



**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

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building  
50 Harry S Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

410-841-5882 Baltimore/Washington  
410-841-5914 Fax

**MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**

**Working Minutes**

**December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

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

**Join Zoom Meeting <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81064925398?pwd=DffQaa0ucarT1kQhIk30EWos4t92lj.1>**

**Meeting ID: 810 6492 5398 Passcode: 520568**

**Present:**

Dr. Melissa Welsh  
Stefanie Reiser  
Raj Kathuria  
Kellie Hinkle  
Amy Crone, Vice Chair  
Paula Linthicum  
Chris Rhodes  
Hunter Pusey  
Levi Sellers

Sean Hough  
Kelly Lewis, Chair  
Emma Jagoz  
Zach Evans  
Richard Stonebreaker  
Dr. Marianne Bailey  
Rachel Lipman  
Jenell Eck McHenry

**Absent:**

Johnny Shockley  
Ann Merryman  
John Murphy

Gordon Kretser  
Frank Allnutt  
Dr. Darren Jarboe  
Russel Shlagel

**MDA Staff:**

Sec. Kevin Atticks  
Steve Connelly  
Rachel Jones  
Jessica Hackett  
Hans Schmidt

Cassie Shirk  
Michael Calkins  
Martin Proulx  
Harrison Palmer  
Heather Barthel

**Guests:**

Allison Roe  
Stacy Kubofcik  
Dave Nemazie  
Kelsey Keadle

Grayson Middleton  
Anika LaFave  
Susanne Richards  
Colby Silvert

## **Call to Order:**

The December 2024 Maryland Agricultural Commission meeting was called to order by Amy Crone, Vice Chair at 10:08 am.

## **Approval of Minutes:**

Motion to approve the September 2024 meeting minutes was made by Sean Hough second by Paula Linthicum.

## **Presentations:**

- **Maryland Ag Careers Research Proposal – Colby Silvert, UMD & Susanne Richards, MAEF**
- **Maryland Agricultural & Resource Based Economic Development Corporation Annual Update – Stacy Kubofcik**

## **Committee Reports:**

### **Farm Profitability & Sustainability Committee – Amy Crone, Chair:**

- The Maryland's Best Marketing team at the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) presented to the Farm Profitability and Sustainability Committee (the Committee), highlighting program successes and their role within the marketing of Maryland agricultural products, connecting buyers and growers, and serving at the crossroads of agricultural literacy & marketing. The Committee brought up several ideas for collaboration and program evolution to ensure farmers are aware of the opportunities that Maryland's Best can bring. There is a lot of overlap in marketing from the statewide scale from partner organizations such as University of Maryland, Future Harvest, and Maryland Farm Bureau; the Committee recognizes the need for cross-collaboration and resource aggregation to present a unified voice from the agricultural industry. Karen Fedor presented to the Committee some of the opportunities for agricultural literacy to be highlighted through marketing's work and the Farm 2 School program.

### **Legislative Affairs Committee – Paula Linthicum, Chair:**

- The Legislative Affairs Committee did not meet due to conflicting meetings/events of Committee members.

### **Value Added Agriculture Committee – Amy Crone, Chair:**

- The Committee highlighted the importance of a statewide agritourism definition, weighing the pros and cons of incorporating limits to agricultural innovation while also recognizing that if agricultural entities do not define agriculture and its various aspects, other agencies and regulators will define it without our advice.

- Amy Crone proposed that the Committee investigate neighboring states definitions of agritourism and agriculture.
- Kelly Dudeck suggested engaging with the agricultural business development specialists across the state to ensure that the leniencies and interpretations of definitions within the agricultural context across jurisdictions are legal and can be replicated.
- The Committee recognizes that agritourism and value-added agriculture has operated in a regulatory gray area, but a clearer picture will need to be established that establishes guardrails and guidelines without inhibiting innovation.
- The Committee will be working on developing case studies to prove success.

#### **Committee on Watershed Strategies – Gordon Kretser, Chair:**

- MDA Program Planning & Evaluation staff presented to the Committee, highlighting themes from the previous meeting, presenting data to bolster conversation on Maryland agricultural progress in the WIP model, and laying out steps for the proposed LEEF framework.
  - The Committee highlighted the need to cross-evaluate conservation and the climate, and studying the feasibility of carbon credits to financially support conservation efforts if federal funding and supports diminished.
  - Secretary Atticks' LEEF program is an opportunity for all agricultural operations to engage with conservation and go beyond conservation implementation, expanding into community leadership and education opportunities.
- Gordon, Chair, brought forward a working case-study at the Cherrywood Solar site on Caroline County. This case-study points to the conflicting messaging and lack of enforcement regarding native plantings on solar installations, and non-fulfillment of pollinator plantings as listed in Maryland code.
  - The Department's Resource Conservation section will pursue meeting with the PPRP to ensure that the stabilization requirements are being met and enforced on solar installations on agricultural land and will provide an update at the next committee meeting in 2025.
  - *During the December meeting, Rachel Jones highlighted several points that MDA has requested from the PPRP, including the request that wells are installed on solar facilities. Chris Rhodes raised concerns about the current permitting that MDE has in place and the documentation requirements for agricultural wells that places liability on the farmer if neighbors wells run dry.*
- **Action items:** Raj moved to support Gordon Kretser as the Maryland Agricultural Commission's representative on the State Soil Conservation Committee. Sean Hough seconded the motion; all were in favor.

#### **Committee on Agricultural Literacy & Education – Hunter Pusey, Acting Chair:**

- The Maryland Agriculture Teachers Association (MATA), Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF), Maryland Farm Bureau (MDFB) and representatives from the University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) presented their proposal for Leadership

of Environmental, Agricultural, and Natural Resources (EANR) Education in Maryland to the Committee on Agricultural Literacy and Education.

- This proposal includes the creation of a Director of Agricultural Education housed either within the Maryland State Department of Education or the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and support staff to include an Asst. Director for Curriculum, Classroom Instruction & Community College Workforce Development, an Asst. Director for Leadership Development, an Asst. Director for Experiential Learning, and several specialty positions.
- The Committee discussed the challenges in Maryland agricultural education with the group, understanding the different needs and perspectives from each participating party.
- One overarching concern was funding for these positions and for agricultural education in general; options such as State general fund dollars, Cannabis tax, and industry financial support were all discussed.
- Identifying Industry Recognized Credentials continues to be challenge for the agricultural industry, given that there are few “mandatory certifications” to work in the field compared to the nursing, welding, and other CTE programs. The current list of IRCs for agriculture is limited but there is a structured process to add credentials to the list.
- **Action Items:** The Committee requests that Secretary Atticks meet with Dr. Carey Wright of the Maryland State Department of Education in order to ensure that agricultural education keeps a seat at the table.

## **Commodity Reports:**

### **Ag Education- Dr. Melissa Welsh:**

- Recently appointed, Dr. Welsh provided an introduction to the commission of her background.

### **Agribusiness- Vacant:**

### **Agritourism – Vacant:**

### **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:**

- No Report.

**Consumer – Kellie Hinkle:**

- The incredible, edible egg!
- For Thanksgiving 2024, we hosted 4 adults and 2 children under the age of six for three days. From crème brûlée to breakfast casserole, my shopping list included 36 eggs. Those eggs cost me 60% more in 2024 than Thanksgiving 2023.
- The average price for a dozen eggs in U.S. cities was \$3.37 in October 2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That was down slightly from September 2024, and down significantly from January 2023, when the average price soared to \$4.82. But it was up 60 percent from October 2023, when a dozen eggs cost around \$2.00.
- Serious baking season is upon us, pies, cakes, cookies, and baklava (no eggs required) and according to Emily Metz, president, and CEO of the American Egg Board “the highest consumption period of the year, is the December holidays.” However, it seems that the egg might be inflation proof—we just completed 18 months of consecutive high consumption. Typically, there is a little softening of the market during the summer months, when everybody’s outside. That did not happen in 2024.
- Although the annual rate of food-at-home prices in 2024 has held steady at about 1% and grocery prices have calmed in 2024, nearing pre-pandemic levels, American’s grocery bill concern revolves around the price of eggs.
- The price of eggs has become more of a symbol of U.S. fiscal policy than the Federal Reserve setting interest rates. Food-at-home prices are lower than overall inflation while food-away-from-home prices are higher....so put on your apron and bake your cookies at home this holiday season!

**Dairy I – Vacant:****Dairy II- Vacant:****Direct Farm Market – Amy Crone:**

- This is the quiet part of the year for direct marketing farmers, with 2025 planning underway & conference season getting in full swing.
- Conferences & upcoming events:
  - MDA buyer Grower Meeting 1/7
  - VABF 1/10-1/12 in Roanoke
  - Cultivate & Craft Summit 1/16
  - FutureHarvest Conference 1/17-1/18
  - PASA 2/5-2/7
  - MidAtlantic Women in Ag Conference 2/12

**Equine (Horse Breeding) – Ann Merryman:**

- No Report.

**Farm Bureau – Paula Linthicum:**

- Maryland Farm Bureau held it’s 109<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Delegates in Cambridge, MD in early December. Paula highlighted the Young Farmers and Ranchers Next Gen Summit,

stressing the importance of involving and developing the next generation of new and beginning farmers.

### **Field Crops – Chris Rhodes:**

- No official report, but engaged in conversation with respect to CAFO permitting updates.

### **Food Processing – Vacant:**

### **Forestry – Hunter Pusey:**

- **Truck Weight Increase**
  - Of paramount importance to Maryland’s forest products industry is increasing the State’s truck weight law for hauling harvested timber from the fields to the processors. AFI has been at the table these last 2 years with the Moore Administration seeking its support. Consequently, AFI anticipates the introduction of departmental legislation in 2025 to authorize this increase via a special hauling permit issued by Maryland’s DOT. Since departmental legislation is considered proprietary until its official introduction, AFI anxiously awaits the envisioned legislation being announced in early January 2025 and cannot share more at this time.
- **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. So serious is this issue, that federal refuges – like Blackwater in Dorchester County – have begun to restrict timber harvesting for several months.
- **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. AFI led an effort in 2022 to secure a \$1 million mandated appropriation effective for fiscal year 2024 b/c WIF has historically been grossly underfunded. However, the *2024 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA)* reduced the \$1 million to \$500,000 for fiscal year 2025 and beyond. Causal factor: projected State revenues not keeping pace with anticipated State expenditures, aka “structural deficit”.
  - Notably, AFI has asked the State’s Legislative Auditor to examine funds purportedly being credited to WIF via the agricultural land transfer tax required by § 13–306 of the Tax – Property Article. Those dollars have fluctuated so much over the years that AFI has requested a fiscal compliance audit. And we are confident this audit is underway.

### **Hemp- Matthew ‘Levi’ Sellers:**

- 2024 Farm Bill discussions are being postponed into 2025
  - Hemp Industry is looking at what the updated definitions will be and what that

impact could mean.

- There are 2 other bills pending federally but will likely not be passed in the current lameduck session.

### **Horticulture – Vacant:**

### **Livestock- Sean Hough:**

- Farrowing season is kicking off preparing for fair/show season.
- National beef prices remain high while the supply is low
- Screwworm case in Mexico has triggered a national response and quarantine requirements.
- Pork had a record year regarding U.S. exports, though changes are anticipated with the new administration and proposed tariffs.
- Livestock processing capacity in Maryland continues to remain at the forefront of producers minds.

### **Nursery I- J. Kelly Lewis:**

- December is a busy season in the nursery industry, wrapping up a dry and challenging year.
- Stanton Gill, University of Maryland Extension, passed away recently. He was a nursery specialist and was extremely influential to the industry for many years, he will be missed.
- MNLGA is discussing the Montgomery County native plant mandate, dictating all plants going into Montgomery must be native. Most plants in the county are not native right now, landscape architects and other businesses would be severely affected and hindered by this proposed action.
- MidAtlantic Nursery Trade Show kicks off on January 8<sup>th</sup>, this is the largest nursery trade show in the country and it is held in Baltimore annually.

### **Nursery II- John Murphy:**

- No report.

### **Organic Farming – Emma Jagoz:**

- Resources
  - [Organic farming leads to adaptations in plant genetic materials](#) in 23 year study, showing resilient + heterogeneous traits
  - USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Market News recently expanded its collection and distribution of price and production cost information for organic agricultural products by adding organic milk, cattle, grains and feedstuffs, and fertilizer to its list of published reports. Organic products are included among the hundreds of agricultural products for which AMS Market News publishes market information. This data promotes market transparency and helps farmers and businesses make informed business decisions – resulting in a fairer and more competitive marketplace for all participants.
    - In 2024, AMS Market News, through partnerships with state departments of agriculture and universities, expanded the collection and distribution of price and production cost information for organic agricultural products with organic milk, cattle, fertilizer, and farmer's markets recently added and expanded coverage of organic grain and feedstuffs to be added in the

- coming year.
  - The new information includes:
    - [Farmgate organic milk prices](#) for Vermont and Pennsylvania.
    - [Production cost prices](#) for organic poultry litter fertilizer in Alabama, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.
    - Additional farmers market coverage in Pennsylvania, Iowa, New York, and California including [organic specialty crops](#) and [dairy products](#).
    - Expanded market information for [organic food and feed grade grains](#) and for feedstuffs coming in 2025.
- Challenges
  - Competition from PA organic growers
    - Out of state competition on MD organic farms is a significant challenge, especially from PA. Making it easy + incentivized for MD growers to become Certified Maryland Grown could help (an option on Nut Man applications?) An updated "local" definition and adopting a MD Grown Label would be helpful. Incentives for local businesses to buy certified MD grown foods might motivate local retailers.
  - Climate Change
    - Water access
      - Access to irrigation water– already a serious problem in Charles County in Southern Maryland, Frederick County too! Solutions: On-farm ponds and \*improved\* NRCS irrigation management efficient programs
    - High tunnel + greenhouse funding through NRCS
      - Raise the cap for those utilizing it – very much helps mitigate the risk of crop loss from heat, drought, cold, deluge, hail + more.
    - Several organic farmers are thinking about 2025 and are requesting streamlined and simplified Nutrient Management requirements – especially for small-scale organic farms who use low-risk inputs
- Opportunities + Events
  - Oct. 28, 2024 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) today announced the launch of the Organic Dairy Product Promotion (ODPP) program, allocating \$15 million to expand access to organic dairy products in educational institutions and youth programs. The initiative was announced today by USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Lester Moffitt during a visit to Vermont. Funded by the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), the program will increase consumption of organic dairy products among children and young adults while creating new opportunities for small and mid-sized organic dairy producers.

### **Poultry I- Zach Evans:**

- Agricultural exemption on hauling is supported by both agricultural and forestry industries.
  - It takes on average 15% more trucks in Maryland to haul chickens versus the same number of birds in Delaware due to differing exemptions.
- CAFO



- MDE listening sessions have been appreciated by industry leaders and farmers.
- MDA is encouraged to implore that MDE engage with all agricultural stakeholders on the matter.
- Farmer comments:
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration of CAFO permits, Maryland farmers have not had extensive EPA violations – Maryland farmers have been doing a good job and hope that there are not major changes to the permit.
  - There are concerns with making nutrient management plans public – these are private entities and deserve the respect to keep their business private.
  - No-land and land permits must be treated differently.
  - MDE did not grant permits in a timely manner, impacting farmers ability to get loans, chickens, dates, etc.
  - Most poultry farmers want permits to be associated with the farm operation and not the individual. When a new owner purchases a farm and takes over an operation, the permits start from scratch and severely impact the success of the operation. Other industries have site permits, not individual permits, and agricultural would like to be considered for this option.
- Poultry wants to keep the related sciences within the experts at MDA and UMD. The workload required in the proposed updated process from MDE is significantly higher and unmanageable by both agencies and farmers, for the same number of chickens to be grown in the state.

## **Poultry II- Vacant:**

### **State Grange- Richard Stonebreaker:**

- October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Maryland State Grange celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of serving agriculture and communities across the state.
- Annual meeting of the Maryland State Grange held October 17-19<sup>th</sup>, 2024 in New Market Maryland. The following policy/resolutions were adopted:
  - **Farm Bill Resolutions**
    - **TITLE I; Commodities.**
      - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange urges that the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) be reformed so that the payment rate shall be raised to 100% of fair market value for a loss caused by a federally protected species; be it further
      - RESOLVED; the Grange urges that supplemental indemnity be allowed for unborn livestock when the gestating animal qualifies.
      - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange urges that the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) be reformed to provide more flexibility for producers to plant alternative varieties, stand densities, or locations.
      - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange urges that ad hoc disaster programs be delivered via block grants to the states, since they would better understand the needs of those receiving this aid.
      - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports efforts to reallocate all unobligated Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) conservation funding into Farm

Bill conservation programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (PL83-566) and reinvest IRA funds to create continuing funding for orphan and new programs while restructuring the climate sideboards included in the IRA so that they can be better utilized by farm operators.

- RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange urges the creation of the Forest Conservation Easement Program, modeled after the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which would provide an easement option for working forests.
- **TITLE IV; Nutrition.**
  - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports efforts such as HR 3100, HR 4817, and HR 3087 to reform the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) so that income of young people under age 21 and in secondary school shall not be counted against the eligibility of the total household.
- **TITLE VIII; Forestry.**
  - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports efforts to utilize livestock grazing as a wildfire risk reduction strategy on federal lands.
- **TITLE IX; Energy.**
  - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports the effort to limit the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to utilize USDA funding to convert private forestland and prime farmland to ground-mounted solar panel installations.
- **TITLE X; Horticulture, Marketing, and Regulatory Reform.**
  - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports adding food hubs to the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program.
  - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports expanding the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production to provide guidance and promoting conservation techniques for activities of urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices.
- **TITLE XI; Crop Insurance.**
  - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports efforts to establish a specialty crop advisory committee to ensure that the unique perspectives of the specialty crop industry have a seat at the table for policy development and expansion.
  - RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports efforts to enhance coverage options to reduce the need for ad hoc disaster assistance, such as

expanding hurricane and tropical storm coverage options and frost or freeze index options, and wine grape losses due to smoke exposure.

○ **TITLE XII; Miscellaneous.**

- RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports enhanced efforts to safeguard domestic agriculture and natural resources from foreign invasive pests and diseases by improved detection at ports of entry, including dog training.
- RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports the General Accounting Office (GAO) requirement that a report be prepared on any agricultural land owned by citizens or entities with ties to China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and other state sponsors of terrorism and identify potential threats from the ownership of said farmland. This report shall be shared with the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). There shall be a timely sharing of information between the United States Department of Agriculture and the CFIUS.

○ **The EATS ACT**

- RESOLVED; the Maryland State Grange supports the effort to prevent state and local governments from imposing a condition or standard on the production of covered livestock outside of their own jurisdiction as condition for sale.

○ Resolutions outside of the Farm Bill:

- Membership numbers across the state have continued to fluctuate, even though we are trending a decline in membership.
- Leitersburg Grange #361 in Washington County, MD was reorganized in September.
- Maryland State Grange carried the insurance for 4 Community Shows across the State.

**Tobacco – Vacant:**

**Turf- Gordon Kretser:**

- Maryland Turfgrass Council (MTC) – Annual Conference and Trade Show will take place on December 12<sup>th</sup> at Turf Valley Resort in Ellicott City. This will be a full day of educational seminars by the leading industry experts as well as Keynote Speaker Michael Calkins
- Turf Producers of Maryland (TPM) – Annual business meeting and board of directors' elections will take place at Turf Valley as well on December 12<sup>th</sup>
- Virginia Sod Growers (VSG) – Annual business meeting and elections will take place on December 19<sup>th</sup> in Ashland, VA at Hanover Country Club. Keynote Speaker will be Tom Hardiman, State Certification Program Manager, who will be addressing the current state of the sod certification program in Virginia.
- Mid Atlantic Nursery & Trade Show (MANTS) – Jan 8 – 10<sup>th</sup> at the Baltimore Convention Center. MANTS attracts over 11,000 attendees and more than 900 exhibitors. Nursery stock, garden tools, power equipment, and everything you can imagine in the green industry will be on display.

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

- The University of Maryland (UMD) transitioned to a new administrative system called Workday. The transition took place November 15.
- The University of Maryland Extension is embarking on a strategic planning process to develop a stakeholder-driven plan, granting the university's community partners an opportunity to contribute to the institution's future success. To produce a specialized strategic plan that is consistent with the broader objectives of the University of Maryland, we will prioritize strategies that will uplift our community and complement UMD initiatives. You are invited to regularly return to the page linked below to stay updated on the process.
- We are inviting stakeholders in Maryland to join us for a town hall conversations focused on the future direction of our programs. Come share your insights and help shape the strategic plan that will guide our work in the years ahead. Come to any of the following Town Hall sessions and participate in this important conversation. Please follow this link for a list of dates, times, and locations and to sign up for a Town Hall session: <https://extension.umd.edu/about/extension-impact/strategic-plan/>.
  - UMES Research, Extension & Teaching Farm, 10789 Stewart Neck Road, Princess Anne, MD, Noon–2 p.m., January 15
  - Wicomico County Extension Office, 28647 Old Quantico Road, Salisbury, MD, Morning, 5:30–7:30 p.m., January 15
  - Wye Research and Education Center, 124 Wye Narrows Drive, Queenstown, MD, Noon–2 p.m., January 16
  - Anne Arundel Extension Office, 97 Dairy Lane, Gambrills, MD, 5:30–7:30 p.m., January 16
  - Baltimore County Extension Office, 1114 Shawan Road, Cockeysville, MD, 5:30–7:30 p.m., January 21
  - Howard County Fairgrounds, 2210 Fairgrounds Rd, West Friendship, MD 21794, 12:30–2:30 p.m., January 22
  - St. Mary's Agriculture Service Center, 26737 Radio Station Way, Leonardtown, MD, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., January 22
  - University of Maryland College Park Campus, Location TBD, College Park, MD, 9–11 a.m., January 23
- Listening sessions have already been conducted at the Maryland Farm Bureau Annual Meeting of Delegates in Cambridge, Allegany County Fairgrounds in Cumberland, and Washington County Extension Office in Boonsboro.
- Farmers are testing corn for mycotoxins and Extension agents reported high levels for some fields. The Maryland Department of Agriculture and University of Maryland Extension are collaborating to support farmers with free testing and strategies for utilization of infected corn.
- Kayla Griffith has been named acting program director for the Agricultural Nutrient Management Program. Kayla has been an ANMP faculty specialist since last November and was previously a nutrient management advisor for Anne Arundel County where she farms with her family.
- The update for AgFS Program positions is below:
  - *AgFS Extension*
    - AgFS county educator, Caroline County: Finalists were interviewed December 4

- AgFS IPM specialist, ornamental horticulture: Ornamental horticulture team met and an industry listening session to discuss program needs took place December 3
  - AgFS local foods and entrepreneurship specialist: finalist interview occurred November 15
  - AgFS county educator, Prince George's County: The position is being evaluated
- *Agricultural Nutrient Management Program*
  - Program director and faculty specialist: The position description will be revised and reposted after the Workday transition is completed
  - Faculty specialist – training: verbal acceptance of the position
  - Nutrient management advisor, Allegany County: Will be posted after Workday transition is completed
  - Nutrient management advisor, Anne Arundel County: verbal acceptance of the position
  - Nutrient management advisor, Carroll County: verbal acceptance of the position
  - Nutrient management advisor, Charles County: Will be reposted after Workday transition is completed
  - Nutrient management advisor, Washington County: verbal acceptance of the position
  - Nutrient management advisor, location TBD: Will be posted after Workday transition is completed
  - Administrative assistant: Three candidates were interviewed November 22.
- Stanton Gill passed away suddenly in October. He was a long-time IPM specialist with the Agriculture and Food Systems (AgFS) Extension Program in Maryland. Stanton's leadership of the ornamental horticulture team led to a high performing, collegial team that served Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic Region, and national horticulture industries. The team has been driving innovation through applied research and demonstration programs. Stanton always looked for ways to involve new Extension faculty members in research and educational programming, making them feel welcome and part of the AgFS Extension team. He will be missed by the AgFS Team, University of Maryland Extension, and the ornamental horticulture industry.
- Craig Yohn, nutrient management advisor, Dorchester County and past interim ANMP program director, announced his retirement from the ANMP effective October 31, 2024. Craig provided excellent service to his farmer clientele and his excellent nutrient management knowledge and expertise will be missed.
- Sandy Corridon, interim program leader for 4-H Youth Development and Dr. Jeff Howard has taken over the role of interim program leader for 4-H Youth Development. Patsy Ezell, interim program leader for Family and Consumer Sciences Extension, has retired again and Dr. Lisa McCoy has stepped into the interim FCS program leader role.
- Grant
  - Kumar, H. and D. Jarboe. 2024. Maryland NRCS Irrigation Services Agreement. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. \$1,437,526.

**Vegetable – Russell Shlagel:**

- No report.

**Veterinary – Dr. Marianne B. O'Malley:**

- Many thanks to the Vet Board for approving Continuing Education Credits for volunteering

at the Maryland State Fair.

- The Maryland Agricultural Fair Board and State Veterinarian proposed to continue the program in 2025 which was approved and accepted by the Vet Board.
- During the last election, Colorado voters were in favor of a mid-level veterinary position with a “masters-equivalent” degree for practicing veterinary medicine.
  - Maryland vets are concerned with what this could look like in Maryland, could the mid-level vet provide the same level of service without the extensive schooling and training that a full veterinarian can?
  - It does not necessarily answer the veterinary shortage that Maryland is experiencing, but it could play a part.

#### **Viticulture – Rachel Lipman:**

- No report.

#### **Young Farmers Advisory Board – Jenell Eck McHenry, Chair:**

- The Maryland Young Farmers Survey is still live, please share this during the various conferences throughout the winter season.
  - Incentives for completing the survey include yeti tumblers and a cooler.

### **Maryland Department of Agriculture Staff Updates:**

#### **Secretary Kevin Atticks:**

- CAFO (Confined Animal Feeding Operations) permits:
  - MDA is actively engaging with MDE and coming to conclusions that satisfy the needs of all parties.
  - MDA continues to invite industry representatives to the table for discussions with MDE and environmental partners and asks that the industry continue to extend the same respect to the department to ensure continuity and constructive discussion.
- The Governors Intergovernmental Commission on Agriculture (GICA) is up and running
  - Primarily made of agencies with some industry representatives.
  - The Maryland Ag Commission brings industry perspectives and issues to MDA, then MDA can open discussions with other agencies that touch agriculture to overcome those issues.
  - The goal is to move things along in regulatory context outside of legislation through GICA.
- The Bay Program includes all states within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. For the first time ever, an Agriculture Committee was established and unanimously approved by Bay Program leadership to focus on specific agricultural impacts.

#### **Deputy Secretary Steve Connelly:**

- Hi-Path Avian Influenza (HPAI) moved into lactating dairy cattle earlier this year.
  - USDA has mandated the testing of bulk milk to identify potential cases.
    - Maryland will likely begin testing within the coming months.

- Hi-Path continues to prevail in poultry, enhanced biosecurity is encouraged.
- Comments from Zach Evans, Poultry representative:
  - Positive HPAI tests in ANY species impacts the exports of products from the state, sick cows can impact the chicken industry.
  - It is important to note that products are not unsafe if prepared properly, pasteurization kills the virus in milk and proper cooking temperatures kills the virus in meat.
  - Testing can trigger larger impacts, MDA has been encouraging biosecurity but the larger impacts of positive cases in the state need to be recognized by the industry.

**Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations:**

- January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025 legislative session begins
- MDA has 11 departmental bills being proposed
  - 7 mirror last years fee change proposals
  - 1 allows MDA to update the Pesticide Applicator Laws to conform to EPA changes
  - 1 requires Soil & Water Quality plans be provided to MDA
  - 1 updates the Maryland Agricultural Commission and Young Farmers Advisory Board structure.
- The Governor adopted the LEEF program in his omnibus package.
- MDA is preparing for egg layer bills, PFAS bills, and others that will have major impacts on agriculture.

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

- No report.

**Hans Schmidt, Assistance Secretary of Resource Conservation:**

- CAFO
  - The federal EPA permit references “control” to determine who will be responsible for applying for the CAFO permit.
    - Previous MDE guidance was to separate the entities from the poultry, grain, and other associated businesses in the farm.
    - The new administration is reverting back to the federal permit language and engaging with all entities within the farm business.
    - Maryland farmers have unique guardrails in place (Nutrient Management Plans, nutrient application setbacks, etc.) and while the EPA permit delegates authority, it is a nationwide permit that must be enforced in each state with respect to the processes in place to accomplish the same goal.
  -

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

- No report.

**Martin Proulx, Value Added Agriculture Specialist:**

- No report.

**Jessica Hackett, Director of Communications:**

- No report.

**Public Comment:**

- None.

**Old Business:**

- None.

**New Business:**

- Newly appointed members are asked to contact Harrison to join one (or multiple) committees.
- 2025 Commission Schedule
  - Meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month; subcommittee meetings target the same 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday.
  - The proposed schedule is as follows:
    - January - Full Commission Meeting
    - February - Independent Committee Meetings
    - March - Full Commission Meeting
    - April - Independent Committee Meetings
    - May - **Tour**, Full Commission
    - June - Full Commission Meeting (election of officers)
    - July - OFF
    - August - Independent Committee Meetings
    - September - Full Commission Meeting
    - October - **Tour**, Full Commission
    - November - Independent Committee Meetings
    - December - Full Commission Meeting

Meeting Adjourned at 12:18 pm by Paula Linthicum, seconded by Kellie Hinkle.



Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary