

# Background and Purpose

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## Project Phasing

### I. Assess Current State

Industry Analysis

Interviews with Farmers and Food Professionals

### II. Identify Opportunities for Improvement

Market Analysis

Priority Areas for Improvements

Review of Counties with Successful Initiatives

### III. Define List of Recommendations

Creation of Working Subgroups

List of Actions

Scope

Leadership

Top Initiatives

### IV. Implement Top Initiatives

## Purpose

The purpose of this project is to provide a road map of priority initiatives that can improve the profitability of agricultural operations in Baltimore County and allow farming to reestablish itself as a viable career choice. The outcome of the project is an actionable plan that will support policy and funding decisions by the County and investment decisions by farm-related organizations, private organizations, and the general public.

## Background

Baltimore County is an important source of agricultural products in the Mid-Atlantic with key assets in place. It has one of the oldest and one of the strictest agricultural zoning ordinances in the country. The density allowance (new houses per acre) for agricultural land (RC2) is one residential unit per 50 acres. It has an urban services boundary that prevents the drift of sprawl to the rural areas. As of August 2007, over 53,000 acres have been permanently preserved, with a goal of 80,000 acres preserved by 2020. Funding has been approved for an agricultural resource center for the County, which will coordinate support to the farming community and education to county residents about local agriculture. Leaders in the agricultural community provide valuable input about how to increase the profitability of agriculture in the County, identifying which barriers must be overcome. At the State level, a 2006 project produced new recommendations to improve the outlook of Maryland agriculture.

At the same time, the number of farms in the County has been steadily decreasing (from 889 farms in 1997 to 751 farms in 2007) as well as the land in farms (78,282 acres down from 83,232). The proximity to the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan area has increased the value of land and puts constant pressure for new residential development, making farming, as a career, a more difficult financial choice for the future.

## Benefits

A primary tenet of this project is that profitability in agriculture is a key support feature for the future preservation of agriculture. A profitable local agricultural industry can significantly impact Baltimore County by:

- Increasing the income of local farm owners,
- Increasing the attractiveness of farming as a career and creating job opportunities,
- Enabling farm owners to keep prime and productive agricultural land undeveloped for present and future production,
- Decreasing the tax burden on all residents (working and open land has been proven in many counties to be a net tax benefit to counties in comparison to residential property),
- Creating local wealth, and empowering the local community network,
- Providing an ability to better control food security,
- Promoting public health through access to fresh, locally produced food (with high nutritional value),
- Limiting the environmental impact of transportation and packaging waste and associated costs,
- Increasing the quality of life of all residents, and
- Conserving water for 1.8 million municipal water users.

## Project Organization

The project relied heavily on the commitment from growers, producers, community groups, agricultural industry support organizations, government entities, and many others with a direct or peripheral interest in the success of agriculture in Baltimore County. Key among the project's objectives was to maintain a regular dialogue with the agricultural industry through the formation of project teams. The responsibility of the teams was to oversee the project's implementation, review data, and validate the observations of the consultant and farmer interviews. Three teams were utilized to perform these functions and included:

- **An Executive Team** (leaders and coordinators of the project) consisting of Baltimore County Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board Chairman David Greene, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Baltimore County Director David Martin, Baltimore County Agricultural Land Preservation Program Director Wallace Lippincott, County Economic Development Agricultural Liaison Chris McCollum, MidAtlantic Farm Credit and Farm Bureau Representative Keith Wills and Farm Bureau Representative Mike Turley, University of Maryland Extension Economist and Associate Professor Jim Hanson, NCP Vice-President Alice Chalmers, and NCP Board Member and finance and marketing professional Cathy Tipper.
- **A Multi-Disciplined Team** of individuals that were either interviewed or participated in meetings to provide feedback and direction to the project, consisting of:
  - Tom and Karen Albright, (produce, retail),
  - Wayne Armacost (ex-dairy farmer),
  - Kevin Atticks, Maryland Wine Association,
  - Ned Atwater, Atwaters' (retail),
  - Zack Baillet TSU intern,
  - Jim Baird, AFT,
  - Henry Baker (retired banker),
  - Greg Bartlomiejczuk, intern,
  - Amanda Behrens, Johns Hopkins CLF,
  - Lee Bishop, NCP,
  - Dean Bryant, Roseda Beef,
  - Ken Bullen, Graul's (retail),
  - Eva Delp-Cole, FSA,
  - Gaylord Clark, Two Oceans Seafood,
  - Trevor Clatterbuck, FreshForkMarket,
  - Charlie Conklin, Baltimore Co. Soil Conserv.,
  - Amy Crohn, MDA,
  - Rob and Julie Deford, Boordy Vineyards,
  - Jack Dillon, BCARC,
  - Todd Erling, HVADC,
  - Colby Ferguson, Frederick Co Econ. Dev.,
  - Tony Geraci, Baltimore City Schools,
  - Cricket Goodall, MD Horse Breeding Asso.,
  - David Hayden, Dark Hollow Farm (equine),
  - Janna Howley (farmers' markets),
  - Jack and Becky Gurley, Calvert's Gift, (organic),
  - George Mayo, MAEF,
  - Mike and Wayne McGinnis (grain),
  - Steve McHenry, MARBIDCO,
  - Louis Mitchell, Md. Hospitals for a Healthy Envir.,
  - Teresa Moore, VPC,
  - Marion Gaines Mullen, Mullen Landscaping (nursery),
  - Ginger Myers (Extension/marketing),
  - Joan and Drew Norman, One Straw Farm (organic),
  - Bonnie North, Baltimore Eats,
  - Ann Palmer, Johns Hopkins CLF,
  - Pat Patterson, Manor View Farm (horticulture),
  - Bob Prigel, Bellevalle Farm (dairy),
  - Les Richardson, Richardson Farm (produce, poultry),
  - Steve Piper (Corn & Soy),
  - Patrick Rogers, North Run Farm (Ag Tourism),
  - Ted Rouse, Chesapeake Sustainable Business Alliance,
  - Paul Saval, Saval Foodservice (food distribution),
  - Roy Skeen, City Farmer,
  - David Smith, Springfield Farm (poultry),
  - Dierdre Smith, Doug Carroll (Beef, Horses),
  - Mike Spencer, BCARC,
  - Nathan Stambaugh, Roseda Farm, (beef),
  - Jane Stores, MDA,
  - Greg Strella, Farmer City Schools,
  - Hank Suchting, MD Angus Association,
  - John Sullivan III, Dep. Chief for Ag., Harford County,
  - Gene Swackhamer, BCARC,
  - Cheryl Wade, Mill Valley (retail),
  - Steve Weber, Weber' Farm (produce, poultry),
  - Jane Wofson, TSU.
- **A Core Team** in charge of the day-to-day work, made up of Alice Chalmers and Cathy Tipper from NCP and Philip Gottwals of ACDS, LLC, the paid consultant.