

scholarship. The MAEF Academic Scholarship is awarded to college juniors and seniors, or postgraduate students, seeking a degree in agriculture education or Extension education. Applications can be found on the MAEF website.

- Registration is open for MAEF's elementary and middle school professional development workshop in April. More information is available on the MAEF website.
- The Secondary Education team attended the Maryland Council for Agriculture meeting which focused on Middle School Ag Education programs.
- Ms. Terrie Shank, MAEF Assistant Director of High School programs attended the National Agriculture Education Summit in Indianapolis. Key takeaways from the summit included: Crystal Jones, Head of Talent Acquisition –North America for John Deere, stated there's a shortage of talent across agriculture, especially in the areas of artificial intelligence and precision agriculture. Internships for students to obtain career knowledge and skills are important along with the ability to think critically, take risks and not to be afraid to fail but have the drive to take that failure and keep trying new things. John Deere is looking for people who have "empathy" for others and know how to treat others with respect. At John Deere, every employee is a recruiter as they hire 500 interns annually for 10–12-week positions.
- Shari Westerferfeld, U.S. Head of Sustainability at Zoetis, an Animal Health Company headquartered in New Jersey with over 12,000 employees, stated sales employees are expected to be able to communicate well with Veterinarians, farm managers and workers, co-workers and managers. Zoetis is looking for people who can build relationships with others to move into the management roles. The earlier in their education that students are exposed to careers in agriculture and have a real-life learning experience, the better employees they become in the company. Providing experiential learning through internships for student allows them to find the careers that they don't enjoy and hopefully, the ones that they want to pursue.
- Justin Grandt, Site Lead-Train and pipeline Delivery for Bayer stated they see trends in hiring people in data analysis, automation and who are good problem solvers. Many of these positions are filled by students directly out of high school and 2-year post-secondary programs in technician roles who have a 70-20-10 skill set, (70% of the time able to do a task, 20% of the time able to coach and be coached/mentored and, 10% of the time willing to grow their general knowledge.) This was an excellent panel of top employers in U.S. and Global agriculture. Not once did the panelist say that students needed a specific credential or certification to work for their companies, which is currently the thought in Maryland. They all said multiple times that we, in education, need to provide students with hands on learning experiences that build their communication and teamwork skills. They want employees who are willing to serve their communities, support each other and help to grow their companies for the future.

- FFA
 - National FFA Week is February 18-25. During the week, the State FFA Officers will be visiting FFA Chapters, Promoting Agriculture through reading literacy in elementary school, assisting with conducting Regional public speaking and Ag Mechanics events. Thursday, February 23rd is National "Give FFA Day". This is an opportunity for supporters to donate to the State Association or National Organization.
 - The Maryland FFA State Officers traveled to Costa Rica January 2-15, 2023, as part of the National FFA International Leadership Seminar for State officers. There were 75 students who are serving as State officers from across the country who participated in this event. They visited numerous agricultural companies and historical sites learning about the global connection of agriculture between the US and Costa Rica. Upon their return, the State Officers completed a three-day leadership training focusing on public speaking, communication skills and team dynamics.
 - On January 31, the State Officers led the Pledge to the Flag and spoke at the National Council for Agricultural Employers Conference in Washington, D>, C.
 - The Sherwood FFA Chapter was rechartered.
 - State Officers attended the Taste of Maryland on February 2, attend the MD Farm Bureau Day in Annapolis and visiting several FFA chapters throughout the state.
 - State Spring judging events will be held on April 1 at Westminster High School. Volunteers are always welcome to assist with judging.
 - The 95th Maryland FFA State convention will be held on June 27-29, at the University of Maryland, College Park.
- MDFB
 - The Ag Education and Extension Committee will hold its first meeting of the year on February 16. The MDFB values open dialogue with UMD, AGNR, and has invited Dr. Rachel Slattery, UMD, Animal and Avian Sciences Department to speak about new efforts in Animal sciences including a new beef cattle breeding project and new livestock judging course. Please contact Tyler Hough, MDFB, (tylough@marylandfb.org) if you have any questions about the committee.
 - Joint work continues support for agriculture education with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. MATA, MAEF, and MDFB are circulating a sign-on letter to the Maryland Department of Labor, CTE Committee in which urge for the proposed structure and function for ag education in the future. MDFB is requesting signatures by February 10, for all food and ag farming, agribusiness, and other organization. If you or your organization would like to sign on, please contact Parker Welch (pwelch@marylandfb.org) or Colby Ferguson (cferguson@marylandfb.org).

Michael Levengood- Poultry:

- AI continues to be a real threat to the poultry industry
In recent days, HPAI commercial poultry cases popped up in Rockingham County, Va.) turkey Flock) and Weakley County, Tenn., where a 267,800-bird broiler flock was depopulated after detection.
The drip-drip of new HPAI cases is getting mainstream media attention this winter, too. Fortune claimed in a Jan. 23 online story that HPAI "poses an existential threat to the poultry industry in the U.S." The Tampa Bay Times, meanwhile, focused on reports that [tens of thousands of wild birds in Florida](#) -- including iconic southern birds like sandhill cranes and pelicans - have contracted avian flu. No commercial poultry flocks in Florida have been found to have HPAI infections, though, the paper reported.
- 2023 DCA College Scholarship Program is open to college, grad students since 1985, DCA has awarded more than \$178,000 to undergraduate and graduate students in our College Scholarship Program. In 2023, we are again offering undergraduate scholarships of \$2,000 and graduate scholarships of \$3,000. (Students - take some time during winter break to work on your scholarship applications! Netflix will still be there when you're done! Complete [applications](#) for these scholarships must be received at our office no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, April 7, 2023. Late applications, incomplete applications, and handwritten applications will not be considered.
- Future dates to get on your calendar:
 - June 7, 2023: Booster BBQ, Harrington, Del.
 - Sept. 25-27, 2023: 58th Annual National Meeting on Poultry Health, Processing, & Live Production | Ocean City, Md.

Michael Pons- Equine:

- Maryland Horse Industry Day in Annapolis is scheduled for Tuesday, February 14, 2023, at the Governor Calvert House from 5:00-7:00 pm. Representatives from a broad spectrum of horse groups, associations, and enthusiasts will be assembling to meet with state legislators and government officials. I believe, this is the first in-person assembly for Maryland Horse Industry Day since 2019. A large group of folks is likely to attend this Valentine's Day event.
- The first Thoroughbred foal of the year is the royally bred colt by Kentucky Leading Sire, Tapit, out of the top race mare, Anna's Bandit, winner of more than \$700,000. The colt, born on January 10, 2023. is the product of a foal-share and will likely be sold as a yearling in Kentucky.
- Thoroughbred breeding sheds are opening this month across the state and the nation. Several Kentucky breeding sheds are scheduled to open on Monday, February 13th.
- Discussions between Maryland horsemen and the Stronach Group concerning the future of Laurel Park, the Preakness, and Pimlico have been ongoing over the past few months. A possible sale of Laurel to the horsemen has been discussed.

- The Ten-Year Plan, which has become a model for cooperation between racetrack owners, trainers, and breeders, was recently renewed for six-months. The Maryland Jockey Club received an increase in the cash contributions from the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association and the Maryland Horse Breeders Association. A longer-term deal will hopefully be decided upon once the future of Maryland racing becomes clearer.
- Fasig-Tipton Company has scheduled a second 2-Year-Old Sale for Maryland for this year. In addition to the popular May Sale, held on the Monday and Tuesday following the Preakness, May 22nd and 23rd, 2023, F-T also is planning a sale of juveniles on Wednesday, June 28, 2023. The second sale should help with the overflow of horses being nominated to the May Sale, the state's highest grossing horse sale annually.
- Implementation of the Horse Racing Integrity Act's new medication rules, which provided uniform regulations for all Thoroughbred racing states, was scheduled to begin on January 1, 2023. However, courts in Texas and Louisiana ruled against the HISA medication program, citing a violation of state's rights. Until the legal uncertainties are resolved, then the HISA-uniform medication plan will remain on hold.
- The 2023 Maryland Thoroughbred racing calendar will follow a similar plan as in the past few years. Racing at Laurel Park began January 1, 2023, and continues through May 7th, before the Pimlico meet, which runs until Memorial Day. Then back to Laurel until the Timonium meeting starts on August 25, 2023. The fall meet at Laurel begins September 15th and runs through the end of the year. This year's summer dates at Laurel will compete with Colonial Downs in Virginia for the first time in several years. Churchill Downs, owner of Colonial Downs, plans to run on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays this summer, going head-to-head with tracks in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York.
- The Fair Hill Foundation is planning the return of live racing this Memorial Day Weekend, for the first time since 2019. The FH Foundation is looking for sponsors and donations. One pressing concern is how to get a hundred, or so, cars over the turf course and into the infield tailgating-area, without harming the grass. Several suggestions are being considered, including using portable bridges to keep vehicles off the track.
- Can hardly wait until spring,

Tom Mullineaux- Agribusiness Report

- As Agribusiness experienced consolidation in the seed, crop protection, and Fertilizer business in recent years, retail is experiencing a similar situation. Farmer cooperatives are continuing their merger-buyout of smaller struggling businesses.
- Growmark continues to expand its reach in the retail side of input distribution as the once 800-pound gorilla of agribusiness in Maryland, Southern States rides off into the sunset on its 100th Anniversary!
- All indications are that fertilizer prices will continue to "adjust" just before spring. Spot Nitrogen has trended down. Growers concerns with diesel are at the top of the list.

- Early orders for corn and soybean seed are at all-time highs. Seed dealers tell me there are shortages of some hybrids and varieties.
- I am unable to get a straight answer from my “herbicide friends” regarding Glyphosate supply for this season.
- Winter small grain looks excellent. Top dressing wheat and barley will begin in 10 days or so.
- Spring is coming.

Rebecca Stoecker-Vegetable:

- Dates
 - Central Maryland vegetable grower meeting-Jan 26
 - Mid Atlantic fruit and vegetable convention- Jan 31- Feb 2
 - Southern Maryland vegetable grower meeting- Feb 9
- Seed costs are up, and availability of certain things are limited, which are not related to germination rates.
- labor continues to be a major concern for farmers.
- research was presented to the farmers about using shade cloth out in the fields on plants like tomatoes to increase yield and limit heat stress on the plants.
- Biosolarization is also another topic that is being researched to improve soil health using clear plastic tarps to trap heat from the sun. This creates an environment for rapid growth of microbes that produce organic acids from fermentation. This can be effective against pests and weeds.
- Farmers are expressing frustration on the new pesticide regulations, requiring everyone to have a license as opposed to the farm.

Far Nasir- Poultry:

- Cost of Electric has gone up significantly, putting farmers in a financial bind. On top of increasing cost, we also pay a demand charge, which increases our cost to \$4 per Kilowatt-hour.
- CAFO permits are coming up for 2024 renewals, 2019 permits are still not finalized.
- Chicken Day in Annapolis is on February 28th. Contact me for more information.
- Maryland Legislative Priorities Delmarva Chicken Association 2023 Climate Change - DCA recognizes the societal threat of climate change and appreciates the need for reasonable and effective climate change solutions.
- Efforts to improve the environment and mitigate further climate change should be done in a manner which does not harm the livelihoods of farmers or put them at a competitive disadvantage.
- We oppose any effort to restrict the use of natural gas, or any restriction or ban on the use of fossil fuels for agricultural purposes.

- We support best management practices (BMPs) that have environmental and climate change co-benefits, including the use of vegetative environmental buffers. Electric Sales and Use Agricultural Tax Exemption.
- This bill, which we support, would exempt the electricity purchased by a farmer on a commercial account from the state sales and use tax when used to raise livestock or poultry, tending the soil, or planting, harvesting, storing, cleaning, drying, or transporting seeds and crops.
- Such an exemption already exists for the manufacture of goods, so it should also apply to the production of food.
- Many existing poultry houses are currently exempt from this tax under a residential account. However, most poultry operations established after 2010 are on a commercial account and are subject to the tax. This legislation would make electric sales and use tax for farming operations uniform across the state.
- The legislation would directly result in significant savings for farmers. This is especially important given the 41% rise in energy costs in 2022. Establishment of a Fund for Growers Regionally Affected by HPAI - USDA federal indemnity funds already exist for growers directly affected by HPAI (depopulated flocks). However, none currently exists for growers in the control area who cannot replace birds back on the farm in a timely manner, resulting in a loss of income.
- The goal is to establish a fund for growers in the affected region who experienced a loss of income as the result of “wrong time, wrong place.” - Several states with large poultry sectors have already established such funds. Support Status of Biomass as a Tier 1 Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard Option.
- A qualifying biomass is a non-hazardous, organic waste material that is available on a renewable basis and includes some timber by-products, crop by-products, gas produced by anerobic digestion of animal and poultry waste, and some food residuals.
- A proposal resulting in the loss of Renewable Energy Credits for biomass energy production, could result in a financial penalty for new and expanding technology.
- We oppose any effort to stigmatize or penalize this sustainable, clean solution to a long-term industry by-products issue. Environmental Rights Amendment We oppose an environmental rights constitutional amendment for the following reasons.
- There are a wide variety of science-based statutes and regulations currently in place, including many that our chicken community are required to follow to help protect the environment. - Such an amendment could open a floodgate of unmerited litigation against farmers, integrators, and state or local agencies.
- This could create undue financial burdens and stress for farmers and the industry and has the potential to disrupt the general permitting process and the paradigm between farmers and state agencies. Environmental Justice.
- With nearly 18,000 employees across Delmarva and more than 1,300 contract growers, our chicken community encompasses people of all sex, color, race and income level. - In

Maryland, 23% of chicken growers are minorities as compared with 4.5% of all farmers across the United States.

- DCA believes in the environmental health and well-being for all Marylanders, based on sound science and research, which is why we will continue to work with our partners at the Maryland Department of Environment and the Campbell Foundation for the Environment to monitor ambient air within areas of a high concentration of chicken houses.

Amy Crone-Direct Farm Market:

- Conference and meeting season for the farm direct sector; this weekend is the PASA in-person conference (<https://pasafarming.org/2023-sustainable-agriculture-conference/>)
 - PASA awarded \$55m grant for climate smart strategies, project includes FutureHarvest in MD; full summary of projects awarded [here](#)
- Most farmers markets will open in April for the season.
 - MDA Farmers Market Conference usually in March (date TBD)
- Direct marketing farmers taking winter courses and updating any certifications such as Pesticide Management & Nutrient Management
- Cottage Food Training held by SMADC on 2/7 had record registration – over 300.
- Fruit and vegetable meetings happening around the state:
 - List of all through UMD [here](#)
 - Eastern Shore Vegetable Growers Meeting (2/7)
 - [Southern Maryland Fruit & Vegetable Meeting](#) (2/9)
 - PSA Produce Safety Rule (PSR) Grower Training (2/10) [registration](#)
 - Western MD Regional Fruit Meeting (3/2) [registration](#)
 - Soil Amendment Workshop in Derwood (3/9) [registration](#)
 - Urban Agriculture Education Grower Meetings list [here](#)
 - MD State Beekeepers Association immersive course (2/11) [details here](#)
- Million Acre Challenge [events list](#)
- Grants available:
 - [SMADC Small Grants](#) closes 2/15
 - MDA Competitive Grants Program - [Healthy Soils Competitive Fund](#): (due by 3/3)
 - [Urban Ag](#) grants through the USDA (due 3/27)

Cliff Newsome- State Grange:

- Maryland Grangers across the state have been attending Legislative Days. Several state officers went to the Taste of Maryland event.
- This Friday, Feb 11th is the Frederick County Legislative Day at New Midway Fire Hall.
- I highly recommend that our members attend such events in your area.
- The 18th is the Maryland Grange Cabin Fever Event in New Market.
- Our Degree Day is March 4th at Wacoju Grange.

- Feb 20th will an open forum called Rural Minds at Burns Hall at the Carroll County Ag. Center at 7:30 p.m.
- How is your mental health?

Kelly Dudeck- Agritourism:

- Important Bills to Note
- SB418/HB592: Property Tax - Agricultural Land and Improvements - Assessment Bill Synopsis: Providing that value-added agricultural activities are a farm or agricultural use of land for assessment purposes; creating a subclass of real property consisting of improvements on an actively used farm that support value-added agricultural activities; requiring improvements on an actively used farm that support value-added agricultural activities to be assessed at the agricultural use rate; etc.
- SB34/HB389 - Department of Agriculture - State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture Bill Synopsis: For the purpose of establishing the State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture as a position in the Department of Agriculture; and generally relating to the State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture.
- SB448/HB595: Alcoholic Beverages - Manufacturer's Licenses and Off-Site Permits Bill Synopsis: Extending the termination date for provisions relating to the authorization of holders of certain manufacturer's licenses to sell and deliver and to directly ship their own alcoholic beverages products to certain individuals under certain circumstances to June 30, 2025; and delaying a certain effective date for the authorization of certain manufacturer off-site permits to July 1, 2025.
- SB497/HB178: State Designations – State Spirit – Maryland Rye Bill Synopsis: Designating Maryland Rye or Maryland Rye Whiskey as the State spirit.
- Other Items: Grow & Fortify met with the folks at MDE to discuss the issues agritourism folks are having at the county level, dealing with the health department and septic issues. That conversation went well and has now been turned into an agritourism workgroup, with many of the agencies participating. We are encouraged.
- Processing facilities are still the number one concern for many of our growers and producers. The need for more facilities, skilled labor, and guidance regarding inspection and compliance is huge.
- A few of us on the Commission had the opportunity to learn more about a recently discovered genetically unique hop found growing in MD a few years ago. A grant from USDA/MDA was awarded to University of Maryland Extension and Grow & Fortify, along with Milkhouse Brewery on Stillpoint Farm in Frederick County, to see if this hop might be a viable alternative for MD brewers. Here is a short video on the project: <https://youtu.be/04nUiEHcIk0>

Staff Updates:

Kevin Atticks:

- Welcome to everyone.
- Would like to get back to in person meetings and looking forward to the tours.
- Background in agricultural policy and policy development.
- While I'm not a farmer we are the ones called by farmers to help with interpretations and translations of the laws.
- Lot of experience in the industry.
- Please feel free to call and reach out and make sure your issues and triumphs are on our radar.
- Will look to commission as advisory committee for the industry.
- We have some vacancies we need to fill, and we will work hard on getting those filled.
- Reach out with anything you have that is pressing.

Steve Connelly:

- Meeting with USDA today at 10:00.
- Maryland Farm Bureau Day in Annapolis today.
- Secretary Atticks is there right now and will be joining the call by phone.
- Been a busy last couple weeks with transition and Kevin coming in.
- It has been a smooth transition with the change in governor.
- Kevin has been active with getting out to meeting with farmers, ag industry representatives and legislatives.
- It is busy here at the industry with the legislature in. There are some bills that we are providing information on and the pesticide testing bill, also urban grant program.
- Little different and having to get retrained because we were limited on taking positions on legislation in the past and that has now changed.

Hans Schmidt:

- House Bill 152 Urban Ag Grant provides funding for small urban farming for some of their practices.
- Hearing today in support of the bill with some amendments we want to add.
- Nutrient management update meeting the 14th.
- Those that need credits we will have updates on food waste corporation program now.
- Someone from MDE will discuss those updates.
- Five-year PMT study, state chemist talks about soil amendments.
- Potassium studies on crops update and study.
- Conservation grants program updates.
- Positions open for nutrient management planning.
- Working with the University to provide services.

Kevin Conroy:

- Normal course of business.
- Monitoring a few bills luckily nothing unexpected.
- A bill dropped for native plants bill run by extension but haven't seen language on bill yet.
- We have concerns with valid methods to test pesticides.
- Only hearing in the senate not a house hearing yet believe bill will be amended a few times.
- There is a hemp bill.

Jessica Hackett:

- Taste of Maryland event last Thursday was a huge success.
- We are going to have a century farm induction ceremony. We are working with the governor's office to coordinate that.

Stacy Kubofcik

- Busy with loan program.
- Wood incentive program, grant for forestry program and deadline to apply is February 15th.

Meeting adjourned.

