

New Agriculture Laws Go Into Effect October 1 ***Positive Changes for Agricultural Land Preservation, Organic Farming***

ANNAPOLIS, MD (Sept. 29, 2009) – Eight new agriculture laws go into effect October 1 in Maryland. The laws address agricultural land preservation, organic farming, veterinary, turf grass and tobacco authority issues.

“Working closely with the General Assembly this session, we passed key legislation to protect our priorities of strengthening our middle class and our small and family owned businesses and farms, providing opportunity for more people, and protecting the health of our citizens and the environment to keep Maryland smart, green and growing,” said Governor Martin O’Malley.

“We are very pleased by this year’s legislative session and have worked to get these laws up and running,” said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance. “We thank Governor O’Malley, the General Assembly, the farm community and the citizens who pushed for passage of these bills. Their support shows that more people are recognizing how important agriculture is to their lives.”

2009 agriculture-related laws effective October 1 are:

- **SB 90** - Corrects an oversight in legislation from the early 1990s when the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) changed its valuation method appraisal system.
- **SB 89** – Authorizes MALPF to assess civil penalties to help correct willful violations of the easement purchased with public funds.
- **SB 91** - Requires cool season lawn and turf grasses to be labeled with a sell-by date and will extend the valid germination test date from nine months to 15 months. These changes bring Maryland’s Seed Law regarding cool season turf grasses into harmony with the USDA’s Federal Seed Act.
- **SB 77** - Removes the requirement to adopt regulations that create a program that meets the requirements of the federal Organic Food Production Act and allows MDA to use the federal regulations. Removes the \$500 fee limit to defray the cost of conducting field inspections and laboratory analysis.
- **SB 78** - Permits a veterinary medical student who has successfully completed three years of veterinary education to work under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinary practitioner.
- **SB 74** - Repeals the Maryland Tobacco Authority, which has historically been responsible for regulating and overseeing the auction sale of leaf tobacco.
- **HB 1413** - Requires that Maryland-licensed veterinarians obtain a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education annually to renew their license with the Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.

- **HB 1418** - Establishes a review process for requests to condemn land preserved by MALPF for economic development, residential development, or parkland, comparing the public interest served by preserving the land for agricultural use versus the alternative use for which the land would be condemned.

Two additional laws went into effect on July 1, 2009:

- **SB 73** - Requires the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and its county partners to maintain the confidentiality of financial information and the rankings of individual landowners until the end of an annual easement acquisition cycle.
- **HB 676** – Authorizes MALPF to reconfigure the land under easement to resolve minor problems and/or enhance the farming operation.

A more detailed description of each new law is available on MDA's website at: www.mda.state.md.us/about_mda/laws-legislation/2009_legislation.php. To see a full listing of bills signed by Governor O'Malley, visit www.gov.state.md.us and to see all bills considered by the 2009 General Assembly log onto www.mlis.state.md.us.