

Maryland Agriculture Balancing Competing Priorities

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- 1. Economics**
- 2. Health and Safety**
- 3. The Environment**
- 4. The Needs of the Future**

Competing Priorities

- Agriculture and aquaculture are major components of the Maryland economy.
- The source of jobs and family livelihood.
- A set of historic lifestyles worth protecting.
- The economic and social foundation for many rural communities.

1. Economics

- We must ensure the safety of our food supply.
- We must protect human health and safety – on the job and in the general community.
 - Obesity and food-related disorders are a growing concern.
- We must ensure reliable access to good, nutritious food for all residents.
 - Hunger persists in some parts of Maryland.
 - There is lack of adequate access in many areas – “food desserts.”

2. Health and Safety

- Pressure on our natural resources is growing from multiple directions.
- We face declining aquaculture stocks.
- Pollution continues and the Bay's health is not fundamentally improving.
- There is growing pressure on water supplies.
- There are competing economic interests when it comes to land use – recreation, housing, agriculture.

3. Protecting the Environment

- We need to preserve limited natural resources for future needs.
- We need to preserve our agricultural capacity.
- We are likely to face increasing concentrations of power, wealth and corporate control that will reduce options.
- We face “transition” problems and the need to educate, motivate and involve our young.

4. The Future – The “Normal” Course

- Rising sea levels and sinking land will reduce our options in the future.
- Weather changes will continue to have an impact.
- Population dislocation is likely if there is sea level rise and loss of land.
- We may face problems with infrastructure reliability – transportation networks, energy supply, water.
- Fewer resources, but more demand for action.

5. The Future – “Worst Case” Scenario

Part 2

Ideas for Action

1. Improving Market Access for Maryland Agriculture

- What are the real world obstacles to increased market share for Maryland agriculture (and aquaculture)?
 - Market structure, market access, financing, timing, government regulation, etc.
- What can be done to overcome the obstacles?
 - By government – local, state, federal
 - By private sector initiative
 - Through public-private partnerships
- Who needs to be involved in the discussion?

Items for Discussion

- How do all the factors differ between small, medium and large agricultural producers?
- And different kinds of agricultural markets?
 - Wholesale
 - Retail
 - Institutional
 - Processors
- What does the research and data tell us?
 - Where can we find it?
 - Sources for additional research

A Differentiated Strategy

- Small and medium producers face problems with:
 - Access to the markets
 - Marketing of products
 - Scale and volume requirements
 - Transportation
 - Storage
 - Nature of the products needed
 - Timing and availability of products
 - The need for processing or pre-processing

Lessons from “Farm to School”

- What are we already doing?
- Who is doing what?
- What have been the results?
- What is being done in other areas?
- What can we duplicate?
- What new approaches can we take?
- Who can we call upon for help?

What We Need to Know?

2. Improving Consumer Access to Good (Maryland) Food Products

- Areas where consumers do not have ready access to good, nutritional food are now being labeled as “food desserts.”
- They exist in both urban and rural areas.
- They contribute to the growing problem of obesity and health-related problems because they limit access to good food and push people to less healthy food options.

“Food Desserts”

- Identifying and stimulating new sources for food.
 - Farmer's markets
 - Cooperatives and group buying
 - Specialty outlets
- Reprogramming existing markets.
 - Neighborhood markets
 - Convenience stores
- Encouraging new commercial markets.
 - Why are they not there now?
 - What can be done to bring them to new locations?

Strategies to “Water the Desserts”

3. Educating Our Children About Food, Farming and Nutrition

- Food and agriculture are not adequately presented in most school curriculums.
- Increasing student awareness about food and food-related issues, including agriculture, should be a key part of any program.
- To be effective, it must be a part of the required curriculum – the body of learning that is taught and tested.

A Food and Ag Curriculum

- To be effective, a food and ag curriculum must be more than an “academic” exercise.
- There must be hands-on involvement.
 - School and community gardens
 - Site visits to real farms and food processors
 - Meaningful learning experiences
- Internships and cooperative learning experiences.
- An issue for the State Board of Education and local Boards.

More than Academic

**Do what you can.
Where you are.
With what you have.**

- Theodore Roosevelt