



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of Resource Conservation

Nutrient Management Program

Maryland Nutrient Management Program Fact Sheet

Introduction

The **Maryland Nutrient Management Program (NMP)** ensures that farms use nutrients efficiently while protecting water quality in the **Chesapeake Bay and local waterways**. The program is **regulated by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)** under **state law**, which requires certain farms and businesses to develop and follow **nutrient management plans**.

Why It Matters

- Reduces **nutrient runoff** into streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay
- Helps farmers **optimize fertilizer use** for better crop yields
- Ensures **compliance with Maryland law** to protect natural resources

Understanding the Law, MDA, and Nutrient Management Plans

The Law

Maryland law requires certain **farmers and land managers** to control nutrient applications through science-based management.

- Any **agricultural operation** with a gross annual income of **\$2500** or more from tilling, cropping, pasturing or producing agricultural products (including plants, trees, sod, fiber, etc) **or** eight or more animal units (\geq 8000 lbs. animal weight).
- The law aims to **reduce nutrient pollution** to improve water quality.

Implementation and Compliance- Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)

MDA **oversees and enforces** nutrient management regulations through:

- ✓ **Approving and certifying nutrient management consultants and farm operators**
- ✓ **Reviewing and inspecting farm records for compliance**
- ✓ **Administering financial assistance programs**
- ✓ **Providing education and training to farmers in partnership with University of Maryland Extension**

Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs)

A **Nutrient Management Plan (NMP)** is a **customized plan** that helps farmers apply nutrients responsibly. Plans must:

- ✓ Be **written by a Certified Nutrient Management Consultant or a Certified Farm Operator**
- ✓ Be **updated every three years** or when major changes occur
- ✓ Follow the **Phosphorus Management Tool (PMT)** for high-risk fields

Farmers must **submit an Annual Implementation Report (AIR) by March 1** each year to document nutrient applications.

Training & Certification

- **Farmers:** Attend Farmer Training Certification (FTC) to understand plan requirements and become certified to write their own plans. Their certification process involves a training course, open-book exam, and writing your own NMP.
 - **In-ground farmers:** In-person and online training available
 - **Nursery/Greenhouse/Controlled Environment Growers:** In-person only
- **Consultants:** Must be certified by the MDA to write plans for operations defined in “**Understanding the Law, MDA, and Nutrient Management Plans.**” The certification process involves an annual two-day training course and two testing dates each year. The test is **not** open book.

Compliance and Enforcement

- Farmers must **maintain and follow** their NMP.
- **MDA inspectors may review farm records** for compliance.
- **Failure to comply** may result in **fines or other penalties.**

For more information, visit:

Maryland Department of Agriculture- [Nutrient Management Program](#)

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