

AG NOTES

University of Maryland Extension | Harford County

Hello Harford County!

Happy National Dairy Month! Be sure to enjoy any one or many of the great dairy products, several of which are produced right here on our Harford County dairy farms. In the interest of space, included below is an article from our Extension Weed Management Specialist, Kurt Vollmer, regarding Pesticide Use Limitation Areas. --Until next time, Andy

PULA Tips Every Farmer Should Know

by Kurt Vollmer

Farmers across the country may be hearing a new term tied to pesticide applications: PULA.

PULA stands for Pesticide Use Limitation Area. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service created these areas to help protect endangered and threatened species and their critical habitats from possible pesticide exposure.

PULAs are based on scientific data, including known species locations, habitat areas and critical habitat maps. One PULA may include protections for several species.

The EPA uses an online system called Bulletins Live! Two to identify where PULAs are located. Farmers and pesticide applicators can search their farm location and print a bulletin showing whether special rules are required before spraying.

To use the system, applicators can enter a farm address or zoom in on the map. Users also must choose the month they plan to spray

because restrictions can vary throughout the year. Fields marked in pink are considered PULAs. Clicking on a highlighted area provides more information and allows users to print a bulletin for their records.

Farmers whose fields fall inside a PULA can still use many pesticide products. In most cases, the bulletin requires additional steps beyond the pesticide label instructions rather than a complete ban on spraying. Those measures may include buffer zones, conservation practices, or changes in application methods to reduce risk to listed species.

PULAs may change over time as pesticides are registered or re-registered, species maps are improved, and new information becomes available. However, a bulletin printed from Bulletins Live! Two remains legally valid for six months before a planned application date, even if requirements are later updated.

Farmers and applicators are advised to check Bulletins Live! Two before spraying to stay compliant and avoid unexpected restrictions during the growing season.



June is Dairy Month!

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Postharvest Infrastructure Grant Program

Maryland Department of Agriculture [press release](#) (abridged)

The Maryland Department of Agriculture today announced the launch of the [Postharvest Infrastructure Grant Program](#) (PHI), making \$1.6 million available to establish new and improve existing cold storage and delivery networks in rural communities throughout Maryland.

The PHI program is part of the federally funded [Maryland Rural Health Transformation Program](#) and is designed to expand food aggregation and distribution capacities in rural parts of the state.

“By strengthening the operational capacity of local food producers, this initiative will approve access to nutritious, locally sourced food for rural Marylanders,” said Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks.

The program supports a wide range of Maryland food providers, including those handling fresh produce, dairy, grains for human consumption, meat and poultry, herbs and seafood.

Additionally, MDA is partnering with the [Maryland Food Bank](#) to enhance cold storage capacity and increase distribution of fresh foods. Food banks interested in cold storage infrastructure should contact the Maryland Food Bank directly.

Eligible Applicants:

- **Agricultural producers or seafood processors:** Individual agricultural producers, as well as organized groups of producers and seafood processors. This category is a priority.
- **Nonprofit organizations:** Must have 501(c)(3) status, be registered as a charity with the Maryland Secretary of State and be involved in postharvest storage of local agricultural products.
- **Local government entities:** Municipal or county governments involved in postharvest storage of local agricultural products.
- **Institutions:** Universities and hospitals seeking to establish shared infrastructure or equipment to support postharvest handling and storage for multiple local producers.

Funding may be used across five key categories to strengthen the cold chain and distribution process, with priority given to cold storage:

- **Cold storage infrastructure:** Purchase walk-in coolers and freezers, backup generators, and upgrade climate control systems, such as smart thermostats or defrost controls.

- **Transportation and fleet upgrades:** Acquire refrigerated trucks or retrofit existing farm and distribution vehicles.
- **Distribution logistics and technology:** Implement route optimization software, cold chain data loggers and inventory tracking systems.
- **Handling and loading infrastructure:** Upgrade loading dock, purchase material handling equipment and add commercial transport sanitation stations.
- **Food safety modernization:** Invest in commercial-grade sanitization systems, storage facility food-safety upgrades, environmental monitoring and traceability software.

Individual grants have a minimum of \$30,000 with no maximum or match requirement. Ten percent of the grant can go towards administrative costs. All projects are subject to funding availability and final approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Grant Deadline:

June 14, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET

To Apply:

Interested applicants are encouraged to review the complete [PHI Request for Proposals](#) and apply online via the [Foundant application portal](#).

Program Background

This initiative is a core component of the Rural Health Transformation Program, a five-year federal initiative funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services through the Maryland Department of Health. The Rural Health Transformation Program empowers states to strengthen rural communities by improving healthcare access, quality and outcomes by transforming the healthcare delivery ecosystem.

For questions regarding the application process, please contact Karen Fedor or Kelley Koeppen at postharvest.mda@maryland.gov.

Funding Acknowledgment: *The Maryland Rural Health Transformation Program is supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award to the Maryland Department of Health totaling \$168,180,837.61 with 100 percent funded by CMS/HHS. The contents of this document are of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CMS/HHS, or the U.S. Government.*

Urban Agriculture Commercial Lending Incentive Grant

Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO)
MARBIDCO.org | (410) 267-6807

Overview

This grant is designed to provide an incentive for beginning urban farmers to seek commercial lender financing for the development of their urban agricultural enterprises, including the purchase of a farm property in an eligible urban area. MARBIDCO has partnered with Horizon Farm Credit to establish and manage this fund. Call us today for more information on how to apply for this grant at (410) 267-6807.

Eligibility

Applicants must be Beginning Urban Farmers, which are defined as being farmers (either individuals or incorporated businesses) with the principal operator(s) having:

- 10 or fewer years of commercial farming experience - either in a for-profit or not-for-profit setting or having limited personal or business financial resources (net worth less than \$300,000);
- A commercial food/fiber growing operation located in an urban area, as defined by the United States Census Bureau and any incorporated municipality recognized by the State of Maryland.

Eligible business activities include the purchase of:

- Real estate
- Agricultural inputs and supplies such as seeds, fertilizer, compost, and baskets.
- Farm tools and equipment.
- Greenhouses, high tunnels, refrigeration, and irrigation systems; and
- Hired labor (at no more than 20% of the total eligible project cost).

Terms and Conditions

Maximum Grant Amount: \$15,000 for equipment and working capital and \$35,000 for real property, but no more than 25% of the project's total cost. In addition, the grant amount can be no more than 33% of the approved commercial loan for this project.

Minimum Grant Amount: \$1,000. (This means there must be an approved commercial loan of at least \$3,000.)

Commercial Lender Participation: Required. A commercial lender must have approved a loan to fund the proposed urban farming project before a grant will be awarded.

Disbursement of Funds: Funds will be disbursed to approved applicants on a schedule to be determined when the grant is awarded.

Application Submission Process

Applicants must verify in their application that commercial lender or Farm Service Agency loan proceeds are available to help complete the proposed farming project.

Applicants who are awarded grants may not materially deviate from their approved business plans without approval from MARBIDCO and the participating commercial lender.

Send the completed application to MARBIDCO Urban Agriculture Grant, 1410 Forest Drive, Suite 21, 21403, or email it to info@marbidco.org.



Deere & Company Repair Services Antitrust Litigation - Understanding the Preliminary Settlement Approval and Your Rights

Olivia Scuderi, Program Assistant and Paul Goeringer, Agriculture Law Extension Specialist
University of Maryland, Agriculture Law Education Initiative

Reposted from the [Ag Risk Management Blog](#). This article is not a substitute for legal advice.

Introduction

In *In re Deere & Company Repair Services Antitrust Litigation*, plaintiffs—farmers and agricultural businesses, challenged John Deere’s control over the right to repair their equipment and anticompetitive market practices resulting from such withholding. The United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois found that all individual counts, three under [Section 1](#) of the [Sherman Act](#), four under [Section 2](#) of the Sherman Act, and one count for declaratory and injunctive relief under both Section 1 and Section 2, pled plausible claims for relief. The key question in this case is whether Deere has foreclosed competition for repair services for Large Ag Equipment. Settlement negotiations were critical to securing recovery for farmers, with support from the then [Biden Administration](#), including the filing of a [statement of interest](#). The resulting March 2026 settlement provides [both monetary relief and structural reforms](#)—over a ten-year period—marking a significant development in the ongoing “right-to-repair” debate within modern agriculture. On May 18 2026, the federal district court provided preliminary approval and set deadlines.

Allegations Under Federal Antitrust Law

Plaintiffs alleged that Deere violated Sections 1 and 2 of the Sherman Act by restricting access to diagnostic software and repair tools necessary to service Deere equipment. According to the complaint, Deere’s conduct forced farmers to rely only on authorized dealers. This practice eliminates competition from independent repair providers and inflates repair costs. The court denied Deere’s motion to dismiss for lack of standing, holding that the plaintiffs plausibly alleged monopolization, attempted monopolization, and concerted anticompetitive conduct. This ruling allowed the case to proceed into extensive discovery and positioned plaintiffs for class certification and trial. The discussions surrounding the settlement were marked by a series of in-depth, arm’s-length negotiations, showcasing a commitment to [reaching a fair agreement by March 6, 2026](#).

The Settlement Agreement

The proposed settlement provides two principal forms of relief: 1.) robust injunctive relief ensuring that farmers and independent repair providers (“IRPs”) can diagnose and fix Deere-brand Large Ag Equipment; and 2.)

\$99 million (plus interest) to Settlement Class members who paid Deere’s authorized dealers for repairs to their Large Ag Equipment from January 10, 2018 to May 18, 2026.

Deere agreed to establish a \$99 million settlement fund (plus interest) to compensate class members who purchased repair services from Deere or its authorized dealers between January 10, 2018, and May 18, 2026. Distribution will occur on a [pro rata basis](#), tied to repair-related labor expenditures. Pro rata, meaning a proportional allocation of a total amount among participants based on their individual interests.

More consequentially, Deere agreed to implement sweeping changes to its repair ecosystem. Specifically, Deere must provide farmers and independent repair providers with access to diagnostic tools, software, and technical information on “fair and reasonable terms,” including future updates. Deere established, as cited from the settlement, they were committed to:

- **Deere Commits to Making Repair Resources Widely Available:** Deere has committed to providing—and is already implementing—significant injunctive relief that will provide Owners, Lessors, and IRPs with the digital tools required for the maintenance, diagnosis, and repair of Large Ag Equipment, and without which such equipment cannot be operated in the manner for which it was designed. (Making these tools available will enable farmers and IRPs to diagnose and repair problems without having to use the services of an authorized Dealer)
- **Make Repair Resources—which permit Deere Large Ag Equipment to be maintained, diagnosed, and repaired such that they can be operated in the manner for which they were designed—available to every Owner, Lessor, and IRP on a license or subscription basis on Fair and Reasonable Terms;**
- **Make available to every Owner, Lessor, and IRP on Fair and Reasonable Terms Future Repair Resources** that Deere provides to Deere Dealers as soon as access is granted to over 50 percent of Deere Dealer locations;
- **Provide Owners, Lessors, and IRPs with the ability to access and view Dealer Technical Assistance Center (“DTAC”) Solutions, consistent with Section A.3(p) of Appendix A, as incorporated in the definition of Repair Resources, no later than December 31, 2026;**

Collectively, these provisions aim to dismantle the alleged “repair monopoly” by enabling self-repair and third-party servicing. The agreement established the fund to reimburse all parties involved in the litigation and affected class members. As cited in the settlement, the settlement fund amount will be used to pay: the eligible Class members, reimburse Co-Lead Counsel for the costs, fees, and expenses related to notice and administration of the Settlement, reimburse the costs and expenses incurred by Class Counsel in litigating the Action, pay Class Counsel’s attorneys’ fees, pay service awards for each representative Plaintiff, and pay applicable taxes and tax-preparation expenses.

Who falls under the Settlement Class?

The settlement class includes all persons and entities in the United States who purchased repair services for Deere “Large Agricultural Equipment” from Deere or its authorized dealers during the class period. The documents produced in discovery and provided by Deere for notice purposes reflect a class size estimated to be well in excess of 200,000 farmers. “Large Ag Equipment” is defined in the Settlement Agreement as: *“agricultural equipment manufactured by John Deere, which depend for their functioning, in part, on electronic control units (‘ECUs’) and which include large and medium tractors (all 6000, 7000, 8000, and 9000 Series models); combines; cotton pickers; cotton strippers; sugarcane harvesters; tillage, seeding (including planters), and application equipment and sprayers.”*

The certified class consists of all persons and entities who purchased Repair Services for Deere Large Agricultural Equipment from John Deere or its authorized Dealers in the United States between January 10, 2018, and May 18, 2026. Based on the filings, the distribution will be based on the total labor hours devoted to the repairs of the claimant’s Large Agricultural Equipment during the class period (Jan. 10, 2018 to May 18, 2026). This is contingent upon the proof provided with the claimants’ respective claim forms and/or the prepopulated data supplied by Deere. The settlement agreement notes that during discovery, the plaintiffs’ lawyers obtained data from Deere detailing the labor hours for the maintenance and repair of each piece of Large Agricultural Equipment, which were tracked by a unique Product Identification Number (PIN).

Deere must provide injunctive relief to the class for a ten-year period, during which the District Court for the Northern District of Illinois will have continued jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the Settlement.

Settlement Deadlines

In mid-July, those that qualify as class members will begin to get notice of the settlement. The important date to keep in mind for many of you will be September 15, 2026.

This date is the last date for class members to opt out of the settlement and pursue their own claims against Deere. At the same time, this is the last opportunity for class members to provide written objections to the settlement to the federal district court.

One week later, on September 22, 2026, the Plaintiffs will file a motion for final approval of the settlement. After that is done, things will move quickly. The last date for class members who have not opted out to file a claim form will be October 15, 2026. A Fairness Hearing on the settlement will be held on October 29, 2026. Those who believe they are members of the class can visit DeereRepairSettlement.com. As claim forms go out, this will be the spot where class members can verify their information.

Implications for Farmers and Agricultural Markets

This settlement addresses short-and long-term impacts, hopefully bringing stability to farmers in future seasons. In the short term, eligible farmers may obtain compensation for past repair overcharges. In the long term, the settlement’s injunctive provisions may fundamentally alter repair markets by lowering barriers to entry for independent service providers and enabling self-repair.

Beyond the class action settlement, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), alongside the attorneys general of Illinois and Minnesota, initiated legal proceedings against Deere in January 2025 within the same jurisdiction, accusing the company of “unfair practices that have driven up equipment repair costs for farmers while also depriving farmers of the ability to make timely repairs”. See *Federal Trade Commission, et al. v. Deere & Co.*, No. 3:25-cv-50017 (N.D. Ill.). This litigation alleges violations of Section 5(a) of the Federal Trade Commission Act as well as Section 2 of the Sherman Act. The FTC’s complaint centers on Deere’s restriction on farmers’ access to diagnostic software, claiming that this practice constitutes an unfair method of competition that has driven up repair costs and deprived farmers of prompt repair options during essential planting and harvesting periods. The litigation is progressing, although the outcome remains uncertain. Luckily, there is now some relief available through the In re Deere & Company Repair Services Antitrust Litigation class action settlement.

Conclusion

The Deere settlement marks a significant moment at the intersection of antitrust law and agricultural technology. By integrating monetary compensation with forward-looking injunctive relief, it provides a means of redress for past grievances while also establishing a framework for fostering more competitive repair markets. Keep in mind the deadlines listed, especially if you think that you will be a member of the class.

Forage Demonstration Pasture Walk

Amanda Grev, Pasture & Forage Specialist
University of Maryland Extension

Join University of Maryland Extension for an educational pasture walk at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center on **June 23 at 6:00 PM**. This pasture walk will feature a mixed-species grazing system with sheep and cattle utilizing both perennial and annual forages. Discussion will include setting up a grazing system, mixed-species grazing, parasite management, utilizing annual forages to extend the grazing season, pasture renovation, and what to do with failed seedings. Extension educators are also starting a soil amendment study looking at different sources of fertility (compost, litter, etc.) on a pasture-based system.

Registration: <https://go.umd.edu/pwjune>

Stay tuned for additional dates and locations! More pasture walks are currently being planned and scheduled for the rest of the year and will include topics like grazing solar sites, utilizing silvopasture, and working with virtual fencing.

Participants are welcome to join for one or more events. Registration is free but required, please visit the specific link for each individual event or call (301) 432-2767 to register. All events will be outdoors, please dress accordingly.

For more information on upcoming forage events visit <https://go.umd.edu/forageevents>. If you need accommodations please contact Amanda Grev (agrev@umd.edu; 301-226-7575).

Septic System Survey

Cameron Smith, Graduate Student
University of Maryland, College Park

I am a student at the University of Maryland. We are working on a project to understand the risk of septic system failure and the risk of contamination of well water for homes that rely on septic systems. Our project team includes researchers from the University of Maryland, George Mason University, Resources for the Future, and the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. (SERCAP). This project has been approved by the University of Maryland Quali-IRB Package 1310-2.

We invite you to participate in a short survey (around 9 minutes long) to provide us with more information about your septic system and well. You must be at least 18 years of age and reside in the United States to participate in this study.

Please use the following link to access the survey:
https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/form/SV_3kJ12mOAEw80KOK.

Your answers are confidential and will not be shared with any other party, and only used by project investigators.

If you have any questions, please contact Cameron Smith, csmith51@umd.edu.



New Extension Publication

The 4 Pillars of Managing Deer Damage is a comprehensive fact sheet by Luke Macaulay, UMD Wildlife Management Extension Specialist. This guide serves as a basis for managing deer on farms generated from local research. The full publication can be downloaded at <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/4-pillars-managing-deer-damage-eb-2024-0740/> or contact the Extension office for a print copy.

Ozone Injury to Vegetable Crops

Andrew Kness, Senior Agriculture Agent and Veronica Yurchak, Commercial Vegetable IPM Extension Specialist
University of Maryland Extension

Ground-level ozone is one of the most widespread air pollutants in the United States, and concentrations can fluctuate considerably from day to day. The hot, hazy conditions often associated with poor air quality frequently coincide with elevated ozone levels. Between May 16 and 20, 2026, ozone concentrations reported by Maryland Department of the Environment air quality monitoring stations reached concentrations as high as 76 parts per billion (ppb).

Ground-level ozone is not emitted directly into the atmosphere. Instead, it forms when nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) released from vehicles, electricity generation, industrial activities, and other sources react in the presence of sunlight. Hot, sunny weather promotes these reactions, which is why elevated ozone levels are commonly associated with conditions like those experienced during the recent high-ozone event.

Ozone is a highly reactive gas that enters plants through leaf stomata and disrupts normal cellular processes. Research has shown that ozone concentrations between 40 and 60 ppb can cause crop injury and reduce yields in sensitive species.

Plant sensitivity to ozone varies by crop, with tomatoes, potatoes, and cucurbits among the most susceptible vegetable crops. Symptoms of ozone injury may include interveinal chlorosis and necrosis, bleaching, stippling (small, darkly pigmented spots approximately 2-4 mm in diameter), flecking (tiny, light-tan spots less than 1 mm in diameter), bronzing, and reddening (Figure 1). Symptoms typically appear first on older leaves. In most crops, injury is most evident on the upper leaf surface; however, symptoms may occasionally be restricted to the abaxial (lower) leaf surface, as shown with the potato in Figure 1.

Because ozone injury can resemble symptoms associated with diseases, nutrient deficiencies, or pesticide phytotoxicity, diagnosis should consider recent air quality conditions and symptom patterns across multiple varieties or fields.



Figure 1. Symptoms on tomato (left) and potato (right) likely caused by ozone. Images: A. Kness, University of Maryland.

Estimating yield losses resulting from ozone exposure can be challenging. Jerry Brust, retired University of Maryland Extension Vegetable Specialist, previously cited studies showing that “when average daily ozone concentrations are moderate to high, yields of vegetables can be reduced by 5-15%.” Additional research examining tomato pollen viability found that ozone exposure reduced pollen germination and pollen tube development, ultimately affecting pollination and fruit set.

Fortunately, this recent ozone event occurred early in the growing season, before flowering and fruit development in most vegetable crops. As a result, significant yield losses are unlikely, provided ozone concentrations return to normal levels and do not remain elevated for extended periods. There is no treatment for ozone injury once it occurs; however, new growth produced after ozone levels subside should develop normally.



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Dates to remember

06 Jun. Seminar: Fruits and Berries for Small Places. 10-11 AM. Baltimore County Ag Center, Cockeysville, MD. Free. Register [online](#) or contact Lexie Lesser at (410) 887-8090.

15 Jun. Solar Energy Webinar Series: Land Leasing. 12-1:15 PM. Online via Zoom. Register [online](#) or call (301) 226-7581.

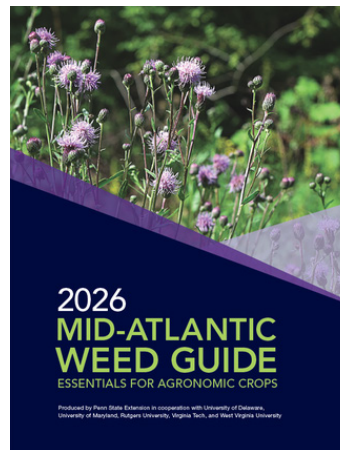
19 Jun. Extension offices closed for Juneteenth holiday.

23 Jun. Pasture and Forage Walk. 6-8 PM. Western Maryland Research & Education Center, Keedysville, MD. Register [online](#) or call (301) 226-7575.

25 Jun. Maryland Crop Scouting School. 9-2:45 PM. Wye Research & Education Center, Queenstown, MD. \$10. Register [online](#) or call (301) 226-7502.

18-25 Jul. Harford County Farm Fair.

23 Jul. Maryland Commodity Classic. 10:30 AM. Queen Anne's County 4-H Park, Centreville, MD. Ticket price varies (\$0-\$20). Register [online](#) or call (443) 262-8491.



The 2026 Mid-Atlantic Weed Guide is available for purchase at <https://extension.psu.edu/mid-atlantic-field-crop-weed-management-guide>



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