



Maryland Agricultural Commission Minutes February 14th, 2024

Present:

Frank Allnut
Rachel Lipman
Raj Kathuria
Sean Hough
Joe Dymek
Kellie Hinkle
Stefanie Reiser
Emma Jagoz
Chris Rhodes
Dr. Darren Jarboe
Amy Crone

Zach Evans
Hunter Pusey
Kelly Lewis
Cliff Newsome
Kelly Dudeck
Ann Merryman (Virtual)
Russell Shlagel (Virtual)
Far Nasir (Virtual)
Jenell McHenry (Virtual)
Paula Linthicum (Virtual)
Dr. Marianne B. O'Malley

Absent:

Tom Mullineaux
Johnny Shockley
Levi Sellers
John Murphy
Gordon Kretser

MDA Staff:

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

Cassie Shirk
Harrison Palmer
Heather Barthel
Martin Proulx
Lauren Moises (Virtual)

Guests:

Dean Moses Kairo, UMES
Katie Stevens, Frederick County Office of Agriculture
Brittany Rawlings, MARBIDCO
Shelby Watson-Hampton, SMADC
Dave Nemazie, UMCES
Matt Teffeau, Rural Maryland Council Agriculture Committee
Charlotte Davis, RMC
Steve McHenry, MARBIDCO
Jonathan Cribbs, American Farmland Publications

Call to Order:

The February 2024 Maryland Agricultural Commission meeting was called to order by Kelly Dudeck, Chair, at 10:05 am.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the January 2024 meeting minutes was made by Raj Kathuria, second by Joe Dymek at 10:09 AM

Presentation from Rural Maryland Council Executive Director, Charlotte Davis

Commodity Reports:

Ag Education- Joseph Dymek:

- **MAEF** – Reported by Susanne Richard, MAEF Executive Director
 - Always accepting entries to our calendar contest
 - Accepting applications for the Seibel and MAEF Scholarships
 - Accepting nominations and applications for the Velma Clark Award for Excellence in Teaching About Agriculture
 - Working on the design concepts for the new Showcase (as well as fundraising/seeking grants)
 - Always looking for Mobile Lab teachers, Showcase attendants, reliable local haulers, and safe places around the state for "layovers" for the Labs and Showcase. (Contact: Susanne Richards: susanne@maefonline.com or (410) 430-2613.)
 - Monitoring legislation to protect the Ag Tag and Bay Plate, and agricultural education.
 - College of Southern Maryland is hiring an ag teacher for their LaPlata campus; if anyone in or around the Charles County area is interested please let me know.
 - MAEF is accepting applications for the 2024 “LET’S GRO” Together Grants.
 - The goal of the “LET’S GRO” Together Grant is to increase the understanding and appreciation of agriculture in the lives of students, especially those living in urban areas. School and community garden projects help meet this goal through hands-on gardening and classroom activities that meet Common Core, Environmental Literacy, and NGSS standards. This program aims to provide financial support for collaborative projects promoting agricultural education and community engagement in Maryland. The “LET’S GRO” Together Grant is ideal for any project that offers students direct experience with growing, harvesting, and preparing fresh foods while learning about concepts in botany, nutrition, environmental stewardship, and engineering practices. Outdoor school gardens, in-class plant science activities, hydroponics and vertical greenhouse projects, unique

irrigation systems, nutrition and food preparation with fresh produce and more are a few examples where these concepts can be applied.

- MAEF will be offering up to \$500 for the creation, expansion, or maintenance of any applicable “LET’S GRO” project. Eligible applicants include K-12 teachers of public and private schools, nonprofit organizations and other private institutions who have plant science education as a goal. The deadline for grant application submissions is March 25, 2024, and must be submitted through the online application. Funding awards will be announced by May 1, 2024. For more information about the grant process, email Ben Brown at bbrown@maefonline.com.
- **FFA - Terrie Shank, Maryland FFA Executive Director, MAEF Asst. Director High School Program**
 - Fall Membership is 2160 student members. Chapter Advisors have until the end of February to add their second semester students to their rosters.
 - February 22-24 MD FFA will be hosting the National FFA Southern Region Vice-President Carter Howell at events at Chesapeake College, Washington County Technical HS, Maryland State Fairgrounds and Gwynn Park HS.
 - February 28, 2024 is the MD FFA Advocacy Day in Annapolis. Chapters are currently signing up to attend tours, legislative visits and committee meetings.
 - April 13, 2024 are the MD FFA Spring Career Events at Westminster High School from 8am-5pm.
 - June 24-26, 2024 will be the 96th MD FFA State Convention at the Wisp Resort in Garrett County and Garrett College.
- **Maryland 4-H Report-** Shared by Sandy Corridon, Interim MD 4-H Program Leader, Assistant Director, UMD
 - In-Service Trainings: Our State 4-H Specialist are busy training and updating our county educators and volunteers. The annual Animal Science In-service on Thursday, December 7th at the Howard County Fairgrounds was attended by more than 50 UME 4-H faculty/staff and partner representatives. Topics included: Partner Updates from the Maryland Department of Agriculture Division of Animal Health, Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Agriculture Fair Board, Maryland State Fair, and the UMD College of AGNR Animal Science Department; 4-H Animal Science program updates for dairy, equine, and livestock; and a presentation by the Animal Agriculture Alliance. This annual training event highlights program accomplishments, program updates and changes for the year, as well as addressing current and emerging topics in animal agriculture impacting educational programs and exhibitions.
 - Camping In-Service held every January brings 4-H faculty and county 4-H camp directors and volunteers together for a day of workshops and resources for camping programs across the state. Our 4-H Environmental Specialist is currently at the

ACA National Convention as a national presenter at the conference. A more thorough 4-H summer camping report will be provided during camping season.

- The first Maryland 4-H STEM In-Service will be on Thursday, February 22 from 9:30am to 3:30pm at the Howard County Fairgrounds. It will cover a broad range of topics in the STEM realm, and provide attendees with resources to help increase their capacity to do STEM programs locally. Some topics will include Robotics, Drones, Circuitry/Electronics, Chemistry, the 2024 Solar Eclipse, and 3-D Printing.
- Maryland 4-H State Council held its first gathering in the form of a retreat at Hashawha Environmental Center in late January. 27 teen members met with our 4-H faculty advisors to foster collaboration, develop toolkits for team-building to be used in their local communities, and to highlight professional development opportunities for the teens, and set goals for the year. These teens represent 4-H at The Taste of Maryland Agriculture, Governor's Day at the Fair, and other State and National events. They have participated in White House events from National Day of the Girl to the Pardoning of the National Turkey
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Teams Results** - As a result of months of practices and training our 4-Hers from across the state participate in Judging Competitions at the Maryland State Fair. High scores result in the opportunity to practice some more and then compete on the National Level. Some results:
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Dairy Bowl Team**
 - Team Members: Abbey Bearden, Michael Merriman, Atley Schafer
 - Coaches: April Barczewski, Mandy German
 - North American Invitational 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl, North American International Livestock Expo, Louisville, KY
 - Atley Schafer – 6th in Written Exam
 - Team - 5th Overall
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Dairy Judging B Team**
 - Team Members: Shea Cencula
 - Coaches: Brian Schnebly, Amanda Clougherty
- **Invitational Youth 4-H Dairy Judging Contest, North American International Livestock Expo, Louisville, KY**
 - Shea Cencula- 6th in Jerseys, 1 th in Holsteins, 24th Overall
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Horse Teams**
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Horse Bowl Team**
 - Team Members: Olivia Baltrosky, Chloe Kroger, Mabry Orndorff, Breana Schwam
 - Coach: Lisa Fulco
 - Eastern National 4-H Horse Round Up, Louisville, KY
 - Olivia Baltrosky - 7th Individual

- Mabry Orndorff - 3rd Individual
 - Breana Schwam - 5th Individual
 - Team - 3rd Overall
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Horse Communications Team**
 - Team Members: Danica Frushour, Maya Landis
 - Coach: Karen Scott
- **Eastern National 4-H Horse Round Up, Louisville, KY**
 - Danica Frushour – 6th Place Individual Presentation
 - Maya Landis - 10th Place Public Speaking
 - Team - 10th State Overall
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Horse Judging Team**
 - Team Members: Summer Mrotek, Stella Otto, Cassidy Stone
 - Coach: Jaqueline “Paige” Merriam
- **Eastern National 4-H Horse Round Up, Louisville, KY**
 - Cassidy Stone -10th Individual
 - Team - 7th Overall
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Horticulture Team**
 - Team Members: Bobear Anderson, Emily Clontz, Caleb Darsney, Joni Elbich, Nathaniel Smith
 - Coaches: Angela Darsney, Victoria Layman
- **National 4-H Horticulture Judging Contest, National Junior Horticulture Association Convention, Kalamazoo, MI**
 - Bobear Anderson – 3rd in Identification & Judging
 - Emily Clontz – 6th in Identification & Judging
 - Joni Elbich – 4th in Identification & Judging
 - Nathaniel Smith – 7th in Identification & Judging
 - Team – 1st Place Overall
 - Caleb Darsney – 1st Place, National Award Winner Demonstrations in Horticulture
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Livestock Judging A Team**
 - Team Members: Brennan King, Stephen King, Kelsey Zepp, Payton Zepp
 - Coaches: Bonnie Boyden, David Gordon, Kathy Gordon, Karen Holloway, Tyler Hough
- **Keystone International Junior Livestock Judging Contest, Keystone International Livestock Expo, Harrisburg, PA**
 - Brennan King – 3rd Sheep, 19th Oral Reasons, 13 th Overall
 - Stephen King - 4th Swine, 8th Overall
 - Kelsey Zepp - 14th Beef
 - Team - 6th Sheep, 7th Swine, 9th Oral Reasons, 6th Overall

- **National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest, North American International Livestock Expo, Louisville, KY**
 - Kelsey Zepp - 13th Overall, 15th in Beef, 16th in Reasons
 - Payton Zepp - 8th in Sheep/Goat
 - Team - 3rd in Sheep/Goat, 9th in Beef, 10th in Swine, 6th Overall
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Livestock Judging B Team**
 - Team Members: Lily Luther, Megan Mansfield
 - Coaches: Bonnie Boyden, David Gordon, Kathy Gordon, Karen Holloway, Tyler Hough
- **Southeastern Regional Livestock Judging Contest, Abingdon, VA**
 - Lily Luther - 16th in Beef
 - Megan Mansfield- 4th in Sheep & Goats
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Livestock Skillathon Team**
 - Team Members: Tiffany Abell, Lucas Barnett, Riley Jo Herbert, Abby Zimmerman
 - Coaches: Jeanne Williams, Lauren Mohler
- **National 4-H Livestock Skillathon Contest, North American International Livestock Expo, Louisville, KY**
 - Lucas Barnett - 6th in Evaluation
 - Riley Jo Herbert – 19th Overall
 - Team - 2nd in Evaluation, 8th in Quality Assurance, 9th in Identification, 6th Overall
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Poultry Judging Team**
 - Team Members: Philip (Addison) Herbert, IV
 - Coaches: Angelique Livezey, Philip Herbert, III
- **National 4-H Poultry Judging Contest, National Poultry & Egg Conference, Louisville, KY**
 - Philip (Addison) Herbert, IV - 18th Overall
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Archery Team**
 - Team Members: Rachel Egan, Ashlynn Kidwell, Andrew Main, Abigail Smith
 - Coaches: Jennifer Blizzard, Michael Blizzard
- **National 4-H Shooting Sports Championship, Grand Island, NE**
 - 25th Overall Compound Archery
- **2023 Maryland 4-H Shotgun Team**
 - Team Members: Dylan Lee, Kenneth Matthews, William McConnell, Hunter Seago
 - Coaches: James Flutka, Michael Smith
- **National 4-H Shooting Sports Championship, Grand Island, NE**
 - 15th Overall Shotgun

Agribusiness- Thomas Mullineaux:

- The spreaders and sprayers are greased up and ready. Operators are ready. Businesses are ready, wheat is ready. It's just the fact that the ground isn't ready. The blessed rain and snow of the last several months is still laying in some fields. We'll have to be patient.
- Fertilizer and crop protection products are readily available, no shortages foreseen. Prices continue to fluctuate. Politics, Russia, the drought, the floods. One reason after another.
- Local big news in the seed business: Merrihan Corporation that we've viewed as a "Southern Company" is in the process of purchasing Boyle Brothers seed processing of Queenstown, MD. All indications at this time point to business as usual for seed wheat, barley and soybeans.
- Retail is struggling. With very few exceptions the "one Stop shopping" for feed, seed, fertilizer and farm supplies will be a thing of the past.
- Positive: for those businesses that have adapted, spring plant and veggie seed sales are beginning even now!
- I look forward to seeing you live and in person in March.

Agritourism - Kelly Dudeck:

- Priority bills:
 - HB1217/SB1042 Allowing delivery & shipping, lifting the to-go caps that came around during COVID and proved to be helpful.
 - HB914/SB746 Modifying the Winery & Vineyard Economic Development Grant Program allows a broader applicant pool for the grant.
 - SB1001 expands the definition for wineries and which agricultural products can be used in their products.
- Dry January has been hard for local alcohol.
 - FeBREWary typically sees a spike in craft beer, offsetting the decrease in January.
 - MDA's Shuck and Stout event promotes the craft beer industry.
 - March is Maryland Wine Month, also offsetting the January decrease.
- Encourages everyone, especially farmers, to represent their industry. Agriculture must go back to its roots and explain farming to the legislature, since they are so far removed from agriculture.

Aquaculture - Johnny Shockley:

- No report.

Bio-Fuel - Rajneesh Kathuria:

- According to Interesting Engineering. Com
- Scientists at the University of Malaga (UMA) have participated in a groundbreaking international study led by the Future Power Systems Group of the University of

Birmingham in the UK, investigating how to reduce vehicle pollutant emissions without affecting engine performance.

- The study analyzed the use of oxygenated biofuels blended with diesel in a 20-percent volume concentration, noting a reduction in the production of soot – black smoke emitted by cars – by over 90 percent.

Consumer – Kellie Hinkle:

- Now that dry January is in the rearview mirror, consumers stocked up for the big game!
 - Fans in Kansas City were consuming:
 - Tito’s Handmade Vodka
 - Wycliff Brut
 - Michelob Ultra
 - Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc
 - Kendall Jackson Chardonnay
 - Fans in San Francisco were enjoying:
 - Modelo Especial
 - Coors Light
 - Tito’s Handmade Vodka
 - Jameson Irish Whiskey
 - Corona Extra
- I attended the Spirits of Southern Maryland event the day before the Super Bowl and diversified my cocktail cabinet. We started Super Bowl Sunday with St. Mary’s own, Tobacco Barn Distillery Bourbon Crème in our coffee and finished the night with Charles County Copper Compass Lemon Drop Rum on the rocks. I noticed a larger number of distilleries offering local vodka, which tracks with consumer buying preferences.
- Super Bowl Sunday is the second biggest “eating” day of the year after Thanksgiving.
 - Super Bowl Top Ten
 - #10- Chili
 - #9- Spinach Artichoke dip
 - #8- Meatballs
 - #7- Pigs in a blanket
 - #6- Veggie tray
 - #5- Deviled Eggs
 - #4- Sliders
 - #3- Nachos
 - #2- Pizza
 - #1- Chicken Wings
- “The National Chicken Council estimates that 1.45 billion chicken wings were consumed for Super Bowl Sunday. To help visualize just how many wings that is:
 - 1.45 billion wings is enough for every man, woman and child in the United States to eat four wings each.

- If Kansas City Coach Andy Reid ate 50 wings every day, it would take him 79,452 years to eat all 1.45 billion.
- 1.45 billion wings is enough to put 693 wings on every seat in all 30 NFL stadiums.
- If laid end-to-end, 1.45 billion wings would stretch 1/3 of the way to the moon.
- If each wing represented one second moving forward, 1.45 billion would be 46 years from now, or the year 2070.”
- In support of Maryland’s poultry producers, can we get on board to increase wing consumption for Super Bowl 59 by cheering for the Buffalo Bills next season?

Dairy I – Vacant:

Dairy II- Vacant:

Direct Farm Market - Amy Crone:

- Most farm stands and farmers markets are still closed for the winter season; many will open in April.
- There is a list of the year round farmers markets [here](#) and you find lists [here](#) for inspiration of what’s in season before you shop.
- Winter CSAs are accepting members; they are [listed](#) on Maryland’s Best for folks to find one near them and inquire if they offer options year-round.
- [Applications](#) are open for SMADC’s Maryland Market Money program for the 2024 season.
- Conference season is in full swing; see list below.
- Grants / Opportunities / Conferences (in chronological order):
 - [MDA Farmers Market Conference](#): 3/12/2024
 - MDA announced the [Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program](#), with applications due on 3/15/24
- Ongoing challenges for this sector: processing dates, weather, labor

Equine (Horse Breeding) - Ann Merryman:

- American Horse Council – Economic Impact Study on Equine (Maryland Breakout Study)
 - Economic impact grew 38% from 2017-2022
 - Over 30% of Maryland households have an equine interest
 - \$1.5 billion GDP, adding \$1.8 billion to the Maryland Economy
- Traditional agriculture often pushes against equine, but there is a noticeable overlap on agricultural products incorporated into the equine industry and can work together to advance Maryland agriculture.
- There are more horses per square mile in Maryland than there are in any other state in the U.S.

Farm Bureau - Paula Linthicum:

- Bills MDFB **opposes** that would make farming in Maryland more difficult:
 - **HB0210: Proposed fossil fuel use & electric-ready building standards jeopardize MD farm viability**
 - *SB0193 (HB0357)*: Banning caged egg farm operations, mandating a costly conversion
 - *HB0109 (SB0281)*: Restricts submerged aquatic vegetation management on aquaculture leases
 - *SB0235 (HB0057)*: Includes veterinarians in drug monitoring program, risking rural vet practices.
 - *HB0150*: Imposes recurring fees on certain vehicles, negatively impacting farmers.
 - *HB0245*: MDE bill to raise fees on various permits, setting concerning precedent.
- Priority bills MDFB **supports**:
 - **SB0392 (HB0616): Restricts adversarial foreign government property interest in MD farmland**
 - **SB0589/HB0812: Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - SMADC Funding**
 - *SB290*: Alters Certified Local Farm and Fish Program deadlines for efficiency
 - *SB0196*: Shifts small pond plan reviews to Soil Conservation Districts
 - *HB0113 (SB0042)*: Mandates helmets for minors in public land equestrian activities
 - *SB0056 (HB0163)*: Establishes On-Farm Organic Diversion & Compost Grant Program
 - *HB0447 (SB0440)*: Increases income tax credit for venison donation to \$75.
 - *SB0367 (HB0481)*: Authorizes and protects antlerless deer hunting programs.
 - *SB0278 (HB0234)*: Updates agriculture fees, penalties, and regulations.
(Supported with amendments)
 - *SB0178 (HB0022)*: Requires State Highway Administration's pollinator plan.
(Supported with amendments)
- *Maryland Farm Bureau Day in Annapolis February 7, 2024*:
 - Nearly 100 from across the state met with over 30 legislators to discuss policy and the impact on their farm businesses.

Field Crops – Chris Rhodes:

- The biggest news in the ag world right now is a federal court in Arizona has vacated the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2020 approvals of dicamba-based herbicides sold by Bayer (XtendiMax), BASF (Engenia) and Syngenta (Tavium). U.S. District Court Judge David Bury said the agency violated procedures mandating public input when it reauthorized dicamba back in 2020. This is for over the top use of the herbicide which it is primarily used on soybeans and cotton. As of now the EPA hasn't appealed the ruling

although most feel there will be an appeal especially since most farmers have purchased there seed and chemical's for the 24 growing season.

- Panama is experiencing record drought right now which is affecting the ability of the canal to function. Ships traveling through the canal are prioritized on how far in advance they can accurately book their passage. Since grain ships operate on a more flexible schedule, they are less of a priority and are therefore finding other routes of passage around the world.

Food Processing – Vacant:

Forestry – Hunter Pusey:

- Of pending concern to Maryland’s forest community is the General Assembly’s consideration of the Administration-sponsored **2024 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act** (link below to “BRFA”).
 - <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024RS/bills/sb/sb0362F.pdf>
 - This Act, among other things, proposes to reduce the \$1 million mandated appropriation to *the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fellowship Fund* (“WIF”) by 50% effective for fiscal year 2025 and beyond. Why does this matter to forestry?
 - Suffice to say, the Association of Forest Industries (“AFI”) led an effort in 2009 to secure enactment of the **2009 Sustainable Forestry Act** (link below to Chapter 175). This Act, among other things, statutorily declares the nexus between a healthy Chesapeake Bay and a healthy sustainably managed forest system. Maryland’s forests – which comprises about 42% of all acreage in Maryland – absorb the harmful nutrients that are choking the Chesapeake Bay to death not to mention providing clean air through photosynthesis. Simply put, investing in sustainable forestry management is a key watershed goal.
 - https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2009rs/chapters_noln/Ch_175_sb0549T.pdf
 - It took from 2009 to 2022 to secure WIF funding via the latter of which the \$1 million for WIF was included in the *Great Maryland Outdoors Act*. Finally, forestry thought, DNR’s Forest Service will have the dollars needed to fulfill its mission -- via § 5–307 NR – and measurably contribute to the multi-billion-dollar Chesapeake Bay restoration effort. This effort will be compromised if WIF funding is reduced via the 2024 BRFA as introduced. Forestry is doing its best to convince State lawmakers of the short-sightedness of the WIF 50% reduction, especially as Maryland taxpayers contribute billions of dollars to the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort.

Hemp- Matthew ‘Levi’ Sellers:

- No report.

Horticulture – Vacant:**Livestock- Sean Hough:**

- Spring small livestock sales are kicking off and actively scheduling for pigs, sheep, & goats. This will peak in the April timeframe for the 4-H and FFA youth for summer projects.

Nursery I- J. Kelly Lewis:

- The MNLGA (Maryland Nursery, Landscape and Greenhouse Association) is watching and getting member input on HB979 and SB915 on Invasive Plant Species. The industry supports the need to reduce invasive plants and wants to be heard as to the “what’s, how’s and when’s” of the legislation. The risk of significant financial impact should be weighed and avoided if possible.
- Acknowledge the benefit of the opening new University of Maryland Extension Central Maryland Research and Education Center in Clarksville Md. Will include a large lab for Plant Pathology and Entomology to enhance the diagnostic outreach for the commercial horticulture industry. It also includes space for educational groups.
- Chesapeake Green 2024 to be held on 2/15 and 2/16 at the Maritime Institute. The largest educational event sponsored by MNLGA, Maryland Extension and AgFS (Agriculture and Food Systems)
- In general, the Maryland Nursery industry is busy preparing for the busy spring season with harvesting and shipping of nursery plant material. So far, the winter weather has been favorable and most operations seem optimistic for a good season and year.

Nursery II- John Murphy:

- No Report.

Organic Farming – Emma Jagoz:

- Resources
 - [Organic Blueberry Production Guide](#), by ATTRA
 - [Organic Soil Health online resources](#)
- Opportunities
 - USDA thru FSA announces reopening of [Continuous Conservation Reserve Program](#) as of Jan 12, 2024
 - Apply through FSA by July 31, 2024
 - [Organic Transition Initiative](#) by USDA, \$300M
 - [Organic Farmers Association annual survey](#) - to be completed by organic farmers with the goal of shaping policy - complete by 2/11

- [Fava bean as winter crop in MidAtlantic](#): multi-state initiative led by Virginia Tech touts fava bean as versatile and resilient winter crop
- [Organic Grain Conference + Trade Show](#) Feb 7-8, Illinois
- [Organic Regulations for Livestock](#) Jan 22, Zoom, based out of CA
- Challenges
 - New regulations for organic certification coming through the MDA to be effective Apr 1, 2024– overall looks to be a bit more daily recordkeeping
 - Certified naturally grown can be risky given the broad opportunity to “do a favor” in peer-to-peer certifications.
 - [New invasive pest](#) coming in on house plants – thrips parvispinus
 - Found in FL
 - Recommendation: avoid purchasing new house plants
 - Crops most affected: papaya, peppers, potatoes, eggplant, beans, shallots, and strawberries
 - [Inequities Persist Among American Women Farmers](#)
 - [USDA Gender Equity Report](#)
 - Women account for greater % of organic and sustainable operations
 - “Though it is not possible to generalize values and characteristics to all women in agriculture, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests women-led farms currently operating in the U.S. tend to prioritize community-scale impacts on food security, environmental sustainability, and local economies.” p14
 - “Women-led farms are not experiencing equal outcomes as farms run by men. Women are struggling economically to a greater extent, are having unique challenges accessing secure land tenure and enough land and are receiving less government support through financial and technical assistance. They also are more at risk of experiencing violence and discrimination.” p26
 - [American Farmland Trust’s report on these findings](#)
- Overall there market is strong and growing for organic in the state, region and nation
 - Record sales every year for organic across the board ([Organic Trade Association](#))
 - Certified organic is up to 6% of total food sales in the US
 - Sales of organic foods are far outpacing the growth of non-organic foods, at 8.7% annual growth rate compared to overall food industry growth expectation of 3.8% through 2027
 - Organic produce is at the top of all organic sales (\$22B out of >\$61B), 15% of all veg and fruit sales in US
 - Millennial parents are the top buyers of organic products

- Organic farms overall across the nation are increasing in acreage (5% increase in the nation from 2019-2022) - [USDA](#)
- There's 62 certified organic farms in Maryland (fiscal year 2022)
- Pennsylvania organic sales have skyrocketed over the past 10 years, competing with Washington state for the #2 spot (next to California) in the nation for organic
 - Noteworthy especially because many PA growers are selling into Maryland and across it into DC and NoVA
- Top organic products across US: all are trending up in sales growth
 - Milk
 - chickens/broilers
 - Eggs
 - Apples
 - Corn for grain
 - Strawberries
- Top ways of selling organic:
 - Direct to consumer
 - Direct to retail or institutions
 - Value-added products
- Top organic production practices employed
 - Buffer strips
 - Applied animal manures
 - Use water management practices
 - Plant and incorporate green manures
 - No-till or minimum till
 - Produce or use mulch and/or compost
- Challenges
 - Top challenge faced by organic farmers: regulatory issues
 - With new organic standards coming into place with an update in 2023, these may be exacerbated in 2024 and beyond
 - Alternatives to the label
 - Among many organic growers, distrust of the changes in the requirements, namely allowing for some CAFO operations and hydroponic operations to become certified organic fueled a new movement called "Real Organic"
 - "Regenerative" momentum continues despite having a universal definition
- Opportunities for organic growers are abundant
 - Grant opportunities abound for organic farmers – costing attention and discernment to filter through and apply for
 - [Organic Market Development](#) grant via USDA was new in 2023 and only available for organic or transitionally organic growers with a \$75M pot
 - Cost shares and supportive programs

- Cover crop programs are expanding to include small-scale growers
 -
- Organic is defined as a “value add” and therefore all USDA opportunities for “value-added agriculture” are available for organic farms
- Many complicated and untimely annual USDA grant opportunities (such as [VAPG](#)) are adding “fast track” applications to ease the burden on farmer applicants

Poultry I- Zach Evans:

- Updates from Delmarva Chicken Association (DCA)
- Dissolved Air Floatation (DAF)
 - Using air to capture solids from wastewater and food processing facilities.
 - The byproduct collected from the DAF process is approved by the Maryland State Chemist as a soil amendment to be used in conjunction with a nutrient management plan.
- The current bill to better regulate the storage and land application of DAF that was introduced last week has bipartisan support.
 - The original bill put the regulatory burden on an agency that does not have a section that would be able to focus on carrying out those duties.
 - Stakeholders have been working closely with the legislature and the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to shift the oversight into MDA since it has the knowledge and connection with the farmers.
 - Other notable amendments in the bill:
 - The original bill made it comparable in regulation to biosolids, but DAF is food waste and shouldn’t be regulated the same as wastewater.
 - The definition of utilization was broad and would have put the onus on the farmer/ applicant for handling a complex permit application and increase their risk.
 - There are several concerns about a county’s ability to regulate DAF.
 - Counties currently have and will still have the authority to ban DAF through planning and zoning.
 - Additional concerns come up surrounding the origin of DAF.
 - Point of origin must be reported on a farmers Annual Implementation Report, however this is only reported annually in March, and is “after the fact.”
 - The new proposed permitting process will give notice prior to application.
 - MDA has not found any cases of misuse but given the dilution of the product it takes several passes through a field to reach a significant nutrient value.
 - “Smell what you see” – when farmers are constantly in the field working and applying multiple times because the nutrient value is low, there is a

strong odor that is compounded by perception.

- Highly pathogenetic avian influenza (Hi-Path)
 - No current local cases.
- DCA 2023 Poultry Industry Statistics:
 - 601 million chickens were raised and processed on Delmarva.
 - 4.4 billion lbs. of chicken were produced in 2023.
 - 1213 family farms raised chickens.
 - 4900 poultry houses
 - Not representative of active houses, some older structures are not used for chickens anymore but are still standing.
 - 1800 company employees
 - \$1.5 billion paid to local grain farmers.
 - \$4.4 billion Delmarva net GDP in 2023
 - Down from \$5 billion in 2022
 - Payment to poultry farmers, employees, and grain farmers were all higher in 2023 than years previous.
 - The cost of chicken went down; but the overall inputs are still high.
 - One of the greatest values in the integrated system is that it insulates farmers from market factors such as high input prices and low grain markets, while still being able to remain profitable and sustainable in the long run.

Poultry II- Far Nasir:

- No Report.

Related Services I – Frank Allnutt:

- No report.

Related Services II – Stefanie Reiser:

- Hemp is struggling to get traction due to misconceptions - there's political friction between hemp and marijuana, and the only differentiator is the level of THC (the intoxicating cannabinoid).
 - Working with legislators to carve out more opportunities for the hemp producers to sell non-intoxicating products (i.e. products that support health and wellness without the intoxicating effects of THC).
- Maryland administration is hesitant to work with hemp producers because of the ongoing litigation from a segment of the industry that wants intoxicating products to be included in hemp legislation.
 - As long as there are lawsuits in place, it locks out opportunities for leadership on both sides to work together, forcing business out of state while our neighbors outpace us in the industry.

- There is great desire and opportunity for further value-added processing within the hemp industry.
- There is a large movement in Western Maryland interested in the production of industrial hemp for fiber.
- Federally, hemp is legal as long as it is under the specified level of THC.
 - Maryland and other states struggle to balance hemp, recreational marijuana, and unregulated modified highly intoxicating products that are found in gas stations etc.
- Joe Dymek – Howard County workgroup recently published a hemp & cannabis report evaluating several factors, including the tax implications on producers, buyers, and the county.

State Grange- Clifford Newsome:

- The Ground Hog saw his shadow and we've gotten rain and snow. This helped the water table and brought us out of the drought status. Next week is National FFA week. Today is Valentine's Day.
- The Maryland Grange is watching our state's legislative action in Annapolis. Crime is at the forefront of their attention. Their attention to juvenile problems will determine how to curb carjacking, drug, assaults and gun control in schools and neighborhoods. The city is not the only problem area in the state. Crime is already creeping into surrounding counties. Using the "kid gloves" approach isn't working. Jail time in adult jails or prisons provide a "training ground" for youth. Community service in the areas affected might help reduce problems. More police would help but recruitment and training will be needed. If people move out of these areas. Crime will increase or follow to those areas. Good luck legislators.
- Cost of education is a concern especially in rural counties. The area from Baltimore to D.C has higher income population that can afford these costs. All other counties are struggling to meet their budgets without additional costs imposed by the educational initiative.
- The career and technical centers developing courses which enhance possibilities for non-collegiate careers. Computer courses are exposing students to thousands of careers. Funding should increase in this area.
- We plan to help with the Maryland FFA Spring Judging Contest at Westminster High School on April 13. Did you know that the FFA Creed was written by a Granger?
- The Maryland Grange will be celebrating their 150th Anniversary this year in October.

Turf- Gordon Kretser:

- No report.

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

- The University of Maryland Statewide Extension Advisory Committee (SEAC) met virtually on February 13 to discuss unmet needs and opportunities, strategic partnerships, and UME program priorities for the next five years. The next SEAC meeting will be October 8th.
- University of Maryland Eastern Shore and University of Maryland, College Park had their semiannual meeting to share applied research and educational programs, coordinate Extension efforts, and identify collaboration opportunities.
- Dr. Xuan Wei started as urban agriculture farm and agribusiness management specialist on February 12. Dr. Qianwen Lu will start as urban agriculture production specialist in mid-March. Both have statewide responsibilities and will be located at CMREC-Clarksville.
- The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) has received requests for 723 nutrient management plans and 40% of these have been completed. All the information needed to write nutrient management plans has been received for 58% of the requests and 69% of these have been delivered to farmers.
- LEAD Maryland Class XII visited Panama in February for its international experience. Class XIII starts its program on February 22 in Cecil County. LEAD Maryland will celebrate its 25th anniversary that day.
- The AgFS Program has 10 positions in various stages of recruitment. Charles County AgFS educator candidates have been selected for initial interviews. The AgFS vegetable production specialist and ruminant livestock specialist positions are expected to post on eTerp around March 1. The Caroline County AgFS educator position description has been submitted to human resources and will post in late spring.
- The faculty specialist, ANMP program director announcement is accepting applications and has a best consideration date of February 18th. Sixteen applications were received for the five open nutrient management advisor positions in Caroline, Montgomery, Wicomico/Worcester, and Washington Counties, and statewide. Nine of the candidates will be interviewed in late February or early March.
- AgFS winter educational programming continues.

Vegetable – Russell Shlagel:

- More and more growers have started seeding greenhouses with onion and leek transplants as well as some tomato and pepper plants to be used in high tunnel, hanging baskets also are being started.
- There are some winter markets that will go through till Spring to a dedicated following of buy local customers.
- The recent no plastic bag laws enacted in PG and AA county seem to be not as bad for farmers and farmers markets as previously thought.

- Conference season is slowly winding down. There are still plenty of excellent opportunities afforded to us by MD cooperative extension, MDA, and industry trade partners to get our credits for nutrient management vouchers, crop protection applications and food safety compliance. Don't waste the winter, get your paperwork in order.
- Some upcoming
 - Eastern Shore Vegetable, 2/20/2024
 - Bay Area Fruit School, 2/23/2024
 - Farm Food Safety Plan Writing Workshop, 2/27/24
 - Mid Atlantic Strawberry Field Day @ VA Beach, 2/26 & 2/27/2024.
- If you use the Farmers Market Nutrition Program don't forget you need to be certified every 3 years. Classes are being offered across the state as well as online.
- On the Nutrient Management side, the AIR report forms arrived as reliable as Santa Clause at Christmas. Fellow Growers take the time now before you get busy to get these done.
- This takes me to my pet peeve of the month. As early as mid-January I was seeing weed and feed fertilizer show up in the big box stores for sale. I saw no sign saying do not apply before March 1 or don't use fertilizer for ice and snow melt. Why does it fall on the farming community shoulders to be responsible stewards. I think we should expect more from our corporate partners.
 - 2005 United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA NASS) performed a study funded by Maryland's turf industry.
 - 1.1 million acres of turf in Maryland (18% of the total land area)
 - Turf was the largest single agricultural crop, and the greatest portion (937,000 acres) in single family home lawns.
 - For reference, 2.6 million acres were forest, 2.1 million were farmland.
- Finding reliable legal workers for Ag jobs continues to be a struggle.
- Changes with the AWER calculation and job classification continue to dissuade some growers from using the program. This year, 2024, H2-A laborers will be paid \$17.20/hour.
- Now is the time to get those "Winter Jobs" done that you've been putting off all Spring and Summer. You're running out of time on this.
- Did anyone notice today is 10 hours 42 minutes of daylight about 2.5 minutes longer than yesterday. Spring is just around the corner.

Veterinary – Dr. Marianne B. O'Malley:

- The MD Vet Med Association is working on a few bills-SB 0235/ HB 0057 Prescription Drug Monitoring Program- Dispensers- Veterinarians SB 235 and HB 57 alter the definition of "dispenser" for purposes of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) to include certain licensed veterinarians when dispensing controlled substances for animals in the usual course of providing professional services; and providing that the

PDMP is not required to disclose prescription drug monitoring data to veterinarians. The MDVMA believes it is in the best interest of public health and state regulatory officials to maintain the veterinary exemption from the PDMP. We disagree that the statute requires inclusion of veterinarians within the PDMP to be effective and what we have determined, however, is the exemption of veterinarians from the start was purposeful and for good reason.

- The PDMP system is designed for humans, not animals.
- Data shows veterinarians do not contribute to controlled substance diversion and abuse.
- Veterinarian exclusion does not endanger public health.
- Veterinarian use of controlled substances occurs within the clinical setting and are rarely dispensed.
- Impact on rural emergency veterinary care
- SB 0745 -Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine – Funding.
 - SB 745 increases the number of Maryland residents from 30 to 42 in the student body of the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.
 - Maryland is experiencing a statewide shortage of veterinarians that is significantly impacting our industry in rural, suburban, and urban areas of the state.
 - Both large and small animal practices are experiencing longer than historical wait times to care for patients.
 - Practices are unable to fill vacant positions for new doctors for extended periods of time.
 - The recent growth of the profession in more diversified fields such as Specialty Practice, Shelter Medicine, Urgent Care, USDA, FDA, Human Health and One Health has reduced the number of graduates working in general practice.
 - Population growth has increased demand for more veterinary services.
 - Professionals with veterinary degrees are in high demand in cross-over professions.
 - Broad education in the field has opened created opportunities in World Health and management of zoonotic diseases.
 - The increase in specialty medicine and technology has greatly expanded the opportunities available in the profession.
 - Trained veterinarians are needed to keep up with the technical advancements in procedures to improve animal health.
- SB 745 will be heard by the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee although a date has yet to be determined.

MDVMA's position:

SUPPORT

HB 0171: State Board of Pharmacy – Membership – Veterinarian

*Sponsored by Delegate Guyton
Health and Government Operations
Hearing: 2/8/24 at 1:00PM*

The Maryland Veterinary Medical Association supports the passage of HB171. The inclusion of a veterinarian on the State Board of Pharmacy will make the organization of professionals stronger and enhance protection of the public. Veterinarians, like all healthcare practitioners, commonly prescribe medications. While human and animal healthcare practitioners may commonly prescribe the same medications to treat similar conditions, animal prescriptions often require doses uncommon to humans with varying routes of administration. We believe it is in the best interest of the public as well as pharmacists and prescribers to have specific expertise on the State Board of Pharmacy.

MDVMA's position:

MONITORING

SB 0193/HB 0357: Agriculture – Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production – Prohibitions

*Sponsored by Senator Lewis Young and Delegates Terrasa, Lehman et al.
Environment and Transportation Hearing: 2/14/24 at 1:00PM*

The MDVMA wishes to highlight there are inherent advantages to both free range and caged production systems for the health of the bird and the public. The choice of which type of egg to purchase is and should remain for Maryland consumers to decide. We believe it is critical to food security/public health that Maryland producers can produce eggs with flexible systems that reduce externalities posed by adverse disease or weather events when necessary while maintaining welfare of the individual chicken.

MDVMA's position:

SUPPORT

HB 0647: Property and Casualty Insurance – Pet Insurance –

Regulation

Sponsored by Delegate Guyton

Economic Matters Hearing: 2/15/24 at 1:00PM

HB 0647 is legislation drafted to help clarify what exclusions and inclusions exist in individual pet health insurance programs without explicitly defining what they should or can be. We are pleased to see the drafted legislation takes careful aim at defining coverage to provide clarity to policy holders without requiring it.

Additionally there is no requirement for veterinarians to be processors of insurance payments/copays etc. Furthermore it seeks to clarify what wellness plans are but does nothing to prohibit veterinarians who provide them to their clients.

Viticulture – Rachel Lipman:

- Pruning season is getting underway in preparation for the upcoming growing season.
 - The winter weather has been relatively mild.
- March is Maryland Wine Month; local wineries are going to making a push to encourage Marylanders to go out and visit.

Young Farmers Advisory Board Report – Jenell Eck McHenry, Chair:

- Young Farmer's Survey starting in 2024/2025 to show changes from the 2015 Survey
- Working on a top-priority white-page document
 - 1: Barriers to Entry
 - 2: Developmental Pressures on Ag Land (housing/solar)

Maryland Department of Agriculture Staff Updates:

Secretary Kevin Atticks:

- All eyes on Annapolis, and all hands on deck!
- Overall, agriculture is making good collaborative progress working with other groups that are both agriculturally friendly and those who are historically not.
 - MDA is engaging in a way that the legislature is not used to, allowing agriculture to have a say in staying ahead of legislation and guiding it before it drops.
- MDA has continued to put energy into the major issues that have been discussed throughout the past year; deer, solar, nutrient management, as well as the newly arising topics as they have come up.

Cassie Shirk:

- 3/12 Farmers Market Conference at MDA
- MDA Marketing's FeBREWary promotion has continued throughout February, March is Maryland Wine Month
- There is a new deer initiative with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, connecting farmers with hunters (intentionally non-legislative and non-regulatory).

Hans Schmidt:

- A press release will be going out today announcing that farmers can start topdressing small grain. The Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland crops are at a stage that they are ready for fertilizer, even though it is earlier than the typical end of the blackout dates. This announcement is not regional, but the ones is put onto the farmers to make good agronomic decisions based on their crops needs.
- MACS Cost Share regulations have just been published that raise the funding caps for certain projects.
 - All of this information will be available under Conservation Grants on MDA's website.
 - Conservation Buffer grant, Healthy Soil grant, Small Farm program grants, all available on MDA's website as well.
- There have been concerns with cover crop payments brought up in the January Maryland Ag Commission meeting – MDA is working with the Comptroller's office to get those payments out quicker and streamline process to get the money into the farmers' pockets for the 2024 season.

Jessica Hackett:

- All grant information will remain on the front landing page of the Maryland Department of Agriculture website.

Martin Proulx:

- [Regional Food Systems Infrastructure Grant](#) is now accepting applications
 - MDA is issuing subaward grants for two categories
 - Mid-supply chain infrastructure
 - Equipment only (no matching funds required)
 - Deadline to apply is March 15th
- The USDA Regional Food Business Centers (RFBC), broken into twelve regions nationally, are initiatives support producers by providing localized assistance to access local and regional supply chains, including linking producers to wholesalers and distributors. There will be Grant and Technical assistance resources for Maryland Farmers. Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties will be included in services areas

for the Appalachia Region. The remaining Counties will fall within the service area of the Northeast Region.

Guest Reports:

- Shelby Watson Hampton, Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Corporation (SMADC)
 - Currently has a funding bill (HB812/SB589) that will secure a permanent percentage of the cigarette restitution fund instead of having to testify and lobby for it annually.
- Dean Moses Kairo, University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)
 - Recognizing the concerns with PFAS, UMES faculty is doing research and establishing a stakeholder workshop in late April.
 - Ongoing Maryland Youth Institute with the World Food Prize Foundation, targeting high schoolers that are interested in food security in the broad context, and can attend the World Food Prize dialogues in Des Moines, Iowa in October.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:02 pm by Stefanie Reiser, seconded by Amy Crone.

Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary