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Hotline #6

February 24, 2023

Welcome to the sixth Hotline of the 2023 Maryland General Assembly session. As we move toward the end of February, the House and Senate committees are hard at work to get through all 2,200 bill hearings by the second week in March. This week was no exception. Maryland Farm Bureau along with ag stakeholders testified on several key bills including the SDAT reassessment of value-added ag bill and the farm electricity sales and use tax exemption bill. We want to thank Howie Feaga from Howard County Farm Bureau and Scott Hipkins from Frederick County Farm Bureau for making the trip down to Annapolis to testify on these bills. Also this week, the right to repair farm equipment bill was withdrawn by the bill sponsor to allow the recent [MOU](#) between American Farm Bureau Federation and John Deere to move forward and address the concerns of our farmers. Next week looks to be another long bill hearing week, multiple days with several key bills being heard.

The Hotline will be posted on the [MDFB website](#) each week. Maryland Farm Bureau members are urged to contact their legislators and members of relevant committees in support of Maryland Farm Bureau's positions. Visit Maryland Farm Bureau's [action center](#) to stay up to date on pending legislation on which we have position.

Tuesday, February 28, 2023

[SB590](#): Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources - Alterations

Senator Lewis Young, EEE at 1:00 PM

This bill alters the definition of "Tier 1 renewable source" for purposes of excluding energy derived from qualifying biomass, methane from the anaerobic decomposition of organic materials, fuel cells, poultry litter-to-energy, waste-to-energy, refuse-derived fuel, and thermal energy from a thermal biomass system from being eligible for inclusion in the renewable energy portfolio standard.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support an additional carve-out in the Maryland RPS for woody biomass, poultry litter and livestock manure to energy generation.

**MARYLAND FARM
BUREAU OPPOSES**

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

SB640: Sales and Use Tax - Electricity for Agricultural Purposes - Exemption

Senator Jackson, B&T at 1:00 PM

This bill adds to the existing agricultural sales and use tax exemption electricity that is used for agricultural purposes, such as raising livestock and poultry, irrigation, or crop production and grain harvest. Currently, only farms that all their electricity use is tied to the house meter is tax exempt. Electricity use from other farm meters are currently being taxed. This bill exempts these additional farm meters. In addition to residential electricity not being taxed, manufacturing businesses are not taxed. This includes Perdue's processing plant. Agriculture has always been considered manufacturing, so exempting all farm electricity would be consistent with current law.

**MARYLAND FARM
BUREAU SUPPORTS**

HB466: Worcester County - Natural Resources - Hunting

Delegate Otto, E&T at 2:00 PM

This bill adds Worcester county to a list of counties in the state that would allow all day Sunday hunting for both game birds and game mammals during the allowed hunting seasons in the county. It also reduces the archery safety zone from 150 yards to 50 yards.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support statewide Sunday hunting on private lands.

MARYLAND FARM
BUREAU SUPPORTS

HB530: Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks and the Forest Conservation Fund – Alterations

Delegate Kerr, E&T at 2:00 PM

This bill adds "applications that were submitted" to the requirement that a forest mitigation bank had to be approved on or before December 31, 2020, to be eligible, and it extends the deadline from two years to five or from three growing seasons to six for the Department of Natural Resources to accomplish the reforestation or afforestation for which certain money is deposited to the Forest Conservation Fund.

MARYLAND FARM
BUREAU SUPPORTS

HB847: Anaerobic Digestion Workgroup

Delegate Stein, E&T at 2:00 PM

This bill creates an Anaerobic Digestion Workgroup to study, identify, examine, and make recommendations on the aspects of anaerobic digestion in Maryland. There would be 11 members of the workgroup and includes a member of the Maryland Farm Bureau. The workgroup will be staffed by MDA and will study this area and make recommendations on the best options for Maryland. These recommendation will be sent to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 30, 2023.

MARYLAND FARM
BUREAU SUPPORTS

HB934: Natural Resources - Female Deer Hunting Contests - Authorization

Delegate Hutchinson, E&T at 2:00 PM

This bill authorizes the Department of Natural Resources to allow a person, for the management of the deer population in the State, to sponsor, conduct, or participate in an existing, random contest in the State held during the month of January that has the objective of harvesting a female deer.

Maryland Farm Bureau requests an amendment to replace "the month of January" with "the approved hunting seasons" to allow for a more flexible timeline for additional programs to be created.

MARYLAND FARM
BUREAU SUPPORTS

Thursday, March 2, 2023

SB434: Natural Resources - Restorative Aquaculture Pilot Program

Senator Klausmeier, EEE at 1:00 PM

This bill would require DNR to establish a pilot program, in consultation with the Aquaculture Coordinating Council and UMCES, to provide incentive payments for aquaculture farmers who maintain conditions on their lease that provide similar ecosystem benefits as restored reef areas. This program would sunset after six years. This would provide alternative revenue stream for oyster farmers who choose to manage their farms to the standards developed by DNR.

MARYLAND FARM
BUREAU SUPPORTS

SB690: Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions

Senator Lewis Young, EEE at 1:00 PM

This bill bans the use of cages in egg-laying farms in Maryland starting January 1, 2025. The economic impact to an existing farm to make these changes is a 41% increase in cost of production to retrofit the existing barns and an 119% increase in labor. By moving to a cage-free operation, the hen mortality rate increases significantly due to more bacterial habitat being introduced in the barn. Lastly, these farms are contracted with out of state companies that will just drop their contracts with the farms and then these farms will have to create a new demand for their eggs in a market where there is already an over supply of cage-free eggs. This bill would put the few egg-laying farms, that farm this way, out of business.

MARYLAND FARM
BUREAU OPPOSES

Friday, March 3, 2023

HB983: Hunting, Wildlife Conservation, and Outdoor Recreation - Funding, Promotion, Management, Licenses, Permits, and Stamp

Delegate Allen, E&T at 1:00 PM

This comprehensive wildlife management and hunting bill does many things. First, it cleans up the landowner liability language to ensure a landowner has proper liability coverage if they allow hunters to hunt on their land. Secondly, it establishes the Wildlife Conservation, Education, and Outreach Program to provide outreach and foster an interest in outdoor recreation and stewardship, hunting, and wildlife conservation. Next, it establishes a stamp for hunting sika deer. One of the biggest parts of the bill is it increased the fees for many of the hunting licenses and stamps. These fees haven't been increased in 36 years. The increased fees are to generate the needed funding for DNR to qualify for the available USDA matching funds that the department is currently receiving. These additional funding will allow DNR's Wildlife services division to provide the needed food habitats in Wildlife Management Areas. An additional part of this bill that we didn't see before the Senate bill hearing last week was that this bill allows statewide Sunday hunting for waterfowl. Several farmers and hunters have expressed concern with the increase as the migratory waterfowl numbers tend to be inconsistent from year to year, and they worry that increasing the hunting season could create another moratorium in the future.

Maryland Farm Bureau will be offering two amendments to the bill. One is to remove the Sunday hunting of waterfowl and the second is to add language to require DNR to start and fund a farmer cost-share program to plant private land forage crops (aka sacrificial crops) to help curb the crop loss on farms due to wildlife damage.

**MARYLAND FARM BUREAU
SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENT**

Committees & Room Numbers:

Senate: Budget & Taxation (B&T), 3 West Miller; Education, Energy and the Environment (EEE), 2 West Miller; Finance (FIN), 3 East Miller; Judicial Proceedings (JPR), 2 East Miller

House: Appropriations (APP), 120 HOB; Economic Matters (ECM), 230 HOB; Environment & Transportation (E&T), 250 HOB; Health & Government Operations (HGO), 240 HOB; Judiciary (JUD), 100 HOB; Ways & Means (W&M) 130 HOB
