

2025 Maryland Young Farmers Survey

Insights into the Next Generation of Maryland Agriculture

Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board

Fill out the 2024 Maryland Young Farmers Survey and help shape the Future of Agriculture!

Survey Open to Farmers, Ranchers, and Agricultural Professionals; Ages 18-45
(Completed responses may be entered to win incentives!)

Scan me

Click here for the online survey!
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2024MarylandYoungFarmersSurvey>

2024 MARYLAND YOUNG FARMERS SURVEY SPONSORS



The image displays a promotional banner for the 2024 Maryland Young Farmers Survey. The banner features a green and yellow color scheme with a background of stylized birds and a farmer silhouette. It includes a QR code, a survey link, and a list of sponsors. The sponsors are arranged in a grid and include logos for various organizations such as Willard, RMC, SMAC, Growmark FS, LLC, Pivot Bio, Fulton Bank, Farm Credit, Corvea, and others.





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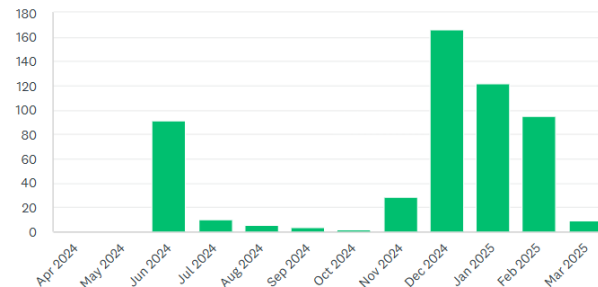
Our Mission

The Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board serves to promote Agriculture as a positive contributor to Maryland's economy, environment, and scenic landscape; and to make recommendations related to economic development and policy issues that will assist young and beginning farmers, and other related businesses in creating and continuing profitable Agriculture throughout the State.



Why Survey?

- **Purpose:** To equip Maryland agricultural service providers, lawmakers, and government agencies with data to support young farmers.
- **Method:**
 - Conceptualized and designed the survey throughout Spring 2024
 - Secured stakeholder involvement and financial support
 - Released Survey in June 2024, leveraged funding for off-season engagement events & promotional incentives (26 cups, 1 cooler)
 - Closed March 2025 with **534 responses**
- **Survey Focus Areas:**
 - Understanding the current landscape and demographics of young farmers, ranchers, and agricultural professionals.
 - Forecasting their greatest upcoming challenges.
 - Recognizing innovative techniques used for market resilience.





Comparative Data

2015 Maryland Young Farmers Survey Summary

Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board

As a result of the 2015 Young Farmers Survey, the Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board was able to draw several strong conclusions about the challenges Maryland young farmers are facing. This summary will highlight the key findings and discuss what it means for Maryland agriculture as a whole. There were 466 young farmers (under 40) sampled for the survey. The majority of the survey participants reside in Maryland, with every county represented, with a few respondents from Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

- ❖ The majority of the respondents were between the ages 23-39 (69%), 42% have at least a bachelor's degree, and an additional 17% had attained higher levels of education (i.e. Master's, Professional, and Doctorate).

In the opening questions of the survey, the results shows that close to 30% of young farmers are first generation farmers and over half have been farming for less than 10 years. Question three also shows that over half of young farmers have less than 10 years of farming experience. Additionally, we can conclude from the responses below regarding a young farmers' source of information, that the most common outlet of education is "other farmers". If existing farmers tend to be the traditional source of education and close to 30% of young and new farmers are coming from backgrounds without this intrinsic knowledge, it presents a unique information gap. The Young Farmers Board sees this as a major need for education about farming practices among the starting population. This need for education presents a unique opportunity to institute the best farm management practices available for new agricultural operations coming online. This could have significant effects regarding cost reduction, production efficiency, and environmental restoration.

- 2005 - The Future of Maryland Agriculture: What is Your Opinion?
 - Handwritten & mailed questionnaire
 - Profitability (Labor availability, liability & insurance, taxes, market access, education, other)
 - Land Use and Management (Availability and Preservation, Planning and Zoning Regs, Right to Farm, Environmental Regs, Water Usage)
 - Value Added, Diversification, Alternative Enterprise Opportunities (Biofuels, processing facilities, agritourism, market access, education)
 - Biosecurity (Animal Health, Input and Pesticide Management, Food Safety, Plant Pests/Disease, Farmer Education)
- 2015 Maryland Young Farmers Survey
 - 40 Questions - 466 farmers
 - Designed to capture a broad range of data for policy decisions

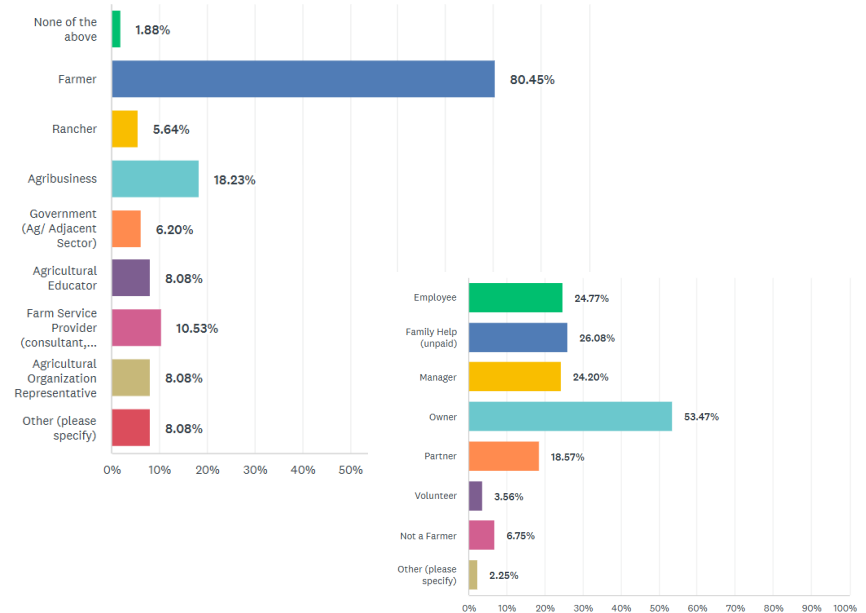


A Snapshot of Maryland Young Farmers

- Driven by Passion [90% identified this as their primary motivation to enter/remain in the industry]
- Facing Hurdles
 - Land Access
 - Capital
 - Income
- Embracing Innovation
 - Technology
 - Conservation
- Optimistic & Ambitious
 - Desire for growth, diversification and efficiency
- NEEDS: Strategic support for a resilient future

A Snapshot of Survey Respondents

- Nearly equal gender split
 - 49% male
 - 48% female
- Predominantly white (90.7%)
- 2022 US Census of Agriculture (MD)
 - 62% Male
 - 37% Female
 - 96.3% white



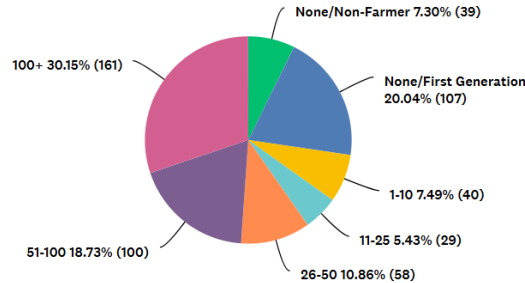
Pathways to Farming

01 — Most young farmers grew up on a farm.

02 — Diverse paths lead to Maryland agriculture.

How many years has your family been farming?

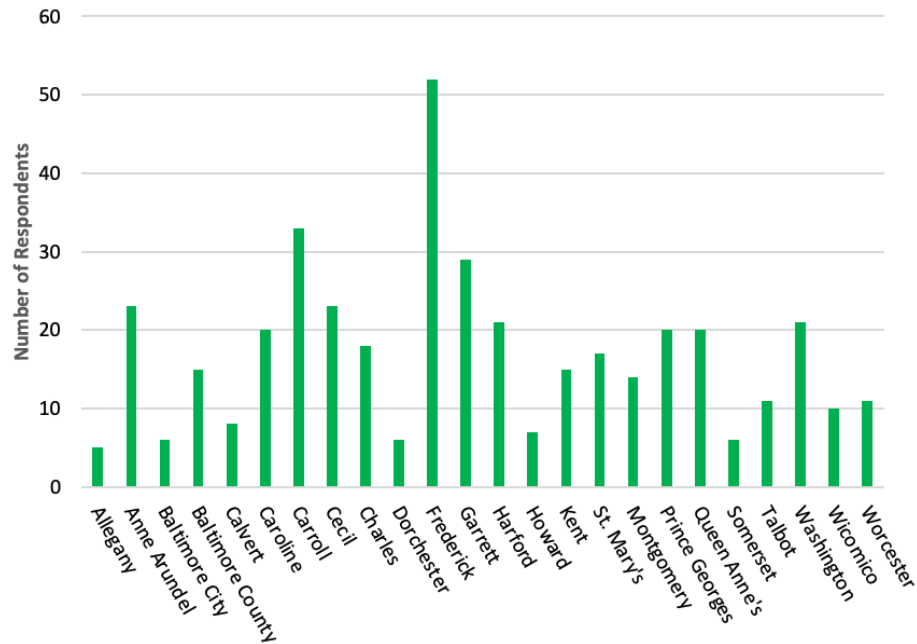
Answered: 534 Skipped: 0



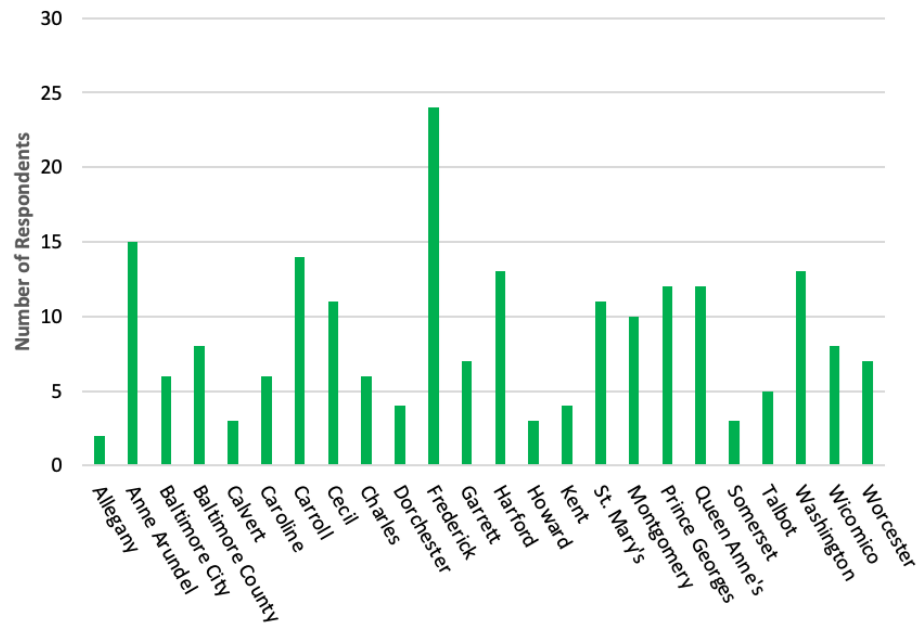
03 — A significant portion are first-generation farmers. (20%)

04 — Many come from long-standing farming families.

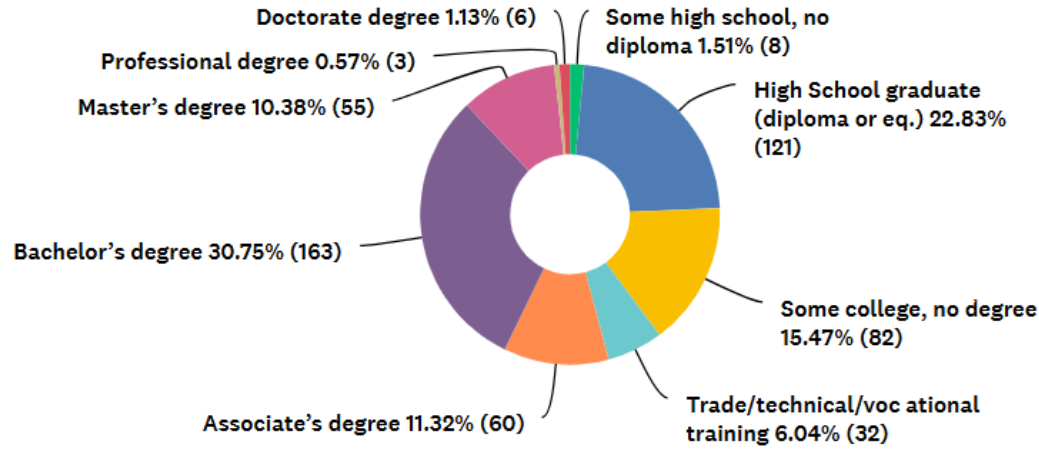
Respondent Location



Location of Respondents with 0-10 years of Experience

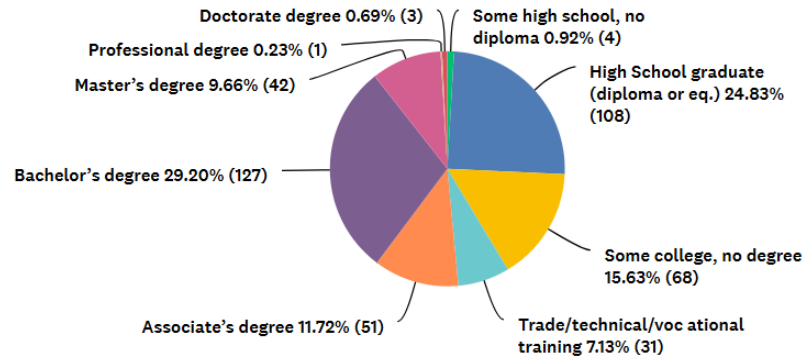


EDUCATION



All Respondents

Answered: 435 Skipped: 3



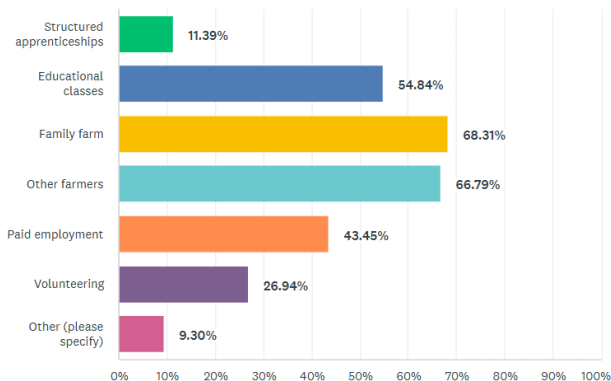
Farmers & Ranchers



Farmer Growth and Development

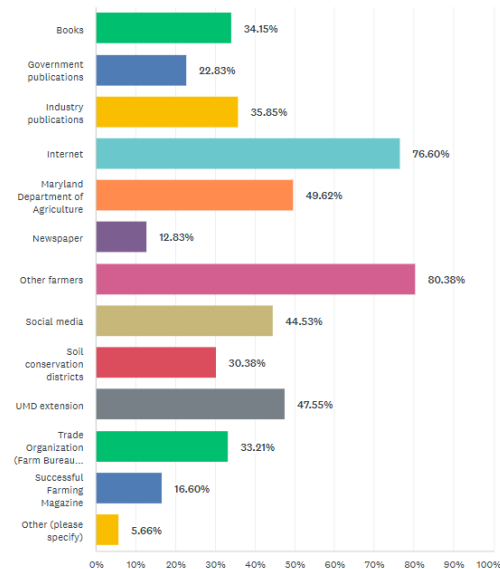
In what ways have you gained farming experience? (Select all that apply):

Answered: 527 Skipped: 7



What sources do you use when you need information regarding farming?
(Select all that apply):

Answered: 530 Skipped: 4





Building the Knowledge Reservoir

Trusted Information

Membership
Affiliations



49.2%

38.4%



21.4%

6.7%



49.6%

47.6%



The Financial Reality: The Role of Off-Farm Income

01 — Most young farmers rely on off-farm income (over 70%)

02 — Few off-farm jobs are agriculture-related (38%)



03 — The need for an off-farm job is often driven by health insurance benefits and supplemental income.

04 — On-farm income averages appx. 45% of total household income



Operations of Respondents:

Steady State:

- Livestock
- Field Crops
- Hay/Forage

Growth:

- Equine
- Forestry
- Livestock
- Agribusiness

Decline:

- Nursery/Greenhouse
- Organic
- Poultry
- Vegetable

	2015 (%)	2025 (%)	2015 (#)	2025 (#)
Agritourism	15.32%	10.60%	53	44
Aquaculture	3.76%	0.72%	13	3
Dairy	10.69%	10.36%	37	43
Equine	7.80%	8.92%	27	37
Field Crops	46.53%	47.23%	161	196
Food Processing	7.80%	5.54%	27	23
Forestry	3.76%	4.82%	13	20
Horticulture	11.27%	3.61%	39	15
Livestock	42.20%	49.16%	146	204
Nursery and Greenhouse	13.87%	7.95%	48	33
Organic	17.92%	3.86%	62	16
Poultry	28.32%	20.48%	98	85
Turf	0.87%	0.00%	3	0
Vegetable	47.98%	24.58%	166	102
Viticulture	2.89%	0.24%	10	1
Agribusiness	3.76%	12.29%	13	51
Other	14.74%	7.23%	51	30

Precision and AI Opportunities



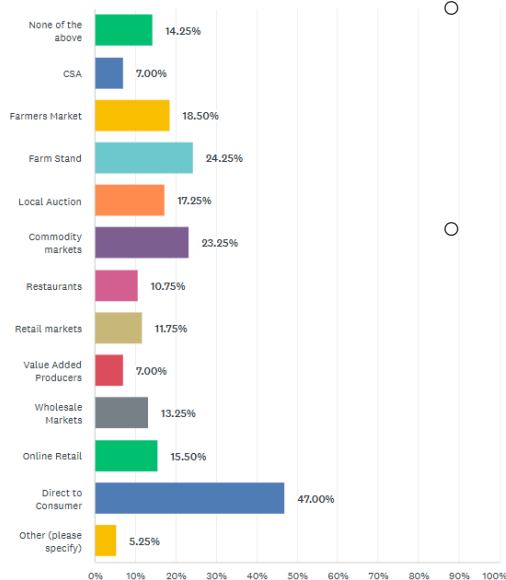
- **Precision Agriculture Adoption: 48% incorporated some form.**
 - Precision planting (27%), Yield data (24%), Precision spraying (25%).
- **AI Exploration:**
 - Only 9.7% currently use AI.
 - Many actively seeking ways to incorporate AI (automation, data analysis).
 - Some respondents are opposed to AI.
- **Cybersecurity & Data Protection:**
 - 47.16% not concerned.
 - Only 11% are proactively investing.



Marketing and Media

How do you market your products? (Select all that apply):

Answered: 400 Skipped: 134



Marketing Channels:

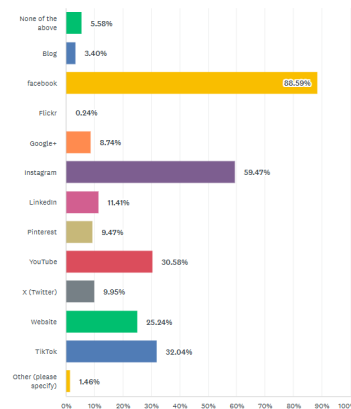
- **Direct-to-Consumer (47%) is most common.**
- **Opportunities in restaurant sales, value-added, CSAs, online retail.**

Social Media Engagement:

- **94.3% leverage social media (Facebook 88.6%, Instagram 59.5%).**
- **Only 37.8% post weekly or more often.**
- **Recognize Social Media for public education and advocacy.**

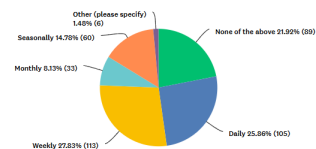
What social media platforms do you use? (Select all that apply):

Answered: 412 Skipped: 122



How frequently do you use social media for your farm?

Answered: 406 Skipped: 128



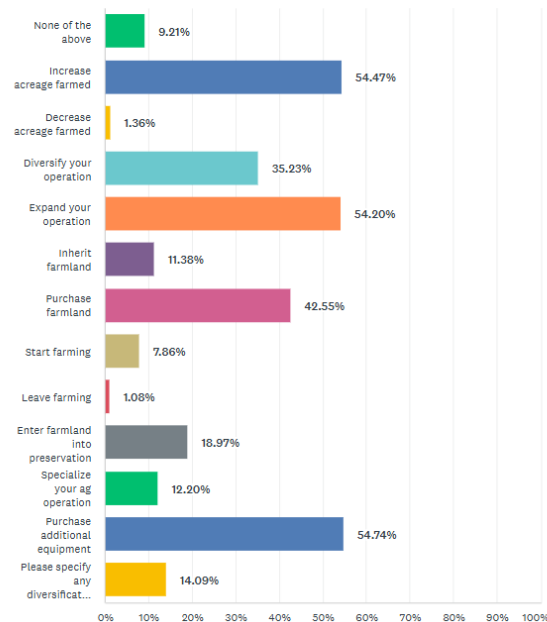


Optimism & Growth: Young Farmers' Future Plans

- **Key Points:**
 - **Excitement for the Future: Overwhelmingly "excited about the future of agriculture."**
 - **Strong Desire to Expand:**
 - **54.7% plan to purchase equipment.**
 - **54.4% to increase acreage.**
 - **42.5% to purchase farmland.**
 - **35.2% to diversify operations.**
 - **Commitment to Farming: Less than 2% anticipate leaving or decreasing acreage.**
 - **Interest in New Avenues: 26.8% interested in pilot carbon credit programs.**

In the next 5 years do you plan to: (Select all that apply)

Answered: 369 Skipped: 165





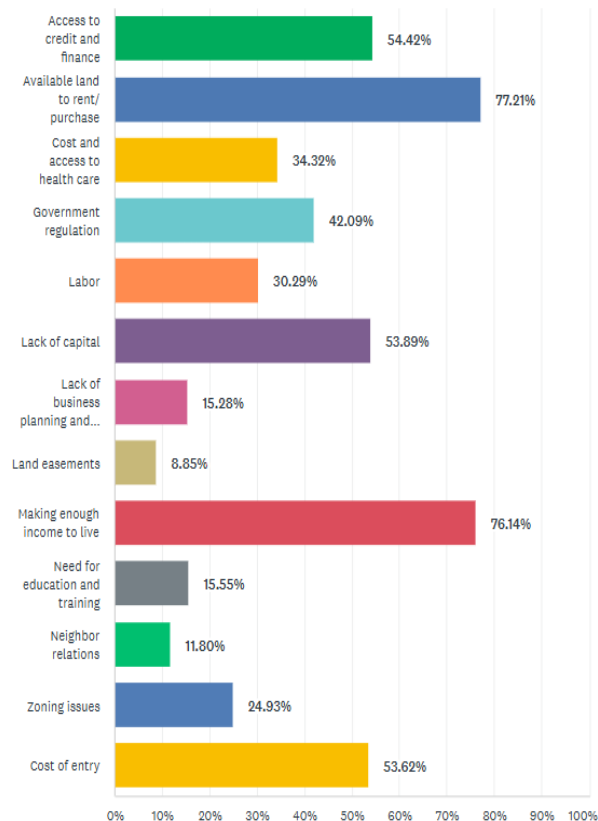
Obstacles to Success

Continuities from 2015 -2025

- Access to Land
- Livable Income
- Lack of Capital
- Access to Credit/Financing
- Government Regulation

From your experience please select up to five main obstacles that young farmers face:

Answered: 373 Skipped: 161





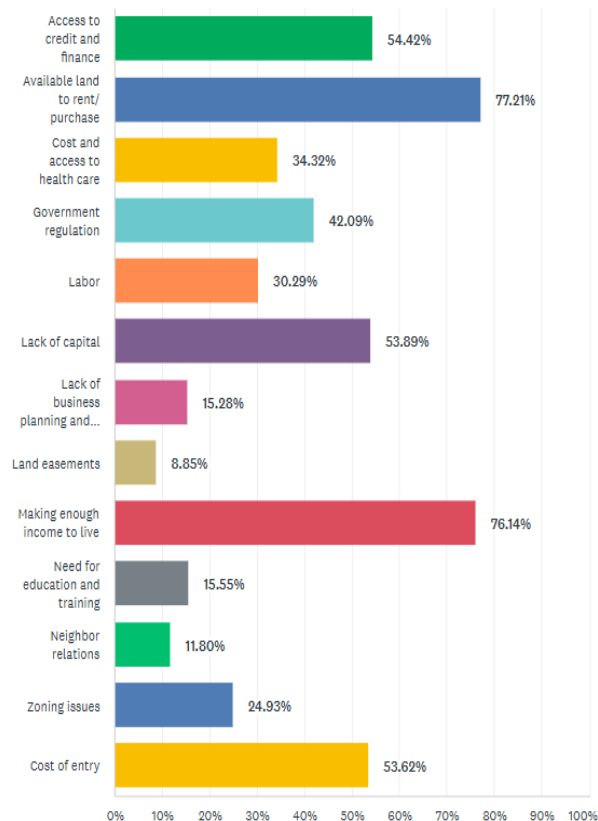
Obstacles to Success

Differences from 2015 - 2025

- “Cost of Entry” as a Top 5 Challenge
- Increased Visibility of Health Care Costs
- Labor Challenges
- Zoning Issues
- Wildlife Challenges
- Broadening of education and training

From your experience please select up to five main obstacles that young farmers face:

Answered: 373 Skipped: 161





Trends

- Intensification of Core Financial and Land Challenges
- Increasing Complexity of the Farming Environment
- Growing External Pressures



5 Strategic Opportunities to Protect and Grow Maryland's Agriculture Industry

1. Enhance Financial Accessibility and Support for Farmers
2. Safeguard Farmland and Mitigate Development Pressures
3. Simplify Regulatory Framework and Clarify Expectations
4. Cultivate Public Understanding and Advocate for Agriculture
5. Strengthen Farmer Engagement and Responsive Government Support

Questions?



THANK YOU to the sponsors of the 2025 Maryland Young Farmers Survey, this effort would not have been possible without your gracious support.

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