

Oct 1, 2026

# Governor's Intergovernmental Commission for Agriculture

Agritourism & Value Added Subcommittee Meeting

October 1, 2026

Maryland Department of Agriculture

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**Attendees:** Garry Aime, Thomas Akras, Kevin Atticks, Prem Bhandari, Allie Cavanagh, Jo-Ann Chason, Latanya Clark, Jenny Dempsey, Kelly Dudek, Rachel Felver, Hannah Fuchs, Deborah Herr Cornwell, Janna Howley, Stephanie Jones, Jeffrey Kelly, Les Knapp, Annika La Fave, Steve McHenry, Joseph Milone, Cliff Mitchell, Vincent Pacheco, Joshua Parker, Martin Proulx, Jessica Richards, Sara Seitz, Nicole Sherry, Cassie Shirk, Andrew Waters.

**Agenda**  GICA - A&VA Sub. - Agenda - 10.1.26

**Slide Deck**  GICA - A&VA Sub. Meeting - 10.1.26.pptx

## Meeting records

 (Virtual) GICA Agritourism & Value Added Subcommittee - 2026/10/01 14:54...

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## Summary

Subcommittee session covered brewery legislation and rural health transformation funding via agency reports.

## Senate Bill 807 Regulations

Discussion covered Senate Bill 807 implementation and local zoning authority for Class 8 farm breweries. Proposed regulations will establish reporting requirements and special event permits.

## Rural Health Transformation Program

Presentations detailed funding allocations and grant distribution for rural health and agricultural infrastructure. State agencies are coordinating food resilience initiatives across multiple counties.

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## Next steps

- ☐ [Stephanie Jones] Provide Contacts: Send contact details for the Maryland Association of Counties planners affiliate to the ATCC team.
  - ☐ [Allie Cavanagh] Share Updates: Distribute the written updates regarding HB 272 alongside the meeting notes.
  - ☐ [Martin Proulx] Publicize Awards: Publish information detailing the grant award recipients for the rural health transformation program.
  - ☐ [Joshua L Parker] Submit MACo Contacts: Send the Maryland Association of Counties contact information to Jeff Kelly or Tom Akras.
  - ☐ [The group] Align Messaging: Align messaging across state agencies regarding grant programs to address public confusion about program goals and eligibility.
  - ☐ [Martin Proulx] Build Landing Page: Build out the new Maryland Best farmers market landing page and coordinate with partners to establish it as the guiding resource for market functions.
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## Detailed Notes

- **Approval of July 2026 Subcommittee Meeting Minutes:** Jo-Ann Chason made a motion to approve the July meeting minutes as presented,

which was seconded by Jenny Dempsey and unanimously approved by attendees.

- **SB 807 - Class 9 Farm Brewery Licenses**

- Overview: Thomas Akras from the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission presented an overview of Senate Bill 807, which passed during the previous legislative session to address value-added agriculture for Class 8 farm brewery licenses. The legislation removed certain local zoning oversight for four licenses issued before July 1, 2015, defined these farm breweries as agribusinesses engaged in agritourism, expanded food services such as food trucks, permitted large-scale events and entertainment, and granted the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission exclusive regulatory authority to ensure public safety and wellbeing.
- Proposed Regulations and Reporting Requirements for Senate Bill 807: Thomas Akras discussed the upcoming proposed regulations for Senate Bill 807, developed in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Agriculture to define agribusiness and agritourism, with publication expected within 40 to 60 days before the end of the year. There are 37 active Class 8 farm brewery licenses, and new reporting requirements will be established to track festival types, attendee numbers, and quantities of alcoholic beverages sold.
- Enforcement and Zoning for Senate Bill 807 Farm Breweries: Stephanie Jones from Queen Anne's County raised a question about how local enforcement would handle complaints when local authorities no longer possess zoning oversight. Thomas Akras explained that local jurisdictions will serve as local eyes and ears, while the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission—comprising 60 staff members, including 30 sworn law enforcement officers—will conduct independent investigations and administrative charges when violations are verified. Addressing concerns about event sizes and neighborhood noise, Thomas Akras noted that proposed regulations contemplate special event permits modeled after Baltimore City frameworks, requiring footprint, security, traffic calming, and sanitation plans for large events exceeding approximately 200 to 250 attendees.

- Regulatory Review Process and Timeline for Senate Bill 807: Thomas Akras outlined the regulatory review process for Senate Bill 807, stating that draft regulations will be shared with stakeholders and local zoning officials for feedback within the next couple of weeks before official publication. Once published, the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission will send an EGOV delivery, post links on their website, and open a 30-day public comment window in the Maryland Register before finalizing the rules.
- Brewery Industry Challenges and Closures: Kelly Dudeck from the Brewers Association highlighted industry struggles by announcing the closure of the Guinness Open Gate brewery, emphasizing that no business is immune to current economic pressures, and noted that the association currently represents about 100 members.
- Local Government and Critical Area Engagement on Senate Bill 807: Jeffrey Kelly from the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission and Stephanie Jones discussed coordinating regulation reviews through the Maryland Association of Counties planners affiliate, while Joshua Parker from the Maryland Department of Health noted that local environmental health directors also participate in the Maryland Association of Counties. Additionally, Stephanie Jones raised concerns regarding consistency with the Critical Area Commission and Resource Conservation Area special event limits, prompting Jeffrey Kelly to clarify that the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission intends to build flexibility into the statewide regulations to collaborate with each of the 25 major jurisdictions rather than imposing a single uniform rule.
- **HB 272 Update - Postponed:** Allie Cavanagh announced that the scheduled update on House Bill 272 had to be skipped because Kelly from the Maryland Department of Health faced an unexpected scheduling conflict, but written updates will be provided and shared with the meeting notes.
  - Written Updates from MDH Post-Meeting: “Thank you for the opportunity to update the Commission on the progress the Department has made in drafting regulations for HB 272, the On-Farm Retail Food Service License legislation enacted earlier this year. We have previously updated this group, so this update will focus on the progress and structure of the regulations package as it stands today. As we have mentioned, we

started with an extensive outreach and information-gathering process with the agricultural community, in addition to the consultations required in the legislation. Based on that, we have drafted regulations that do the following:

- “1. The regulations are based on expanding opportunities for retail food service on farms (not for retail sales offsite, as we have mentioned several times) based on two primary food safety considerations: (a) the total number of days of operation, and (b) the types of food being served and cooking being done. This helps us understand the magnitude of the population risk.
- “2. The Department wanted to expand the total number of days and schedule that farms could use, so we are proposing two levels of operating duration (the number of days of operation) to allow flexibility – the first being for farms that might want to provide food service up to 3 days per week all year long (which is a bit less than 160 days) and the second being those who wish to serve up to 5 days per week year round (a bit less than 270 days).
- “3. In addition to days of operation, the Department is also addressing different types of foods proposed for service – non-potentially hazardous versus foods requiring heating, cooling, or both – the types of structures that can be used, the types of equipment that can be used (including the use of commercial versus home equipment), and particularly challenging issues like requirements for drinking water and wastewater.
- “In all of these discussions, the Department has strived to produce regulations that appropriately balance economic growth and opportunity for farms to expand their offerings of on-farm retail food service with food safety considerations. The Department believes that the current draft does meet this goal, and looks forward to working with GICA and other stakeholders as the draft regulations are proposed and ultimately adopted.”

- **Rural Health Transformation Program**

- Overview of the Rural Health Transformation Program: Sara Seitz from the Maryland Department of Health provided an overview of the Rural Health Transformation Program, established through federal HR1 allocating \$50 billion over five years to rural America, resulting in Maryland receiving an initial investment of \$168 million for budget period one. The program focuses on three main pillars: transforming the rural health workforce, promoting sustainable access and innovative care through health information technology and telehealth, and empowering rural Marylanders to eat for health, with subrecipients including the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Maryland Department of Emergency Management, and the Rural Maryland Council.
- Post-Harvest Infrastructure Grants under the Rural Health Transformation Program: Cassie Shirk and Martin Proulx from the Maryland Department of Agriculture detailed pillar three's post-harvest infrastructure grant initiative, which invests in items like walk-in coolers and refrigerated trucks to expand food aggregation and distribution in rural communities. Out of 91 applications requesting \$16 million in funding, the Maryland Department of Agriculture awarded \$3.6 million to 37 organizations across 16 counties, with awardees notified recently and detailed public announcements expected the following week.
- Food Resilience Coordination under the Rural Health Transformation Program: Annika La Fave from the Maryland Department of Emergency Management presented the Maryland Food Resilience Link program, which deploys four regional food resilience coordinators to support local food councils, supply chains, and food security in rural jurisdictions. One coordinator is already on staff for southern Maryland, and two additional coordinators for western Maryland and the Eastern Shore are starting the following Wednesday to connect food systems, extension offices, and agricultural marketing professionals without duplicating efforts.
- Discussion on Rural Health Transformation Program Strategy and Funding: Sara Seitz, Annika La Fave, and Allie Cavanagh discussed the unique, rapid speed and historical volume of the Rural Health Transformation Program funding, emphasizing the importance of aligning state agency efforts, addressing public confusion regarding various grant programs, and leveraging the finite resources to build sustainable, transformational infrastructure.

- **Farmers Market Directory Rebranding and Expansion:** Martin Proulx from the Maryland Department of Agriculture introduced a programmatic change to address discrepancies in the farmers market directory, which historically required markets to exist for two consecutive seasons to be published, unintentionally creating hurdles for local zoning approvals. To resolve this, the Maryland Department of Agriculture created a flexible farmers market landing page under the Maryland's Best brand to list startup markets immediately and support value-added beverage producers participating in farmers markets without strict time limitations.
- **Upcoming Meeting Dates:** Allie Cavanagh -MDA- announced that due to space availability challenges, the final full commission GICA meeting of the year has been rescheduled to November 30, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Maryland Department of Agriculture headquarters in Annapolis, with a virtual option available.

*Meeting notes were supported by Gemini and edited for accuracy by Allie Cavanagh - MDA-.*