

The Maryland Farm Bureau Hotline

Legislative proposals that impact Maryland's farm community



Contact: Val Connelly or Kurt Fuchs
(410) 922-3426

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National Update

PUT DEATH TAXES TO REST – Priority Campaign for Farm Bureau

For over a decade, Farm Bureau has been at the forefront seeking Death Tax reform. In 1996, it was Farm Bureau members who brought the issue to Congress' attention by delivering 100,000 messages to lawmakers. Key Hill leaders have told us they expect legislative action prior to Memorial Day, most likely in the Senate Finance Committee.

In 2010, we have an opportunity to seek long-lasting reform. AFBF is launching the "Put Death Taxes to Rest" campaign. If we garner the 60 votes needed, the Senate is likely to address this issue. It will take quality messages, a focused grassroots effort of Farm Bureau members and leadership to help win this issue for Farm Bureau. We are seeking quality contacts from members who have been impacted by Death Taxes, went through expensive planning or need reform in order to pass along their agricultural operations to the next generation.

The success of this campaign will require action from all of Farm Bureau members, state Farm Bureau Presidents, board members, Farm Bureau Young Farmer and Rancher committees and Women's Leadership committees to contact their Senators.

The strategy for the "Put Death Taxes to Rest" campaign emphasizes a focused engagement with Senators and Senate Finance Committee members before the full grassroots network.

Our most influential tool is personal stories. AFBF has setup a "Share Your Story" feature on the FBACT Insider website (www.fbactinsider.org) as a one-stop Web site to collect the stories that will have an influence with Senators. Click here to share your story: http://www.fbactinsider.org/involved_share.jsf and to get additional information about the campaign.

EWG Updates Ag Spending Database

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) yesterday released an updated version of their online database of farm program payments. The press release announcing this update can be found [here](#). The EWG has used the update of their database to criticize farm programs as wasteful and runaway spending.

According to AFBF analysts EWG manipulated data to fit their scenario. Some examples include:

- EWG "farm payment" numbers are actually a summation of the farm safety net, conservation payments, disaster assistance and crop insurance subsidies. Many of the numbers used by EWG

are also an accumulation of 15 years of data, not just single-year data. By adding all of these numbers together, they exaggerate the impact of farm payments.

- Despite the fact that the 2008 farm bill requires direct attribution for all payments in 2009, the EWG database continues to show payments by entity. Again, by accumulating the payments of multiple individuals under one entity, there appear to be no limits on farm program payments. The inclusion of crop insurance in the commodity payments number further implies that limits don't exist on farm program payments. Of course, farm program payments limits do exist and are closely monitored by USDA.
- EWG points out that 10 percent of farm program recipients received 74 percent of all farm subsidies, but they fail to mention that these farmers also produce the majority of the country's food, feed, renewable fuel and fiber.
- EWG implies that commodities other than traditional program crops (cotton, corn, soybeans, rice, and wheat) are not eligible for any of the payments they track and receive no assistance in the 2008 farm bill. In reality, crop insurance, disaster payments and conservation payments are all available to specialty crop and livestock producers. Specialty crops receive assistance through specialty crop block grants, food purchase programs and research funding.
- The EWG press release further states that commodity program spending continues at the expense of healthy school lunches and wildlife habitat protection. Additional funds for the school lunch program are currently being negotiated, and \$1 billion was added to the school snack program in the 2008 farm bill. Additional funds were also added in the 2008 farm bill for a variety conservation programs such as EQIP, CRP, WRP, WHIP and CSP.
- EWG fails to mention that farmers pay a premium for crop insurance coverage. The crop insurance system in the United States is an innovative, actuarially-sound public/private partnership that provides farmers with a market-based risk management tool. Additionally, the terms of the arrangement between private crop insurance companies and the government are constantly re-evaluated to ensure that the American taxpayer is getting the best value for the money.
- EWG asserts that biofuel production has had a negative impact on conservation in the United States. However, the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) published in April 2010 found that total cropland erosion in this country has declined by about 43 percent over the past 25 years. Additionally, cropland acreage declined from 420 million acres in 1982 to 357 million acres in 2007. The NRI found that half of this reduction was reflected in enrollments of environmentally sensitive cropland in the Conservation Reserve Program.
- By the admission of EWG's own footnotes, a great deal of their data is estimated or incomplete.

MFB Joins 100 Ag & Commodity Groups in Letter to Support Cuban Trade

The letter reads.....

Dear Members of the House Agriculture Committee: *(including MD Rep. Frank Kratovil)*

As representatives of America's agriculture and agribusiness community, broader business community and other advocates, we urge you to cosponsor and vote to report favorably from the Committee on Agriculture H.R. 4645, the *Travel Restriction Reform and Export Enhancement Act*.

Since sales of U.S. farm goods were allowed to Cuba in 2000, U.S. farmers have seen \$4 billion in sales into the market and payment has been received from the Cubans without issue. Unfortunately, due to continued arbitrary restrictions on U.S. agricultural sales, American producers have failed to realize the full potential of this market. Your support is important in helping America's farmers increase their export sales, especially in these difficult economic times.

H.R. 4645 will not repeal the U.S. embargo or lift the restrictions on credit. Cuban exports to the United States would continue to be prohibited. The bill simply clarifies how U.S. farmers and agricultural businesses conduct sales to Cuba and allows U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba, consistent with their ability to do so to every other country, including other U.S. sanctioned countries. These modest changes will establish and protect U.S. agriculture's reputation as a reliable supplier and provide the opportunity to maintain and grow U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba.

H.R. 4645 has three provisions:

1. It will reverse the controversial February 22, 2005, Office of Foreign Assets Control interpretation of the term "payment of cash in advance" for sales to Cuba. This regulatory restriction is contrary to the *Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000*, which allows for the shipment of agricultural goods under a broader interpretation of "payment of cash in advance" terms, consistent with practices successfully used by U.S. exporters with other importers, which prior to 2005 included Cuba.
2. The bill will eliminate the expensive and discriminatory requirement that payments to U.S. agricultural sellers must pass through banks in third countries. This process increases the cost of purchasing U.S. agricultural goods and puts U.S. agriculture at a competitive disadvantage.
3. The bill will enhance the ability of Cuba to purchase U.S. farm goods by lifting restrictions on U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba. Texas A&M University estimates that lifting these travel restrictions alone will increase U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba in the long term by \$336 million per year, creating up to 5,500 new jobs. In addition, public opinion polls show that about 64 percent of Americans and two-thirds of Cuban-Americans support the ability of U.S. citizens to freely travel to Cuba.

H.R. 4645 represents an opportunity to remove unjustified U.S. barriers to our own agricultural sector in order to increase the export competitiveness of U.S. agriculture products in Cuba. We urge you to support the bill as introduced by Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) and Rep. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) without amendments.

Rural Development Blog Serves as 'One-Stop-Shop'

"Rural Community Building," a new blog created by the American Farm Bureau Federation, serves as a "one-stop-shop" for county and state Farm Bureaus to share resources, ideas and information on improving the quality of life in rural communities.

The site will be updated regularly with news stories and blog entries about rural development. Also featured are resources and links on a broad range of topics including agritourism, local foods, funding opportunities, research reports and initiatives to foster entrepreneurship. Visitors to the site may comment on posts. Information on rural development workshops available from AFBF also is available on the site, as well as a "blogroll" with links to related resources on broadband, community building, entrepreneurship, Agriculture Department rural development programs and more. Check out the Rural Community Building Blog at: <http://ruralcommunitybuilding.fb.org>.

State Update

False Area K-tag Citations

In phone calls and emails, it has become apparent that the original points of contact provided at the DC Motor Vehicle Administration are no longer effective in resolving the issue of false tickets being sent to farmers with Area K-tag registrations. The Maryland Department of Agriculture is continuing to work with MDOT and the MD MVA to resolve the matter fully in the long-term. In the meantime they have advised farmers to contact **Carla Chester at the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration** at the following number **410-787-7828**. She will assist farmers in resolving their false-tickets/citations on a case by case basis and from the feedback we have received to date, farmers have been very pleased with how helpful and effective she has been. If you have further questions please contact Kurt Fuchs at 410-922-3426 or kurtf.mdfb@verizon.net or Sue duPont, Maryland Department of Agriculture, at 410-841-5889.

Statewide Planning Forums

Between now and the end of June the Maryland Department of Planning is conducting a series of public forums throughout the state to gather input regarding *smart growth* and planning and zoning related issues in general. Their goal is to use the community input to formulate a State Development Plan, which was authorized in the 1970s, but never completed. Included is the link to the "PlanMaryland" website (<http://plan.maryland.gov/getinvolved/publicForums.shtml>) where you will find greater detail on the public forums and the impetus behind them. Additionally, the website for the Maryland Department of Planning is <http://planning.maryland.gov/>.

It is a difficult time of year to ask farmers to take time away from their farm operations and families, especially after the weather we have had over the winter and early spring, but it is imperative that the agricultural community come out in numbers to attend these forums. The specter of statewide zoning or some version thereof has been floated in planning and environmental circles for several years now, and you can bet its proponents will be attending these forums all over the state.

Attached you will find a listing of the forums to be held with dates, times, and locations. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact me at 410-922-3426 or by email at kurtf.mdfb@verizon.net.

2010 Cover Crop Program

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have teamed up to offer Maryland farmers more choices and better incentives to plant cover crops in their fields this fall. This year, MDA will provide farmers with approximately \$15 million to plant cover crops. NRCS has made an additional \$3 million available to farmers who plant traditional or harvested cover crops this fall. Sign-up is open now for the NRCS program. Sign-up for the MDA program will take place from June 21-July 15, 2010.

Farmers who choose to plant cover crops for harvest can receive \$51/acre from NRCS or \$25/an acre from MDA. The MDA payment increases to \$35/acre if rye is used as the cover crop.

Farmers who plant traditional cover crops may receive \$51 an acre from NRCS or \$40/acre from MDA. This year, farmers who plant traditional cover crops using NRCS or MDA funds can receive up to \$55/acre in additional incentive payments for using highly valued planting practices. The maximum payment under this option is \$106/acre.

Cover crops are cereal grains and winter annual brassicas (plants in the cabbage family), such as rapeseed, that may be planted to scavenge excess nutrients that remain in the soil following production of corn, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco or vegetables. Special incentives are available to farmers who plant rye. All seed used is required to meet Maryland Seed Law and Regulatory Standards and have a minimum germination rate of 80 percent.

Maryland Recycles Pesticide Containers for 18th Year Collection Dates Open in June

ANNAPOLIS, MD (April 26, 2010) For 17 years, Maryland's pesticide container recycling program, offered by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), has helped prevent pesticide residues from entering the soil and local waterways and has saved valuable landfill space by recycling 616,000 empty, plastic pesticide containers. The program will open its 18th year of operation in June, asking farmers, pesticide applicators and others to properly rinse and recycle their empty pesticide containers. A total of 28 collection days are scheduled June through September at eight locations throughout the state.

"This beneficial pesticide recycling program is a win-win situation for everyone and protects the environment from possible contamination. We are very pleased with the response by farmers, commercial agricultural pesticide applicators and other pesticide users to this program," said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance. "It offers producers and others a free way to dispose of pesticide containers, protects the Chesapeake Bay and keeps Maryland smart, green and growing by removing potential contaminants through proper disposal, and provides source of recycled material for vendors. As the word has spread about the benefits of the program, participation has consistently increased."

The pesticide container recycling program is FREE and open to all agricultural producers and pesticide applicators. The Agricultural Container Recycling Council (ACRC) provides a chipper to grind the plastic containers into flakes, which are then transported to a contractor for recycling. The containers collected in Maryland have yielded more than 260 tons of recyclable plastic flakes.

"We are especially pleased with the cooperative effort of the Ag Container Recycling Council and USAg Recycling, Inc., which makes local recycling and special pick up for large quantities possible, providing a convenient and much cheaper alternative to landfill disposal," said Secretary Hance. "With continued cooperation among the participating groups, farmers and pesticide applicators, the program will continue to be successful and will protect the natural resources of the state from potential contamination by pesticides."

Maryland's container recycling program is a combined effort of state, county and federal agencies, as well as private industry, working together to protect the environment. With cooperation between MDA and Mid-Shore Regional Solid Waste Facility, Kent County Public Works, Wicomico Public Works, Frederick County Bureau of Solid Waste Management, Harford County Public Works, Crop Production Services-Denton, Southern States Centreville Cooperative, Southern States Hampstead Cooperative, Southern States Kennedyville Cooperative, Martin's Elevator, Angelica Nurseries, Inc., The Mill of Black Horse, Willard Agri Service Inc., Chesapeake Ag. Air, Tim's Aerial Applications, Allen Chorman and Son, Eddie Mercer, Inc., Maryland Environmental Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service, and Maryland farmers and applicators, the program has been effective in reducing the landfill disposal of plastic pesticide containers and in allowing the plastic to be reused.

A schedule of collection dates and sites is available on the MDA website at www.mda.state.md.us/pdf/recycle.pdf. For additional information, or to schedule a chipping date at your

site, contact Rob Hofstetter, special programs coordinator, Pesticide Regulation Section, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Annapolis, MD, telephone 410-841-5710.

New Maryland Nutrient Trading Program to be Introduced at Meetings across the State

– The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has scheduled a series of educational meetings to provide an overview of the new Maryland Nutrient Trading Program and introduce its web-based nutrient credit assessment tool, marketplace, and registry. Governor Martin O'Malley signed House Bill 974 into law this week, which enables the exchange (buying and selling) of nutrient reduction credits that have monetary value to help reduce nitrogen and phosphorus in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

The sessions run from 10:00 a.m. to noon and are as follows:

- May 25 - Whitaker Campus Center Commons at Hood College in Frederick www.hood.edu
- June 2 - Room 113, Conference Center at the La Plata campus of the College of Southern Maryland www.csmd.edu
- June 3 - Room 110 at the Higher Education Center at Chesapeake College in Wye Mills www.chesapeake.edu.

The agenda for each meeting will include the following:

- Background information on the challenges posed by the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and the role of nutrient trading
- The development of nutrient trading policy, protocols, and tools
- The general features and requirements of Maryland's trading program
- How the nutrient trading market works and how to participate
- Using the trading tool to establish eligibility and generate tradable credits
- Getting credits certified, verified, and registered
- Executing a trade
- Financial incentives and environmental benefits from the growth of a comprehensive ecosystem marketplace
- Carbon offset and stacking opportunities from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions Act of 2009
- The creation of a Maryland Carbon Sequestration/Trading Advisory Committee

All meetings will be moderated by Mark M. Bundy, Ph.D., who is the former Director of Education, Bay Policy, and Growth Management Services at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and a current member of the Maryland Green Building Council. Dr. Bundy facilitated the two-year process which drew upon the expertise of a diverse group of stakeholders from state agencies, regional and national organizations, and private industry to develop the principles, policies, and tools for Maryland's nutrient trading program. Staff from MDA's Office of Resource Conservation will be joined by representatives from the Maryland Department of the Environment, the World Resources Institute, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, and the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts in discussing meeting topics and responding to questions.

To RSVP or obtain additional information, contact Susan Payne, coordinator of ecosystem markets, at 410-841-5865 or NuTrade@mda.state.md.us. Additional information about Maryland's Nutrient Trading Program can be found on MDA's homepage at www.mda.state.md.us under MDA Events or www.mdnutrienttrading.com.