

# MARYLAND FARM BUREAU

## STATE POLICY

### FOREWORD

Farm Bureau, the voice of agriculture, is a free, independent, non-governmental voluntary association of farm families and those with related interest.

Farm Bureau is local, statewide, national and international in its scope and influence. It is non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-secret in character. It is organized to provide a means by which farmers can work together toward the goals upon which they agree. It is wholly controlled by its members and is financed by dues covering county, state and national membership, paid annually by each member family.

Farm Bureau policies stem from the people on the land. Farm families discuss issues, talk them over in the community and make recommendations. County resolutions derived from these community recommendations were adopted as policies on county issues and as recommendations on state and national issues to the Maryland Farm Bureau. The policies herein were derived from these county recommendations and became official Maryland Farm Bureau policy for 2002 as set by voting delegates during the 86th annual convention of the Maryland Farm Bureau, December 5, 2001.

### ABANDONED ORCHARDS

We recommend that Maryland Farm Bureau support and solicit legislation from the Maryland General Assembly that would require owners of abandoned fruit orchards (orchards of more than five trees) that are no longer in active commercial production to remove all fruit trees from the property within three years after active commercial production is terminated. #98

### AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

We recommend that teacher-training units of Maryland public colleges include a mini-course in agriculture, and that state educational sub-divisions include an in-service day or days to instruct teachers and guidance counselors about agriculture. #97

We commend the Maryland Commission on Education in Agriculture for its study and report concerning the enhancement of agricultural education in the state. We support the commission's recommendations to improve and enhance education in agricultural programs throughout Maryland, especially the improved agricultural curriculum in Grades K-12 and the recommendations for new and upgraded facilities. We encourage the continued efforts of the Governor to expand and improve agricultural curriculum in the Maryland public school system. #96

We support the vocational education program in Maryland. We recommend that local boards of education, with state support, introduce an approved production agriculture program in Maryland junior/senior or senior high schools. We strongly recommend that the State Board of Education institute standards for vocational agricultural programs that include teaching agriculture, ag economics and general agri-business.

We urge the introduction or expansion of agricultural programs in the community colleges throughout the state. #97

We endorse and support the Maryland Agriculture Education Foundation in its endeavors (i.e. ag in the classroom) to upgrade agriculture education for Maryland students as well as increase the public awareness of the importance of agriculture and its career opportunities.

We support the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation in its effort to receive legislative funding from the state special fund appropriations and funding through grant-in-aid from the Maryland State Department of Education. #96

We support the Maryland Ag Tag and we believe that all fees derived from sales should continue to be used to support MAEF. #2001

We support the recognition of certain agriculture curriculum as science and math credits for high school students.

We oppose the expenditure of public funds to promote animal rights and the use of educational materials in public schools that discourage the use of animal products.

### AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION

We support the concept of agricultural land preservation and urge all landowners to acquaint themselves with the programs available and the benefits derived thereof. Furthermore, we urge the state and county governments to continue to support the voluntary preservation of agricultural land with substantial increases in funding, as agriculture is vital to the future.

We support the existing Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy efforts and encourage the investigation of alternative ag land preservation programs. #99

We support the Maryland Ag Land Preservation Foundation and county preservation boards in their efforts to preserve agricultural land throughout the state. Furthermore, we urge that these boards maintain the right to select land eligible for easement sale with priority toward creating large contiguous blocks of preserved land. #2001

#### Ag Preservation Funding

We urge additional funding by the state and counties for agland preservation programs, including but not limited to MALPF, Rural Legacy and Critical Farms Program. #2001

We request that a study of creative and alternative funding for easement purchase be initiated by the legislature. We encourage the development and funding of state programs that preserve farmland on less than a permanent basis. #99

We oppose transfer and/or use of funds set aside for agricultural land preservation for anything other than the preservation of farmland. Monies in this fund should not be used to offset the State's budget deficit.

We support a line on state income tax returns to allow taxpayers to donate funds to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation to preserve farmland. #2000

We urge the Maryland State Legislature to restore full funding for the State Agricultural Land Preservation Program.

Furthermore, we recommend that additional county and state incentives for participation should be provided, such as property tax credits for agricultural district properties committed to a term of five years or property tax credits on land where easements have been purchased, and the enactment of a Maryland agricultural land property tax credit program. #96

#### Appraisals

We urge the state to use local appraisers who should base their appraisals on the recent sale or transfer of property in the immediate vicinity. We also believe that the appraisers should be required to successfully complete a course of study specifically on agricultural land appraisal approved by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation. Furthermore, appraisers should be required to take into consideration the subdivision value of any property, as well as the uniqueness of the metropolitan areas when making their appraisals

#### Easement Value Disputes

Landowners who successfully defend their cases before the County Assessment Appeals Board for farmland easement value may find that funds are no longer available to purchase the easement, and they must now submit a new application for the sale of their easements. We believe that such landowners should be given a priority and are entitled to immediate compensation when funds become available without having to submit another application. #97

#### Mapping

We oppose the identification and inclusion of state and county ag land preservation easement properties in land use and public facilities maps. Where so included and identified, such areas should be prominently labeled as private property.

#### Maryland Agland Preservation Foundation

In order for the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) to operate more efficiently we believe that the Maryland General Assembly should develop a permanent annual allotment for the Agricultural Land Preservation Program. We also believe the following changes should be made:

(1) All aspects of the Agricultural Land Preservation Program should be entirely under the administration of the Maryland Department of Agriculture, including the appraisals and settlements now being handled by the Department of General Services;

(2) The "Right to Farm" provisions provided in the sale of Maryland agricultural land easements should be extended to anyone who is enrolled in an agricultural district.

(3) We direct MALPF to allow other forms of income when it does not interfere with the present agriculture operation or change the agricultural capabilities of the land. #99

(4) We support agricultural subdivisions for land under MALPF easements at the density of one division per 50 acres up to 150 acres and one division per full 100 acres thereafter. #97

(5) We recommend that producers of nursery crops and turf be made eligible to participate in the Agriculture Land Preservation Program.

(6) If an agricultural corporation wants to sell easements to the Maryland Agland Preservation Foundation, the application should be deemed acceptable as long as a corporate resolution to do so is consistent with the corporation's by-laws. #98

(7) We recommend a revision of the agricultural value formula that is being used by the Maryland Ag Land Preservation Foundation because the current formula discriminates against farms in the program with superior soils. #97

(8) We recommend that farms be allowed into the MALPF program without regard to mineral rights issues. #2001

#### Other Methods to Preserve Agland

As another step toward preservation of agricultural land, we propose legislation to create an Agricultural Land Condemnation Board, chaired by the State's Secretary of Agriculture. Before anyone can condemn any productive agricultural lands for any purpose, the involved body must appeal to the board. The board must determine that there is no reasonable or prudent alternative.

In order to further aid in farmland preservation in Maryland and to assist younger farmers to gain a start in their own farm operation, we urge the state to study the establishment of a farm brokerage program similar to Pennsylvania's program. #96

#### Soil Surveys

We urge the Natural Resource Conservation Service to complete the updating of the county soil surveys for Maryland to include the numerical productivity indexes that were developed during the 1980's. #98

#### Transfer Development Rights

We oppose the conveyance of Transferable Development Rights across county lines. #96