



Maryland Certified Local Farm and Fish Program Report

Prepared by
Maryland Department of
Agriculture
Fiscal Year 2025

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Program Overview

The Certified Local Farm and Fish Program (CLFF) was established by the Maryland Department of Agriculture in 2021. The program's fundamental objective is to enhance the economic viability and participation of eligible Maryland farms in State government procurement. This is accomplished by encouraging state agencies, including public four-year universities, to meet a target of sourcing 20% of their food purchases from the Certified Local Farm and Fish Directory, as mandated by the Agriculture Article, §2-103 and State Finance and Procurement Article, §§14-701 through 14-707 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

State agencies and universities are required to submit reports detailing purchases from providers listed in the Certified Local Farm and Fish Directory.

Pursuant to §2-1257 of the State Government Article concerning Program Implementation and Participation, 2023 Chapter 576 stipulates that the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) shall submit a consolidated report to the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment and the House Health and Government Operations Committee by December 31 of every year.

There is no cost to become a Certified Local Farm or Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider. Once certified, farms and/or seafood providers must renew annually. Registration and renewal of certification takes place through the State's OneStop portal.

A certified local farm is a farm that has a nutrient management plan or meets the nutrient management requirements, i.e. apiarists or aquaculturists, with the Maryland Department of Agriculture. A Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider is a seafood dealer that is licensed as a Tidal Fish Dealer with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. DNR provides MDA with a list of Tidal Fish Dealer licensees on an annual basis. Thirty-nine additional farms were certified in FY2025, bringing the total to 167 farms and/or Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers in the CLFF Directory.

Maryland Department of Agriculture identified the following agencies which procure food with state funds through the review of the agency's mission: Department of General Services, Maryland Dept of Health, Dept. of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Dept. of Juvenile Services, Dept. of Veteran Affairs and 10 Universities.

The Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) has an USDA-inspected processing plant and a fleet of refrigerated trucks from their processing plant in Hagerstown, MD. MCE has voluntarily reported that they have purchased 36,590 pounds of blue catfish from the state contract.

The following agencies and universities requested waivers from the Certified Local Farm and Fish Program for FY 2025:

- Department of Public Safety & Correctional Services
- Department of Juvenile Services
- Dept of Veteran Affairs
- Coppin State University
- Frostburg State University
- Towson University
- University of MD College Park (UMCP)
- Univ. of MD Eastern Shore (UMES)

Data Collection

The primary data point used to measure the state entity's food purchasing goal is payment dollars. During FY 2025, total expenditures from 16 Certified Local Farm and Fish providers across the state agencies and universities was \$1,503,073 million (See Appendix 1). Approximately \$96 million was spent on food from about over 100 food vendors. The primary data points used to collect data is indicated in Appendix 2

The food procurement goal was calculated solely based on the work performed by a CLFF provider, whether acting as the prime contractor, subcontractor or supplier to a subcontractor. State agencies and universities primarily purchase products from CLFF providers indirectly through their food distributors. The only exceptions are the Department of Juvenile Services, Department of Veteran Services, and UMD College Park which have purchased directly from CLFF providers for some of their products.

	# of CLFF providers selling to state agencies	State expenditures to CLFF providers
FY 23	10	\$522,334
FY 24	16	\$238,920
FY 25	16	\$1,503,073

The Certified Local Farm and Fish (CLFF) program successfully onboarded more producers in FY 25, enabling them to sell their products to state agencies and universities.

A key factor in the State's food supply chain is food safety. While state agencies and universities may not always specify USDA GAP certification in their food specifications, their contracted food distributors require it. MDA supports producers seeking this USDA GAP certification through a cost-share program and is an active member of the Maryland Food Safety Network.

The program's continued success relies heavily on strong producer participation. State agencies

and universities are encouraged to increase their awareness of the Maryland agriculture and seafood providers they use and to notify MDA if those providers are not yet certified in the CLFF program. MDA is dedicated to assisting providers in meeting the established requirements to join.

Program Highlights:

- The Certified Local Farm and Fish directory increased the number of providers by 33%, the same percentage increase as last year.
- In FY 2025, MARBIDCO approved 4 projects for the Certified Local Farm and Fish Food Aggregation Grant program for \$600,000.
- The following state agencies requested Certified Local Farm and Fish language to include into their Request for Proposals on the program:
 - Department of General Services;
 - Maryland Dept of Health for Thomas B. Finan Center Facility.
- A training video was created by MDA personnel and made accessible to state agencies for use as a reference when completing the report form.
- The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) has created a commitment goal of achieving a minimum 2% CLFF purchase goal for all food purchases. DJS is going to accomplish the goal through the following measures: vendor and regional engagement, staff training on local food procurement and reporting requirements and quarterly reporting.
- Near the close of FY 25, the Department of General Services, Office of State Procurement began modifying its food procurement solicitations. This change incorporates a requirement notifying offerors that 20% of the food must be sourced from local CLFF food providers. The updated language allows the State to gather essential information from contractors for mandatory reporting purposes.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS:

A Certified Local Farm and Fish Program participation goal of 20 percent (20%) of the total contract dollar amount has been established for this food procurement. By submitting a response to this solicitation, the bidder or offeror agrees that this percentage of the total dollar amount of the contract for food procurement will be performed by a certified local farm or a certified Chesapeake invasive species provider, as those terms are defined by MD Code, State Finance and Procurement, §14-701. Furthermore, in accordance with COMAR 15.01.19.10, the bidder or offer agrees to provide all information and data necessary for the procuring agency to satisfy its reporting requirements to the Office for the Certified Local Farm and Fish Program.

To date, the language was included in the Statewide Request for Proposal (RFP) for Dairy Products and it will be included in the upcoming RFPs:

- Statewide Contract for Meat and Poultry Products
 - Statewide Contract for Ice Cream Products
 - Statewide Contract for Vegetarian and Plant-based Foods.
- MDA entered into two Memorandum of Understanding's with the Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center (CAIC) and University of Maryland - Baltimore, Agriculture Law Education Initiative (ALEI) after each organization received grant funding from the USDA Local Food Promotion Program to address opportunities and challenges with the CLFF program. Below are the
 - The Chesapeake Farm to Institution Value Chain Coordination Project, CAIC aims to advance the Certified Local Food Program (CLFF) by linking farmers with institutions. The project prepares both farmers and institutions to engage in larger local food transactions, addressing the challenges institutions face when working with small family farms and helping farmers navigate the procurement processes of state institutions. CAIC will develop strategies to expand local food in institutions like state agencies and public universities, while identifying and supporting farmers interested in these markets. The project also assists in creating individual institutional demand plans and coordinating farmers' sales to meet these plans, optimizing logistics to facilitate purchasing commitments.
 - ALEI is conducting a research study to better understand the legal barriers faced by institutional partners and local farmers in Maryland and the Chesapeake region, particularly in increasing participation in Farm to Institution local purchasing programs. The study, titled "Focusing In: Identifying and Addressing Legal Challenges and Educational Needs to Increase Participation in Maryland's Farm to Institution Local Food Purchasing Programs", aims to:
 1. Identify specific challenges faced by regional producers and buyers regarding legal and policy issues, such as contracting strategies, pricing standards, and procurement processes. This will be done through surveys and focus group discussions with key stakeholders.
 2. Create opportunities for collaboration by bringing together farmers, institutional buyers, food distribution managers, local agricultural service providers, and community organization members to learn from one another and build relationships.
 3. Design educational materials to address the identified gaps in knowledge and understanding.

4. Share the results with regional partners and collaborators through a detailed research report, a public symposium, and live webinars.

APPENDIX 1. Summary of Key Metrics – FY 25 CLFF Program

State Agency / University	Total Value food purchased (\$)	Payments to CLFF (\$)	%	Report Requirement	Report status
Department of General Services	\$2,599,221	\$0	0.00%	Required	Reported
Dept of Health	\$3,548,645	\$0	0.00%	Required	Reported
Dept of Juvenile Services	\$4,019,988	\$5,724	0.14%	Required	Reported
Dept of Public Safety & Correctional Services	\$37,379,715	\$1,162,851	3.11%	Required	Reported
Dep of Veteran Affairs	\$1,174,216	\$1,000	0.09%	Required	Reported
University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)	\$2,498,720	\$6,119	0.24%	Required	Reported
Coppin State University	\$1,029,980	\$1,407	0.14%	Optional	Reported
University of Maryland College Park (UMCP)	\$24,957,071	\$309,791	1.24%	Required	Reported
Towson State University	\$4,733,760	\$2,249	0.05%	Required	Reported
Bowie State University				Optional	
Frostburg State University (FSU)		\$6,030	*1	Required	Reported
Morgan State University	\$3,319,636	\$683	0.02 %	Optional	Reported
Salisbury University (SU)				Optional	
St. Mary's College of Maryland				Optional	
University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC)	\$6,115,320	\$7,219	0.12%	Optional	Reported
TOTAL	\$91,376,273	\$1,503,073	1.64%		

*1 MDA was unable to calculate the percentage due to the Total Value not being reported

The following universities do not need to report because their food service contract was established prior to the law's effective date of March 14, 2021:

- Bowie State University
- Salisbury University
- St. Mary's College of Maryland

Universities that do not have dining halls or cafeterias and therefore not required to report:

- University of Maryland Global Campus
- University of Maryland, Baltimore
- University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
- University of Baltimore

APPENDIX 2. Source of Primary Data and State Object and MCC Codes Used

For state agencies and universities with a **self-operated food service**, the following Comptroller Expenditure Object Codes were used to determine food procurement: OBJ 0811 and OBJ 0920.

For credit card payments, the applicable Merchant Category Codes (MCC) are: 5300, 5411, 5422, 5441, 5451, 5462, and 5499.

For agencies and universities with a **food service prime contractor**, the data is sourced from the internal records of each food service provider and its distributors.