to MD breeders.

Added and diversification opportunities. To save farming in this state we need to stress the relationship between farmers, the products they produce and the consumer. The more the consumer understands the value of purchasing locally produced products and the value it has the better chance farmers have staying solvent. Buy a peach – save a farm.

How to solve: Maryland farmers need to educate consumers about the importance of purchasing locally produced products and the direct impact it has on everyone's economic situations. MDA could promote a "true" buy local campaign using mass media to explain to consumers what is at stake when they don't purchase local products.

Agriculture in Maryland has four basic needs at this point in time – land, capital, access to new markets and regulation reform.

With the increasing pressure of urbanization, to buy land for farming is almost impossible and to rent land is becoming increasingly difficult. Land is one of the basic inputs of the farming industry and without it farming ceases to exist. MDA, and MDP need to work together to target ag land preservation monies towards concentrated ag areas or priority preservation areas. If the state is serious about not only maintaining the agricultural industries of the state, but also expanding them, the state will continue to fund the ag preservation programs at the previous levels to ensure an adequate land base to support ag industries. As the average age of farmers continues to increase, making land available and affordable to young farmers becomes a priority.

Capital is needed in the form of support for transitioning farming operations. Many farms see the need for an additional outlet for current products but do not have the start up capital needed to get started. Providing seed money for value added businesses makes good economic sense on several levels. On one hand there are the multipliers in the economy generated by the new business plus the added benefit of preserving the land while preserving the farmer.

Access to new markets is best exemplified by Chesapeake Fields and its entry into the Asian markets while also opening up new markets at home with their soy snacks and popcorn. Until recently DBED has not recognized agriculture as a major economic engine of the state. Support for the entities like Chesapeake Fields is essential to the health of agriculture in the state.

Regulation reform would enable agricultural industries in the state to expand into new areas. Discussions between the State Health Department, the MDA and DBED would enable farmers to pursue new businesses and still comply with state regulations.

If the state is serious about supporting agriculture, I would suggest the following:

Support the funding of the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO). The proposed services for 2006 encompass many of the above stated needs.

Support the increased funding for ag preservation programs.

Encourage the support of DBED for agricultural initiatives, particularly those promoting new markets.

Support increased discussions between MDA and the State Health Department on ways to enable farmers to expand their business opportunities.

Yes, many of these items require the investment of state resources i.e. cash. The health of many rural communities depends on the agricultural industries that are their lifeblood. An investment in agriculture is an investment in these rural communities and the people that live there.

2. Land use and management

Land availability and preservation.

Very limited expansion opportunities. Farmland, environmental issues, water (Chesapeake Bay), air... Urban sprawl, encroaching development, land prices, crowded infrastructure. Funds unchanged over 50 years and show no signs of changing.

Availability of land, our major input.

Land availability and conservation.

Maintaining enough productive farmland in the right places. The flip side of this is the land equity issue – those who continue to farm share in the increased equity that is occurring in Maryland. You shouldn't have to "sell the farm" to take advantage of the increased value of land. I think this is the most difficult issue we face.

Availability and preservation.

Land available for AG.

Absence of protected agriculture areas / buffer zones which allow farming to thrive (not just survive). This requires areas that offer the infrastructure to support agriculture and encourage responsible land use.

AG pres group and planning and zoning makes it hard to do what is necessary to make your farm profitable! The restrictions are unbelievable. It seems that every year new restrictions are added which make it harder and harder and even impossible or inviting to the younger generation to want to be apart of the agriculture life.

Will agriculture survive in Harford counties?

Preservation of good farmland for future AG industry. Created strong buffers / areas of these across the state to help keep infrastructure and support for AG community. Expand education to general public / programs that will encourage above. Make it profitable for

all of the above for landowners to commit. Encourage congress / pres. To help USA AG by discouraging dumping AG products from other country's because of political or other gain. Encourage mandated ethanol in all US gas.

Sprawl, the residentialization of AG land.

The need to find more sources of money / funds to help farmers implement management practice that will protect water quality, and keep farmers profitable.

Land availability and preservation are my greatest concern. How do we live and feed people if we pave all the farmlands? New development causes flooding and erosion of farmlands.

Need to put funding toward measures to reduce nutrient runoff. We know the steps that need to be taken, buffers, cover crops, manure transport, better mgmt. Farmers are willing to do them if they're paid for, but it can't happen without funding.

Land availability and preservation. We need large blocks of contiguous land in agriculture to make it economic and keep all our service businesses available. Now that the state has a "billion dollar" surplus, POS / MALPF should be fully funded and a large budget should be allocated for AG conservation practices.

Preserve farmland to ensure a future for AG.

The availability of land preservation money's explicitly for young and new farmers (before non-farmers).

Maintaining the minimum land mass necessary for sustaining agriculture and rural Maryland. If urban sprawl is allowed to grow as it has in the pas 10 years. Our AG heritage will be destroyed. Furthermore, once agriculture is gone, our quality of life will be poor, and our environmental quality will lessen. Without agriculture who will protect our precious natural resources?

AG land preservation and availability.

Lack of affordable land.

Land availability at a reasonable cost.

Preserving private property rights.

Will I lose the value of my land? Will I be zoned into poverty?

3. New ideas

Making farming innovative, exciting, profitable, and a vital part of the local economy.
Spirit of entrepreneurship, building bridges with rural development, planning and zoning.
Re-thinking successful economic indicators for local communities.

Noxious and invasive organisms. We need a coordinated education and PR campaign to teach these groups to control noxious and invasive weeds. County & state highway employees, homeowners, developers and yes (some) farmers.

Citizen / consumer / legislator

Education – The reality of farming, the need to live within our environment. This is long term. Farming can thrive in MD only with the support of the non-farming population. Consumers drive the economy. Who drives the environment (land use decisions)? Does this mean we should start education in schools? Or, should we send adults out to work on farms as a prerequisite for holding public office.

The need for research for new crops and new crop products. Start by focusing on problems and make them valuable. We need markets for tree of heaven, Canada thistle, groundhog and deer. Turn these into money makers instead of costs. Create a research oversight committee to direct research in Maryland for Maryland. Make its membership primarily farmers but include at least one engineer, one agronomist, one economist and one professional facilitator.

Mentoring program for young farmers.

4. Bio-security

Plant diseases, protocols based on science on fear. Do not under fund U of M extension services. Importance of MD extension professionals to us in: path services, education training of IPM team (newsletters / e-news), consultation, advisors to trade organizations / resources and research.

5. Value added

Farmers need to be presented opportunities to make changes to there operations without being handcuffed by arcane regulations. Health department regs are a major issue that needs to be resolved. MD farmers are not on a level playing field with other states. Organic remains a solid opportunity for farmers to add value to their products and income yet it remains a tiny segment of the farm community in MD. Lack of processing facilities cause farmers to loose market share.

Providing the opportunity and assistance to create or expand a value added products / service to the existing operations.

Diversification and innovation are hindered by Harford county P+Z and licensing / permits.

Making humane and organic farming practices available and profitable for farmers. Also make farmers products affordable for the average consumer.

Government regs. Standardize health dept. regs across the state.

Wicomico County Listening Session August 15, 2005
Participants Discussion Points

1. RTF

- Pay attention to RTF rules – have teeth
- Educate legal community on RTF
- Dorchester needs forward looking rather reactive
- Protections only apply to existing need protections for future activities new ventures
- RTF provision that the bills are paid by people raising suits w / no merit
- Protections from eminent domain issues
- Require land purchasers to sign RTF awareness document as part of purchase (e.g. DE law)
- Have \$ in MDA budget to be resource person for RTF support

2. Land Use

- CREP should not pull good land from farming
 - Find ways to help new farmers get access to land
- Comprehensive plans (every 5-7 years) show “growth areas”
 - P&Z boards can give variances
 - People need to participate in hearings
 - Need to stick to plan
- Reverse set backs need to be used to protect existing farms
- Counties have to remain neutral when annexing LG tracts of farms
 - Losing farms because can’t advocate
- Need more funds to offset what developers can pay
 - Need other sources of funds for AG preservation
- Raise taxes on development & lower it on farms to control development
- AG preservation needs to target large tracts away from cities
 - Protect it before prices go up
 - Target & prioritize
- Critical farms programs
 - Target to young farmers to address cash flow

3. Profitability

- Educate people that costs are going up, & crops need to cover costs
- Restructure extension of focus on rural development, help farmers stay in farming, get into farming, & help find niches, other scales that are profitable need local mechanisms to help

- Need AG help to market AG as a purpose
- Brand MD agriculture, Jersey Fros
- Have AG shown to be a good land steward when they farm
- Find ways to use manure – bio fuel when burned, facilities to convert to better uses
- Pay to keep forests as forests (see what other states are doing, DE re taxes)
- Farm enterprise zones to reduce taxes, keep young farmers on the land, and otherwise support farms to stay as farms – put \$\$\$ MARBIDCO
- MARBIDCO needs to be funded – will help forestry, AG, seafood
- Bio diesel
 - Zoning issues are preventing development of facility
 - Need clarification that alternatives are acceptable
 - Still agriculture, not “BZ” business
- Eminent domain is always a threat
- Extension needs to be “21st” century
 - Review role & current needs for services
 - What educator needs are
- What \$ funds needed – legislation for extension

4. Other

- Turkeys are going to be a problem – wild turkey problem
- MD is not as business friendly as it should be
 - Poultry industry is losing companies, and we should do more to keep the industry we have
- DOT needs education – rigs are money makers, need to help farmers fall harvests
- Education is needed for students regarding agriculture
 - All kids to understand farming changes
 - AG related jobs should have ties to teachers public education system
- Vocational AG in H.S. is an idea to revisit
 - PA is doing it now
 - Getting more participation in FFA as an example
- Take kids out on the land
 - Should be part of education, hands on the land
 - ESP. forest land
 - More \$\$ for AG / forest school trips
- More self promotion in the news, on the farm, take personal resp. to work to improve image
- Educators @ Univ. need to be educated, keep AG as a goal (support expansion)
- Niche marketing “small farmer tech assistance” in DE, MD, VA (funding cut each year)

- Embryology program is good education
 - need to keep them functioning

5. Diversity crops & animals

- Enabling legislation to get DH, MH to recognize how to process @ a smaller scale, help people diversify farm business & treat farm business as a business
- Recognize forest part of family farm
 - Think about green payments for forest ero-services
- Environmental laws by region to target problems rather than trying to do everything whether you need to –

6. New ideas (Rest)

- Need education for youth (& adult) – AG is a foundation of this country, and still plays an important role
 - See farms as business to keep business in community
- Extension needs to better support farmers and education needs
- New landowners don't understand neighborhood farms
- Rules should apply to everyone not just farms
- Investment in farm business retention infrastructure
- Diversity of farm enterprises
 - Need to protect all options
 - Hunting is an example of business that needs protection
- MD legislators need to be educated about AG
- Need to do something about sewage overflows
 - Put penalties in place of pay to fix it
 - Tie annexing to sewer potential
- Solar NR – in chicken houses need more research & support / incentives
- MAERDAF – AG education fund needs money to accomplish goals / restore
- Get behind barley ethanol plant help profitability
- Have env. And farm community work together in land preservation for farms and forests
- Form alliances w/foresters who have same issues
 - ID problems & then can find solutions
 - Cons. Easements should not take management options away
 - Education issue
 - Work to change those understandings
- Timber is organic
- MDA or extension needs to have media liaison to educate public on all AG improvements re: consumers & communities

- Deer damage needs to have solutions identified
 - State owns deer, and state needs to do something
 - Extend hunting season
 - Increase limits / incentives to hunt and use meat for community use
 - This is an increasing problem that needs help - county
- Recognize that organic AG is the only growth area – get help to market

Wicomico County
August 15, 2005
7:00 – 9:00 PM

1 Concern about sustaining Agriculture in Maryland

1. Land Use

- A clean, healthy environment is the birth right of every person. No individual (or industry) has the right to violate that fundamental precept. Maryland AG will not survive, and we all will be the poorer for it, if the industry cannot find away to live by the same rules as other industries. No industry, nor any government, can long survive if the normal course of doing business does subsidies (e.g. payment for obeying the law) as a part of its “profitability.” I am deeply concerned that Maryland AG is pursuing a business model that is incompatible with the likes of the environment.
- The alarming rate at which farm land is being developed or being put into useless government programs such as CREP.
- Right to farm laws need to be made as strong as possible.
- Planning and zoning regulation + implementation w / environmental priority.
- Keep open space and farmland.
- Land preservation funds. Less environmental regulations “make state in regions” education for youth.
- Loss of farmland and farmers – extremely low prices for farm preservation. Lack of funding for farmland preservation.
- Land user / urbanization is challenging all aspects of agriculture whether it’s the farmer or others along the supply chain.
- Land is valued for residence and businesses that need infrastructure, yet do not add to the tax base.
- The voting block of urbanized regions holds more influence with policy makers.
- AG land preservation – Have more money available for compensation to farmers for easements.
- Also land AG preservation should not be taken out of production because of CREP programs, but best management practices should be followed.
- To identify best soil and ensure large contiguous areas remain AG through planning, easements, zoning that will protect them for AG. State funding / easements.
- Right to farm
- Right to farm laws “need more state help”
- Lack of education to all youth. Not just youth who plan to become farmers!
- Followed very close by land use, because we will not need marketability if we have not the land to produce.
- The impact of water pollution will take a back seat to the economic value of large farm

- Development of farm land at a rate that will cause the chicken companies to leave the shore, in less than 10 years the amount of grain that will have to be imported will be more than what is grown here. This cost will cause the companies to leave.
- The over development of farmland needs to stop.
- Development.
- Right to farm regulations not strong enough. Zoning not doing job for farmers.
- Land use planning must address AG as a whole including forestry, hunting and other farmland use and activities and protect all of those activities. In order for agriculture to be viable. We must exercise all of the options available on an area of land.
- Impact on H2O quality, but needs to be economically feasible to farmers.
- Keeping enough land to keep farming and to be able to make some decent money.
- Land being used all up for homes, and other things completely unnecessary. Will be no land to farm, or have poultry houses on, for young farmers. The future does not look good if there is no land to farm especially on the shore. Salisbury as an example, 10 years ago you could see tractors on route 13 farming the land, now, only can see them riding up and down the highway.
- Increasing urbanization and loss of farmland and neighbor complaints. This affects profitability as well as the ability of farmers to stay in farming or to expand their operations.
- To stay sustainable, agriculture must stay environmentally conscious. But farmers can't afford to implement conservation practices with profit margins as low as they are. The state must help fund conservation practices; full funding for the tributary team strategies would go a long way to help farmers and the bay.
- Right to farm laws protect the farmers integrity, protect farming community from encroaching residential communities. Protect the small family farms not just the large operations.
- Large society in Maryland does not see farm as an activity that has value in and of itself and should be fostered.

2. Profitability

- Apparently corn, beans and wheat have very little value when there is enough for everyone's needs. This is not the case with cars, machinery, gasoline etc.
- Education, public relations, promotion, labor availability
- Pay farmer development value of land to sustain preservations of farmland.
- Growth issue
- We're all good farmers – we all farm to make a profit. It's hard to encourage your children to farm if they can't make money. To educate the public will help the farmer as much as anything.
- Funding for state program agencies

- MARBIDCO - MD AG and resource based industry development corp.
Newly created entity critical to future economic viability of MD AG, esp. MD young farmers. Needs full funding in Gov's budget \$5 Mil a year
- MAERDAF – MD AG education, rural development assistance fund has gone from \$422,000 in year 1 – now at \$146,000. This fund is critical to many AG organizations – incl. - lead Maryland.
- MDA - MD department of AG performs functions vital to AG viability. The budget cuts so far have hurt deeply. Any more will cause irreversible harm.
- MACPF – MD AG land preservation foundation – This fund should be sacred. Full funding to preserve levels ASAP is needed.
- AG insurance – Maximize state crop insurance subsidies.
- Maintaining a profit level that makes agriculture an enjoyable lifestyle.
- To make more money, as the cost of living increases, expenses to operate increase, income should increase? How is the problem?
- Stop the big grain company's from controlling the market.
- Making a profit. Otherwise I can't compete with developers. MDA needs to educate the public that farmers need a proper profit, not 50 cent lopes and \$1.00 watermelons. Environmental issues – as Dr. Harry Womack of SSC the Chesapeake and its tributaries are being used as a glorified & average system. Seafood is contaminated and there is even man killing bacteria in the water. It may be chicken manure but it's also human waste. Do something! Don't just stand there. Ralph Hareum Jr.
- Good return on investment.
- Farm program that helps farmers: Current programs pertaining to AG use are detrimental to AG.
- Require city and suburbanites to same conservation regulations as AG.
- New idea – Farm to market program would add to net income.
- Need for larger percent of overall costs to flow through to net profit for operations.
 - Support AG preservation for AG use as a deterrent to non AG user / sprawl (lower land costs).
 - More value added to products to remain w/ operations (less control by mega-national corporations) (bio-fuels, etc).
 - New ideas to support commodity pricing structure (similar to LDP's, direct payments).
- Keeping farming viable in the face of residential development pressures
- Develop new markets tax advantages – farm enterprise zones for product development process.
- Without profit none of the others matter.
- Keeping the poultry industry here on the shore & if not the corn and bean production is gone.
- It costs app. \$350.00 per acre to grow corn. Today's price is \$2.00; therefore, we need 150 bushels to break even. Is this fair?
- Helping farmers maintain profitability while implementing conservation practices.

- Production AG will most likely never be profitable enough to compete with rapidly increasing land values. Real estate development is out of control. Public policy should be changed to protect AG lands by increasing AG preservation funding.
- Promote organic systems, move UMD to the 21st century, recognize and support non-traditional farming systems, support of economic development projects on farms (small scale, micro)

3. New Ideas

- Forestry is a significant contributor to the family farm economically and to the community through the numerous eco-services provided. Yet it is not represented.

4. Value Added Opportunities

- Development of new markets for increased contact between the farmer and the consumer

Queen Anne's County Listening Session August 24, 2005
Participants' Discussion Points

1. Land Use

- Better markets
- Tax breaks
- Help reduce state taxes to keep farms in families and family farmer.
Federal exclusion going in a favorable direction, MD is raising taxes.
- Must target money to Ag lands that can be saved – lg. blocks.
- Money is needed in open space programs to allow land purchase.
- Farmers should be compensated for buffers to protect Bay - model after everglades.
- Money needs to end up in production of farmer's hands, not just landowners.
- Everyone should be held to nutrient laws- not just farmers - lawns need to be considered, too.
- Cover crops in winter would be done if “flown on” - re: Russ
- Need more funding to pay for cover crops.
- Cover crops “minimum” payment so everyone interested gets at least some support.
- Cover crops can't be sold- but it could be used to increase profits – ethanol - priorities to target- be more innovative. Hold people accountable to what's required.
- Re-establish soil testing lab at University of Maryland.
- 65% down on homeowner samples to control fertilizer application.
- New Bay Bridge should not go through prime farm land.
- BMP's and other approaches are not enough- need new tools for water, air, and other pollutants and problems, better technologies.
- Surface raised oysters need to be supported by state to help improve water quality on the bay - use better biologic filters. Don't push watermen to power dredging. Farming & zoning.
- More bottom aquaculture - consider it all.
- Needs to be more profitable- needs to be encouraged to make profitable discoveries.
- Have Maryland formulate state plan on eminent domain to protect farm land.

2. Profitability

- Ethanol plants.
- MTBE ban in MD so ethanol will sell in the state - good in many ways - more bio-diesels.
- Need money to market research and feasibility studies- need to know what will work - then need a business park to support new ventures - DBED is stepping into help.

- Niche markets like horizon dairy organic is more valuable – [Pork in Kent Co (?)] takes time-help farmers make conversion.
- Support MARBIDCO - it will help these efforts.
- MD needs legislation requiring risk and cost/ benefit analysis on environment regulations - ensure cost and long run implications are leading to environment
- More risk as input costs increase- need better support for crop insurance to address risks.
- High investment specialty and new ventures have least history and need insurance the most, but get no support - lose good ideas those least dependent have least [*sic*].
- Look at farming with \$5 fuel costs.
- Education of consumers is needed- \$10 a week on local produce (means) \$150k in Queen Anne County each week - get demand going local.
- The state should be identifying local sources of food-websites,maps - more marketing in Cecil co new effort.
- Slot machines to increase horse purses so alfalfa is supported.
- Fragmenting farm land is making farming harder.
- Lack of affordable health insurance.
- Critical areas, others, and mitigation need to be more farm friendly.
- Change land preservation options- limits on types of Ag activity- farm business, etc.
- Education - need national center on Ag to reconnect people to Ag as a base in US and how important Ag is - keep animal Ag viable - educate urban neighbors.
- Increase \$\$ MAERDAF- money's been going down- wrong time to stop.
- Need to find ways - state program - to keep young people in farming - need to look at other states as models - find new ways.
- Need to have production Ag return to high schools, community college, and universities. Ag programs need to work with farmers. Kids need incentives to learn to farm and work with livestock etc.
- Zoning changes are causing economic hardship especially on young and new farmers. RTE/economic viability. Can't buy land as it is
- Hard to justify farming given development offers.
- Land preservation has to make it worthwhile.

3. Other

- Link land preservation payments to high-value life insurance to provide high \$ without losing farm.
- Need strong Ag infrastructure- need to look at MD tax credit to encourage purchases from MD dealers.
- Rural entrepreneurial networks - Many people working together - see how other states are doing this. Access to market, credit, marketing, etc. Nebraska, others, MN, ND too.
- Alternative high value crops for smaller acres. More research and pilots to explore this.

- Foreign farmer worker visa expand and sustain.
- Equipment dealers need help and support to stay in business. New wealth is not buying farm equipment. Hobby farmers are a market and don't need profits. Others need to rethink approaches. Shift to where markets are.
- Farmers need to be the ones to make it work.
- Effects of air pollution on yield crops, Christmas trees, etc. Need to look at this and address it.
- Educate about bio-security before something bad happens.
- Farmers need to know about this. 2007 farm bill discussions need to keep MD farmers in mind. Conservation funding especially.
- MDA needs funding restored. Too much cut already - establish a fund to help fill gaps. Bay restoration funds.
- If Ag is a priority, programs would be funded - conservation not just Ag.
- Ag, seafood, and tourism need to talk together.

Queen Anne's County
August 24, 2005
7:00 – 9:00 pm

1 Concern about sustaining Agriculture in Maryland

1. Land Use

- Farm land being sold to development. Help with the counties that are planning new “Comprehensive” plans to protect large blocks of farmland. Educate the public and farmers to preserve our farms and the importance of the land to keep ag profitable in our state. More funding for Ag Land preservation. Concerns about water quality with all the development that will be draining into the rivers and bays.
- Impact on water quality (Bay and Tribs) and need to provide adequate funding to farmers for conservation program.
- Without land, there is no farming. W/out farming there is no water improvement habitat for wildlife. W/out water improvement and clean environment we will live in a sewer like a 3rd world country.
- Preservation of viable farmland. Preservation of agriculture communities and infrastructure.
- Keeping enough acres in ag production / land values so high farmers can't afford the land and anyone who buys it wants more of a return on their investment than Ag can generate. We need enough acres in Ag to keep a valuable industry.
- Run off sediment, soil, and pollution.
- Pollutants- Do more to monitor the large and small manufacturers. The feeling is that nutrient management is doing their job in agriculture, but not nearly enough is done in other areas of living and playing. To help solve the problem, enforce all standard laws that are currently in place.
- We need to be reasonable about requiring facilities to stop pollution. I spent \$64,000 in the past 2 yrs to stop 600 pounds of nitrogen from entering a stream. 50 ft buffer strip with trees stops 90% of nitrogen. 200 ft of grass should stop 10%. Cost share received \$22,000. It's taken 4 months from completion of last project to complete paper work and another 4-6 wks for payment. Interests on these projects is over \$300 a month.
- Preserving and protecting productive Ag land through improved growth mgt and paying higher easement \$ to preserve land.
- Development.
- Sustaining any adequate land base in the face of increasing development pressure.
- Preservation of farmland to maintain critical mass of farms to sustain Ag industry of the shore.
- Helping farmers withstand constant \$ pressure from developers.

- We must work to stop the ever increasing loss of land to development. Without land to farm the rest of this won't matter. We must stop the out of control growth of the urban areas.
- How is a young farmer able to exist and compete with the growth of development, in the future, to maintain a profit in farming.
- Land use and maintenance. We are being pushed out by development.
- Growth and development of farmland.
- Land use and mgt to be profitable / Maryland estate taxes / Ag land preservation / Young farmers / Development.
- Run away development. Ag operations and houses don't mix well. Third bay bridge proposed to Kent Co. Rural areas need to get our house in order before development comes in.
- Operators age. Education and management skills.
- Land use and zoning.
- Farm preservation and natural resources.
- Environmental regulations/planning zoning. Large confinement operations (factory farms) have forced out small farmers. Maryland must define "farming"- public funds should not be used to subsidize large corporate entities. The environment must never be damaged simply for profitability. Our land is too fragile and the bay too important to the state's economy.
- Effective process to address conflicts that arise between the agricultural and residential community as well as the agricultural community and government (planning, zoning, and health dept).
- Profitability for small farmers. Land prices and development.
- Retention of land for agriculture as opposed to residential and commercial development.
- How fast farmland is being developed. Once the land is gone, none of these other topics matter- they are dead! As Will Rogers said "They are not working anymore". Profitability will help save our farmland.
- Lack of research and funding providing new economically viable alternatives for best mgt practices to keep our air, water and land pollution free. The recent tool box is empty and ineffective.
- "Whole system" approach including hedgerows for beneficial and wildlife (e.g. bob-white/quail) corridors need to be promoted via education and if necessary, incentives.
- No northern bay bridge. No bridge in the strongest agriculture area in the state. We don't have to look like the western shore.
- Stopping the rampant spread of development. Best farmland is taken because it is the easiest to develop. Need a strategic plan and vision for the Eastern shore as a whole to keep agriculture and it's infrastructure in place and viable. Once the land is gone, it is gone.
- Farming must co-exist peaceably with the Chesapeake Bay- the largest estuary in the U.S. All farmers should be adequately compensated by the state and federal government for mandatory buffers along ditches and field perimeters in

order to significantly reduce run-off into the Bay. (If adequate compensation, mandatory nature shouldn't be a problem).

- Continue to provide funding at state and local level for farmland preservation and ensure the programs provide flexibility in the future to address changes in farm/family situations.

2. Profitability

- Profitability - value added products.
- Diversification to increase profitability and to facilitate younger people entering farming. Develop market for products: Vegetables, hay, freezer meat, and flowers. Develop processing facilities for meat. More lenient zoning to permit various enterprisers that are not currently allowed.
- Additional state support for organic/sustainable farming. Training at state colleges in large scale organic farming. Restore state funds for conservation easements (makes keeping the farm possible). More state support for "buy local" initiation. Offer small farm grants to ease transition to organic farming systems (it costs to switch).
- Encourage organic farming practices through incentives to help mitigate the higher cost. The benefits to society and the land are important to quality of life.
- Alternative high value crops for small farms or nurseries.
- Having enough young farmers to continue agriculture in Md.
- Maintaining "profitability" across a full spectrum of Ag enterprises. If you keep a farmer profitable, he will be a better steward of the land than anyone else who could ever own the land. With escalating land values, the only way to preserve the land is to preserve the livelihood of this industry. The government needs to support bio-fuels to lessen our dependence on foreign supply and consume a large volume of Ag products.
- Profitability is the main concern, not only in agriculture but any business. Land is too high for Ag use. Too many people, farmers included, are selling elsewhere and driving prices up. There are many ways to solve this problem but the laws, and the lack of foresight of planning and zoning are a hindrance. Some lands need to be sold for alternative uses to help sustain agriculture.
- Improve and expand crop insurance availability and affordability to farmers. Better compensation to farmers who suffer large crop losses. High investment crops need better crop insurance coverage(s).
- Energy production - industry slow to become a major farm product.
- Eastern Shore's inability to sustain a product program where shore residents can buy and consume locally grown and raised food. 50% of food available should be grown within 50 miles of where consumer lives.
- Being able to continue to farm at a level to provide enough product to continue every year to provide Marylanders with decent food at reasonable

prices. With production costs increasing every year and prices at a stagnant level, there does not seem to be much potential for the future. Ethanol may help, but currently it does not seem to be available in the states. The state should consider more tax reductions to dealers who are willing to [still gather (?)] E85 or gasohol without strings attached to encourage the use on agriculture based fuels.

- Creating lively competition for Maryland's many high quality crops.
- The relationship between citizens and the agriculture community. An understanding by the general public of Ag land use requirements and setbacks will help profitability and thereby land will stay in Ag.
- Sustainable funding for MARBIDCO.
- Need to grow markets for all segments of agriculture. Value of land exceeding profitability of traditional crops.
- Insurance costs for crop insurance. Would like to see state subsidy to help farmers to afford higher coverage levels.
- Need for new markets for corn, wheat, and soy. Too much supply and not enough demand. Increase crop insurance subsidy from state as well as USDA.
- Profitability / Cost of Ag Inputs = Fuel, fertilizer, and seed. Biodiesel and ethanol - let us provide the state with fuel from our crops. State of Maryland tax reduction (death or descendent).
- Access to markets. "Getting the farmers share".
- Access to markets - Identification and alternatives.
- Educating citizens on importance of supporting or participating in local, sustainable or organic agriculture.
- All institutions that serve agriculture in MD are being defunded, demoted, and dismantled. University Ag research, Ag extension, and MD Dept of Ag. All of the above rank lower and lower on their institutional totem poles. Institutionally Maryland is saying they don't give much of a hoot about agriculture.
- Keeping poultry and dairy industry viable.
- The increasing pressure for conversion of farm land to housing development. If farming was more profitable, perhaps the pressure would be reduced. The need to convert the farmland to \$ for retirement and old age (health care) would also be reduced.
- Profitability and land use and more ways to develop bio-fuel plants.
- The best land preservation is a profitable farm.
- Labor.
- Land values for houses exceed any money I can reasonably expect to earn in a lifetime of farming. Should I sell before zoning regulations take away my nest egg. Why not stop all new houses building on Ag land? (except replacing existing houses). Compensate owners annually for giving this right (having land equity taken) with taxes or fees from part of profit where houses are permitted. i.e. Share in changes in land values with all

landowners. Current Ag preservation and zoning is not working to keep Ag land so it can be farmed. Right to farm laws will last only so long.

- New infrastructure. [*Two remaining comments illegible*]

3. New Ideas

- Lack of cohesive approach such as a rural enterprise network for supporting rural enterprise agri-business, agri-tourism, access to markets, access to capital research and development and product development.
- Farmers/operators equity and land availability for production. Only allow an “operator” (not only an owner) to be only entity to sell land out of agriculture for non-Ag use and development. Need to operate a farm for 10 years or greater before sale. This would forbid speculative land sales to drive the competitive price for open land to benefit from sales. Also would force more individuals into Ag to gain broader knowledge base among the public (w/ the younger generation).
- Increased funding for MDA to support the consumer and producer programs and staffing needed. MDA has had more than its share of budget cuts, at a time it has increased demands.
- More tax incentives for Maryland farmers to buy conservation equipment, but from Maryland as dealers.
- Punitive, vindictive environmental regulation that is disguised as “good” that is directed toward agriculture. An example is “co-permitting” a few years back. If this co-permitting were passed the broiler chicken industry would have left Maryland and so would the grain farming industry. This vast amount of land would have ended up in mostly non-agricultural uses. The main point is that the long run implications of stupid regulations are ignored. One way to solve this problem is a requirement that Maryland conduct risk-cost-benefit studies which take into consideration the long term implications of regulations.

Calvert County Listening Session August 29, 2005
Participants Discussion Points

1. Regulations and Zoning

- Get more options for voting on what happens.
Re: cows and confinement
- Right to Farm information - should be everywhere a [*sic*] real estate requires.
- Farmland needs more protection through TDR's – more money and less lip service.
- Protect farmland from eminent domain when land is valuable for development.
- Reverse set back for real estate to buffer farms.
- Consistency between political jurisdictions.

2. Profitability

- County commissioners seem less supportive of agriculture.
- Be able to buy local produce - sell in local stores - encourage it.
- Ports for grain- state and local - instead of the way it works now.
- Crop damage improvement- allow hunting (more) on deer, geese- need to allow more options to control populations.
- Need local processing plant for beef and pork.
- Processing plant for vegetables.
- Better prices for crops - prices are stable, inputs are going up - can't stay this way.
- Stop using fees to cover everything - call a tax a tax.
- Health Dept. regulation on farm items - need to balance regulation and safety with farmers ability to sell.
- Cover crop is good, but need small grain program so can be harvested.

3. Other Thoughts

- What's accessibility on preserved land, especially in drought years or times of need - put it to better use.
- Make Maryland more pro-agriculture - cheap food is not the only good idea - farms need to be more profitable.
- Farms with forests are caught in a bind because can't get the services from DNR.
- Agriculture tax/rural legacy program is not returning investment to (Southern) Maryland.
- Can't advertise seasonal crops on highways - need a way to attract customers - just during season, need access to public- yet real estate signs go up every weekend.
- Agriculture is getting blamed for water quality problems- need more support for agriculture as good steward of land.

- Need state soil testing program with help to understand results and suggestions on what would be a good use of farm.

4. Land Use

- Agriculture preservation program needs to be consistently funded year after year.
- Young farmers need to have help in taking on farms as farmer's age.
- What to do with aging barns- need some kind of program to help maintain them.
- Make it easier for children to build on family farms with no impact fees or regulatory hurdles.
- Inheritance tax and state level needs to support and encourage farm land to stay in farming - preservation program allows sales of development rights, but \$1 million limit doesn't work – makes this less attractive.
- Preservation status should be protected from right-of-way and other intrusions.
- Some fields are un-rentable because of deer problems - too much damage - humans cause problems, too- encroachment and trespass issues - 4 wheel damage, too.
- More farms than what are considered "farms" - might be good to find ways to connect more people.
- Insurance for nursery means paying for electrical outage - expand crop insurance to address nursery - look more broadly at what's needed.
- People need to tell farmers why they are on their farm - what's it all about- not just to find violation.
- Trespass laws need to be publicized and enforced.

5. Other Thoughts

- Put money where mouths are- stop cutting extension budget when more services are needed and expected.
- Give more money to MDA to expedite training for nutrient mgt. for community greenhouse operators- needs to be local and soon.
- In Maryland, separating forestry and agriculture, makes forestry a step child to agriculture issues- need closer cooperation between agriculture and forestry.

Calvert County
August 29, 2005
7:00- 9:00 pm

1 Concern about sustaining Agriculture in Maryland

1. Profitability

- Need to make farming more profitable in many agriculture areas. Also we need to preserve the farmer as well as the farms.
- Profitability because the other 3 issues need to be addressed to produce profitability.
- Making agriculture profitable for young farmers with the cost for land vs. commodity prices.
- Profitability.
- Insurance / Planning, and zoning regulations.
- Costs of input does not keep pace with increase to selling prices.
- Profit from agriculture / Liability of insurance / Taxes / Bio-fuels.
- Insurance / Production cost vs. profit.
- Aging farmers / Producers and their level of education.
- Wildlife damage to crops.
- Preserving farmers by increasing profitability in agriculture.
- More profitability.
- Ability of producers to produce and market value added products.
- Availability of labor.
- Lack of successful local marketing due to lack of consumer interest in local markets.
- “Parity” that Maryland farms are not disadvantaged as compared to neighboring states (licensing, zoning, access to markets, tax).
- Access to more outlets for grain- markets.
- Being run out of business due to
 - 1) State environmental regulations
 - 2) Local zoning laws

Reasoning: The more the restrictive the county and state are with farmers, the more it cost in terms of “production costs”. The higher the cost of production the less likely we can make a profit.

If Maryland continues to urbanize like it has been in the passed [sic] 30 years there will be no more farming. Maryland will be part of one big city stretching from New York to Richmond.

- My concern is that Maryland Department of Agriculture does not anticipate problems in agriculture community and they don’t have workable solutions in anticipation of these problems.
 - A. Southern Maryland Transitioning Out of Tobacco
 1. Alternative crops- not under crop insurance.
 2. Markets available nor support to find markets auctions for

example. Department of Agriculture playing catch up.

3. Wine or grape production need more buyers or processors.

B. Direct Marketing

1. Support for roadside markets.

2. Bureaucratic stumbling blocks- building permits, license

C. Value Added

1. Markets

2. Farmers creating own markets

None of these under crop insurance.

- Every institution in the state designed to support agriculture is being diminished:

University of Maryland ag school

Agriculture extension

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Marylanders must realize that agriculture is part of their heritage, but more importantly it is a crucial part of their future, whether you view agriculture in terms of food supply, environment or ecology, Maryland would be a sad, sad place without agriculture.

2. Land use

- Loss of farmland.
- Farmland preservation.
- Land use and management.
- Land use and management.
- Agriculture has to be environmentally sound to stay sustainable, and farmers want to take measures to be good stewards of the land, but farmers can't afford to do it alone. The state can help farmers and the bay by fully funding cost share programs for agriculture conservation practices.
- Loss of agriculture land to residential development. Intrusion of residential development into prime farming areas.
- Urbanization of farmland.
- Stop development on clear farmland.
- Too many farms are growing houses rather than crops.
- The availability of land to farm because of the current lack of commitment to land preservation and suburban sprawl.
- Increasing spread of development puts great pressure on land resource base. Better resistance to sprawl (In form of TDR's and tax and income incentives) will enable younger farmers to buy land. Without younger new farmers, agriculture will wither.
- Agriculture land preservation vs. urban sprawl.
- Calvert County zoning restrictions on livestock raising and feeding.
- Aging farm population and heavy development pressure may outpace our ability to provide profitability in agriculture for the next generation of farmers.
- Suburban growth.

- Wildlife, mainly deer make it almost impossible to produce most vegetable crops in many areas including mine. Much land is idle because nobody will rent the land because of high deer population in the particular area. Need managed special hunts to lower the deer population in these areas.

3. Value Added, Diversification, and Alternatives

- Legally be able to put seasonal agriculture sign up on Rt. 2 & 4 to advertise my products.
- The need for processing facilities for beef and value added products.
- The tobacco buyout has been received for 5 years - many family farms will receive their checks for only 5 more years, only a few of these operations have found a replacement source of income and are yet waiting for an enterprise suggestion to replace the tobacco production as many growers report decline of produce sales this production year. Alternatives need to be developed that will enable family members to assistant [*sic*] electric taxes, insurance etc.

4. Bio-Security

- In Calvert County, I recently read an article in the Calvert Recorder that recommended that Calvert County diversify (i.e. Calvert is too heavy on energy industry). Given this information why is a new Nuclear Reactor suggested for Calvert Cliffs? Since Calvert is so close to Washington, D.C. there is an increased risk of terrorism. The Nuclear plant would be a valuable target to terrorists. An accident, no matter how small would devastate the Calvert County agriculture industry. Why take the risk? Non agriculture areas should be selected for power plants.

5. New Ideas

- Less regulation. Allowance for farm home site integration. Diversification of farm products and crops.
- Sustainability = sustaining agriculture here for several reasons - Food security (D.C., Md., and Va.), preserving water quality, preserving open and green space, preserving a cultural heritage.
- Land use involves more than commodity and crops. Soil survey best use may be for forests which comes under USDA but seems treated as a step-child in a different organization in Md. I'd like to see a more inclusive and togetherness with farming / tree farming as best use.

APPENDIX VI
FORUM RANKINGS

**Total
score**

Issue 1: Enhance Profitability

Issue 1a: Improve Marketing and Access to Markets

4. Focus a business development initiative on attracting processing operations for value-added benefits and export facilities for Maryland grown products.	108
11. Support legislative incentives that increase the production and use of bio-energy (including forest products).	99
8. Focus a business development effort on establishing primary processing and production facilities in the state.	80
1. Establish an ongoing statewide working group on agricultural marketing and branding issues.	49
7. Initiate a "buy local" promotional campaign.	47
2. Increase contracts with government institutions to purchase Maryland agricultural products.	36
6. Develop and implement a branding initiative for Maryland grown farm and forestry products.	36
3. Improve product availability in local (in-state) grocery stores and markets.	29
5. Increase funding for state marketing programs.	29
13. Provide loan guarantees and industrial bonds so farmers can own a larger portion of a biofuel facility.	29
12. Enact a statewide initiative to blend 2 percent biodiesel into entire diesel supply.	27
9. Support legislation to ban MTBEs (a gasoline additive) in Maryland.	19
10. Require new state vehicles to be bio-fuel compatible and use alternative fuels when available.	17

Issue 1b: Provide Business Development Assistance

2. Provide financing for business planning assistance, capital investment, and infrastructure, including grain marketing and local processing facilities.	71
3. Provide seed money and low-cost loans to enable vertical integration and value-added product development enterprises through MARBIDCO, the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), and other agricultural economic development initiatives.	68
5. Identify and define resources, roles, and responsibilities of various economic development partners, in concert with the University system resources, to minimize duplication of efforts and maximize opportunities.	53
12. Fund MARBIDCO.	53
7. Encourage establishment of an agricultural marketing professional position with economic development focus in those counties that currently do not have this position.	50
1. Create and provide incentives for "agricultural enterprise zones" to attract value-added and processing businesses.	48
4. Provide working capital grants for farms in transition, demonstration projects, and internships.	48
11. Expedite value-added permitting and outline an easy process "roadmap".	45
value-added strategies. If necessary provide training for Small Business Development Counselors (SBDC) on agricultural business development and lending.	44
8. Support market studies and research on production methods, crops, and agricultural products to improve profit margins and enable diversification.	42
13. Create a Center for Beginning Farmers and Enterprise Development (CBFED) as described in the section "Provide education and assistance for farmers".	34

9. Study the feasibility of making Maryland a home to a business cluster for agricultural and nutraceutical research and development, production, and distribution.	32
10. Leverage the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center to build corporate partnerships that encourage research and product commercialization.	15

Issue 1c: Reduce the Cost of Production

1. Develop and implement ways to reduce health insurance costs for agricultural businesses and farm families.	139
4. Streamline the application and approval process for H2A and H2B workers.	67
8. Extend the deer and geese hunting seasons throughout the state.	56
7. Encourage new and expanded temporary worker programs.	52
9. Legalize retail sale of game meat and provide additional incentives/funding for donating game meat for community uses.	49
2. Increase funding levels and types of crops eligible for crop insurance including funding for technical assistance and outreach to the agricultural community.	48
3. Undertake a business development initiative to attract underwriters that will provide affordable liability coverage.	45
6. Encourage appropriate adjustments to the Federal "adverse wage rate" so Maryland farmers can have competitive access to the H2A program.	28
11. Work with insurance companies to help cover crop damage due to wildlife.	28
12. Increase education and outreach to suburban community groups on how to effectively manage deer populations.	24
10. Promote wildlife control solutions currently offered by the Maryland DNR.	20
5. Find affordable housing solutions for farm employees.	16
13. Establish standing depredation order so that nuisance geese can be controlled without waiting weeks for a permit.	15
14. Develop a registry of hunters willing to help farmers who have a crop damage hunting permit.	10

Issue 1d: Address Regulations

5. Develop a technical assistance toolbox for local officials on how to create zoning regulations that both support traditional agriculture and allow for alternative agricultural uses.	114
3. Enact a state food policy that encourages on-farm processing, training, and certification of farmers in on-farm food processing safety. certifies food safety inspectors who specialize in on-farm and small-scale processes. cultivates innovation in small batch food processing.	91
9. Require a science-based, cost-benefit analysis, including agricultural industry input, prior to the passage of any statute that impacts agriculture.	91
6. Convene an ongoing statewide working group to discuss zoning issues related to agriculture and develop tangible action items	70
4. Reform policies to vertically "harmonize" federal, state, and local inspections and other standards-based regulations at the legislative and departmental levels, particularly with regard to on-farm processing and meat products.	60
2. Change state regulations and encourage modification of local regulations so they honor the intent of existing regulations while developing alternative approaches that scale to farm-based and community-based processing systems.	58
10. Investigate and adopt strategies to improve local water resources and attain the goals of the 2000 Bay Agreement by 2010.	43
1. Convene an ongoing statewide working group to ensure transparent health regulations that are most advantageous to the farming community.	34

8. Review and adjust inter- and intra-state weight limit restrictions on agricultural products.	27
7. Establish traffic study count measures / average impact numbers for certain categories of similar agricultural practices.	4

Issue 1e: Make Taxes More Supportive of Agriculture

1. Encourage all counties to offer tax credits for preserving land, ensure that this option is also available on the state level.	148
2. Eliminate part or all of the federal and state estate tax for agricultural enterprises.	132
3. Eliminate capital gains taxes on the sale of development rights.	105
7. Provide tax credits/exemptions for bio-diesel and ethanol use.	94
6. Waive amusement tax for agri-tourism enterprises.	52
4. Raise the employer tax exemption from \$600 to \$2,000.	36
5. Develop and distribute appropriate informational materials.	3

Issue 2: Ensure an Adequate Base of Well-Managed Agricultural Land

Issue 2a: Stabilize the Land Base

5. Ensure full funding for Maryland's land protection programs by not diverting the real estate transfer tax and the agricultural transfer tax for other uses.	147
9. Improve MALPF's flexibility on what agricultural uses are allowed on preserved farms.	107
3. Establish a revolving fund for MALPF to buy agricultural land in fee and then sell the land at auction to farmers subject to an easement. (The program could be targeted to beginning, young or minority farmers as appropriate.).	69
4. Develop TDR and new farmland preservation programs through state and county collaboration.	69
7. Prioritize the use of state land preservation funding to encourage the preservation of large contiguous blocks of productive farmland.	64
6. Explore and adopt new funding sources for agricultural land preservation.	59
10. Monitor the issue of transferring water rights on MALPF protected farmland. This will have an impact on growth constraints of towns located close to protected farmland and on future operations of the protected farm.	36
1. Implement and fund a state-level Critical Farms program.	30
8. Establish a permanent Commission on Agricultural Land Preservation and Zoning.	20
2. Establish an Executive Order for state agencies to minimize the extent to which they contribute to the conversion of productive agricultural land.	15
11. Request that the appropriate staff agency representative from the Advisory Committee on the Management and Protection of the State's Water Resources provide periodic updates on the future availability of water to the Commission.	4

Issue 2b: Encourage Agricultural Stewardship

1. Provide additional funding for Maryland Soil Conservation Districts to better administer and implement conservation programs.	112
6. Provide sufficient funding for cover crop program.	98
8. Design a two-tiered cover crop system to allow for harvesting.	91
4. Implement ways to reward farmers who already are using good stewardship practices.	81
2. Provide additional funding for the University system to conduct research on potential new BMPs that address the needs of agriculture and the health of the bay.	59
3. Fund implementation and adaptation of newly developed conservation practices that result from the University system and other research.	51

5. Take advantage of possible future opportunities for farmers to receive “credit” for nutrient reductions from crop management systems that foster carbon sequestration and from new income streams from alternative funding mechanisms such as nutrient trading.	48
7. Examine the possibility of adjusting the program to reflect planting differences across the state.	31
9. Provide funding for the University system to quantify and document the costs and benefits that will or have resulted from regulations.	28
10. Strive for full compliance with Maryland’s nutrient management regulations.	15

Issue 2c: Strengthen and Protect Right-to-Farm

1. Change state right-to-farm law.	
2. Develop a state guide to planning for agriculture that includes mechanisms (like reverse setbacks) for heading off land use conflicts, and a model right-to-farm ordinance with guidelines for county officials.	

Issue 2d: Advance Forestry as an Agricultural Enterprise

5. Promote forestry within the agricultural community as another way for farmers to remain profitable.	146
4. Promote forestry as part of any agricultural outreach or marketing campaign by the state.	121
2. Promote forestry and provide outreach to foresters as part of the work of Soil Conservation Districts.	100
1. Create a task force to examine ways to ensure that state programs and regulations are more consistent between forestry and farming.	81
3. Include a forestry representative as part of each county Soil Conservation District.	64
6. Encourage MDA to write a section for forestry when doing a farm plan for their clients.	57

Issue 3: Advance Research, Education, and the Advocacy of Agriculture

Issue 3a: Advance Research and Education for Future Viability of Maryland Agriculture

7. Secure enhanced funding for MCE.	90
6. Re-open and fully fund the University of Maryland Soil Testing Laboratory.	89
3. Conduct value-added agricultural production research associated with farm enterprises.	79
8. Establish the CBFED to provide concept development and business planning assistance to agricultural operations and offer specialized services to young and beginning farmers in the areas of marketing, business and financial planning, cultural practices, and policy implications that affect agriculture across the broad range of land-based enterprises.	76
1. Create and dedicate a revenue stream to enable research that will support farmers in implementing best management practices to meet sediment and nutrient reduction goals that encourage water quality improvement in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.	75
5. Create better coordination within related University system efforts and between the University and state agencies.	43
9. Provide adequate information and practical training on BMPs to better achieve nutrient management plans to protect the health of Chesapeake Bay and its watersheds.	42
12. Strongly support those university programs where agriculture and suburban/urban markets merge: turf, nursery, horticulture, landscaping.	42

2. Establish a Center for Agricultural and Environmental Biotechnology within the University system to enhance and improve current agricultural practices.	40
10. Continue to provide through MCE faculty excellent leadership and services to Maryland citizens in the areas of food and water safety, agrosecurity, health and nutrition, child care, youth development, and leadership.	31
11. Establish a Plant Protection Center.	12
4. Install the University's IFS3 as a premier global authority for comprehensive research, service, and information on food and water protection, defense, and safety.	9

Issue 3b: Advocate for Agriculture

3. Fund LEAD Maryland program to continue to provide agricultural leaders to advance agriculture in Maryland.	196
1. Continue funding MAEF as a vehicle to increase agricultural education in the K-12 school system.	186
2. Develop and implement a public relations campaign promoting the benefits of Maryland agriculture.	179
4. Encourage MHAA to fund projects that promote and present the historic agricultural focus of Maryland.	29

Issue 3c: Support and Encourage the Next Generation of Farmers

2. Support reduced capital gains tax rates for land sold to young or new farmers.	182
1. Establish and fund the "next generation land acquisition" effort through MARBIDCO.	163
4. Promote agriculture as a viable career opportunity and lifestyle.	121
3. Incorporate the CBFED as described under the section titled "Provide education and assistance for farmers" (p. 37).	111

APPENDIX VII

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

At the conclusion of the Governor's Forum, participants were asked to move beyond the day-to-day activities of agriculture to identify possible issues for Maryland agriculture. Based on the unexpected disruptions and opportunities wrought by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, forum participants were challenged to identify what Maryland might unexpectedly experience — and hence, should be preparing for. The goal was to both ensure that the strategic plan was comprehensive in its issue coverage and to take advantage of the insights represented by the more than 300 people who participated in the plan review that day.

Although originally framed as potential threats and opportunities, one person's perceived threat was another's equally positive opportunity. What follows is a brief summary of possible situations that could be factors in Maryland's agricultural future, if the state is not prepared in advance to address them.

Farm-based Catastrophe - Maryland agricultural enterprises including animal agriculture, grain, produce, and processing facilities are perceived at risk for bioterrorist attacks, including seed modification. Preventing entry of new pests, especially through ports, was seen as crucial to future farm sustainability. Participants agreed that an effective, well coordinated, and well publicized emergency plan was needed now to prepare for human- or naturally-caused disasters. The plan must be based on networked systems that can analyze threats, spread alerts as appropriate while preventing panic and over reaction, but not be vulnerable to power outages or disrupted cell phone service.

In addition, the plan needs to insure farmers are educated about how an emergency plan will be implemented, and their role in it. It was also suggested that regional "safe" farms in Maryland be identified to serve as short-term hosts for displaced but healthy stock, especially breeding animal. It was noted that Homeland Security grant funds were already supporting local agricultural Emergency Response Teams in Maryland, and that four-day USDA training courses in Food Security were also being offered. Building public understanding about farmers' need to protect the land and farm crops by limiting access was also encouraged.

Avian Flu – Sustaining the poultry industry in Maryland means preparing now for avian influenza through vaccination. The University of Maryland is a key player in ensuring effective preparations. Acknowledging that the poultry industry is also a primary purchaser of Maryland-grown grain, a variety of other strategies was offered to maintain poultry as a viable part of the Eastern Shore agricultural community. The need for education – of farmers, the legislature, and the public regarding the value of agriculture, especially animal agriculture — was also reinforced.

Water – Participants called for agricultural water policy that would create systems now to prevent fighting between neighbors in times of drought. Effective well head protection systems were also called for. The need for adequate science was also cited, to identify the size and vitality of aquifers or sources of pollutants. Assessing water quality relationships relative to septic systems was offered as an example, with a recommendation to look at European systems

as an alternative. Protecting ground and surface water cannot equate to “no farming” decisions; finding a balance was seen as key, such as encouraging water impoundments while acknowledging and supporting environmental protection. Support of local consumer products, such as strawberries and fresh corn, were seen as an avenue for building support for new water policies.

On a related note, coastal protection from rising water levels was also seen as an emerging issue, especially as it related to rice and other coastal crop viability. It was suggested that the Netherlands be looked at as a model for maintaining desired water levels on agricultural lands.

Wine – The Maryland wine industry was a topic of high interest given early 2006 decisions by the Maryland Comptroller’s Office regarding the distribution of wine. Noting that neighboring states have the same problem, a coordinated campaign to build public, legislative, and government agency support, local to state-level, was encouraged. Washington State’s approach was offered as a model solution. Daily wine and cheese farmer’s markets at metro stops were another suggestion.

New Products – Many participants saw opportunities for new products, and called for support of visionary researchers and increased agricultural research funding, linked to biotechnology and other pursuits, at both universities and private institutions. Creating and sustaining needed infrastructure, from processing facilities to market access, was seen as key.

The emerging market for bio-based energy products was seen as a major opportunity for Maryland agriculture, but one that could be lost if subsidies were put in place before research on the optimal fuel crops was completed. Not using bio fuels risks staying subject to the whims and availability of petroleum based fuels. Given proximity to markets, tax breaks and other incentives were encouraged for positioning Maryland as a leader in bio-product production, both agricultural and forest-based. Lowering costs through improved energy conservation education was also encouraged.

Shifting Allies – The changing focus and policies of environmental organizations were also seen as opportunities for agriculture to the extent that sustaining Maryland agriculture and agricultural lands are common goals. Some questioned whether the perceived changes were accurate, and feared a return to the long held misrepresentation of farmers as threats to the environment. Keeping open lines of communication was encouraged, along with continued education through programs like LEAD Maryland and ongoing dialogue with policy makers. Expanding annual agricultural recognition dinners to include environmental achievements was also suggested.