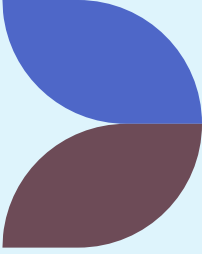


Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF)





Framing the Conversation

Today's Objective: MDA is looking to hear about the types of practices occurring across the landscape that should be eligible as a LEEF "community best practice". This category has the potential to be extensive and today MDA hopes to gain an idea of the potential practices related to - or similar to - food system resiliency, mentorship programs for beginning farmers, leadership within Boards or Committees, and collaboration with on-farm research. Future meetings will consider administrative decisions, such as prioritization or verification, as well as program incentives.

11:00 Welcome & Overview

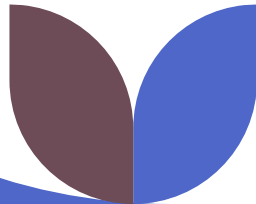
- Welcome from Secretary Atticks
- Review of LEEF framework and purpose
- Overview of Community Best Practices
 - Definition
 - State Priorities
 - Documentation

11:20 Discussion - Hearing from Partners

Topics to include:

- Food Resiliency
- Service Leadership
- Education and Partnership
 - Research
 - Mentorship
- Additional Opportunities
- Program Structure Questions

Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act



Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2

Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Leaders in Environmentally Engaged
4 Farming (LEEF) Program; establishing the Maryland Leaders in Environmentally
5 Engaged Farming (LEEF) Program Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund; altering the
6 definition of “healthy soils” for purposes of the Maryland Healthy Soils Program;
7 exempting certain holders of certain fishing licenses from the requirement to obtain
8 a food establishment license from the Maryland Department of Health; establishing
9 the Water Quality Monitoring Program; altering provisions of law regarding
10 fisheries management plans, including the entities required to be consulted,
11 circumstances under which a plan may be prepared, authorizing rather than
12 requiring that certain measures be adopted by regulation, and the location of certain
13 public hearings; altering application and public informational meeting requirements
14 and authorizations for certain submerged land or water column leases; altering
15 reporting requirements for the leaseholder of certain aquaculture and submerged
16 land leases; authorizing the Department of Natural Resources to lease certain land
17 to a person implementing practices that support healthy soils and regenerative
18 practices and traditions; establishing a process to develop a plan for permitting and
19 expediting the permitting of certain projects under the Whole Watershed Restoration
20 Partnership; requiring the Department of the Environment, by a certain date, to
21 authorize certain projects to be eligible to generate water quality trading credits and
22 develop a process for certifying the credits; providing that certain provisions of law
23 regarding stream and floodplain restoration projects may not be construed to apply
24 to permit or license applications submitted before a certain date; and generally
25 relating to the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays watershed.



LEEF

The purposes of the program are to -

- 1) Invigorate strategies to:
 - a) Reduce nutrients in support of Chesapeake Bay Watershed Restoration
 - b) Mitigate farm emissions and increase carbon sequestration in accordance with Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan
 - c) Align environmental goals and initiatives of the department and the state while enhancing farm profitability
- 1) Provide producers with greater incentives to voluntarily participate in the adoption of multiple conservation practices and community best practices within individual agricultural operations or across multiple operations that are in close proximity to one another.
- 2) Establish tiers of recognition for producers to be evaluated for program certification.
- 3) Provide state funds to incentivize the coordinated adoption of conservation practices and community best practices to achieve environmental, social, and climate resiliency benefits and nutrient and sediment reduction.

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Design Practices

Value & Prioritize

Implement

Conservation.

Conservation tillage, nutrient input reductions, cover crops, natural filters, buffers, wildlife and pollinator habitats, healthy soils practices, adoption of on-farm renewable energy, WIP eligible, and more...

Community. Research, mentorship, service to food banks and solutions for food insecurity, participation in Maryland's Certified Local Farm and Fish Program, and more...

Value. Practices would have weighted points assigned, according to intensity of a practice and/or according to their value in reaching statewide goals.

Prioritize. Practice weights can be assigned based on the location of a priority BMP, if it falls within the critical area, for example. Practices must cross between environmental, conservation practices and community practices.

Implement. Farms would add practices based on their unique situational needs, and resource concerns.

Stack. Farms would be encouraged to add practices that further enhance their efforts and increase their overall score.

Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming | LEEF

Verify

Verify. MDA already serves as the accounting agency for the agricultural sector, tracking progress towards environmental goals, and provides field assessment for verification of practices.

Certify

Tiers. Participants would earn points to qualify for tiers. *Example:*

- Platinum (80+)
- Gold (60-79)
- Silver (50-59)
- Certified (40-49)

Point groupings may differ. Tiers would acknowledge practices in place, as well as unlock greater incentives.

Promote

Promo. A farm's LEEF Certification would be promoted by MDA and by partners to promote a farm's stewardship.

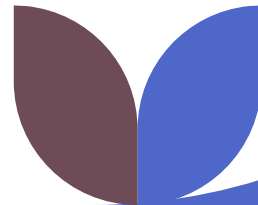
Incentives. Prioritization for funding for equipment, for contracts with vendors. Future incentives could include priority access to programs and grants, tax incentives, etc.

Act would establish a definition:

(B) “COMMUNITY BEST PRACTICE” MEANS A FARM’S OR FARMER’S DEMONSTRATED ENGAGEMENT WITH MARYLAND COMMUNITIES AS IT RELATES TO:

(1) THE PRODUCTION, SALE, OR DISTRIBUTION OF MARYLAND FARM PRODUCTS; OR

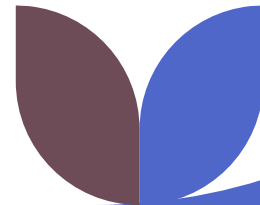
(2) PROVIDING SERVICE TO AN ORGANIZATION WHOSE FOCUS IS ADVANCING MARYLAND’S AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY, ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES, CONSERVATION PRACTICES, OR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION.



State Priorities and Documentation

To start, MDA is considering practices that are statewide priorities. In the future, county level or watershed level community best practices could be considered.

MDA welcomes the opportunity to share the message of the many farmer actions that contribute to a healthier watershed, but there is a need for them to be documented. If state funds are offered as an incentive, there will need to be records to cite.



Maryland's Path Forward

- Prioritize Co-Benefits across the many outcomes of the Bay Agreement.
- Consider new ways to measure “progress” – including capturing BMPs that are innovative and new to the landscape.
 - Holistic evaluation of agriculture’s role, outside of the model.
- Leverage partnerships and funding.
- Prioritize key landscapes and stacking of BMPs.



Community Best Practices

Facilitating work experience focused on agriculture in underserved communities

Participating in the Maryland's Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Partnership with Food Banks or Nonprofit Organizations to address food insecurity

Participation in Maryland's Certified Local Farm and Fish Program

Mentorship of new and beginning farmers

And more...





WAYS TO GIVE +

HUNGER IN MARYLAND +

Farm To Food Bank

Home → Hunger in Maryland → Programs → Farm To Food Bank



Maryland Farmers Helping Their Neighbors in Need



AGRONOMIC RESEARCH AT UMD

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

The Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) is a USDA-funded nutrition grant program that is administered by MDA in conjunction with the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Aging. Funds are utilized by state agencies to support participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and low-resource seniors who participate in the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program. Participants in both programs receive an annual voucher of either \$30 for WIC or \$50 for seniors to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets between June 1 and November 30. In Maryland, all of the 100+ authorized farmers markets throughout the State have at least one farmer who accepts FMNP. Nearly 200 farmers are authorized to sell in farmers markets or at their farm stand. **See the directory below to find a farmers market near you!**

Beginning Farmer Resources

SMADC offers several resources that specifically benefit new or transitioning farmers.

Mentor Match Program

The Maryland Farmlink Mentor Match Program pairs experienced farmers (mentors) with new or transitioning farm owners/operators (mentees) for one-on-one training, advice and interaction.

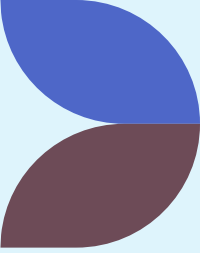
Mentee Eligibility and Responsibilities

To be eligible for the program, mentees must have *no more than ten years' experience* as a farm owner or operator and have an interest in cultivating skills in the target areas listed above. There is no charge to apply or be in the program.

If a mentor match is found, the mentee's responsibilities will include the following:



2024-2025 On-Farm Trials Information



Discussion

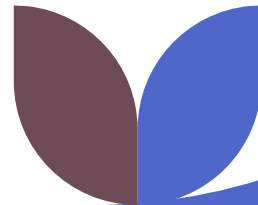
MDA is looking to hear input of partner knowledge or thoughts on practices. We will not be discussing weight or value of practices. We will not be making decisions on the “how” - how these components will work together.

Rather, at this point in development, we are looking to gather as much information as we can on the continuum of practices occurring across the many operations in Maryland.



Thank you!

Questions can be emailed to
LEEF.MDA@maryland.gov



Feedback & Next Steps

- Practices
- Incentives
- Collaborations
- Structure
- Other initial thoughts and ideas?



Survey is live!

