



**Maryland
Department of Agriculture**

Office of the Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Kevin M. Atticks, Secretary
Steven A. Connelly, Deputy Secretary

Maryland Agricultural Commission

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry
mda.maryland.gov

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building
50 Harry S Truman Parkway
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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**Maryland Agricultural Commission
Minutes
December 13th, 2023**

Present:

Chris Rhodes
Paula Linthicum
Frank Allnut
Stefanie Reiser
Gordon Kretser
Kellie Hinkle (Virtual)
Russell Shlagel
Kelly Lewis
Rachel Lipman
Joe Dymek

Hunter Pusey
Raj Kathuria
Tom Mullineaux
Mike Levensgood
Amy Crone
Dr. Darren Jarboe
Cliff Newsome
Ann Merryman (Virtual)
Kelly Dudeck
Sean Hough

Absent:

Johnny Shockley
Levi Sellers
John Murphy
Far Nasir
Dr. Marianne Bailey O'Malley

MDA Staff:

Sec. Kevin Atticks
Michael Calkins
Martin Proulx
Rachel Jones

Jessica Hackett
Hans Schmidt
Harrison Palmer

Guests:

Steve McHenry
Sierra Criste
Jill Kubatko
Allison Roe

Michael Pons (Virtual)
Zach Evans (Virtual)

Call to Order:

The December 2023 Maryland Agricultural Commission meeting was called to order by Kelly Dudeck, Chair, at 10:09 am.

Approval of Minutes:

Request to amend the Vegetable Report in the November 2023 meeting minutes made by Russel Shlagel. Motion to approve the November 2023 meeting minutes as amended was made by Tom Mullineaux, second by Cliff Newsome.

Presentation – Maryland Agriculture and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation Annual Report - Steve McHenry, Executive Director, MARBIDCO

Presentation – Maryland Department of Agriculture’s Legislative Update - Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations, MDA

Commodity Reports:

Ag Education- Joseph Dymek:

MAEF

- The MAEF Annual Report, 2022-2023, will be provided to all Commissioners. Over 150,000 students were reached this past year!
- The new MAEF Showcase planning is well underway. Over \$55,000 has been received in grant funding along with \$4,000 in gifts. MAEF is seeking additional funding from individuals, corporate sponsors, and agriculture organizations.
- Agriculture apprenticeships are needed. Please start thinking of agricultural businesses or organizations which may be able to offer apprenticeships to students.
- MAEF is in desperate need for new mobile science lab teachers and showcase attendants, especially in the central Maryland area and Eastern Shore. Consider asking individuals in your network who may be interested in part-time teaching. Please contact MAEF for additional information.
- MAEF’s book, *Amazing! Maryland Agriculture*, will be released soon.
- The 2024 MAEF scholarship application will be available soon. Applications can be obtained on the MAEF website.

FFA

- Maryland FFA held the first in-person COLT leadership conference for Chapter Officers since 2019. There were 75 students and advisors in attendance. Workshops were led by the MD FFA State Officers and focused on local Chapter programming and Officer Team building.
- The Maryland FFA members excelled at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis. Six members were recognized with top 10 individual placings in their respective career and leadership events. Seven additional members finished in the top 20 of their events.. The Natural Resources team from Linganore finished in 10th place and the Forestry team from North Harford finished in 6th place nationally. Fourteen members received the

American FFA Degree, the highest degree awarded to a member, as less than 1% the national membership qualify to receive this degree.

- Four Regional Leadership Conferences were held the week of November 13th for Ag Ed students. There were over 700 students who attended one of the conferences. MD FFA Officers lead workshops on Communications, Career Opportunities in Agriculture, Time Management and Planning and Developing Your Leadership Potential.
- Maryland FFA Officer Team attended the Maryland Farm Bureau Convention. They participated in the Next Gen Conference, attended workshops and convention sessions.
- The MD FFA State Officers were invited to tour the White House on December 8th.
- Gwynn Park FFA attended the Pardoning of the Turkeys at the White House on November 22nd.

Maryland Agriculture Teachers

- Fourteen Maryland Agriculture Educators attended the National Association of Agricultural Educator and American Career Technology Education annual convention in Phoenix, Arizona.
- Aaron Geiman, Westminster High School, is serving as the NAAE Region VI National Secretary.
- Sara Seiser, Middletown High School, received the NAAE Region VI Teacher Mentor award. Joe Linthicum retired ag teacher from Francis Scott Key High School, received the NAAE Region VI Lifetime Achievement award.
- Stacy Eckles, Southern High School, is serving as President of the Maryland Ag Teachers Association. Kelly Bryant, Maurice McDonough participated in the NAAE Teacher Turn the Key program for teachers with 3-5 years of experience. Gabby Graham, Calvert CTE, participated in the ACTE new teacher program and workshops.
- A new Ag Ed teacher was hired in Allegany County teaching classes at both Fort Hill and Mountain Ridge High Schools. The FFA Chapter at Fort Hill has been reactivated and students are eligible to participate in state and national events. The FFA Chapter at Mountain Ridge High School has recently been approved by the National FFA Organization as a new Chapter.

Agribusiness- Thomas Mullineaux:

- Fall is nearly behind us; winter is almost here. Slow fall...Dead Winter for Retail “Farm Supply” sales.
- We want to sell Ice Melt Products but no Ice! We’ve branched out into new products, Wood Pellets. We are thankful for the cold.
- The Good News List:
 - Still some Fall Fertilizer being applied. Good Margins.
 - Prepay for 2024 coming in pretty strong regionally. Quite simply more rain, more prepay.
 - Central and Western areas some growers are struggling to pay for 2023 inputs. East of the Bay strong payments.
 - Seed corn and soybean seed early orders for the most part very strong. Farmers are optimists.
 - Surprisingly, some Cover Crop Rye is still being sown.
 - Always a little extra margin out there in Wild Bird feed.

- Trending less and less custom applicators as farm operations are growing and can justify purchasing equipment and smaller farms are decreasing.

Agritourism - Kelly Dudeck:

- Trending themes in Maryland Craft Alcohol:
 - Ongoing overregulation seems to be getting worse within the industry over time.
 - Change in the market due to consumer preferences and oversaturation of products.
 - Bigger brands are expanding rapidly which creates less room for local products to be in stores.
 - Several closedowns and mergers within craft alcohol production as it becomes more difficult to keep that business going in Maryland.
 - Consumers are drinking less and less alcohol across the board.
- State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT) – assessment of agricultural buildings as commercial structures continues to exist and cause major issues for agritourism operations.
 - Grow & Fortify has been working with Senator Elfrith to submit a bill that will defend agricultural operations from being taxed as commercial.
 - SDAT and Maryland legislature is looking to draw lines in the sand and define agriculture with strict parameters and limits, however industry does not want to limit innovation in a changing marketplace.
- Baltimore County is doing a regulatory scan for zoning to see where they can improve their agritourism pathway and incentivize value added agriculture to come into the county.
- The University of Maryland Eastern Shore Agritourism Conference spotlighted opportunities for the state to support value added agritourism operations.
- Agritourism isn't new, but what's new is that overall, they want to be promoted and seen. Historically, they've operated under the radar due to overreaching governmental restrictions and the risk of putting a target on their back because they do not fit a traditional mold.

Aquaculture – Johnny Shockley:

- No report.

Bio-Fuel - Rajneesh Kathuria:

- Fuel prices in the U.S. are decreasing, which means the prices for biofuel is decreasing as well.

Consumer – Kellie Hinkle:

- Thanksgiving 2023
 - All indicators point to more home cooked meals. Restaurant menu prices were up and traffic was down. Despite the rising cost of restaurant food, 23% of consumers purchased a complete, ready-made Thanksgiving meal for pickup from a restaurant (a decrease from the 29% in 2022), while 22% roasted the bird themselves but relied on restaurants for the trimmings.
 - It was less expensive to cook Thanksgiving at home this year compared to 2022.

According to the American Farm Bureau Federation cost of a dinner for 10 was down 4.5%, the credit goes to the turkeys, which were more plentiful in 2023 and therefore less expensive. The actual dollars that were spent caused and uproar among consumers on social media without the context of the actual food items that Farm Bureau historically tracks, indicating consumers were planning on going beyond the basics for the Thanksgiving feast.

- Data and tech company Numerator conducted a survey of 4,500 consumers to gauge their 2023 holiday plans. Over 90% celebrated Thanksgiving and more consumers cooked and baked this year compared to last—61% versus 54%. Turkey topped the list, with 59% of respondents choosing to cook turkey or turkey breast. On the drinks side, 33% of consumers bought alcohol for Thanksgiving. Most opted for wine (70%), followed by beer (57%) and spirits (28%). The same survey found that the Thanksgiving trimmings most in demand were side dishes, with 45% of consumers turning to restaurants for items like mashed potatoes, stuffing and vegetables. Desserts were next at 41%, followed by entrees (40%), alcohol beverages (16%) and non-alcoholic beverages (15%).
- On the restaurant side, “SpotOn, a tech company that provides POS systems to operators, discovered that in the last 90 days, independents and emerging chains added 7,147 turkey menu items, with the peak coming the week of Oct. 29, right around Halloween. Items included a whole smoked turkey from Smoke A Holics BBQ, a Turkey Dip from Bourbon Jack’s Honkytonk Grill and a turkey special from World Wrapps.” We may be at the exhaustive end of the perpetual, pumpkin spiced everything trend: “In the sides category, 2,555 items with cranberry appeared on menus in the past 90 days. These ranged from a cranberry orange muffin, to cranberry apple stuffing and a cranberry hazelnut roll. But mashed potatoes were not too far behind. Trending on menus were Garlic Mashed Potatoes from Cisco’s Mexican Food and Smashed Potatoes at Lula Southern Cookhouse. Stuffing and green bean casserole were added less frequently—perhaps an indication that cooks like to make these at home. Only 67 green bean casseroles appeared on menus, with stuffing edging those out at 133 mentions. Sausage stuffing, turkey stuffing quesadillas, and ciabatta stuffing all made their debut.”
- We still have some work to do on the East Coast, the left Coast were twice as likely to purchase seafood or meat alternatives for Thanksgiving, compared to other regions. I see a Thanksgiving 2024 MDA campaign to Make Maryland Oysters the centerpiece of your Thanksgiving table.

Dairy I – Vacant:

Dairy II- Vacant:

Direct Farm Market - Amy Crone:

- Direct marketing farmers are mostly wrapping up their seasons; a few farmers markets run year-round and some have climate controlled solutions on their farms but most will wrap production up at the end of December.
- For those markets that do stay open year round, you can see lists [here](#) for inspiration of what’s in season before you shop the farmers market and the full list is of market dates is

[here](#).

- Winter CSAs will begin soon; they are [listed](#) on Maryland's Best for folks to find one near them and inquire if they offer options year-round.
- [Applications](#) are open for SMADC's Maryland Market Money program for the 2024 season.
- Conference season has begun, with recent conferences held by UMES, ALEI, RMC, MD Farm Bureau and an Agritourism group already held and more to come in January/February (see below).
- National news:
 - NAFMNP was awarded the new SNAP equipment grant, which provides direct marketing farmers and farmers markets with equipment and technical assistance to accept SNAP. Applications are available at www.marketlink.org/apply
 - Part of this new grant will pilot approaches in Maryland to connect direct marketing farmers with SNAP participants – MarketLink is in process of hiring for this role
 - Keeping an eye out to see if any Maryland organizations and/or farmers received the [FMPP](#), [LFPP](#), [GUSNip](#), or [Local Meat Capacity](#) grants
 - SNAP Online grant now [open to farmers](#) to accept SNAP via an eCommerce site (GrownBy).
- Grants / Opportunities / Conferences (in chronological order):
 - Discrimination Financial Assistance Program is now accepting applications from farmers and ranchers who experienced discrimination in USDA's farm lending prior to January 1, 2021. Visit www.22007apply.gov or call 1-800-721-0970 for more details. The application deadline has been extended to January 13, 2024.
 - FutureHarvest Conference Registration is [open](#). 1/18-20, 2024
 - MidAtlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention registration will [open](#) early December. 1/30 – 2/1, 2024
 - PASA Conference registration is [open](#). 2/8-10, 2024

Equine (Horse Breeding) - Ann Merryman:

- Md racing and breeding are in flux right now. We are encouraged by Gov Moore's push to refurbish Pimlico.
- Our foal crop is holding steady for the last 5 years, and actually shows an increase for 2022.
- Obviously the cost of horse breeding is expensive, but the industry is becoming more localized, which will help our racing product.

Farm Bureau - Paula Linthicum:

- 108th Annual Convention & Meeting of Delegates:
 - Young Farmer NextGen Summit:
 - The Young Farmer program offers leadership building opportunities for farm bureau members ages 18-35. Future leaders, including young farmers, college students, FFA & 4-H members, attended the 1 ½ day learning and networking NextGen Summit. Attendees participated in agricultural panels and discussion meets.

- Sara Beale and Hunter Johnson were named the 2023-2024 Maryland Farm Bureau Ag Ambassadors. They will represent Maryland agriculture and Farm Bureau throughout the State in the coming year attending activities and engaging in ag conversations. Do you have an upcoming agricultural event or meeting? Consider inviting the MD Farm Bureau Ag Ambassadors to attend by contacting Kara Hutchinson @ khutchinson@marylandfb.org
- 2023-2024 Newly Elected MDFB Leadership:
 - President - Jamie Raley @ jraley@marylandfb.org
 - 1st Vice President - Jonathan Quinn @ jquinn@marylandfb.org
 - 2nd Vice President - Jo-Ann Chason @ jchason@marylandfb.org
- Policy:
 - Delegates voted on new and revised policy submitted by the Counties to shape 2024 policy priorities. The 2024 Policy Book guides Director of Government Relations Tyler Hough and staff during the upcoming legislative session. PFAS, deer overpopulation (especially Sika deer) and solar siting were among topics discussed by county delegates.
- 2024 Legislative Session-
 - The 2024 Legislative Session begins January 10, 2024 and ends April 8, 2024.
 - Director of Government Relations Tyler Hough @ though@marylandfb.org
 - Maryland Farm Bureau Day in Annapolis will be held in February 2024. Details to follow in January 2024.
- **MDFB Agriculture Education and Extension Committee – Joe Dymek**
 - The Ag Ed and Extension Committee met on November 16. Thanks to Tyler Hough MDFB (though@marylandfb.org) for his able staff leadership and congratulations to him as he steps up to be MDFB Government Affairs director!
 - MDFB held a successful Annual Convention, December 2-5 in Cambridge, including the premiere MDFB Young Farmers Next Gen Summit on December 2. The Summit, hosted by the Ag Ed and the Young Farmers Committees, included almost 40 youth from Maryland FFA, Maryland 4-H, UMD MANRRS, UMES MANRRS, UMD AGNR and MDFB Ag Ambassadors. Including Young Farmers and other member attendees, there were about 160 registered. The keynote speaker, Maria Martinez, Merck Animal Health, spoke from experience of the importance in agriculture of remembering these principles: The TABLE - Teach, Acknowledge others, Build relationships, Lift others up, and realize the importance of Equity. There is room for everyone in Agriculture - we each have a seat at the TABLE!” Participants heard from two panels, networked, shared successes, and strategized together on efforts to lead and amplify MD Agriculture into the future.
 - MDFB members voted to approve four policies on Agriculture Education, including support for the unified “Blueprint for Agriculture Education”; support for a new structure for Maryland Ag Education; support for Maryland Blueprint funding for Community Schools (defined as underserved) that should go to urban farming experiences and education in these elementary schools; and urging curricula in environmental science in K-12 not to disparage agriculture, and teach about science-based farming practices that conserve and enhance the environment and provide resilience to climate.

- In 2024, the Committee will continue to open new doors with members and partners for effective and growing agriculture education and extension programs in Maryland. The MDFB intends to finalize guidance to assist our agriculture youth in successfully being accepted to attend the Maryland two land grant universities to study agriculture – the University of Maryland, College Park, and University of Maryland Eastern Shore.
- Questions? Please connect with Barb Glenn, glennbarb6@gmail.com, or Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org.

Field Crops – Chris Rhodes:

- The transition of Nagel Farm Service to Mountaire Farms makes the grain merchandising on the eastern shore almost solely controlled by the poultry industry.
 - Growing grain in Maryland would be near impossible without the poultry industry and we are grateful for the market, but we need to ensure that farmers have continued options in their grain marketing.
 - Luckily there are still a few independent dealers on the western shore.
- Overall, yield statewide on corn and wheat were above average.
- Soybeans were all over the place depending on geographic location in the state.
- The Chinese export orders have finally lifted wheat prices from recent lows.
- A lot of Maryland farmers still have wheat in storage waiting for the price to go back up and a place to deliver because a lot of the flour mills up north are full.
- As of now all eyes are on South America's weather to see if beans price is going to rise. They have been bouncing around all month of weather forecast.
- We have gotten a slight rally in corn but likely won't see what's going to happen with it until January's USDA report.
- There are issues and concerns with the status and continuity of the Lothian Grain Elevator for farmers in Southern Maryland.
 - From Secretary Kevin Atticks – There are several discussions happening with the operator who is working under an emergency contract with the County, if the contract says that they will have to reopen the bidding process after one year then it will be up to the current operator to re-submit a bid to continue operations.

Food Processing – Vacant:

Forestry – Hunter Pusey:

- At its last meeting, the Maryland Agricultural Commission was informed of the most pressing policy-related issues facing Maryland's forest products industry. Those identified issues were as follows:
 - (1) efforts to increase truck weights for hauling forest products;
 - (2) lack of any woody biomass-fueled public facility in Maryland with the planned conversion of the Eastern Correctional Institution (EC) located in Somerset County from wood to natural gas;
 - (3) recommendations to help Maryland's forest products industry as evidenced by the 2022 Report of the Maryland Climate Change Commission;
 - (4) need for greater access to State-owned/managed forest lands; and
 - (5) expressed appreciation to MARBIDCO b/c of the Wood Products Industry

Equity Incentives Fund (WPIEI).

- On November 28, 2023, Maryland's Secretary of Commerce (Kevin Anderson) visited my family's sawmill in Snow Hill, aka Paul Jones Lumber...a 5th generation forestry business. The good Secretary was accompanied by Members of his staff. We spent a couple of hours touring the facility and explaining the importance of the industry's relationship with the Department of Commerce and Moore Administration, not unlike earlier tours with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources.
- With certainty I can say that on behalf of Maryland's forest products industry – as represented by the Association of Forest Industries – we are heartened by the level of support we have witnessed to date with those Executive Branch agencies in Maryland State Government responsible for varying levels of industry-related jurisdictional oversight.
- The forest products industry is continuing to see a soft market. The decrease in demand for dimension lumber and specialty timbers is usual for this time of year with the holidays and construction projects typically not starting until the warmer weather in spring, but it is not something that the pine mills have not experienced since covid.
- Piling and utility poles have seen an increase in demand thanks to a flood of public and private spending on the electrical grid. Utility companies are forced to upgrade America's electrical grid to handle more wind and solar power projects, electrical cars, and extreme weather events.
- On January 18th, 2024, there will be a legislative luncheon held by Hunters of Maryland and the Association of Forest Industries.

Hemp- Matthew 'Levi' Sellers:

- No report.

Horticulture – Vacant:

Livestock- Sean Hough:

- Small animal birthing season is starting, especially for the 4-H programs.
 - Thus far, good conception rates.
- Local associations are struggling, we need to increase participation across the board.
 - Maryland Cattlemen's Association is nearly defunct.
 - Maryland Pork Producers only has seven paid members.
- American National Junior Shorthorn Show and Youth Conference is coming to Timonium in June, 2024.
 - Maryland Ag Fair Board approved up to \$50,000 in grant funding for premiums, awards, and trophies.
 - Most of the local hotels are already booked, with a huge economic impact.
 - Appx. 1,500 people are anticipated.
 - \$320,000 overall anticipated cost for the show.
- On the markets side:
 - Beef is high in demand with high prices due to the 2024 reduction in national supply after the 2023 drought.
 - Pork prices are down but exports are up 9%.

- Pork exports to Mexico are up 16%.
 - Lamb exports are up 11% for 2023.
- The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association is working with USDA surrounding the labeling of plant based “meat.”
- The U.S. just started allowing beef imports from Paraguay for the first time in 20 years, but there is great concern with the foot and mouth disease coming from that region.

Nursery I- J. Kelly Lewis:

- To better report on some of the issues of Nursery related agriculture in our state, I have started reaching out to some of the other nursery folks I know and respect and specific ask for information we think applicable to this group. So, some of my report items are a result of these interactions.
 - One producer had a problem with an off-target herbicide issue causing damage to his crop. He has requested the final report from the state chemist’s office and after 5 months there is still no report. This seems like a long time to zero in on this problem to ensure to avoid in the future.
 - Many Nurseries are starting to rely less on synthetic fertilizer and increase their use of organics. There is a thought that MDA staff does not have as good an understanding of the use of these organics. This may be an area for additional resources in the future.
 - Some have requested clarification as to whether a new Nutrient Management Plan is required every three years if there are no changes to the plan.
 - Deer damage continues to be a major and frequently largest pest problem to nurseries. Programs to help with the cost of deer fencing would be very beneficial in getting more acres protected and reduce the need to reduce the deer population.
 - There could be benefits from a State sponsored program to encourage the planting of trees. Advertising of the benefits, “coupons” with participating partners for discount or similar programs would help support Maryland Nursery Operations.
 - Spotted Lanternfly continue to be a concern with landscape managers finding SLF throughout Maryland.

Nursery II- John Murphy:

- No Report.

Organic Farming – Vacant:

Poultry I- Michael Levengood:

- **HPAI continues to be the story in the US**
 - As of December 8, 2023, there have been 1,004 confirmed HPAI detections in commercial turkeys, layers, broilers, pullets, ducks, game birds, and backyard flocks. The last commercial detections were on December 7, 2023, in Carroll County, Arkansas in commercial turkeys, Sonoma County, California in commercial ducks, and in Stanislaus County, California in commercial broilers. These detections represent a total of 69,503,891 birds. In addition, there have been 8,278 HPAI detections in wild birds across the U.S. Commercial and backyard flock detections can be found here: [USDA APHIS | 2022-2023](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/areahandlers.do?method=showPage&page=USDA%20APHIS%202022-2023)

[Confirmations of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Commercial and Backyard Flocks](#). Wild bird detections can be found here: [USDA APHIS | 2022-2023 Detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Wild Birds](#). A breakdown of commercial and backyard detections to date are as follows:

Species	# of Premises	Total # Birds	% of Total
Broiler (including breeders/pullets)	38	4,844,500	7.0%
Turkey (including breeding stock)	300	12,933,560	18.6%
Layer (including breeders/pullets)	43	49,808,500	71.7%
Ducks (including breeding stock)	21	580,700	0.8%
Backyard	583	528,661	0.8%
Commercial Game Birds	19	807,970	1.2%
Totals	1004	69,503,891	100.0%

- **This week FDA’s Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) [announced the 2022 Summary Report on Antimicrobials Sold or Distributed for Use in Food-Producing Animals](#). Some highlights from the report include:**
 - Between 2021 and 2022 domestic sales and distribution of medically important antimicrobial drugs approved for use in food-producing animals increased by 4%
 - There has been a 35% decrease in domestic sales and distribution of medically important antimicrobial drugs since 2015.
 - Medically-important sales and distribution by species:
 - 41% estimated for use in cattle
 - 43% estimated for use in swine
 - 12% estimated for use in turkeys
 - **2% estimated for use in chickens**
 - 2% estimated for use in other species/unknown
 - For chicken, medically important estimated annual totals are:
 - 2016 – 508,800 kgs
 - 2017 – 268,047 kgs
 - 2018 – 221,774 kgs
 - 2019 – 192,964 kgs
 - 2020 – 141,793 kgs
 - 2021 – 158,342 kgs
 - 2022 – 152,350 kgs
 - There has been a 4% reduction between 2021 and 2022
 - There has been a 70% reduction between 2016 and 2022
 - There was almost a 4% decrease in non-medically important antibiotics marketed to all species between 2021 and 2022
 - There was a 12% decrease in non-medically important antibiotics marketed to chickens between 2021 and 2022
- **It's time to apply for the DCA College Scholarships**
 - Delmarva Chicken Association offers [scholarships](#) to students pursuing careers in the chicken community. Since 1985, DCA has awarded more than \$197,000 to undergraduate and graduate students. For 2024, we are

offering undergraduate scholarships of \$2,000 and graduate scholarships of \$3,000. Complete applications for these scholarships must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, March 29, 2024.

- All the details you need about eligibility, how to get an application form, and how to submit [are at this link](#).

- **2024 Annie's Project classes announced**

- Annie's Project is a discussion-based workshop bringing women together to learn from experts in production, financial management, human resources, marketing, and the legal field. There is plenty of time for questions, sharing, reacting, and connecting with your presenters and fellow participants. It's a relaxed, fun and dynamic way to learn, grow and meet other women in agriculture. Two sessions are coming up soon:

Mid Shore Maryland

6 sessions, 6:00pm-9:00pm

Wednesdays, February 21, 2024 - March 27, 2024

Location: QAC Extension Office

505 Railroad Avenue, Suite 4 Centreville, MD 21617

Virtual Option

6 sessions, 6:30pm-8:30pm

Wednesdays, February 21, 2024 - March 27, 2024

Location: Zoom

*reading and project assignments outside of class time about 1 hour per week

For more information call Shannon Dill at 410-822-1244 (sdill@umd.edu) or Jenny Rhodes at 410-758-0166 (jrhodes@umd.edu) or visit the website

at www.extension.umd.edu/annies-project. Register online

at: <https://2024annies.eventbrite.com>

- **vLT cases, meanwhile, still cropping up on Delmarva**

- Poultry veterinarians confirmed cases of vaccinal infectious laryngotracheitis, or vLT, on a farm near Newark, Md. in recent days. DCA is coordinating regular conversations with all of the chicken companies to mitigate any spread and discuss vaccination strategies.
- vLT is a serious challenge to the health of poultry flocks, even though it is not as challenging as avian influenza. Spread can be airborne or by contact with sick birds or contaminated equipment, clothing, and vehicles. Broilers with vLT may show [gaspings, coughing bloody mucoid exudate, rattling or squawking, and extension of the neck](#) during inspiration 5–12 days after exposure. They may also have [puffy eyelids with foamy secretions](#). Affected birds are anorectic and inactive. Even after birds recover from the symptoms of vLT, the virus can persist in their airways, according to Dr. Claudia Osorio, the chair of DCA's Poultry Health & Welfare Committee. "The birds become carriers," she noted. "In broilers it goes into latency and is reactivated in cases of stress. And when the virus is

found in a particular area, it can spread to other farms quickly if biosecurity measures are not followed properly."

- Controlling vLT and preventing it from spreading is helped by practicing strict, consistent biosecurity -- the same measures that combat the spread of HPAI can combat the spread of vLT. There are also vaccines to fight vLT, and mass vaccination can be done by water, spray, or in ovo methods.
- Be sure to follow all of your company's biosecurity protocols to reduce the likelihood of your farm becoming the next vLT case on Delmarva. If you notice decreased feed or water consumption in any chicken house, inform your flock advisor right away.

Poultry II- Far Nasir:

- No Report.

Related Services I – Frank Allnutt:

- With recent rain the gauge at Point of Rocks on the Potomac is showing above the drought stage but level is not where it was a year ago.
- Encourage all to learn more about the Maryland Climate Smart Agriculture Project – be part of the process.
 - Sponsored by College of Agriculture & Natural Resources and Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology
 - For more info, go to: go.umd.edu/MDAgClimateStudy
- Encourage all to attend the Taste of Maryland Agriculture scheduled for Thursday, February 1st, 2024. For more info, visit www.mdagcouncil.com or contact Susan Summers @ (240)446-3601

Related Services II – Stefanie Reiser:

- No report.

State Grange- Clifford Newsome:

- The Maryland State Grange reported a net increase of membership for the second straight year.
 - Richard Stonebraker was elected President.
 - Alen Stiles was elected Vice President.
- In 2024, we will be celebrating our 150th Anniversary.
 - A Gala Affair is planned in Frederick.
- At the national session in Niagara Falls, Kaye Stiles was elected the National Chaplain. Many of our agriculture related resolutions were passed. They will be sent for review by the committees in the House & Senate Agriculture Committees.
- This month different Granges are having cookie sales, Christmas parties for children and Wreath laying at various cemeteries to honor deceased veterans.
- We wish everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year!!! May other religious groups also find Peace & happiness this year!!!

Turf- Gordon Kretser:

- Maryland sod growers are continuing to work with MDA on enforcement and

improvement of the Maryland Certified Sod program.

- The MD Certified Sod committee met at the MDA on Nov 30th. Assistant Secretary Michael Calkins, Office of Plant Industries & Pest Management, attended along with Jim Drews, and Rick Boldissar from the MDA Turfgrass and Seed section.
- Site One Landscape Supply announced their acquisition of Newsom Seed on December 8th. Newsom has been servicing the Maryland turfgrass industry since 1985. Newsom operates one of the two seed blending facilities in Maryland capable of producing Maryland certified seed.
- The Maryland Turf Council Annual conference was held on December 12th at Turf Valley. This was the 48th annual conference for MTC. Many educational seminars were held by leading turf experts from University of MD, Penn State, and Rutgers University.

University of Maryland – Dean Craig Beyrouthy | Dr. Darren Jarboe:

- The ANMP continues to write nutrient management plans for farmers statewide. An Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) update was presented at the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) Nutrient Management Advisory Committee meeting on November 21. A similar presentation will be given at the MDA Agricultural Nutrient Management Training Program Updates on December 19 in Annapolis and January 9 in Frederick.
- The ANMP is to recruiting and hiring people for positions. Kayla Griffith has been hired as a faculty specialist to train advisors, farmers, and private plan writers and provide consultations. Nineteen people were invited for nutrient management advisor job interviews. Six offers were made last week with three accepting, two still considering, and one refusing. Recruiting will continue until the positions are filled. Seven temporary advisors have been hired, most of which are experienced plan writers. Some of these have been offered full-time positions. The ANMP program director job announcement was submitted to human resources in late October and will post soon on the University of Maryland eTerp website. The ANMP program coordinator position was submitted to human resources last week.
- A preliminary future ANMP model was developed by a subcommittee of Agriculture and Food Systems (AgFS) faculty and staff. From that model, draft legislation to permanently fund the ANMP is being developed. The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources administration is supportive of this effort.
- LEAD Maryland Class XIII has been selected and will start the program in late February. Class XII will visit Panama for its international experience in early February.
- The Agricultural Law Education Initiative held the Agriculture and Environmental Law Conference in Annapolis on November 16.
- The AgFS Program has five positions in various stages of recruitment. Offers have been accepted for the urban agriculture production and urban agriculture farm and agribusiness management state specialist openings. The AgFS educator position in Charles County has been reopened with a best consideration date of January 31, 2024. The AgFS ruminant livestock and vegetable production specialist position announcements have been submitted to UMD Human Resources for review. Jim Lewis, AgFS educator in Caroline County, announced his retirement effective December 31, 2023.
- Christin Redding was hired as program coordinator for the Agriculture Law Education

Initiative. She was previously project manager/alumni engagement and communications specialist for The U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

- The list of the AgFS 2023-24 Crop Production Meetings is shown in the graphic below.

**2023-2024
CROP PRODUCTION
MEETINGS**

University of Maryland Extension is excited to host local, in-person meetings along with statewide virtual meetings for the 2023-2024 production season!

AGRONOMY		ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE	
11-29-23	Washington Co. Agronomy Day	12-08-23	Advanced IPM Conf.
12-07-23	Kent Co. Agronomy Breakfast	01-8/11-24	2024 Advanced Landscape IPM PHC Short Course
12-07-23	Northern MD Field Crops Day		
12-07-23	Southern MD Crops Conf. & Dinner	01-18-24	Operator Cert. (FTC) for Writing Nursery Nutrient Mgt. Plans for Nurseries, Greenhouses and Controlled Environments
01-10-24	Talbot County Agronomy Program		
01-11-24	Carroll Co. Mid-Winter Mtg.	02-14-24	Eastern Shore Pest Management Conf.
01-26-24	Lower Shore Agronomy Day	02-29/03-1-24	Biol. Control Conf. (Greenhouses, Nurseries, & Landscapes)
02-08-24	Cecil Co. Winter Agronomy Mtg.		
02-20-24	Harford Co. Mid-Winter Agronomy Mtg.		
02-21-24	Central MD Agronomy Mtg.		
02-22-24	Mid-Shore Agronomy Mtg.		
03-01-24	Queen Anne's Agronomy Day		
		Manure	
		01-24-24	Manure Meeting

FORAGE

01-16-24 Southern MD Forage Conf.
01-17-24 Western MD Forage Conf.
01-18-24 Central MD Forage Conf.

FRUIT & VEGETABLE

01-25-24 Central MD Veg. Growers Mtg.
01-27-24 Urban Farmer Winter Mtg.
02-20-24 Mid Shore Veg. Growers Mtg.
02-15-24 Western MD Regional Fruit Mtg.

GRAIN MARKETING

01-05-24 Virtual Meeting

Pesticide Certification, Nutrient Management Voucher, and Certified Crop Advisor credits will be offered!

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**For more information
go.umd.edu/CPM**

Vegetable – Russell Shlagel:

- Most of the traditional farmers markets have ended for the season. There are some winter markets that will go through till Spring. It seems like more market gardeners are using high tunnels, row covers and hoop houses to extend the season, to a dedicated following of buy local customers.
- December starts the season of planning, purchasing, further education, and preparing for 2024.
- There are plenty of excellent opportunities afforded to us by MD cooperative extension, MDA and industry trade partners to get our credits for nutrient management vouchers, crop protection applications and food safety compliance. Don't waste the winter, get your paperwork in order.

- A few of the favorites include but not limited to,
 - Southeast Regional Vegetable Grower Conference 1/11-1/14/2024
 - Central MD Vegetable Growers meeting 1/25/2024
 - Urban Farmer Winter Meeting 1/27/24
 - Mid Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention in conjunction with North American Strawberry growers 1/30-2/1/2024
 - New Jersey Vegetable Growers Convention. 2/6-2/8/2024
 - Western MD Regional Fruit Meeting 2/15/2024
 - Eastern Shore Vegetable Grower Meeting 2/20/2024
 - MD's Best Buyer Grower Expo is 1/9/24.
- MDA currently has a survey out for specialty crop grant funding priorities. Closes 1/16/2024
- Food safety management training opportunities are numerous. Everything from beginner to advanced, in person and zoom.
- Finding reliable legal workers for Ag jobs continues to be a struggle.
- If you rely on H2-A labor, you should already be working on next year's paperwork. Changes with the AWER calculation and job classification continue to dissuade some growers from using the program.
- Maryland has a very active and growing bee community. From the single back yard beekeeper to some nice size commercial apiaries. This is overseen by MDA and their Apiary inspectors, who provide education, outreach, and individual inspections. Just recently 690 hives were inspected prior to leaving the state on the way to California for the almond harvest. Pardon the pun but they are busy as bees.
- Now is the time to get those "Winter Jobs" done that you've been putting off all Spring and Summer.

Veterinary – Dr. Marianne B. O'Malley:

- A canine respiratory disease appears to be spreading through the country and the state. The disease has not been diagnosed at this point, causing confusion and frustration.
- Cases reported appear to primarily fall within three general clinical syndromes.
 - Chronic mild-moderate tracheobronchitis with a prolonged duration (6-8 weeks or longer) that is minimally or not responsive to antibiotics.
 - Chronic pneumonia that is minimally or not responsive to antibiotics.
 - Acute pneumonia rapidly becomes severe and open leads to poor outcomes in as little as 24-36 hours.
- Patients with atypical CIRP have a range of symptoms from progressive coughing that may be accompanied by signs of ocular or nasal discharges and sneezing. Rapid progression to acute severe pneumonia with symptoms particularly if your dog concurrently loses its appetite, has trouble breathing, is coughing continuously, or is extremely lethargic.
- The University of Maryland Department of Veterinary Medicine has been approved to investigate the unknown etiology of atypical respiratory illness in Maryland dogs. The MDVMA is helping to get clinical samples from the community to them for analysis.

Viticulture – Rachel Lipman:

- Maryland Grape Growers Association & Maryland Wineries Association has their annual meeting in January
- Spotted Lanternfly is a major problem in vineyards, most grape growers are aware of this pest have not had as much worry. Winterkill will be an indicator next spring of the true impact of this pest.
- For many wineries, September and October sales were down due to the intense rains.
 - Rain affected the ripening abilities of a lot of fruit.
- The Class 4 license will require 51% of Maryland ingredients go into those licensed wineries products in 2024.
 - This will hopefully help manage the surplus of grapes that we have had.
 - There is a high demand for vinifera (Old World or European grapes, non-hybrid)
 - Hybrid varieties that tend to grow better in our region are not as lucrative, which seems to be the bulk of the surplus that exists in the state right now.

Maryland Department of Agriculture Staff Updates:

Secretary Kevin Atticks:

- Deer:
 - DNR interactions & other policy meetings are moving forward with MDA's goals in mind.
 - Deer seem to be localized on farms away from hunters, creating greater challenges in their management.
 - One of the big discussions asks, "who's deer are they?"
 - If they are owned by the general population, then farmers should be able to do what we need to do to protect our profit.
 - If they are owned by the State, then the State has the obligation to protect a farmer's profit.
- Solar:
 - MDA's Solar Summit held on November 29th, 2023.
 - The State has a renewable energy goal and as a State agency, MDA's responsibility is to help the State meet that goal.
 - We are working to establish bumpers and guidelines to protect agriculture during these discussions.
 - It is not state policy to put solar on agricultural land, but we potentially will need policy to protect it.
 - We have discussed incentivizing agri-voltaics, but it will need to be carefully thought out before it can be implemented to ensure it is implemented with the farmer in mind.
- Cold Storage:
 - The Food System Resiliency Council determined that the lack of cold storage in Maryland is a major liability and a statewide threat for the next emergency/pandemic.
 - MDA has a grant from USDA that will be focused on improving statewide cold storage.

- There will be legislation pushed this year to increase dollars from the state to support on-farm cold storage.
- Former Secretary Bud Virts passed away yesterday, 12/12/2023.
- MDA has a new Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee that has been accepting applications for committee members, designed to help guide our efforts as a department moving forward in the Urban Ag realm.
- Bay Goals
 - There will be new updated information coming out soon.
 - The Governor has revamped the Bay Commission into the Watershed Council to look at the bigger picture around the Bay.
 - Most of Maryland is disconnected from the Bay itself, but the context of the Bay extends far beyond the water and all of Maryland needs to be aware of that.
 - The 2025 Bay Goals will not be met.
 - We are working with our Watershed Council and the larger multi-state EPA Bay Program, of which Governor Moore is the Executive Council Chair.
 - They are forming the Agricultural Committee on the EPA Bay Program, putting agriculture at the main table as a part of the discussion.

Rachel Jones:

- **Summary of 2024 Departmental Bills**
 - The Maryland Department of Agriculture (The Department), in preparation for the 2024 legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly has prepared the enclosed draft legislation. The enclosed bills would have a direct impact on programs that The Department regulates or prior legislation that if amended would increase efficiency of our programs and general operations.
 - The background for the enclosed bills is as follows:
- **Nutrient Management Plan Bill**
 - The proposed legislation will alter the penalty if a farmer submits their Annual Implementation Report (AIR) after the deadline. The AIR is a report documenting nutrient applications and is due to the Nutrient Management Program by March 1 annually. The bill increases the administrative penalty to not less than \$1000. It is currently up to \$1000. This will incentivize farm operators to report their nutrient management and help ensure that they are implementing best management practices in order to meet Chesapeake Bay Goals and Climate Change Solutions Now Act of 2022.
- **Apiary Registration and Fee Bill**
 - The proposed legislation allows the Apiary program to request the use of fines, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture, for beekeepers that do not register. Registration is required by law. Fines are also requested for beekeepers that do not follow instructions for destruction or removal of hives as required by law.
- **Weights & Measures Fee Bill**
 - The proposed legislation authorizes the Secretary to set by regulation reasonable fees for registering weights and measures (eliminating the fees set forth in law); Many of these fees have not been increased in decades. This legislation would

allow The Department the discretion to increase necessary fees without requiring additional legislation in the future to do so. Fees would include things such as

- **Weights & Measures Late Fee Bill**
 - The proposed legislation allows a person who has failed to register a weight and measure in a timely manner to renew the registration retroactively within 30 days under certain conditions including paying a late fee set by the Secretary.
- **Horse Industry Late Fee and Reinstatement Fee**
 - Establishment - allowing a horse establishment that has failed to renew its license in a timely manner to renew the license retroactively within 30 days under certain conditions including paying a late fee set by the Board; allowing a horse establishment to reinstate its license after 30 days under certain conditions including paying a reinstatement fee set by the Board;
- **Certified Local Farm and Fish**
 - Reporting Requirement - Alterations: This proposed legislation alters the reporting date on which a report pertaining to waivers under this Program is to be submitted to the BPW; and altering the date on which the BPW is to submit a record stemming from this report to certain legislative committees. Currently, for the Certified Local Farm and Fish program, MDA needs to report state agencies\universities waiver requests to BPW by *July 30* and state agencies\universities food purchase reports are due to MDA by *Sept 30*. The Department would like to make the waiver request report and the program report due on the same date and alter the due date to December 31st of each year. It will be more streamlined and efficient for staff.
- Please contact Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations with any questions at Rachel.Jones2@maryland.gov.

Hans Schmidt:

- Nutrient Management Meetings are upcoming for farmers, consultants, and plan writers, to come and discuss relevant topics. These will be available on MDA's website.
- The Urban Ag Advisory Committee will be a major asset to the Resource Conservation team that is building the Urban Ag Program within the department.
 - MDA will be providing grants for Urban Ag producers and this committee will help prioritize goals and where these grants will go.
- The Maryland Agricultural and Water Quality Cost Share (MACS)
 - Emergency regulations were submitted to raise the \$75k per project caps to \$150k for non-manure management projects, and eliminate the per-farm cap.
 - For manure management practices, the project cap increases from \$200k to \$300k per project, and the farm cap will be raised to \$450k.

Jessica Hackett:

- On behalf of Assistant Secretary Cassie Shirk:
 - Last week we wrapped up the Maryland's Best Christmas Tree social media campaign.

- January 9th will be the Buyer Grower Expo at Naval Academy Stadium.
- January will also initiate our initiatives centered around Community Supported Agriculture.

Guest Reports:

- Steve McHenry, MARBIDCO
 - See MARBIDCO reports.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:45 pm Tom Mullineaux, seconded by Stefanie Reiser.

Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary