

COMMERCIAL SCALES

Scales used for commercial purposes in Maryland must meet the standards of the Maryland Weights and Measures Law; however, there are no restrictions on the sale of scales that do not meet the requirements of the Maryland law. Therefore, we urge the Maryland Department of Agriculture to prohibit the sale of scales for commercial purposes, which can not meet the minimum requirements of the Maryland Weights and Measures law.

COMMODITY PROMOTION AND MARKETING

Due to the need for the farmers to diversify their operations the use of roadside signs is imperative to let the public know your location and which products are available. Therefore, we support exempting such signs from the regulations governing roadside signs.

Efficient marketing programs are necessary for any successful agricultural enterprise. We urge the Governor and legislators to support the Maryland Department of Agriculture's efforts to improve marketing services.

We strongly encourage the continuance of all farmers markets. #2000

We support the continued funding of the Southern Maryland Regional Farmer's Market with monies generated from cigarette tax revenue for the purpose of marketing alternative crops to tobacco.

We urge the Maryland legislature to adequately fund MDA marketing programs that serve all citizens.

We oppose legislation that attempts to prohibit roadside vending of our agricultural products.

We also urge the support of the Acres Computer Information Network to keep farmers more informed of marketing information.

We strongly encourage the Maryland Department of Economic Development to reinstate its policy of providing financial support for the promotion of agriculture commodities.

We support amending state procurement laws and regulations dealing with the bidding process to give special consideration to Maryland commodity processors.

We recommend that all grain dealers in the state of Maryland should have certified grain-testing personnel. #96

We request that samples taken for moisture tests be free and clear of foreign materials.

We support the voluntary establishment of standards for moisture discounts, which separate shrinkage, and the drying cost and which are not tied to the price paid for the grain. #96 Since the risk of illness from unpasteurized cider is no greater than the risk of illness from any other food source, we do not support any labeling of cider beyond whether or not it is pasteurized. #97

Port of Baltimore - Grain Terminal

We support a viable grain export terminal in the Port of Baltimore. #2001

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

We support cost sharing on conservation-oriented drainage and other water management practices under the EQIP as administered by NRCS. The practices should be designed to improve water quality downstream.

The process of obtaining a permit from the appropriate government agencies to do any type of work in or along the small streams that flow through our farmland has become extremely burdensome and time consuming. We urge these government agencies to approve general permits to install approved best management practices.

We recommend that whenever federal, state or local government projects disturb natural drainage patterns, appropriate best management practices to correct and alleviate problems should be required and installed by the agency behind the project.

We recommend that channelization be considered an acceptable practice for correcting flooding problems in trout streams.

We support the reclassification of Class 3 trout streams, which contain no native trout to Class 4 streams.

We encourage agricultural landowners and tenant operators to study, develop and implement long-term programs or lease arrangements with conservation practice systems, including voluntary nutrient management plans that will achieve the desired water quality benefits.

We support the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Maryland Department of Agriculture in:

- (1) Developing voluntary best management practices for farms, #97
- (2) Training personnel to develop best management practices (BMPs),
- (3) Providing special training for all uses of pesticides, and
- (4) Providing homeowners with more education on pesticide use and lawn fertilizing.

We urge the state to assure that adequate funds be available to provide sufficient cost sharing of approved soil conservation practices. We also urge the state to provide an adequate number of trained personnel in the NRCS Office to assist farmers and property owners in the development and implementation of their conservation plans, making sure the plans not only provide the needed environmental protection but are practical and economical as well. #96

We recommend the Maryland Department of Agriculture include a bunker-type structure to be covered with a tarp for the storage of solid animal waste in the Maryland Agriculture Cost-share (MACS) program. Any contract poultry grower in Maryland, regardless of capacity, should be eligible for cost share funds for both manure sheds and composters. #99

We urge reinstatement of pond construction in wetlands to retain the surrounding area and promote a higher water table to create additional wetlands. We also support the stocking of ponds with fish to reduce mosquitoes and the need for chemical controls. #96

Furthermore, we urge our elected officials to work with us, as well as the Department of Environment, in helping to solve these problems.

We urge the state of Maryland to quickly have highly erodible land determinations made and required farm plans implemented on all state-owned farmland in order for government program benefits to be paid to the farmers of these properties where applicable.

We urge the NRCS to complete the updating of the county soil surveys for Maryland to include the numerical productivity indexes that were developed during the 1980s.

We oppose any legislation that is focused on setting up regulations that add additional personnel to affix mandatory fines for violations. #97

We support the development of a means to record all Best Management Practices (BMPs) whether privately or publicly funded.

Interpretation and definition of Best Management Practices (BMPs) must recognize the economic impact and cost to the farmer.

We support landowner wildlife plantings, but encourage the restriction of tree and shrub plantings within 25 feet of any right-of-way. #99

If accepted best management practices are implemented in good faith and later determined to have a negative impact on the environment or natural resources, the land owner should not be held legally or financially responsible. #99

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

We believe that an evaluation of the CREP program should be conducted to determine the overall impact on Maryland farmers and farmland. #2001

We strongly recommend that public agencies should not be eligible for funding under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). #2000

CO-PERMITTING

We oppose co-permitting as outlined by the Maryland Department of Environment. Co-permitting regulations would have the effect of driving agribusiness out of the state. MDE is over-stepping their authority in developing these regulations. MDA is the only agency authorized to regulate nutrient management plans on farms. MDE's actions violate the intent of the Maryland General Assembly. #2000

COST-SHARE PROGRAMS

We encourage farmers to use cover crops. #98

We support an effective cover crop program that has assisted funding and variable planting dates for different geographic areas of the state. #97 We encourage the Soil Conservation Service to adopt new methods of distributing funds for cover crop programs. #99

We urge the Maryland Department of Agriculture to increase the cost share levels for participation in the cereal cover crop program. #98 The state should fund all cover crop acreage. #2000

The annual calculation of "cover crop acreage planted" by MDA should include all fall cash grain crops, including hay. #98

We support a delayed application date of approximately seven (7) days after notification for the program to participants. If funds are limited, we encourage payments to be based on an equal percent of participation. #97

CRITICAL AREAS COMMISSION

We strongly urge that the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Commission while recognizing the importance of agriculture and the impact of land use limitations on the landowner, use good judgment in the development of criteria for the use of the land within the critical areas. We further urge that the Critical Area Commission allow local jurisdictions more flexibility in developing their own criteria.

We recommend that the membership of the Critical Areas Commission be comprised of at least 50% farmers who own property within 1,000 feet of the critical area.

Due to the impact on the agricultural community, we urge county governments to work with their county Farm Bureaus when they develop their local programs.

The Critical Areas Program as it now stands has the potential to be economically devastating to individual farmers and landowners. We believe the program should either be repealed or delayed until necessary criteria are developed which will provide guarantees that farmers will be able to farm and landowners will be able to receive earned compensation from their land. In particular, we are very concerned with the broadness, vagueness, and possible interpretation of some of the definitions and sections within the regulation.

We are opposed to the inclusion of upstream tributaries and non-tidal water into the Critical Areas Program.

We support legislation that would require the state to compensate, at the fair market value, Maryland property owners who are monetarily affected by the Critical Area Legislation and/or the Endangered Species Act.

We recommend the Critical Area Law be amended to reduce the 1,000 feet from the high mark limit on development to a 300 feet limit. Barring an amendment, we believe the landowner should be compensated.

The present requirement of a 20-acre density in the resource conservation area will present an economic hardship on landowners and, therefore, it should be reduced to 10 acres. Regardless of what density is established, it must be allocated on a basis of ownership. We also believe that there is a need for some modification to insure that landowners and their immediate families will be allowed to build on their property.

The inability to harvest timber in the critical areas is creating an inequitable financial loss for the landowner. We recommend that the landowner be compensated for this loss.

We recommend that landowners receive a tax credit, a lower tax rate, or be eligible to have their development rights purchased by the Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation for the acreage that falls within the Critical Areas.

We are concerned about exemptions granted within the Critical Area for marinas and other recreational water related activities.

CROP PROTECTANTS

We support county and state laws and regulations that encourage viable agricultural practices and encourage farmers to operate in a manner that would avoid endangering the environment and the safety of the general public.

We encourage utilities and government agencies when using pesticides to apply them by approved methods and in accordance with labeled instructions.

In order to help protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, we urge the state to set up a bian-