

spotlight

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A PUBLICATION FOR VOTING MEMBERS OF MARYLAND FARM BUREAU

2008

AFBF Convention in New Orleans



Maryland Farm Bureau members enjoyed many activities at the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention in New Orleans. Among the highlights were a tour of the John Deere plant, delegation dinner and presentation of awards to state honorees. Kelly and Gabe Zepp, above, of Carroll County were selected in the Top Ten Finalists for the Excellence in Agriculture program for the AFBF Young Farmers and Evelyn Wilcom, center, MFB Women's chair, brought home honors for agriculture education efforts.



2008 Legislative Session is Off and Running

Get involved in the process

By Valerie Connelly
MFB Government Relations Director

We are just two weeks into the 2008 Maryland General Assembly and already it is obvious we will have a busy year. While many of the bills are still being drafted, we have heard about a good number that will be of interest to the farm community.

In addition to the many legislative proposals on which we will take a position this winter, we will also be reviewing and commenting on the state's new Confined Animal Feeding Operation discharge permit and working with several non-traditional farm partners on a collaborative for the Chesapeake Bay that may yield significant grant funding for innovative farm projects.

The 2010 Bay Trust Fund was created during the special session last November to provide \$50,000 each year for Bay Cleanup. The precursor to the Trust Fund – *The Green Fund* – was intended to provide major new resources for Best Management Practices on farms to further reduce nutrient loss from farmland. Chairwoman Maggie McIntosh spearheaded the effort in the House, which set aside at least 30 percent of the funding for programs at the MD Department of Agriculture. Her bill did not make it through the Senate in November. The good news is that the funding was agreed to in both the House and the Senate. Now legislators must outline the parameters for spending the money.

Dairy farmers will be the subject of considerable attention this session. As many as four bills will be introduced. Two by Delegate Paul Stull are the result of the year-long efforts of the Dairy Advisory Council. They recommended a Dairy Emergency Fund to make payments to dairy farmers in years when the milk payments from the market drop below the cost of production. The Council also recommended legislation to prevent dairy processors from Pennsylvania from competing unfairly for Maryland commercial contracts by selling milk below their cost of production. The Pennsylvania processors have been able to do this in recent years because of the payments made to them

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Local Dodge Dealers Offer Scholarships to FFA Students

The American Farm Bureau Federation, Dodge Trucks and the National FFA Organization are pleased to announce that Dodge Trucks is offering collegiate scholarships to FFA members across the country. Dodge has been a sponsor of the National FFA Scholarship Program since its inception more than 20 years ago. Farm Bureau joined FFA and Dodge as a partner in 1999.

The scholarship program is a cooperative effort between Dodge,



Farm Bureau and the National FFA Organization. To apply, a student must be an FFA member and a member of a Farm Bureau family. Students must complete the official National FFA Scholarship Application including the parent financial analysis section, as financial need will be considered. Applications are available online at <http://scholarships.ffa.org>. A completed signature page must be mailed to FFA postmarked by Feb. 15, 2008. The scholarships start at \$1,000 each and are available to FFA members in all 50 states.

Dodge Truck scholarships are designed to recognize FFA members from Farm Bureau families throughout the U.S. for their supervised agricultural experience programs (SAEs), academic achievements and other school accomplishments. Dodge Trucks sponsors these scholarships as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. The National FFA Scholarship Program, through the sponsorship of generous corporations and individuals, awards more than \$2 million in scholarships annually to FFA members.

2008 Washington Drive-In

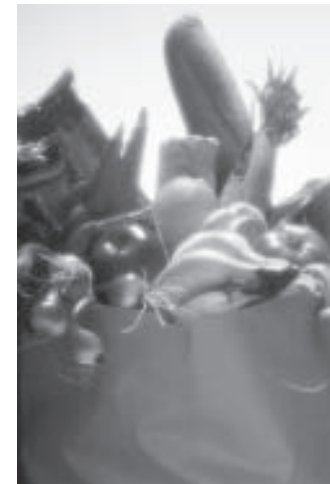
Maryland Farm Bureau's annual Washington Drive-In will take place on Wednesday, March 5, 2008, with a day-long trip to our Nation's Capital. This year we are not holding a Board meeting in conjunction with the Drive-In. Instead, a half-day of briefings and discussions will take place at the headquarters of the American Farm Bureau Federation and then we will head to Capitol Hill to visit our elected Representatives and Senators.

The day will conclude with a dinner on Capitol Hill with speakers from our Congressional Delegation. Congress may still be debating the Farm Bill and Immigration reform early next year. This will be perfect timing for you to influence the debate.

The cost of the Washington Drive-In is \$75 per person. This covers part of the cost of bus service to and from D.C., lunch and dinner. For a registration form, contact your county Farm Bureau secretary or call Val Connelly at (443) 690-2411 or send an email to valeriec.mdfb@erols.com. Registration is limited to 60 people and will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis. The deadline for registration is February 14th.

Food Check-Out events slated for February

In 2008, the Food Check-Out celebrations will run for an entire week – Sunday, February 3 to Saturday, February 9. County and state Farm Bureaus are encouraged to hold events throughout the week, which incorporates Food Check-Out Day on Wednesday, February 6th.



Food Check-Out Day represents the 37th day in the year – the day by which the average American has earned enough money to pay for all of their food for an entire year.

The Maryland Farm Bureau Women will celebrate the day with a trip to the Ronald McDonald House in Baltimore, a major benefactor of the national event, and present them with food and financial support.

Again this year, Food Check-Out collateral materials for use by county and state Farm Bureaus will be available through AFBF. This will include an event planning kit, news release, logo, stickers, posters and banners. We will be developing a new logo and new collateral materials reflecting the new focus of the event.

Information on downloading and ordering the materials are available through Cyndie Sirekis at cyndies@fb.org or 202-406-3649.

Open House offers Free Family Fun

Bring your family and friends to a perennial favorite springtime event, the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Open House on Saturday, March 29th. There is no admission fee for the event that runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and is held at the MDA headquarters at 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway in Annapolis.

This year's open house highlights how MDA serves and protects consumers. The event also celebrates the state's farmers and the important role they play in providing food and protecting the environment. Visitors can see the department's insect collection, make slime in the state chemist's laboratory, enjoy a Maryland food and craft market, demonstrate their hog calling skills, take in a petting farm, milk a cow, ride a pony and learn about the world of agriculture through hands-on activities.

Call (410) 841-5882 or visit www.mda.state.md.us for more information.

Farm Purchase And Operating Loans Targeting Socially Disadvantaged Groups

Elizabeth Anderson, Maryland Executive Director for USDA's Farm Service Agency, recently reminded producers that FSA offers specially targeted farm loans known as Socially Disadvantaged Applicant (SDA) Loans. These loan programs are designed to help farmers purchase and operate family farms.

"With these loan programs, FSA hopes to help reverse the declining number of farmers and ranchers across the U.S. and especially here in Maryland," said Anderson. "These loans help to encourage and assist them in owning and operating their own farms and ranches, participate in agricultural programs and become integral parts of the agricultural community."



According to Anderson FSA reserves a portion of its loan guarantee funds each year for SDA loans. USDA defines socially disadvantaged applicants as a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

In fiscal year 2007, FSA obligated nearly \$300 million in SDA loans across the nation. Direct loans are made to applicants by FSA and include both farm operating and farm ownership loans.

Guaranteed loans also may be made for farm ownership or operating purposes, and may be made by any lending institution subject to Federal or State supervision (banks, savings and loans, credit unions, and units of the Farm Credit System including the Bank for Cooperatives) and guaranteed by FSA. Typically, FSA guarantees 90 or 95 percent of a loan against any loss that might be incurred if the loan fails.

Repayment terms for direct operating loans depend on the collateral securing the loan and usually run from 1 to 7 years. Anderson says that repayment terms for direct ownership loans can be as long as 40 years.

Guaranteed loan terms are set by the lender. Interest rates for direct loans are set periodically according to the government's cost of borrowing. Interest rates for guaranteed loans are established by the lender.

Farm ownership loan funds may be used to purchase or enlarge a farm or ranch, purchase easements or rights of way needed in the farm's operation, build or improve buildings such as a dwelling or barn, promote soil and water conservation and development and pay closing costs.

Farm operating loan funds may be used to purchase livestock, poultry, farm equipment, fertilizer and other materials necessary to operate a successful farm. Operating loan funds can also be used for family living expenses, refinancing debts under certain conditions, paying salaries for hired farm laborers, installing or improving water systems for home, livestock or irrigation use and other similar improvements.

For additional information or applications for all FSA direct loan programs contact your local FSA Office located in the USDA Service Center nearest you.

County Farm Bureau Membership Honor Roll (As of January 18, 2008)

County Farm Bureau Membership Goals are based upon Regular Members, represented in the first two columns. The last column reports the total members paid, including both regular and associates.

| County | YTD Regular Members Paid | Needed for goal | YTD All Members Paid |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Allegany | 76 | 50 | 91 |
| Anne Arundel | 589 | 379 | 1840 |
| Baltimore | 400 | 162 | 2442 |
| Calvert | 195 | 95 | 536 |
| Caroline | 272 | 93 | 540 |
| Carroll | 528 | 329 | 925 |
| Cecil | 187 | 122 | 447 |
| Charles | 161 | 73 | 565 |
| Dorchester | 161 | 75 | 397 |
| Frederick | 531 | 350 | 1173 |
| Garrett | 93 | 85 | 108 |
| Harford | 319 | 120 | 1089 |
| Howard | 130 | 77 | 626 |
| Kent | 178 | 71 | 237 |
| Montgomery | 230 | 95 | 1822 |
| Prince George's | 163 | 73 | 1177 |
| Queen Anne's | 216 | 96 | 371 |
| St. Mary's | 229 | 116 | 451 |
| Somerset | 122 | 106 | 259 |
| Talbot | 195 | 96 | 402 |
| Washington | 170 | 100 | 478 |
| Wicomico | 206 | 153 | 441 |
| Worcester | 179 | 93 | 382 |
| Maryland Totals | 5,530 | 3,010 | 16,799 |

Harford Farm Bureau member passes away

Judy Harlan of Belvedere Farm in Fallston passed away on January 19, 2008. She was the wife of Bill Harlan and was an active member of the Harford County Farm Bureau and Women's Committee. Contributions may be made to

Judith Harlan, Harford Friends School Scholarship Fund in care of Little Falls Friends Meeting, P.O. Box 240, Fallston, MD 21047.

**Nationwide® Agribusiness Insurance & Maryland Farm Bureau
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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

February

- 6 Food Check-Out Day
- 7 Maryland Agriculture Dinner, Michael's Eighth Avenue, Glen Burnie
- 9 Frederick County Farm Bureau & Pomona Grange Legislative Day,
Woodsboro Fire Hall, 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- 16-18 American Farm Bureau Young Farmer and Rancher Leadership Conference,
Baltimore Marriott Waterfront
- 29 Caroline County Farm Bureau Banquet

March

- 5 Washington Drive-In
- 7 Dorchester County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 8 St. Mary's County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 13 Queen Anne's County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 14 Talbot County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 14 Charles County Farm Bureau Banquet, Isaak Walton League
- 15 Prince George's County Farm Bureau Banquet, Baden Fire Hall
- 15 Wicomico County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 20 Worcester County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 21 Somerset County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 27 Frederick County Farm Bureau Spring Meeting,
Jefferson Ruritan Center, 7 p.m.
- 29 Cecil County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 29 Prince George's County Farm Bureau Banquet

(To get your county's activities listed on the calendar, please send the date, event, place and time to Susan Summers at ssummers@comcast.net.)

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by the Pennsylvania Milk Commission. Maryland's handful of dairy processors are really feeling the pinch and believe that protective legislation is necessary to keep them in business.

The other dairy legislation concerns raw milk and cheese. We expect a bill to be introduced to expand the pilot project authorized last year for the production of raw milk cheese. The 2007 bill allowed only one farm in Talbot County to begin producing raw milk cheese under DHMH inspections. The bill this year could expand that to up to five farms in the state.

The raw milk bill has been reintroduced. Unfortunately, it has not been improved since last year. The bill still calls for a completely unregulated, uninspected system of selling unpasteurized milk directly out of bulk tanks to consumers who walk onto a farm. Maryland Farm Bureau opposes the unregulated sale of raw milk. Our policy opposes all sales of unpasteurized fluid milk because of the potential impact illnesses from raw milk could have on the value of all milk products.

In an effort to boost agricultural land preservation funding for critical farms and farmland for the next generation, Senator Mac Middleton will introduce legislation to double the agricultural transfer tax. The Ag transfer tax is assessed on property when it is sold and changes from agricultural use to some other use-like development. Revenues from the increased tax would go to MARBIDCO to implement three land preservation programs in consultation with the state MALPF Board.

The Governor released his annual budget. The \$31.5 million budget for fiscal year 2009 includes a 4 percent increase over last year's budget. The funding for the Maryland Department of Agriculture held steady, with the only significant decrease noticeable in the projected transfer tax receipts for the MALPF program. MALPF is funded through a portion of the transfer tax, and with home sales down considerably this year, the state budget expects to be able to authorize only \$45.7 million for MALPF this year compared to \$89 million last year. But, the budget does not shift funding from the MALPF program to other general fund needs. All special funds designated for agland preservation are budgeted to be spent for that purpose.

The Governor has also provided \$3.8 million to be used in the spring of 2008 for Gypsy Moth eradication. MDA intends to spray 100,000 acres across the

state. There is an additional \$1.5 million in the budget for spraying 25,000 acres in the spring of 2009.

The O'Malley budget includes \$8.4 million for cover crops in FY09 and \$400,000 in additional funds for salaries to Soil Conservation District staff.

A new draft CAFO permit has been circulating in a preliminary release over the last few weeks and is expected to be released for formal comment on February 1st. CAFO permits are not new. EPA has required these discharge permits on large animal operations for many years. The major issue with the new permit is that for the first time poultry operations will be included. The draft permit sets animal numbers and poultry building sizes for both large and medium size CAFOs. Those operators who meet the size specifications will be required to apply for a permit and obtain a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan. MDE will have the authority to inspect CAFO operations to insure compliance with permit requirements. While the major change in the new permit is the inclusion of poultry operations, there are several additional requirements and expenses that will impact all livestock operations. The draft permit can be reviewed by logging onto the MDE site at www.mde.state.md.us/AboutMDE/reqcomments.asp#CAFO. Maryland Farm Bureau will file comments after a thorough review of the permit when it is released on February 1st. Farmers must also file individual comments on the portions of the permit that are problematic to them. Comments can be submitted to: Maryland Department of the Environment, Water Management Administration, 1800 Washington Blvd., Suite 455, Baltimore, MD 21230, Attn. Ed Stone or by email to estone@mde.state.md.us.

Bills are being introduced on a daily basis in Annapolis through the middle of February.

The best way to keep track of bills and other issues that are important to farmers is to log onto Farm Bureau website at www.mdfarmbureau.com and read the Hotline.

Hotline is written every Thursday afternoon and contains a summary of each bill that will be heard by Committee the following week. Hotline also includes updates on special issues like the CAFO permit and national legislation like the Farm Bill.