Maryland
Department of Agriculture

Office of the list

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Maryland Agricultural Commission

Agriculture | *Maryland's Leading Industry*
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MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Committee on Ag Literacy & Education (CALE) Meeting Minutes

April 8, 2026 - 11:15 AM – 12:15 PM **Virtual Only**
Video call link: https://meet.google.com/efx-aapt-qjf
Or dial: (US) +1 440-462-3224 PIN: 804 211 562#

Committee on Agricultural Literacy & Education (CALE) - Focused on promoting agriculture as a viable and necessary industry through public literacy, identifying shortcomings and opportunities to increase agricultural education in the state (K-12 and post-secondary), and engaging with MDA's Karen Fedor to support farm to school programs.

Commission Membership

Commodity	Representative	Committee
Ag. Education	Dr. Missi Welsh	CALE
Agribusiness		
Aquaculture	Johnny Shockley	VAA
Biofuels	Raj Kathuria	VAA, CoWS
Committee on Young Farmers	Jenell Eck McHenry	CYF
Consumer	Kellie Hinkle	VAA
Controlled Environmental Agriculture		
Dairy	Jenni Mallott	
Direct Farm Market	Amy Crone	Profitability, VAA*
Equine	Ann Merryman	Profitability, Leg. Affairs
Farm Bureau	Paula Linthicum	Leg. Affairs*
Field Crops	Chris Rhodes	Profitability, Leg. Affairs

Commodity	Representative	Committee
Food Processing Forestry	Nikita Bocharov Hunter Pusey	CoWS, CALE
Fruit Hemp Livestock	Stefanie Reiser Eleanor Leak	Profitability, VAA CALE
New and Beginning Farmers Nursery, Landscape & Greenhouse Organic Farming	Kelly Lewis Emma Jagoz	Profitability Profitability*, Leg., VAA
Poultry Related Services Socially Disadvantaged Farmers	Zach Evans Keith Parker	Leg. Affairs, CoWS Profitability

State Grange Richard Stonebraker CALE*
Turf Gordon Kretser Profitability, CoWS*

Commodity	Representative	Committee
University of Maryland – AGNR	Dr. Darren Jarboe	CALE
Urban and Small Farmers		
VAA/Agritourism	Janna Howley	VAA
Vegetable	Russell Shlagel	Profitability
Veteran Farmers	Peter Scott	
Veterinary	Dr. Marianne Bailey	Leg. Affairs
Viticulture	Rachel Lipman	VAA

Committee Members Present:
Eleanor Leak Darren Jarboe Richard Stonebraker Susanne Richards

MDA Staff Present:
Kevin Atticks Harrison Palmer Susan Kivioja

Call to Order:
The April 2026 Committee on Ag Literacy & Education (CALE) meeting was called to order by Richard Stonebraker at 11:17 AM .

Approval of Minutes:

A Motion to approve the November 2025 and February 2026 meeting minutes was made by Darren Jarboe, and seconded by Eleanor Leak with unanimous approval.

Committee Discussion:

Agricultural Education Program Standards

New program standards are being developed for agriculture courses in collaboration with the State Department of Education. This includes the addition of a new course on equine care. The standards are scheduled to be released for public comment within the next week or two.

The idea for a statewide strategic plan for agricultural education, previously discussed by the greater agriculture commission, was well-received by the board. Planning for executing this effort is underway and will take place over the summer.

Upcoming Agricultural Awareness Days

Several upcoming agricultural awareness days are planned for middle school students.

- Queen Anne's County event: Scheduled for April 21st and 22nd at the 4-H park, where students will view livestock and machinery and interact with displays.
- Cecil County event: Scheduled from April 28th through the 30th, following a similar format.

Importance of Elementary Agricultural Literacy

Emphasis was placed on the value of starting agricultural awareness early and extending efforts across elementary, middle, and high school levels. Many counties are now hosting various agricultural literacy events in collaboration with schools and other partners. These include field trips for younger students and specific programs such as "Kids Growing with Grains" for elementary students, which is a joint effort between 4-H and extension.

Maryland Agricultural Literacy Week Success

The most recent Maryland Agricultural Literacy Week was a record year. As of last week, 459 books were sold and 13,981 students had been read to, with additional reports still expected. The State Grange contributed by having multiple Granges purchase books and participate in reading sessions at elementary schools.

Budget Reductions Impacting Agricultural Education

Upcoming budget cuts will affect agricultural education programs. The career and technical education department received a 9% reduction, resulting in approximately $5,000 less funding for the agriculture program despite an increase in the number of classrooms. This requires greater reliance on outside institutions and organizations for support. These budget concerns are expected to be widespread across counties in the state.

Development of a New Agricultural Education Position

The Maryland Department of Agriculture is creating a Maryland Agricultural Fair Board Agricultural Education position. Details are still being drafted and internal procedures need to be completed. The goal is to have a representative with expertise in agricultural education to strengthen connections

within the agency and with organizations such as the fair board. This will be an appointed position rather than an open application.

Upcoming Full Board Meeting Tour

The full board meeting in May will include a tour of Washington and Frederick Counties. Tour recommendations have been provided, and local farms have expressed willingness to showcase their operations.

Adjournment: Darren Jarboe motioned to adjourn the meeting and Eleanor Leak seconded the motion at 11:35 AM.