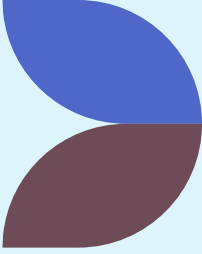


Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF)





Framing the Conversation

Today's Objective: MDA is looking to hear about the various channels, types of financing, or funding occurring across the state that could serve as an incentive for LEEF certified farms. For funding entities - what/how can your programs recognize and support LEEF certification? For the farming community - what types of financial incentives beyond cost-share would be of interest or most helpful to incentivize? Future meetings will consider administrative decisions, such as prioritization or verification of practices.

9:00 Welcome & Overview

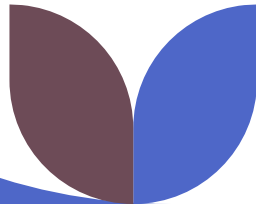
- Welcome from Secretary Atticks
- Review of LEEF framework and purpose

9:20 Discussion | Hearing from Partners

Topics to include:

- Working list of Incentives, so far
- Feedback on additional incentives or coordination of funding that could be helpful to industry

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

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 & Prioritize

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

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.

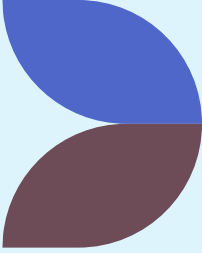
Prioritization for funding for equipment, for contracts with vendors. Future incentives could include priority access to programs and grants, tax incentives, etc.

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.



Discussion



MDA is looking to hear about the various channels, types of financing, or funding occurring across the state that could serve as an incentive for LEEF certified farms.

For funding entities - what/how can your programs recognize and support LEEF certification?

For the farming community - what types of financial incentives beyond cost-share would be of interest or most helpful to incentivize?

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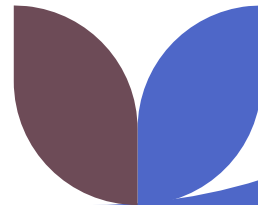


Partner Organization	Type	Program
MARBIDCO	Loan	MRBIFF Maryland Resource-Based Industry Financing Fund
MARBIDCO	Loan	Maryland Large Animal Veterinarian Assistance Loan Fund
MARBIDCO	Loan	Maryland Livestock Processing Loan Fund
MARBIDCO	Loan	Maryland Vineyard/Hopyard/Orchard Planting Loan Fund
MARBIDCO	Loan	Agribusiness Equipment and Working Capital Loan Fund
MARBIDCO	Loan	Forestry Equipment and Working Capital Loan Fund
MARBIDCO	Loan	Southern Maryland Revolving Loan Fund
MARBIDCO	Loan	Rural Business Energy Efficiency Improvement Loan Fund
MARBIDCO	Grant	Maryland Value Added Producer Matching Grant
MARBIDCO	Grant	Certified Local Farm and Fish Food Aggregation Grant
MARBIDCO	Grant	Local Government Agriculture & Resource-Based Industry Project Cost Share Program
MARBIDCO	Grant	Maryland Urban Agriculture Commercial Lending Incentive Grant
MARBIDCO	Grant	Upper Shore Regional Council Farm Incentive Fund
MARBIDCO	Easement	Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program (Next Gen)
MARBIDCO	Easement	Small Acreage Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program (SANG)
Horizon Farm Credit	Loan	Young and Beginning Farmer Loans
Horizon Farm Credit	Grant	JumpStart Grant Program
Horizon Farm Credit	Loan	Farm Equipment Loans
Horizon Farm Credit	Loan	Agribusiness Loans



Thank you!

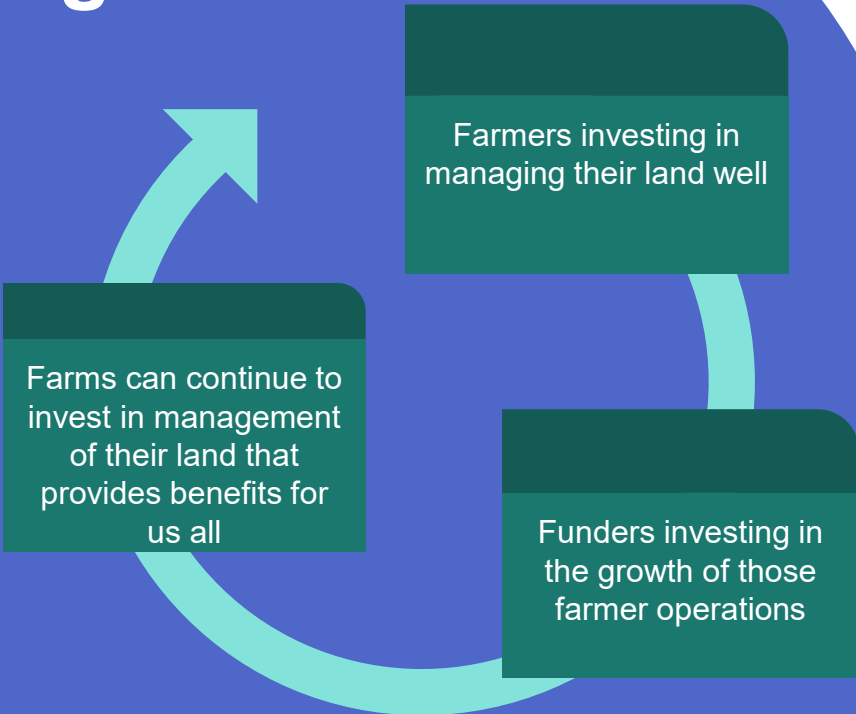
Questions can be emailed to
LEEF.MDA@maryland.gov



How could it be leveraged?

Farm is Silver LEEF certified, recognizing them as good stewards on both the conservation and community front — could that be leveraged when applying for infrastructure grants to build processing plant?

Investing back into an operation that is committed to conservation and community, supporting local economy by assisting them with tools to grow their operation, building resilient food systems by adding to the “missing middle.”



Farms can continue to invest in management of their land that provides benefits for us all

Farmers investing in managing their land well

Funders investing in the growth of those farmer operations



How does it connect us to innovation?

Participation in field trials, being early adopters, bringing that information back to MDA and conservation partners allows for:

- program alignment
- confidence for funding new practices
- better understanding of practice performance and value



How can it help farmers tell their story?

Communication to consumers — Maryland consumers are aware of our impact on the Chesapeake Bay and this provides a clear way to know they are not only buying their groceries at the local market, they are supporting a farm that contributes to cleaner water for us all.

Conservation is a value-add for the state, this recognizes that in a way that can be used to make informed purchases when buying local.



Feedback & Next Steps

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



Survey is live!

