

# SUMMARY OF GICA SURVEY RESULTS

## Summary of Respondents

- 79 Responses (not all respondents answered all questions).
- 19 counties and Baltimore City.
- Types of Operations: Equine, agritourism, fruit/vegetable, organic, Corn, livestock, dairy, hay, orchard, forestry, vineyard, hops, poultry, honey, eggs.

## Questions

### How is your operation defined in the county?

Most said “agriculture” or “farm” or was very specific to type of operation but it was not consistent.

### Are you familiar with county requirements for your operation?

Yes: 61                      No: 8

### What is your source of information (people gave more than one example)?

County Extension Agent      24      County Government offices      22  
Agriculture Marketing Professional (AMP) 17      Friends and Colleagues, Associations 9  
Online/Self      3      Consultants      3      SCD      2      State Government 2

### If you have an AMP in your county do you contact them for assistance with zoning/health regs?

Yes      23                      No 34

### If there is no AMP in the county, do you know who to contact about regulations before proceeding with any activities:

Yes      43      No      23

### Describe any issue you have had with zoning/permitting issues (comments were general):

- Issues with neighbors – neighbors are favored over farmers.
- Urban agriculture undefined – issues with permits.
- Lack of understanding of agriculture/no relationship with county officials.
- Too much bureaucracy/fees – permits and requirements are cost prohibitive.
- Stormwater regulations.
- County health department rules for selling USDA inspected meat are different.
- Health permits pertaining to serving foods (vineyard).
- Would like to see MOU between states for on-farm poultry rabbit slaughter.
- State health dept seems to work against you and continue to changes the rules. Local health departments misinterpret state law/regulations.
- Poor interagency communication.
- Confusion about ADA bathroom requirements (portable vs permanent – information is not consistent by county).
- Sampling license is taking too long to implement in the county.

- Some regulations aren't good for the new faces of agriculture – sustainable farms in more urban areas.
- County officials just say no if the issue is too complicated for them.
- State regulations for on-farm processing and agricultural activities for encouragement of localized farmers market activities conflict with county regulations.
- State has too much of a hold on local zoning regulations.
- Environmental issues that are mandated at the state level are a one size fits all.

**If you believe you were unjustly turned down for a permit or were required to meet, in your opinion, unnecessary requirements, did you know how to appeal the decision?**

Yes 14      No 30

**What is the appeals process for zoning/planning (answers were more specific and individual)**

Examples of responses

- I was told by planning and zoning that I could not appeal because their closed door hearing decision was binding and could not be reversed or appealed. My legal counsel advised me not to pursue the issue as I was sure to lose.
- Had to run around Towson and go to a bunch of offices with my plans.
- It doesn't really matter – appeals take time and money away from me – (Carroll) Board of zoning appeals.
- The county has a board of appeals commission but was told that this is a state regulation and the county must follow it (Stormwater regulations)
- I have been told several times that portable toilets are a state regulation (ADA) but county says state does not allow them at permanent facilities.
- We can't even find a correct person to tell us what the requirements are.
- Go through the hearing examiner in a public hearing.
- County Planning Board of Appeals but process is expensive.
- You can request a zoning variance but expensive and time consuming.
- You need to know the ropes and people. Some people just refuse to learn this though.
- Planning and Zoning or a variance.
- No appeal process for zoning changes when impacts more than one individual.
- Do not have the time or finances to pursue appeals.
- Ag commission, go to planning and zoning with business plan.

**Please describe any changes/additions to your operation that were required by the county health dept (answers were very specific)**

- Products sold had to come from my own farm (not clear what this was referring to).
- Numerous memorandums that had a fee attached to them concerning soil erosion – this occurred with a project that officially was too small to need any additional studies or permits done.
- Health dept issued requirements to install well for water, restroom and septic system in order to get a license to open and operate farm store. Cost prohibitive. Appealed and resolved.

- If I retain ownership in my swine after processing I would have to get an on-farm processing license every year and be inspected just to store and sell the meat. Also, determining which water source to use for on-farm slaughter was important.
- Health dept is doing a good job chasing out businesses. We are “over paperworked.”
- Want to expand food service for fall festival but figuring out who to call is the hardest part.
- Requirements for sampling of raw fruit at a farmers market are the same for a restaurant.
- Processing value added foods – had to rent a church kitchen and obtain processing license at that facility. Not profitable at all.
- Told to upgrade septic system for migrant camp – just updated 10 yrs ago.
- BAT Requirements.
- Took over two years to get one septic site approved on 3.3 acre parcel. County does not follow state rules/criteria.

**Please describe a situation where the county was helpful with a zoning/permitting health requirement:**

- Prince George’s SCD is always helpful.
- The Office of Sustainability helped us appeal the high tunnel building requirements.
- Never – want farmers to prosper? Have less regulation and stay out of our way!
- Water tests are relatively easy and painless to perform.
- Thankful to have Colby Ferguson. Did a great job connecting us with the county.
- Our extension office and county economic development office helps people figure out these things.
- In general Harford county planning and zoning are reasonable people. County health not so much.
- The ag specialist at the Howard County EDA has helped us on various issues.
- If not for our AMP we would be in real trouble.
- Farm buildings are on a simplified form and there is a very straightforward process.
- They have not been helpful in the least. Very harmful, unpleasant experience.
- Some understand there is a problem with the process but they are not the ones who can make a change.