



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Kevin M. Atticks, Secretary
Steven A. Connelly, Deputy Secretary

Maryland Agricultural Commission

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry
mda.maryland.gov

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MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Minutes

June 11th, 2025

Location: 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis MD 21401

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83578378249?pwd=IYwslt3x57cy6bltL3JUclQMs2tsu.1>

Meeting ID: 835 7837 8249 Passcode: 018187

Present:

Dr. Melissa Welsh
Frank Allnutt
Raj Kathuria
Amy Crone, Vice Chair
Ann Merryman
Paula Linthicum
Chris Rhodes
Nikita Bocharov
Sean Hough
Kelly Lewis, Chair
Emma Jagoz
Zach Evans
Dr. Marianne Bailey

Absent:

Janna Howley
Johnny Shockley
Kellie Hinkle
Stefanie Reiser
Hunter Pusey
Levi Sellers
John Murphy
Richard Stonebreaker
Gordon Kretser
Dr. Darren Jarboe
Russel Shlagel
Rachel Lipman

MDA Senior Staff:

Sec. Kevin Atticks
Steve Connelly
Jessica Hackett

Hans Schmidt
Cassie Shirk
Martin Proulx

Guests:

Jenell Eck McHenry, MD YFAB
Matthew Scales, MDA
Charlotte Davis, Rural Maryland Council
Anne Litz, Maryland Horse Industry Board
Allison Bredder, NASA
Jonathan Cribbs, Delmarva Farmer
Michael Maddox, ESSIC
Kara Mobley, UMD
Michael Humber, UMD-NASA

Susanne Richards, MAEF
Allison Roe, MARBIDCO
Alisha Mulkey, MDA
Katie Stevens, Frederick County Office of
Agriculture
Jacquelyn Slade, MDA Intern
Steve McHenry, MARBIDCO
Kelsey Keadle, Washington County
Agriculture
Annika LeFave, FSRC
Nadya Chehab, MDA

Call to Order:

The June 2025 Maryland Agricultural Commission meeting was called to order by Kelly Lewis, Chair, at 10:07 am.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the March 2025 meeting minutes was made by Frank Allnut second by Sean Hough.

Presentations:

- **Dr. Alfredo Ruiz- Barradas, Maryland State Climatologist, University of Maryland Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Science**
 - **Frank Allnut motioned that the Maryland Agricultural Commission support the State Climatologist's efforts in agriculture by serving as a representative body of the industry and making recommendations to benefit Maryland agriculture, Paula Linthicum second the motion, all were in favor.**

Committee Reports:

Farm Profitability & Sustainability Committee – Emma Jagoz, Chair:

- Emma kicked off the meeting with discussions around impending federal contract cuts, tariffs, input costs, and changing operational costs. Sean highlighted the volume of imported feed, fertilizer and fuels and the impact that tariffs will have on agricultural producers as spring planting is kicking off. Amy added that many farmers markets receive federal support for operations and support through programs like the Farmers Market Nutrition Program through the Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) program. The farm based alcohol producers, as represented by Janna Howley, are facing increased costs through tariffs on production materials like bottles, tanks, aluminum, etc., but are hopeful of an increased demand for local products as imports become more expensive. Cuts to the federal workforce will have a larger impact on Maryland and Virginia than other states given the proximity to Washington D.C. and the federal buildings in the DMV, which concern direct-to-consumer markets. However, Russell mentioned, there needs to a stronger push for regional grocery stores, retail establishments, and restaurants to engage more with Maryland farmers as they began to do pre-pandemic. Consumers should be aware of where their food comes from, remembering that local food is tariff free. One method that Emma is pursuing is creating yard signs for consumers to display that identifies “this home supports local farms” that builds pride in buying local and supporting farmers.
- Institutional purchasing continues to be an opportunity for farmers in Maryland, and increased efforts from the Maryland State Department of Education and the Department of General Services to build a Local Food Exchange platform should help facilitate that opportunity for farmers across the state in various scales of production. Emma expressed concern with the buildout of the actual platform, citing that the actual usage must be

extremely farmer friendly to encourage participation. Maryland is a challenging state to navigate due to its geographical shape and transportation network, and many jurisdictions have more access to local produce in Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia instead of Maryland. Increasing opportunities to support aggregators will support farmers' success in the Local Food Exchange program and beyond.

- **Amy Crone moved that the Commission submits a recommendation to State agencies, as they pursue local food procurement and agricultural initiatives, that they involve the Maryland Agricultural Commission serve as a liaison to the agricultural industry and sure that programming has a farmer focus. Emma seconded the motion; all were in favor.**
 - Amy Crone brought this motion to the full Commission, Sean Hough second the motion. All were in favor. Kelly Lewis will bring this to the Governor's Intergovernmental Commission on Agriculture as the Maryland Agricultural Commission's representative.
- During the March Commission meeting, Secretary Atticks requested the Maryland Ag Commission define regenerative agriculture. Emma recommended the creation of a workgroup with partners to establish a statewide definition throughout the summer, leveraging both internal and external partners.

Legislative Affairs Committee – Paula Linthicum, Chair:

- The Legislative Affairs Committee did not hold an official meeting because it did not have enough members for quorum.
- Agenda items to discuss were Food System Resilience Council Recommendations and Regulations Negatively/Impediments Impacting New & Beginning Farmers. It is anticipated those items will be discussed at the next Committee meeting.
- Attendees Emma Jagoz, Paula Linthicum, and Harrison Palmer informally discussed concern about low Committee member attendance and the Committee's Mission & Operations with respect to meeting frequency and the Committee's role throughout the year. The consensus was that the Committee's work is closely tied to the Legislative Session just prior to and during. Outside that timeframe, meeting as discussion items arise relating to local/state regulation or legal code/zoning statutes seems to be most productive and beneficial to the Commission.
- Legislative Affairs Committee - A combination of the originally adopted Agricultural Policy and Advocacy Committee & Regulatory Reform and Oversight Committee. Responsible for monitoring local and state regulation that impacts agriculture, identifying shortcomings in existing legal code or zoning statutes where MDA could act, and discussing potential action of the Commission in support or opposition of bills. Works closely with MDA's Director of Legislative Affairs, Rachel Jones.

Value Added Agriculture Committee – Amy Crone, Chair:

- Joe Milone, Agricultural Programs Specialist with the Maryland Department of Commerce, presented to the Committee about the role that Commerce plays with Value Added Agriculture. As the liaison for the agricultural industry to the Department of Commerce, Joe's role is to help connect new and existing businesses with opportunities for growth, promote emerging food system technologies, and support innovation in agriculture, aquaculture, food and forestry sectors.
- The Committee continued to highlight the need for the Department of Agriculture to set a statewide definition for agriculture, regenerative agriculture, value added, and other agriculturally related terms. Definitions that are adopted and recognized by the agricultural industry will help steer other sectors in State government to recognizing the evolving and growing industry. Kellie Hinkle agreed to start compiling county definitions of agriculture and support background research.
- As the Committee discussed opportunities to collaborate with agriculturally adjacent groups, compiling resource documents of food packers and processors became a highlight of discussion, recognizing that aggregation and processing is a critical need to support value added agricultural production and growth.

Committee on Watershed Strategies – Gordon Kretser, Chair:

- Dr. Audra Hinson, UDSA ARS, presented to the Committee on soybean pollination ecosystem services and the impact that pollinator habitat has on soybeans. Dana Ashford-Kornburger, USDA NRCS, presented to the Committee on agrivoltaics and NRCS guidance documents published for farmers and agrivoltaics operations in the country. The Committee discussed opportunities for the incorporation of agriculture in solar installations and emphasized the significant impact on pollinators in agriculture, highlighting the need for native grasses and true pollinator habitat to be incorporated into plantings on new installation of solar projects.

Committee on Agricultural Literacy & Education – Richard Stonebraker, Chair:

- The Committee reviewed recommendations from the Maryland Farm Bureau Agricultural Education Committee (MDFB), Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF), and Maryland Agricultural Teachers Association (MATA), on the development of an agricultural education specialist role at the Maryland Department of Agriculture as recommended by the Commission in a meeting during the Fall of 2024. Throughout the discussion, members highlighted the need to have an intergovernmental relationship between agriculture and education, and a dedicated person to represent the industry throughout the extensive meetings and committees hosted by the Maryland State Department of Education. Dr. Welsh and Richard agreed to review the proposal

submitted by MDFB, MATA and MAEF along with the supplemental proposals to present to the Committee at the next meeting.

- The Committee also discussed the role that apprenticeships and internships play in the current CTE framework, and the challenges in engaging with agricultural operations to host interns with the increased expense and time commitment to their small businesses. Industry Recognized Credentials are less cut-and-dry than industries like welding and carpentry, but are an integral factor for MDSE's consideration in effective programming. The Committee will continue to support MSDE's request for developing and supporting IRC's in the industry.

Commodity Reports:

Ag Education- Dr. Melissa Welsh:

- <https://acsess.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.4195/nse2018.04.0010>
 - The 1st is an industry study that Purdue led a few years ago to determine industry desired knowledge, skill and abilities for precision Ag jobs. I was thinking I could walk the group through this option for us to conduct with our own industry groups.
- <https://www.agcareers.com/track-report-downloads.cfm?ID=128#gsc.tab=0>
 - The second is a newly released national study by AgCareers and provides info from broad agriculture and food related industries on skill concerns at various levels of education.
 - I'm still trying to find out who all they surveyed. It does provide a good talking point for applied classes with integrated soft skill development. I've attached the whole report with this email.
- <https://www.aplu.org/our-work/1-driving-student-success/preparing-students-for-the-workforce-and-post-collegiate-success/employability-skills-in-agriculture/>
 - The third is a link to the APLU (Association of Public and Land Grant Universities). Several studies are listed here in relation to the Employability skills in Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Comparative Analysis of soft skills across industry groups is being conducted again- currently- last done in 2011. It was a huge study.

Agribusiness- Vacant:

Agritourism – Janna Howley:

- No report.

Aquaculture - Johnny Shockley:

- No report.

At-Large Agricultural Services – Frank Allnutt:

- No report.

At-Large Agricultural Services – Stefanie Reiser:

- **No report.**

Bio-Fuel - Rajneesh Kathuria:

- The Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition established the Maryland Biofuels Task Force to facilitate the state's attainment of the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 objectives, mandating a 60% greenhouse gas emission reduction from 2006 levels by 2031 and net-zero emissions by 2045.
 - This initiative follows preliminary research highlighting the potential economic and environmental advantages of increased biofuel blends for the state. Research suggests biofuels could stimulate Maryland's economy via agricultural processing, potentially mitigating the state's \$3 billion budget deficit.
 - The coalition posits that bolstering agricultural markets could enhance food security, stabilize prices, and prevent increased carbon emissions from land-use changes. One research indicates that the current biofuel supply already saves Maryland drivers approximately \$569 million annually, roughly 20 cents per gallon.
 - Utilizing higher biofuel blends could reduce carbon emissions by 3.2 million metric tons annually—equivalent to removing nearly 800,000 vehicles from the roads—contributing significantly to the state's climate goals.

Consumer – Kellie Hinkle:

- No report.

Dairy I – Vacant:

Dairy II- Vacant:

Direct Farm Market - Amy Crone:

- Farm stands and farmers markets are opening for the season. Full list of farmers market openings can be found [here](#).
- Governor's Buy Local Picnic has been changed to 7/16
- [Buy Local Challenge](#) is 7/17-27, and SMADC is hosting their annual Buy Local Event on 7/28 at Tettimer's Produce
- National Farmers Market Week is set for 8/3-9, 2025
- Applications open for direct-marketing farmers:
 - MDA's [Farmers Market Nutrition program](#)
 - SMADC's [Maryland Market Money program](#) for the 2025 season.
 - [MarketLink](#) assistance and equipment for SNAP acceptance.
- Ongoing challenges for this sector: weather, processing dates, labor

Equine (Horse Breeding) - Ann Merryman:

- Plans are proceeding to rebuild Pimlico
- MTROA (the nonprofit authority managing racing) has finalized plans for Shamrock Farm in Carrol County to be the training center to compliment Pimlico
- Reconstruction of Pimlico will start immediately after the running of the 150th Preakness
- Baltimore city is planning to incorporate a weeklong festival around the Preakness

Farm Bureau - Paula Linthicum:

- Maryland Farm Bureau President Jamie Raley and Executive Director Parker Welch recently met with Representatives Andy Harris and April McClain Delaney to discuss Make American Healthy Again and stress the importance that decisions made concerning pesticides and residual pesticide levels in food are based on sound science.
 - President Raley asked both Representatives for assistance in amending a USDA's Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program. The program is administered in Maryland by MARBIDCO as the Maryland Livestock Processing Loan Fund. The program offers loans to eligible applicants to help start-up or expand small-and-medium-sized USDA-inspected facilities in Maryland to increase the processing of meat, poultry, and blue catfish. The problem that applicants are sharing with President Raley that operations for livestock processing have to be both a slaughter and butcher operation to be eligible. Small custom cut operations that are working toward being USDA certified don't want or need to slaughter and fabricate (butcher). To do so necessitates they purchase equipment to incinerate or compost the waste products from the animals, which creates an added financial burden on them.
 - For example, in Southern Maryland there is an Amish USDA approved slaughter facility. The facility does not fabricate the carcass. Local custom-cut operations can pick up the carcass from the Amish and fabricate it per the customers instructions at their sites. However, the fabricators cannot apply for the loan to upgrade to a USDA approved site because they can't afford the incinerate-compost equipment. President Raley shared with both Representatives that this scenario is probably happening in other parts of the country, potentially impeding the ability of farmers and small to medium sized fabricators to get local meat directly to consumers.
 - Both Representatives Harris and McClain Delaney indicated that they would explore this issue with Dept. of Agriculture staff and, hopefully, devise a solution.
- **Agriculture Education:**
 - Committee Chair Barb Glenn glennbarb6@gmail.com & MDFB Staff member Kendall Abruzzese kabruzzo@marylandfb.org
- **The committee held their Q2 meeting on May 8 2025.**
 - Maryland State 4-H director Dr. Jeff Howard gave an update. MDFB has an MOU with 4-H and is proud to partner with 4-H via MDFB Next Generation Summit, Ag Ambassador program, and Young Farmer program. More to do on careers for future agriculturalists.
 - MDFB continues to advocate for ag education within the emerging Blueprint for Maryland's Future in a coalition with MAEF and MATA. The Committee has communicated with Secretary Attick and the Maryland Ag Commission Committee on Ag Literacy and Education Committee (CALE). We will continue to provide strong support for MDA's future involvement in ag education in Maryland via collaboration with CALE. We are excited that Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks is taking on a leadership role on ag education.
 - Industry recognized credentials (IRCs) are a significant part of the Blueprint. We have recently advised the Board on a future partnership with **Agriculture Education Services & Technology, Inc. (AEST)**, a Florida Farm Bureau

subsidiary, who is supplying the agriculture industry with a certified workforce, stepping up to the needs of the agricultural industry.

- The Board has asked us to review our education and extension relationships with UMD and UME, as preparations are underway for the hiring of a new dean of the **UMD College of Agriculture and Natural Resources**.

Field Crops – Chris Rhodes:

- What started as a dry spring turned pretty wet in spots.
- There were still plenty of opportunity to get things planted a lot of corn was put in early with hardly any replants. Soybeans did see a little slug pressure this year but nothing like last year.
- There is still some beans left to be planted throughout the state. Overall crops look pretty decent except for later planted corn.
- The wet weather and cool temperatures just took a toll on it. But some sun will help that drastically.
- Barley is now being harvested with wheat to follow most likely next week.

Food Processing – Nikita Bocharov:

- No report.

Forestry – Hunter Pusey:

- **Truck Weight Increase:** After 2 years of effort by AFI, the Moore Administration introduced legislation in 2025 authorizing an increase in Maryland's truck weight laws for hauling farm products – inclusive of timber – from the field to the processors. With help from the farming community, forestry was able to secure enactment, aka Chapter 52, Acts of 2025. Link to this historic legislation:
https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/chapters_noln/Ch_52_sb0203T.pdf
- **Funding the Forestry's Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund (WIF):** § 5-307 of the Natural Resources Article outlines the statutory mission of WIF, aka DNR's Forest Service's principal funding mechanism. WIF is funded via a statutory mandate secured by AFI -- \$500,000 each fiscal year – and a portion – up to \$200,000 – of the agricultural land transfer tax imposed when forest land is converted to a non-forestry use. AFI submitted an analysis to the State's Legislative Auditor in November 2024 questioning the methodology by which these dollars to WIF are calculated since WIF has rarely received the \$200,000. On April 24, 2025, the Auditor – officially agreed with AFI – when it released a fiscal compliance of DNR which, among other things, stated the following:
- **Mel Noland Woodland Incentive Fund Finding 5 – DNR did not use available information to ensure the Comptroller of Maryland transferred certain required revenue into the Fund**
- <https://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPblTabPDF/DNR25.pdf>
- **Northern Long Eared Bat (NLEB):** The US Fish & Wildlife Service has designated the NLEB as an “endangered species” thus requiring special efforts to “mitigate and

minimize” the “taking” of the NLEB during forest harvesting operations. What does this mean? IN SHORT, Maryland’s forest products industry, et al, may soon be required to restrict harvesting practices to protect NLEB during its breeding and nesting season. AFI has been working closely with DNR on a plain English explanation of what will be required of the industry. Notably, the Service may likely require a “Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)” – a legally binding document between the applicant and the Service authorized under the federal Endangered Species Act – to “take” the NLEB. Legislation was enacted in 2025 that authorizes DNR to work with impacted stakeholders to develop an HCP:

- https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/chapters_noln/Ch_550_sb0946T.pdf

Hemp- Matthew ‘Levi’ Sellers:

- No report.

Horticulture – Vacant:

Livestock- Sean Hough:

- The U.S. is seeing record pork exports.
- New World Screwworm from Mexico is driving cattle prices up.

Nursery I- J. Kelly Lewis:

- After a slow start to the Spring season for most, the Spring months were busy with many showing sales ahead of 2024. Seemingly regular rains late in the Spring are helping counter the dry start.
- Coming events:
 - 6/24 Stanton Gill Symposium at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center in Ellicott City.
- 7/24 – MNLGA Growers Day at North Creek Nurseries Landenberg, P.
- 9/11 – MNLGA Field Day at Reamelton Farm in Adamstown Md.

Nursery II- John Murphy:

- No report.

Organic Farming – Emma Jagoz:

- Resources
 - [New IPM biocontrol agents available](#): brown lacewing + crazee mite for longer and superior aphid, leaf hopper, mealybug, thrips + whitefly control
 - New free email course - [Communicating with Legislators](#) by the Organic Farming Research Foundation
 - → Understand how Congress makes decisions that affect agriculture.
 - → Craft a compelling story that highlights your experience.
 - → Engage directly with lawmakers through calls, emails, and letters.
 - → Take simple, meaningful action to support organic agriculture.
 - [Conservation + Reduced Tillage in Organic Production Systems](#) - research and findings
 - New Regenerative Ag [Research Repository](#) by the Nutrient Density Alliance

- New [Organic Research Hub](#)
- Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) Impact Report 2024 came out
 - USDA Transition to Organic Partnership Program invests in the capacity of American farmers to meet increasing domestic demand for certified organic food.
 - Today, 82% of American house-holds purchase organic produce and demand for organic continues to rise. In fact, over the past two decades, demand consistently outpaced domestic production capacity. Imported organic ingredients and finished goods fill the gap, with the United States spending an estimated \$8.9 billion on organic imports in 2024, according to research by the Organic Trade Association in 2025.
 - The Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) focuses on opening new horizons for American organic producers. Announced in 2022, TOPP helps U.S. farmers meet the demands of U.S. consumers by providing essential support during the transition process required for certified organic production. As a strategic investment in domestic organic agriculture, TOPP focuses on mentorship, technical assistance, community building, workforce and market development.
- [Beneficial Insect Spotlight](#): an aphid killer!
- National Organic Coalition - hosted a summit a few weeks ago and [here is their meeting minutes](#), including lots of updates and resources on DC policies with regard to organic
- Opportunities
 - [Seven Springs Farm Supply](#) organic farm inputs Cooperative Purchase – order by June 27, pick up July 9 at Moon Valley Farm
 - [Farm AID 40th Anniversary Festival](#) announced Sept 20, 2025 in Minneapolis
- News
 - OMDG + TOPP grants have been reviewed by USDA and are cleared + funding released from the initial freeze in January (as of May 6); though the entire Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) program lost a lot of staff so delays are expected
- Challenges
 - The invasive [Harlequin bug spreads its range](#) and threatens veg grower crops
 - H2A: critical program that keeps getting more expensive every year for farmers; read this article <https://www.thepacker.com/news/industry/growers-say-current-state-h-2a-untenable>
 - Maryland farmers have the added financial burden of required overtime >60 hrs; one of the only states requiring Ag overtime
- Organic Farmer Feedback
 - Red Wiggler Organic Farm (Montgomery County)
 - How are weather conditions affecting your operations? [We were hit by hail already, and lost both green onions and lettuce. This is the 4th time in 5 years we've sustained hail losses.](#)
 - How is your labor situation going? [Pretty good. We have almost completed our seasonal hiring.](#)
 - How is business? Do you have enough demand? [Yes, but we are a Care Farm - so not quite the same thing as for-profit farms.](#)

- Any comments/concerns about organic regulations/standards in general? [The MDA organic team would benefit from more resources to evaluate materials and assist their clients.](#)
- How are USDA cuts/freezes affecting your operations? [Yes, we lost a program called Climate Smart - but we hadn't started the project, so at least we're not in limbo. Also we have a SARE grant that we have still been getting, but feel very nervous about.](#)
- How are tariffs affecting your operation? [Not yet.](#)
- Are there any articles/news relevant to share with the Secretary? [The Food Safety team has been doing a great newsletter and good trainings. We're grateful for them.](#)
- Common Root Farm (Montgomery County)
 - Re labor – H2A on the way soon, and local labor is doing fine. First year with H2A; making the transition as we need more reliable and skilled labor and cannot find it locally
 - Re demand – Plenty of demand. Business is good. Need to raise prices due to inflation, and anticipate that tariffs will affect pricing on our supplies and will need to raise prices.
 - Interested in MDA-led grants to expand local ag, and assistance for young + first generation farmers to purchase land of our own (been farming on leased land for 8 years)

Poultry I- Zach Evans:

- DCA booster barbecue event hosted over 700 attendees.
- Poultry farmers are still in limbo without an official CAFO permit from the EPA.
 - All farms have applied for extensions, which are helpful for existing farmers but new projects are on hold because new permits aren't being processed by MDE.

Poultry II- Vacant:

State Grange- Richard Stonebreaker:

- No report.

Tobacco – Vacant:

Turf- Gordon Kretser:

- No report.

University of Maryland – Dean Craig Beyrouty | Dr. Darren Jarboe:

- No report.

Vegetable – Russell Shlagel:

- No report.

Veterinary – Dr. Marianne B. O'Malley:

- No report.

Viticulture – Rachel Lipman:

- No report.

Young Farmers Advisory Board – Jenell Eck McHenry, Chair:

- The Young Farmers Advisory Board plans to hold a stakeholder event to discuss preliminary results of the Survey on July 16th, with the official release of the survey data and analysis to come this fall.

Maryland Department of Agriculture Staff Updates:

Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations:

- MDA is working on draft regulations to implement new laws that passed during the 2025 legislative session that will go into effect on October 1st.
- MDA is working on draft bills for the 2026 legislative session.
- DCA mentioned that Secretary Rollins is considering allowing hot chicken to be purchased with SNAP benefit dollars, MDA sent a letter of support for this to USDA for consideration.
- 12 Counties in Maryland were declared disaster areas and will be eligible for payments through the Farm Service Agency for disaster payment.

Cassie Shirk, Assistant Secretary of Marketing, Animal Industries and Consumer Services:

- Maryland Market Money is moving to MDA on July 1st from SMADC.
- The Ice Cream Trail is partnering with DNR to support public trails near on-farm ice cream parlors through a new app.
- The summer Eat Like a Marylander campaign has officially kicked off, encouraging Maryland residents to buy local throughout the produce season.
- International marketing events in Peru and Vietnam are opening opportunities to for Maryland farmers to expand into these markets.
- Maryland has been declared HPAI-free since May 30th.
- DNR received a letter from the Maryland General Assembly requesting meetings with stakeholders and elected officials to propose a bill that will address Sunday hunting of deer throughout the state. MDA is partnering with DNR to address crop damage from deer as it is significantly higher in jurisdictions that do not allow Sunday deer hunting.

Hans Schmidt, Assistance Secretary of Resource Conservation:

- Maryland farmers made more progress than any other state in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed plan, Maryland farmers should be proud of their conservation efforts, but the work is not done.
- The 2025 Cover Crop program will be modified to reflect the State budget.
 - 2025 saw the largest cover crop program ever, enrolling nearly 500,000 acres.
 - 2026 is anticipated to be another large year for cover crop.
 - The budget for 2025 was appx. \$32 million, 2026 is \$23 million.
 - The program is working to fulfill the needs of the program with a limited budget.

- The proposed changes were published, then reviewed to match the feedback from soil conservation districts and farmers.
- The updated changes are:
 - A simplified program with streamlined incentives
 - The base rate is reduced to \$35/acre
 - Early planting incentive will be \$15/acre
 - Mixed species cover crops will receive a \$15/acre incentive
 - Fields applied with on-farm manure in the fall are eligible for a \$25 flat rate vs. \$35/acre.
 - There will be a webinar offered on 6/18 elaborating on the agronomic benefits of cover crops.

Michael Calkins, Assistant Secretary of Plant Industries and Pest Management:

- Spotted lanternfly are out in full force
- Mosquito control season is in full swing, including management of midges

Martin Proulx, Value Added Agriculture Specialist:

- The VAA Regulatory Guidance Document for state government is still actively being developed, focusing on the opportunities and challenges for regulating Value Added Agriculture in Maryland in the framework of today, and expanding on future opportunities to navigate the regulatory framework.

Jessica Hackett, Director of Communications:

- Pollinator protection week is upcoming, with statewide support from SHA, DNR, and Extension.

New Business:

- Agricultural Education
 - MSDE is interested in supporting agricultural Career Technical Education programs that have significance to the industry. They are seeking lists of desirable skills, opportunities for apprenticeships, barriers to entry, and top careers in demand.
- Kelly Lewis suggested that the Commission send a letter to MSDE emphasizing the significance of the “soft skills” that are most desirable for agricultural employers, as learned through programs like FFA, and suggest that these be weighed as heavily as job-related skills. This will be workshopped in the Committee for Agricultural Literacy and Education.
- Agriculture and Regenerative Definitions
 - Paula Linthicum moved that the Maryland Agricultural Commission engage with the Agricultural Law Education Initiative at University of Maryland to gather baseline data on statewide definitions of agriculture and pose a definition to MDA for consideration. Sean Hough second the motion, all were in favor.
- Commission Branding and Representation

- The Commission discussed posting each industry representatives email addresses on the MDA website to allow stakeholders to engage with their respective appointed members to bolster feedback.
- Chair/Vice Chair Elections
 - Kelly Lewis nominated Amy Crone to serve as Chair of the Maryland Agricultural Commission, Amy accepted the nomination. Amy Crone nominated Kelly Lewis to serve as Vice Chair, Kelly accepted the nomination. Paula Linthicum second the slate of officers as proposed, all were in favor.

Old Business:

- None.

Public Comment:

- Steve McHenry provided an update from MARBIDCO, recognizing that all programs from the prior fiscal year will continue into the 2026 fiscal year. SMADC and MARBIDCO are collectively providing \$300,000 in grant funding and \$250,000 in loan funding to the St. Mary's cut & wrap processing facility.
- Dave Nemazie provided an UMCES update, highlighting the organizations release of the Chesapeake Bay report card that showcases an upward trend in improvement of Bay health.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:46 pm by Paula Linthicum, second by Sean Hough.

Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary