Steps to Becoming a Certified Farm through the Maryland Agricultural Certainty Program

Step 1 Ask your local soil conservation district (SCD) or the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) for a Pre-Application and Eligibility Checklist. Answer all questions and decide what type of review to request, Full Certainty or Farm Evaluation Only. You will receive an Application and Farmer’s Checklist to begin the application process.

Step 2 You will receive a letter from MDA within two weeks outlining eligibility determination and addition information about the type of review requested. Work with your Verifier to gather required documents.

Step 3 Complete the Application and Farmer’s Checklist and gather appropriate documents for your Verifier. The verifier will conduct a brief interview and discuss your current crop rotation, tillage, and fertilizer application.

Step 4 Your Verifier will begin the following review process:

- A review of the Soil Conservation Water Quality Plan to verify that it is being implemented to address all nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment issues.
- A farm visit to review the operation.
- The nutrient management specialist for your region will be contacted to conduct a Plan Implementation Evaluation. The specialist will contact you directly to set up the review.
- The verifier will use the Maryland Nutrient Trading Tool to evaluate the parcel to ensure that it meets baseline requirements established by Maryland’s Total Maximum Daily Load.
- The verifier will submit a completed Certainty Report and accompanying documents to MDA for review and approval.

Step 5 MDA reviews the verifier’s report.

- Full Certainty - MDA notifies the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) if the operation requires a permit. MDE will either approve the operation for participation in the program or outline conditions that need to be addressed. MDE may require a field inspection.
- Farm Evaluation Only - MDA will notify the farmer of the review results.

Step 6 Once MDA receives MDE approval, it will complete the review and make a final determination.

Step 7 MDA approves the operation to become a Certainty Certified Farm.

- The farmer and MDA sign the 10-year Certainty Agreement which includes inspections every three years and annual reporting requirements.
- After 10 years, the operation must comply with any new regulations.