

**Understanding and Responding  
to the  
Changing Face of Maryland Agriculture**

**A Resource for Local Communities**

**Outline**

**Exec Summary**

Maryland's agricultural producers have a long and proud history in the State of Maryland, due to such advantages as ideal soil and climate conditions and access to large population centers on the east coast. Historians in fact refer to the Mid-Atlantic region as the "breadbasket of the revolution" due to the foodstuffs that local farmers produced to supply the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Today, roughly 1/3 of Maryland is made up of farmland and the State has some of the most productive farms nationwide, with one of the highest dollar amounts yielded per acre of farmland in the country.

Although still a leading economic sector in Maryland, over the past several decades the face of Maryland Agriculture has changed drastically, leaving farmers, communities, and local officials to face new and difficult challenges that are often exacerbated by a lack of understanding amongst stakeholders. Without clear communication, comprehension, and collaboration amongst stakeholders regarding the emerging issues surrounding Maryland agriculture, conflict may arise with community cohesiveness and economic productivity suffering as a result.

This toolkit is an attempt to provide local officials with a basic understanding of the current state of Maryland agriculture and to suggest tools, methods, and resources that will help farmers, their neighbors, and local officials to better work together towards creating communities that support both profitable agricultural production and a high quality of life. The toolkit attempts to compile in one document the variety of resources and information available to communities according to the pertinent topic affecting Maryland agriculture. Although each contact listed may not have all of the answers, they can direct communities to those who do, or provide guidance which may help communities to find their own solutions.

## **Current Major Issues Facing Agricultural Producers**

(Brief summary of the major constraints on producers)

-2010 Listening Session Survey Results

### **Environmental Regulations**

- Programs, Trends
- MDA contact info
- Soil Conservation District Info
- Environmental Regs Guide Attached

### **Loss of Farmland**

- Conflicts w/ Neighbors
- Higher Costs for Farmers

### **Availability of Labor**

- H-2A Visa Program

For more information, please visit the U.S. Department of Labor at

<http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/h-2a.cfm>, or the Agricultural Employers and Workers section at the Maryland Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation at <http://www.dllr.md.gov/employment/agempworker.shtml>.

- Workforce Housing

For more information on OSHA's temporary labor housing standards, please visit:

[http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show\\_document?p\\_table=standards&p\\_id=9791](http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=standards&p_id=9791)

- State Fire Marshall Contact Info

### **Energy Costs**

### **Commodity Pricing**

- Share of Food Dollar
- Farmers as "Price Takers"
- Controlling Input Costs

### **The Requirements for Efficiency**

- The Characteristics of Competitors
- The New Form of Efficiency in Maryland

### **Maryland's Lost Agricultural Sectors**

- why lost
- Tobacco
- Swine

## **Farmer Responses to Constraints**

(will provide a summary of each w/ the rationale for each)

### **Diversification**

- Infrastructure Changes

- Agritourism
- Niche Production

#### On-Farm Processing

#### Direct Marketing

#### Second Jobs

#### Sale of Land

#### Providing Agricultural Services

#### Energy Production

#### Workforce Housing

### **Tools for Problem Solving**

(policy suggestions and resources)

#### Support Value-Added Operations

- Potential For Growth
- An Economic Opportunity

#### Facilitating Value-Added Operations

- Roles, Processes, Timelines
- State Agency Ombudsmen
- Agricultural Marketing Specialists (AMPs)

See Exhibit C for the contact information for each County's AMP.

- Resources for Value-Added Operations
  - For more information on value-added operation, please visit the [University of Maryland's Rural Enterprise Development Center](http://mredc.umd.edu/) at <http://mredc.umd.edu/>.
  - The [University of Maryland's Extension](http://extension.umd.edu/) also provides information and training regarding value-added operation, and has offices in every county. Please visit <http://extension.umd.edu/>
  - Maryland Department of Agriculture, Marketing Services  
410-841-5770
  - Maryland Dept of Business and Economic Development

#### Ensuring Food Safety

- Existing Requirements

For more information please see Exhibit D, which lists requirements for on-farm food processors as they pertain to particular food processing activities.

- Sources of Confusion
- Achieving Food Safety
- Resources for Food Safety
  - [Exhibit B](#) lists the specific licensing requirements for federal and state requirements for on-farm food processors as they pertain to particular food processing activities.
  - The [University of Maryland's Rural Enterprise Development Center](http://mredc.umd.edu/rootFoodProcessing.html) (<http://mredc.umd.edu/rootFoodProcessing.html>) provides information related to on-farm food processing in Maryland that will be valuable to local officials and farmers alike.
  - Links to other orgs (USDA, FDA, GMA, etc.)
  - Contact info for DHMH Ag ombudsman (<http://cha.maryland.gov/ofpchs/>)
  - MDA Contact Info
  - For questions about what other county health department are doing regarding food safety, please see Exhibit C, which lists the contact information for each local health department.

#### Navigating Business Regulations

- Labor
- Industry/Business regs
- Unemployment
- Maryland Dept of Labor, Licensing, and Regulations contact info

#### Avoiding Land Use Conflicts Amongst Neighbors

- Reverse Setbacks
- Characteristic Based Land Development
- Realtor disclosure to potential homeowners
- Facilitated Meetings
- Mediation
  - right to mediation with zoning appeals
  - contact info for MDA's Conflict Resolution Service
- Outreach and Education
- Right to Farm Law
  - what State law does, is there a need to reexamine county RTF laws
  - Link to RTF brochure
- Resources for Land Use Conflicts
  - County Land Uses Survey
  - County Planning Offices Contact Info

#### Preserving Farmland and Agricultural Jobs

- Help w/ meeting environmental requirements
- Agricultural Enterprise Zones
- Incentives for Preserving Farmland
  - Explanation of MALPF, Program Open Space, Rural Legacy, MD Environmental Trust, etc.
  - Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs)

- Resources for Preserving Farms and Ag Jobs
  - UMD Extension, USDA's FSA, Farm Bureau, etc.

### **Coordinating With Other Planning Efforts**

(the need for a cohesive process)

- 12 visions from Article 66B (State Planning Article)
- Working with MDP To coordinate vision (comprehensive strategic plan underway)
  - Reporting requirements by July 2011
  - Ag Land Preservation/Smart Growth
  - State and county Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plans
  - MDP Contact Info
- Capitalizing on MALPF efforts
- Working with Other Counties
  - County Offices Contact Info

### **Conclusion**

(Summary Paragraph)