

Maryland Farm Bureau's Government Relations Bulletin



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National Update

Farmers Double Corn Production Using Less Fertilizer

The Fertilizer Institute announced Tuesday that between 1980 and 2010, U.S. farmers nearly doubled corn production using slightly fewer fertilizer nutrients than were used in 1980. The announcement is based on fertilizer application rate data released last week by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Specifically, in 1980, farmers grew 6.64 billion bushels of corn using 3.9 pounds of nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) for each bushel and in 2010 they grew 12.45 billion bushels using 1.6 pounds of nutrients per bushel produced. In total, this represents an 87.5 percent increase in production with 4 percent fewer nutrients during that same timeframe.

Corn production accounts for half of U.S. fertilizer use and experts estimate that 40 percent to 60 percent of world food production is attributable to fertilizers.

[The Fertilizer Institute news release](#)

Rep. Roscoe Bartlett Advocates for Stink Bug Control Methods and Funding

Rep. Roscoe Bartlett welcomes the high priority to provide farmers effective control methods of the invasive brown marmorated stink bug. He released the following statement after the House Appropriations Committee approved the FY 12 appropriations bill for the Agriculture Department. The statement is also posted on Rep. Bartlett's website here:

<http://bartlett.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=243932>

"I am very appreciative that the House Appropriations committee at my urging identified controlling the invasive Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) as a top priority for FY 12 funding for three different USDA agencies, ARS (Agriculture Research Service), NIFA (National Institute of Food and Agriculture) and APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service). The Appropriations committee has made it clear that the research and development of effective BMSB control methods for our farmers is a top congressional priority. While there is no specific dollar amount associated with the report language, the will of the congress is clear that adequate resources must be made available in the FY 2012 budget to combat this destructive, invasive insect."

A recent article about the spread of the stink bug nationwide is posted on Rep. Bartlett's website here:

<http://bartlett.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=242280>

Coverage of the Town Hall for Farmers that Rep. Bartlett hosted on March 18, 2011 that included a panel of experts about the BMSB is posted here:

<http://bartlett.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=233539>

Agvocacy 2.0 Conference Set for August in Nashville

It's here! After much anticipation, the AgChat Foundation Agvocacy 2.0 Conference is back and ready to welcome a whole new crop of advocates! This year's conference will be held Aug. 22-23 in Nashville, Tenn. The conference is open to anyone who is passionate about agriculture and is interested in learning how social media can be used to tell their stories. [Agchat Foundation news release](#)

State Update

Maryland State Builders Association Released Report on the Cost of Bay Cleanup

BALTIMORE, April 14--A report released by Sage Policy Group explains why Maryland's plan to comply with new federal regulations designed to clean up the Chesapeake Bay would shrink the state's economy by \$10 billion, result in the loss of 65,000 jobs and cost the state, taxpayers and consumers more than \$11 billion by 2017 -- making the overall cost to Marylanders \$21 billion, or \$9,750 per household.

The Sage Group study, "The Impact of the Phase I Watershed Implementation Plan on Key Maryland Industries" was commissioned by the Maryland State Builders Association, which represents the state's home builders, remodelers, suppliers and contractors. "Clearly the findings of this report are cause for concern," said Steve Seawright, the builders association president. "We believe the focus of Bay cleanup should center on the leading causes of pollution and the most economically beneficial reduction measures that can be put in place now with the limited resources available," he said.

At a time when our state and nation are struggling to emerge from a significant recession and resulting high unemployment, moving forward with such an expensive plan will be devastating, with \$2.8 billion in lost wages and income – and worse yet, the plan does not focus on the worst polluters." Above and beyond the efficacy of the current state plan, the new mandates go further than those of neighboring states, thus placing Maryland at a competitive disadvantage as it relates to economic growth, job creation and the overall financial impact on residents.

"From a public policy perspective, this suggests that Maryland's implementation program should strive to retain at least the current level of economic development competitiveness vis-à-vis Virginia and other Mid-Atlantic states," the report said. "In other words, Maryland's contributions to Bay restoration should be commensurate with the contributions of other states, thereby allowing Maryland's industries to continue to effectively compete."

From a practical standpoint, it is unclear how the plan's \$11 billion price tag will be paid for given the current budgetary limitations on the state and localities, which face substantial cuts and growing liabilities this year and forecast over the next two years. While some costs will be passed onto consumers and industries, Maryland and its counties would incur dramatic increased costs for compliance over the plan's first five years.

"The Maryland State Builders Association certainly supports efforts to strengthen the health of the Bay, as every Marylander would. We, however, believe that those efforts should be undertaken within the confines of affordability and in way that keeps Maryland competitive economically," Seawright said.

A copy of the Sage Policy Group Report is attached.

MD Farm Bureau Update

Nominations for Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau Award Requested

The Maryland Farm Bureau will present the eighth annual award for distinguished and meritorious service in the interest of Farm Bureau and agriculture at the 2011 annual meeting in Ocean City, Maryland. All County Farm Bureaus are encouraged to nominate one individual who has made outstanding contributions to Maryland agriculture and Farm Bureau specifically. Rules governing the selection of an award recipient are listed below. Suggestions for nominees should be directed to your county Farm Bureau President or Board of Directors. Past award recipients include:

Clark Kolb of Garrett County, 2004
Joe Free of Frederick County, 2005
Grove Miller of Cecil County, 2006
Oscar Grimes of Anne Arundel County, 2007
Thelma Bigelow of Kent County, 2008
Mildred Darcey of Prince George's County, 2009
J. Allen Swann of Calvert County, 2010

Rules for 2011 Award Nominations:

- The Maryland Farm Bureau's award for distinguished and meritorious service is given in recognition of outstanding service in the interest of MD Farm Bureau and agriculture.
- Nominations for the award may be made only by County Farm Bureaus. Current officers and employees of Farm Bureau are not eligible for nomination. The award will not be presented posthumously nor will it be presented to an organization.
- Nominees must be Maryland Farm Bureau members who have contributed to the betterment of the organization and the industry at the county, state or national level.
- Nominations must be received by the Maryland Farm Bureau on or before **Thursday, October 20, 2011**. The nomination should include name, address, phone number, and qualifications for the nominee.
- Award winners will be selected only from nominations made in the current year. However nominations made in previous years may be resubmitted.
- Nominees will be judged by a committee appointed by the President of the Maryland Farm Bureau.
- The awards committee will select only one award recipient per year.

Policy Development for 2012

Policies are the "signposts" that guide our organization as we decide how to handle the many different challenges we face both in the legislature and before the general public. Our Farm Bureau policy book gives directions to our officers, boards, committees and staff. Policy provides the basis for unity of purpose and action by the organization. To be effective, policies must be based upon the thinking of our members. To be assured of majority opinion, Farm Bureau must know what the members' thoughts are relative to the issues and problems facing agriculture.

Beginning with this edition of the GRB, we will provide one policy development issue for discussion in each edition throughout the summer. We hope that providing one discussion issue at a time will allow you to think about the questions, discuss them with family and neighbors, and hold preliminary policy development discussions at each county Farm Bureau meeting.

Farm Bureau's policy development process begins with you. A proposed policy position should be shared with your county Farm Bureau Policy Development Chairman, President and/or Board. A formal policy development meeting will be held in each county in the fall. Policy resolutions will be discussed and voted on by county Farm Bureau members. Resolutions that are forwarded by counties will be discussed and adopted by the voting delegates at the Maryland Farm Bureau annual meeting in December. Policies dealing with national issues will be forwarded for discussion at the AFBF annual meeting in January 2012 in Hawaii.

The policy development discussion issue for June 2, 2011 is national issue:

Funding Infrastructure Projects

Issue:

Many of the roads and bridges needed to transport our children safely to school, deliver our goods from the farm to market or even to allow barges to move down the river are in serious need of repair and modernization. The funding for these projects comes from local, state and federal governments, and many of these governmental entities will likely have substantially fewer financial resources in the future.

Background:

Our nation's infrastructure—the roads, bridges, levees, dams, and inland waterways—are critical components of our society and our economy. These are the structures that bring us clean water, let us move goods to market, and let our families move from point A to point B. But much of this infrastructure is old and has not been properly maintained over the last several decades. In 2009, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave the nation's total infrastructure a grade of D and estimated it would require \$2.2 trillion over 5 years to bring things back to a passing grade.

As an example, roughly one in four of the nation's bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Bridges are usually built with a life expectancy of 50 years. The average bridge is now 43 years old. Structurally deficient bridges are not necessarily unsafe, but are such that weight and speed limits must be applied. Functionally obsolete bridges are those that are not able to accommodate today's traffic load or vehicle sizes and weights, forcing traffic congestion and emergency vehicle detours. In 2004, nearly half of all bridge improvement funding came from federal funds. These are frequently targets of budget earmarks (for example, the bridge to nowhere). Consequently, one would expect a more difficult federal funding environment.

Obviously, bridges connect roads. Between 1980 and 2005, vehicle miles traveled by automobiles increased 94 percent, with truck miles traveled up by 105 percent during the same period. Yet the actual amount of road miles in the country increased only 3.5 percent, indicating that roads are more crowded today than they were 30 years ago. The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Commission estimates it will take more than \$150 billion per year just to maintain the nation's roads. The Highway Trust Fund took in around \$35 billion in fiscal year 2010 and between fiscal years 2008 to

2010 was supplemented with roughly \$30 billion from general revenues. The cost of road maintenance is directly related to the number of miles traveled, but as vehicle efficiency improves, the effective revenue per mile driven is going down.

A final example is the inland waterways including the locks and dam system that makes navigation possible on large portions of our major rivers. Forty-one states, including all states east of the Mississippi River, have commercially navigable waterways. There are more than 12,000 miles of navigable waterways between the Mississippi, Ohio, Gulf Intercoastal and the Pacific Coast systems. The Mississippi system alone totals 9,000 miles. These systems are served by 257 locks and dams, nearly half of which were classified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as functionally obsolete in 2006. While a significant proportion of the funding needed to support our infrastructure comes from dedicated trust funds, other federal, state and local funds are playing an increasingly important role in not only the maintenance of this infrastructure, but an even greater role in the expansion of our current system.

Some have suggested major shifts in the way in which we provide for infrastructure. One option is to privatize many of these functions, such as toll roads or bridges. Legislation has been introduced recently to establish a national bank, seeded initially with federal funds, to attract private investors to provide resources for infrastructure improvement. Naturally these investors would expect some kind of revenue stream in the future, either through tolls or tax revenue, and some are expecting the activity could attract more than \$500 billion in investments.

Questions

How will we fund just the maintenance and improvement of our nation's infrastructure in order to keep goods flowing to the marketplace and generally providing for the day to day operation of the nation?

Are we willing to pay higher levels of usage fees for roads, bridges, locks and other associated infrastructure?

Is the establishment of a national infrastructure bank a reasonable approach toward handling this issue in the future?

Farm Bureau Policy:

Policy numbers 125 through 128 focus on infrastructure issues from funding to safety regulations. Topics specific to the funding of infrastructure have been excerpted below:

125 – Highways

Lines 1-9: The Federal Highway Trust Fund should be maintained as now constituted and no diversion of these highway funds to non highway-related purposes should be permitted. We support maintaining the separation of the Federal Highway Trust Fund from the unified federal budget. We favor elimination of the federal highway use tax on farm trucks. Until such action is taken, we will support legislation raising the exemption for trucks from the federal highway use tax from 7,500 to 22,500 miles.

Lines 13-20: We recommend that all farm vehicles be exempt from requirements to use taxable (undyed) diesel fuel. This should include farm trucks exempt from state vehicle registration or registered but operating within a 50-mile radius of the farm or farm business. We recommend that federal and state revenue agents checking for fuel tax compliance be required to obtain owner permission or search warrants to enter private property, and that all surprise inspections be conducted in the public domain.

Lines 51-59: We support: (2) Legislation with continued emphasis on the development of secondary, farm-to-market roads and adequate funding for roads and maintenance of bridges; (3) Allowing more flexibility in the use of federal highway construction funds at the state level for the purpose of maintaining primary and secondary roads; (4) Funding for resurfacing, rehabilitating, repairing and reconstructing the nation's interstate highways as many have passed their designed life span.

Lines 87-88: (14) Streamlining the process for permitting, funding, and construction of federal aid transportation projects.

Lines 95-100: We oppose: (3) Toll road construction where federal funds and lands are involved; (4) Increasing highway fuel taxes for deficit reduction purposes; (5) Action by Congress or the DOT to impose sanctions or to withhold user taxes or any other federal funds from any state in an attempt to force or coerce states to enact particular laws;

126 – Maritime Transportation

Lines 14-15: We support improved infrastructure at all U.S. ports, including inland seaports, to better facilitate the loading of all sizes of ships.

128 – Transportation Policy

Lines 1-7: We support development of a long-range national transportation policy that views transportation as a holistic system servicing the needs of both passengers and freight across all modes and recognizes the importance of connectivity between modes. It should encourage exploration of public/private partnerships and be designed to support global competitiveness while developing the most economical and energy efficient methods of meeting future transportation needs.

Lines 8-14: We support the maintenance and improvement of our transportation infrastructure, including:

(1) The lock and dam system and waterways; (2) Rural highways; (3) Railroad systems; (4) Farm-to-market roads; and (5) Pipelines.

Lines 15-19: We should work with other interested groups to educate policymakers and aggressively pursue actions in Congress and appropriate federal and state agencies to ensure that we have an efficient and competitive transportation system through which we can effectively move agricultural products.

Please submit your thoughts on this policy development issue to your county Farm Bureau. If you would like to share your thoughts with us too, we will be happy to send them with your county Farm Bureau President and our Legislative Affairs Committee. You may review Maryland Farm Bureau's current policy by logging on to our website at www.mdfarmbureau.com. The policy can be found on the homepage and under the Government Affairs tab.