



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry

Office of the Secretary

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Maryland Agricultural Commission

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Maryland Agricultural Commission Minutes November 13, 2019

Present:

Agribusiness: Thomas Mullineaux
Agritourism: Taylor Huffman
At Large Ag Service: Frank Allnutt
Food Processing: Cheryl DeBerry
Forestry: Elizabeth Hill

Horticulture: Keith Ohlinger
Poultry I: Michael Levensgood
Poultry II: Michelle Protani- Chesnik
Veterinary: Dr. John Brooks

Absent:

Ag Education: Martha Clark
Aquaculture: Tal Petty
Consumer: Carroll Shry Jr.
Dairy II: David Pyle
Farm Bureau: Jonathan Quinn

Field Crops: Donald Maring
Nursery II: Ray Greenstreet
Organic Farming: Matthew Nielsen
Turf: Tom Warpinski
University: Dr. Craig Beyrouty
Viticulture: Matthew Corey Spies

MDA Staff:

Julie Oberg
Hans Schmidt
Kevin Conroy
Cassie Shirk
Rich Colburn
Joe Bartenfelder

Speaker/Guest:

Kay-Megan Washington (Program Administrator) Agricultural Conflict Resolution Service
Matt Helminiak (Commissioner of Labor and Industry) Effect of Minimum Wage Bill on Agriculture

Commodity Reports:

Agribusiness- Thomas Mullineaux:

- Growers have taken in an excellent corn harvest and much better than average soybean harvest in most areas. However, the lower Eastern Shore has suffered greatly.
- Even with the extreme wet spring in some areas and dry summer in many areas, the harvest over all was very positive. Add to all this an excellent wheat and barley harvest, cash flow was pretty good even with commodity prices not at their best.

- Dairy continues to struggle but the outlook is positive.
- Consolidation continues.
- Fertilizer and Crop Protection prices are expected to be flat. Seed prices for corn and soybeans are up slightly. \$400 for a unit of corn!!!
- Fertilizer and Crop Protection Dealers have told me that farmers are paying their bills for spring 2019 inputs and asking what is the Pre Pay program for 2020.
- Equipment dealers have told me that after 5 years of declining Large Agriculture Equipment sales (100HP+ Tractors) that this year will be flat.
- Local Farm Credit Manager informed that farmers are paying their loans and signing up for 2020 crop loans.
- Fresh Market fruits and veggies had a great year. Folks can't seem to get enough.
- Nutrient Solutions, formerly CPS, formerly UAP has purchased Farmers and Planters of Salisbury.

Agritourism- Taylor Huffman:

As October comes to an end for most Maryland agritourism farms and farm markets, most will report a great year. There is no argument that October is traditionally the most profitable month as far as market and festival sales go. With a rainy start to the year, most feared we would have a repeat of 2018. However, luckily the rain let up and most Maryland farms had a great pumpkin crop in 2019.

The USDA reports that the top pumpkin producing states in the country, with 40% of the Nation's pumpkin acres are: California, Illinois, Indiana, Texas and Pennsylvania. Illinois being the top state for production and Indiana following closely behind. With the rainy start to 2019 and the issues with getting the pumpkin crops planted, there was a drop in the acres produced by the Midwest states. This led to slightly higher pumpkin prices across the nation in 2019. Overall, supply was not as low as 2018 in which many of the east coast's large produce auctions were shipping in pumpkins from Canada to supplement short supply.

As we move into November, many farms are gearing up for Christmas tree sales. Switching their focus from fall to Christmas in just a few short weeks. Overall growing conditions seem to be favorable and tree pricing is not expected to rise significantly.

In 2018, a total of 32.8 million real Christmas trees were purchased and there were 23.6 million fake trees sold. For 2018, real tree purchases increased 20% and prices increased 4% compared to 2017, according to the National Christmas Tree Association. Approximately 28% of the real Christmas tree sales were purchased from farms either pre-cut or cut-your-own.

Food Processing- Cheryl DeBerry:

Interest in hemp continues, as the initial federal regulations have come out. I wish to make known three issues that I believe MDA is going to have to deal with ASAP:

1. **Funding:** in other states, the number of hemp growing applications skyrocketed from 80-100 in the pilot phase to over 500 when the process opened to all. We anticipate that happening in Maryland as well in 2020. In my opinion, the program in 2019 was severely understaffed due to lack of funding. One part-time person barely managed the pilot program in 2019 and there was no way for him to monitor and follow up appropriately. Therefore, it would be prudent for MDA to hire additional staff to help process and manage the applications in the spring. To do that, they need funding. Please talk to your legislators and the governor's office about this important issue.
2. Once the initial year is funded, MDA should set up a fee schedule that will keep the program appropriately staffed in subsequent years.
3. Different types of hemp is grown for different products. There is a problem with growing hemp for CBD oil (all female plants with no pollination) nearby to hemp grown for fiber and seeds (both male/female plants). We need to think about how to manage this potential problem of neighboring farms growing plants that can contaminate other plants.

With Maryland's small farm sizes, this neighbor issue could be a hot button topic. At this point I don't have a recommendation – just asking folks to please think about the ramifications. A few scenarios:

- a. If I am growing CBD hemp and it's contaminated and reduces the value of my products with pollen from my neighbor, can I sue him/her?
- b. Is there a mechanism for the state to create "zones" for growing different types of hemp? If there is, who would police it? What if stressed plants become hermaphroditic and the farmer doesn't catch it?
- c. If the state leaves it to the counties to solve the issue, which counties actually have that authority?

The Tri-State Hay and Pasture Conference will be held on January 16, 2020 at the Garrett College Career Training & Technology Center in Accident. Dr. Matt Poore, Extension Livestock Commodity Coordinator and Ruminant Nutrition Specialist with North Carolina State University will be the featured speaker for the day. A full agenda and registration information will be available by mid-December. If you have any questions, contact the extension office at 301-334-6960.

Forestry- Elizabeth Hill:

- The Rural Maryland Council awarded several MAERDAF grants that will assist in rebuilding Maryland's Forest Products Industry.
- The Maryland Forests Association was the recipient of one of those grants.
- The funds will be used for a Forest Markets Readjustment Project.
- We will meet with a variety of stakeholders to obtain information that will help assist in developing a plan that will help promote new markets and retain existing ones.
- We have just wrapped up the first step of the process, holding 3 regional meetings across the state themed – "Why Markets Matter". The idea behind these meetings was to get people from outside the forestry circle and inside the forestry circle together so they can begin to have conversations about who we are and what we do.
- We had a variety of speakers that were able to convey the economic and ecologic benefits that sustainable forest management provides. We also stressed that having a strong united voice is important for the forest community. The meetings were well attended and the attendees were able to share their concerns about the future of forestry.

Horticulture- Keith Ohlinger:

- Good year in the orchard industry. Weather was much better than last year.
- Main sticking points continue to be regulations, labor and educating the public.
- Howard County had some challenges this year when the county introduced a pesticide, herbicide, fungicide and insecticide ban on county owned land. Were able to get neonicotinoids and glyphosate exempt from the bill. Chlorpyrifos is completely banned on county property.
- The bill on solar power on Ag preserve properties. There is a bill to allow solar on certain properties.
- Did pass a task force to study the issue to include not only solar on Ag preservation parcels but solar power on the entire county as a whole.
- Concern with being consulted even during information gathering section.
- Bill passed to update forest conservation act in individual counties.
- Dean Foods declared bankruptcy.

Poultry I- Michael Levensgood:

- The IPPE poultry show in Atlanta, Ga registration is now open. This is the largest poultry show in the US and will also have over 600 students at the event looking for jobs in the industry. The early registration fee is \$75 until January 11 then it will be \$125.
- The 55th National Meeting on Poultry Health, Processing and Live Production was held in Ocean City, Md. on September 28 – 30. The event was well attended with multiple speakers updating the industry on relevant topics and issues.
- We have had 2 successful legislative tours of poultry farms in the last few months.
- Senator Mary Beth Carozza had her committee visit a poultry farm in Parsonsburg, Md. They then visited a local brewery. Heard lots of positive comments from the attendees.
- We had the House Environmental and Transportation Committee tour a poultry farm in Queen Anne's, Md., local winery and a vegetable and crop farm in Cordova, Md. These tours have been very effective in getting legislators from across the bridge to see what a poultry farm looks like and how they operate. Hopefully, it will give them some understanding when legislation comes up for a vote. The more of these we can do the better.
- The overall poultry market has been stable but there are concerns with multiple complexes coming on line in the next few months.

Poultry II- Michelle Protani-Chesnik:

- Poultry health on the shore has been excellent with no health problems or issues which with the up and down weather of some 95 degree days to some 21 degree days has been a great thing.
- Lay out times are running 4 to 5 weeks on the average with companies. At least there are chickens coming in.
- Hearing in Somerset County for clean bay renewables which is part of the hope chest for phosphorus management tool.
- 50-60 people at meeting all opposed to the Second Clean Bay renewable plant. The plant was denied on the basis that it only specified renewables and that they have done no construction but grading on the first facility.
- Need a place to take poultry litter once the PMT is fully implemented.
- Weather over the past two months has been erratic at best. Our flocks moved on October 4th and the high temperature on the farm that day was 95 degrees. The week before we had a morning in the twenties.
- Poultry health has been good across the shore. Unfortunately, grower layout (time between flocks) has become long once more and most are experiencing a four to five week lay out. This creates an economic hardship for many growers. While all are thankful just to have flocks it is still not easy for many to meet their financial obligations. Debt and bankruptcy as well as high suicide rates are still prevalent across the country.
<https://www.route50.com/finance/2019/11/over-half-states-see-rise-farm-bankruptcies/161101/>
- Building of new houses has slowed but is still continuing. Two of the builders I spoke with have told me that they still have houses to put up. The one said they have 12 to build the other builder 20 plus. I have not had time to poll the other three major builders in the area.
- In October, I participated in the study that was prepared for MDA by Dr. Memo Diriker of Beacon at Salisbury University to see if we would need a delay in the implementation of the phosphorus management tool otherwise known as the PMT.
- On November 6th, I attended a public hearing for Clean Bay Renewable in Princess Anne Somerset County Maryland, I should say a poorly published hearing as it was only published twice in two small local papers. This group was there to seek permission for a second sight on Old Princess Ann Road next to the site that received an MDA grant in 2016 for bio mass to

energy by means of anaerobic digestion. Ironically there is still no progress on the MDA site that was to be completed in 2017. These folks are the same ones who wanted to put a digester in Carvel Hall, a brown field in Crisfield, and they received a 15 million dollar grant a couple of years ago for the same process in Georgetown, Delaware. The request for the new site was denied as well as a text amendment that would have allowed any biological to be used for the production of energy. There was a large crowd opposed to this project between 50 and 60 local citizens. The only ones in favor were the principals. The local people were very adamant that they do not want the first plant on Princess Anne Road (the MDA Site) and definitely not a second one. The most interesting factor is that a building permit does not exist for the MDA site and the Somerset Concerned Citizens have vowed that if a permit is issued they will go to court and file for a **Cease and Desist** order to prevent construction from beginning. There were a lot of concerned and angry people at the hearing. Concerns expressed were the many untruths that Clean Bay has told the count and citizens. Ranging from telling them a plant was already in existence when there is none, and that everything was approved by MDE which they claim is untrue. Concerns of the proximity of this site to a recreational sports field, water usage, lack of safety planning for methane gas releases and a myriad of other concerns. The only existing permit for the site per Somerset County is a grading permit.

- On November 15th, I attended the PMT Advisory Meeting and represented DPI since our appointed representative Virgil Shockley was away. The purpose of this meeting was for Dr. Diriker to present the findings of his study as to whether or not a delay to the final stage of the implementation of the PMT should be considered. The study showed that a delay is a definite consideration as we do not have the necessary infrastructure to support the transport of poultry litter from the lower shore. We do not have the necessary infrastructure to bring in needed commercial fertilizer to replace litter. We can only spread litter between March 15 and May. There is no infrastructure to store litter in mass quantity either. There are alternative use projects up and running and if they come, we are probably at least 3 years away in my opinion when you consider regulations and permitting.
- If we go to the next phase of the PMT which is to drop the FIV (Fertility Index value) from 300 to 150. We would lose an **additional 125,000 acres of spreadable land** (land we can use this organic fertilizer on). What this equates to is if we plant **corn on 50% of this land** we would need to move an additional 5,000 trucks of litter annually from the shore. In my personal opinion we need to delay. Work must start immediately on finding funding to put this infrastructure in place and the next year should be spent putting funding and infrastructure in place. We are talking about 10 million dollars. Until that can occur it is a much safer bet both economically and environmentally to stay at the 300 level which is far below where we started in 2014 than to cripple the farmers that raise the chickens and the ones that raise the grains. Our Eastern Shore economy is reliant upon poultry and grain production and chicken is one of the biggest economic drivers in this state if not the biggest. This delay if voted for would be only one of the two that are built into this regulation. Members of the legislature need to remember the people they will hurt with retaliatory actions if we can't move forward in 2020 are the farmers and rural communities.

Turf- Tom Warpinski:

- As of the first week of November, the weather seems to have stabilized to somewhat normal conditions. The drought, which began in late July, finally broke in mid-October. The dry weather allowed growers to get most of their new fall crop in but did not see much germination until late October.
- Existing sod inventory suffered greatly from the drought due to the turf already being stressed from excess spring and summer rain causing root dieback and heavy disease pressure.

- Sod supply has tighten up a bit due to strong sales demand and growers not being able to clear cut fields, having to jump over and leave behind damaged areas. Producers growing sod on dryland fields experienced heavy damage from the fall drought.
- Disease and fungus pressure subsided slightly during the August to October dry spell but Gray Leafspot seems to be still around causing damage at this time.
- Lawn care operators had a nice dry spell to catch up on mowing and lawn renovations.
- November 15 marks the last day non-professionals can apply fertilizer to their lawns until March 1st. Lawn care professionals can apply up until December 1st but only at a rate of 0.5 pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet.
- The Maryland Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show will be at Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center on Dec 10, 2019. A great trade show with many educational seminars put together by the Maryland Turfgrass Council and the University of Maryland.

Veterinary- Dr. John Brooks:

- On National level in last couple weeks USDA has had to suspend its plan to phase in the use of electronic ids for adult cattle and bison this is an RFID type component. They had to respond to an executive order from the president which required a need for transparency and communication to all before placing any new regulations or requirements on farmers and ranchers. Subsequently the RFD component which was to replace all metal ear tags has been put on hold.
- Since the mad cow disease, there has been a push to come up with animal disease traceability protocols across the nation.
- One of the guide lines or policies for ADT is to be able to identify cattle from calving to slaughter.
- The current guide lines, however, do not include feeder cattle only adult cattle and bison.
- Funding was cut for USAID protocol research program called Predict Zoonotic Disease Research Program. They were able to identify over 1,000 new viruses that are Zoonotic basis from animal to man including a new ebola virus. Unfortunately, the program has been cut. So now the problem is that the program was able to identify a new virus every 4 months.
- Both the Senate and House passed the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act. There is now a federal law that deliberate cruelty or torture to an animal will be faced with a federal felony act by fines and up to seven years in prison.
- Marijuana Hemp CBD is being seen more in veterinary medicine and in pet food, treats and getting calls about using CBD oil for animals. Still trying to get solid footing on what as veterinarians can officially be advised.
- Seeing increase in chronic wasting disease in mid-west and in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania butchers for deer products will only take deer meat that is bone off. They will no longer accept a whole deer carcass.
- The 34th horse was euthanized at Santa Anita. They do not have an idea at this time of why so many animals are being injured at this track. It is suspected that it is something to do with the integrity of the track.
- We are preparing on a National level for an outbreak of African swine fever. African swine fever has an 85-95% mortality rate. China has lost over 300 million head of swine since the fever hit. It is hitting on the Asian rim and the problem is it can be transmitted through contaminated animal feeds. Transport of animal feeds from China may be contaminated with the fever. We are taking precautions to monitor and work with the commodity people to monitor what is coming in as far as animals and feeds.
- There is a proposal called The Center for Veterinary Molecular Diagnostics. This will give us state of the art abilities to quickly detect host and environmental contaminants and pathogens

and their characteristics and be able to preemptively be in the front line for precise target measures and treatment.

General Updates:

- The Commission needs to vote on a representative to serve on the MALPF Board
- It was decided that information about the MALPF Board be emailed out to the whole commission and those interested in representing the commission can let Jessica know. We will chose a representative during December's Meeting.
- We are currently still looking for representatives for Ag Services, Bio-Fuel, Direct Farm Market and State Grange.
- The definition of agritourism is still too broad and needs some more specifics. Each county can adapt different aspects of the definition. Is a pumpkin run agritourism or not?
- We have applications/suggestions for all other commodities at this time.
- A google survey was sent out to all commission members to determine the meeting schedule for 2020.
- The meeting schedule will be finalized during the December meeting.
- Stress the importance of attending the meetings and the consequence of not attending at least 50% of the meetings.
- We identified who on the board is term limited and those that can be reappointed for another term.
- An update on the strategic plan and what stage the plan is in was given.
- The plan is due by December 1st and once posted will be sent out to all commission members.
- There were multiple regional meetings held to receive input to help draft the strategic plan.
- A writing workshop was held to identify trends and challenge areas and where to focus our energy moving forward.
- Secretary Bartenfelder gave a summary about his trip to Mexico City and the comparison of what they are doing vs what we are doing.
- The pictures from Secretary Bartenfelder's trip will be put into a power point slide and shared at a later date.
- Secretary Bartenfelder focused on the food supply difference, the seed supply in Mexico and the difference between the markets in Mexico and the markets in the US.
- Markets in Mexico are open 24/7 7 days a week year round.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 1st by Michelle Protani-Chesnik and 2nd by Keith Ohlinger.
Respectfully Submitted by Jessica O'Sullivan.