

AG NOTES

University of Maryland Extension | Harford County

Hello Harford County!

I hope everyone is enjoying a change in the weather; we have been fortunate to catch some much-needed rain over the past month. These rains are a welcomed relief from earlier drought conditions. These timely rains likely saved our corn crop and has the potential to make a bumper soybean crop. Soon, we will be busy with fall harvest and all the commotion that comes with it. But there is something important happening this fall that you should not ignore:

The 2027 Census of Agriculture.

The Census of Agriculture, conducted every five years by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), is the single largest and most comprehensive dataset collected on U.S. agriculture. Surveys for the 2027 Ag Census will be distributed sometime between November and December. I know it can be tempting to toss another survey in the trash, but I encourage you to take the time to respond; and, most importantly, to report your information accurately.

If you receive an Ag Census questionnaire, you are technically legally obligated to respond, and there are penalties for failing to do so. More importantly, however, the Ag Census is critical to the success of our industry and individual farms. It provides the most comprehensive picture of U.S. agriculture and serves as a primary source of information for federal, state, and local governments when making decisions about agriculture. Legislation, policies, programs, and

funding decisions are often influenced by the data collected through the Ag Census.

That makes participation especially important. Ag Census response rates have declined significantly over the years, with the national response rate falling from 72% in 2017 to just 61% in 2022. Maryland's response rate also declined, from more than 70% in 2017 to less than 65% in 2022.

There is an old saying in statistics: "garbage in, garbage out." The same principle applies here. If farmers do not respond, or if they under-report their production, acreage, livestock, or other farm information, the resulting dataset will not accurately reflect the agricultural industry. Decisions based on incomplete or inaccurate data could ultimately have consequences for farmers and agriculture.

In agriculture, we are constantly dealing with variables that are outside of our control; accurately reporting our farm statistics should not be one of them.

When the Ag Census questionnaire arrives later this year, please take a few minutes to complete it and report your information as accurately as possible. Your response helps ensure that the data used to represent agriculture, and shape its future, accurately reflects the farms and farmers who make up our industry.

Until next time,

-Andy

*The Extension office will be closed
on September 7 for Labor Day*

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Harford County Agricultural Center
3525 Conowingo Rd., Suite 600
Street, MD 21154
M - F 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
extension.umd.edu

Andrew Kness
Senior Agriculture Agent
(410) 638-3255
akness@umd.edu

Public Input Sought on “Harford Forward” Master Plan for Future Quality of Life

Harford County Government [press release](#)

Harford County is seeking community input to begin an update on its master plan, a public policy guide that will affect those who live and work in the county for the next 10 to 20 years. The update, entitled Harford Forward, will guide county decisions on land use, public facilities, economic development, natural resources, historic preservation, transportation and public health. The state of Maryland requires counties to update their master plan at least every 10 years. Harford’s last update was in 2016.

“Harford Forward will help shape our county’s future and citizen input is essential to creating a plan that moves Harford forward while also protecting our wonderful quality of life,” County Executive Cassilly said. “My administration is committed to ensuring a transparent planning process and providing multiple opportunities for public involvement.”

Harford Forward will be organized around eight themes: Agricultural Preservation, Economic Development, Historic Preservation, Housing, Public Safety, Strong Communities, Transportation, and Natural Resources.

A public engagement period is open and will run through February 2027. After all public input is received, a draft plan is projected to be released to the public in November 2027.

More information is on the website, harfordforward.com where a 5-minute survey is the first opportunity for public input.

To connect with community members, representatives from Harford County Planning & Zoning will be on hand at upcoming public events including the Farm Fair, Bel Air First Fridays on August 7, and the Havre de Grace Farmers’ Market on August 15. When the county executive’s community advisory boards return after their summer break, P&Z staff will be scheduling presentations and opportunities for discussion. Community advisory board meetings are open to the public; meeting details are on the county website at <https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/1603/Community-Advisory-Boards>.

Public input and questions are also welcome via email to masterplan@harfordcountymd.gov or by calling (410) 638-3103.

Expected to be in development for approximately one year, Harford Forward will be subject to final approval by the Harford County Council.

MDFB AG TIRE RECYCLING EVENTS: COMING BACK!

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS SECRETARY'S ACTION AGENDA July 22, 2026

Contact: Cio Cook 410-337-3138 cio.cook@maryland.gov

16. MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT Maryland Used Tire Cleanup and Recycling Fund

Recommendation: The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), in coordination with the Maryland Environmental Service (MES), recommends approval of funding up to \$2,056,310 for the following scrap tire project costs:

Authority: Section 9-275, Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland (State Used Tire Cleanup and Recycling Fund)

A. Agricultural Scrap Tire Collection Event	\$ 1,358,810

MDE and MES plan to conduct an Agricultural Scrap Tire Collection Event due to the popular response to previous agricultural and citizen drop-off days and requests from the public, the Maryland Farm Bureau, and local government representatives. This project is designed to assist Maryland farms by providing a responsible disposal alternative for accumulated scrap tires. Encouraging the collection and proper management of these scrap tires from farms will avoid hazards from scrap tire fires and mosquito and other vector harborage associated with scrap tire dumping.

MARYLAND BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS, JULY 22, 2026

Tire Recycling is Back

Good news for Maryland farmers: **Agricultural scrap tire recycling events are coming back!** On July 22nd, the Maryland Board of Public Works approved funding for these events, citing the event's popularity and Maryland Farm Bureau's advocacy.

The approval of this funding is just step one of the process. Help us move the process along by filling out our tonnage estimate survey, which will help us plan these events across the state.

The survey is available at: <https://www.cognitoforms.com/MarylandFarmBureau/MarylandTireRecyclingProgramTonnageEstimateRequest>.

Varroa Mite Populations are Climbing

Hayden Schug, Agriculture Agent | hschug@umd.edu
University of Maryland, Charles County

While sampling colonies for a varroa mite trial this week, I noticed a large increase in mite populations at a couple of different locations. This is a good reminder that mid to late August is often when varroa populations begin to spike. As colonies reduce drone production later in the summer, mites shift into worker brood. You can often see heavy infestations by opening patches of drone brood built between boxes or along the bottoms of frames.

Beekeepers should conduct mite washes and treat as needed. Treatments are usually recommended when mite washes reach 2% to 3%, or about 6 to 9 mites in a sample of 300 bees (half a cup). Studies have also shown that washes using alcohol or soapy water are more accurate than powdered sugar rolls, so if you are using powdered sugar, you may want to lower those treatment thresholds.

If you are using the new Norroa treatment, remember that it is not a rescue treatment. Norroa suppresses mite reproduction, but it will not knock down an already high population. If mite numbers are high, a faster-acting treatment may be needed before using Norroa, such as oxalic acid or another treatment with a short residual.

In the hives we have been working with, Norroa has kept mite levels at or near zero in some colonies, while mite populations in others have increased quickly. We do not know exactly why, but some colonies may have started with higher mite populations that were missed during the first wash. These are only our observations, but it may be worth washing your hives again if Norroa was applied several weeks ago.

Carbon Measurement Tools for Farmers

The Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology

A newly released study, funded by the Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology, helps improve the science of measuring carbon in agricultural soils.

The study was authored by Dr. Gurpal Toor (University of Maryland) and Dr. Keith Paustian (Colorado State University). It reviews the practicalities of two tools used to measure soil organic carbon, with the goal of eventually seeing an accessible tool for the typical farmer.

Soil organic carbon is a key component of soil fertility, but changes in carbon level can often take decades to detect. The study sampled 15 farms across Maryland and compared two different tools used for measuring soil organic carbon.

Researchers found that one tool – called COMET-Farm – while user-friendly, proved too generic, requiring more site-specific information on factors such as soil type and management practices to produce accurate calculations. COMET-Farm was also designed to measure changes in soil organic carbon, not current stock. Another tool – called DayCent – required advanced training, extensive inputs and was less accessible to the average user.

The study highlights the need for site-specific tools that farmers or farm service providers can use to gain valuable information about the health of the soil, and provides recommendations for how to improve the COMET-Farm model.

Join Dr. Toor at 2 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, for a webinar presentation of their findings. He will be joined by Maryland Department of the Environment Deputy Secretary Dr. Suzanne Dorsey, who helped conceptualize the project.

Register for the webinar by clicking [here](#).



September 24, 2026 | 9:00 AM - 2:45 PM | Central MD Research & Education Center, Ellicott City, MD

Join us for a hands-on Crop Scouting School focused on building practical skills for identifying and managing pests, diseases, and crop issues in the field. Participants will learn how to scout effectively, recognize key problems, and make informed management decisions using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles. This program is designed for farmers, crop consultants, and ag service providers looking to improve their field diagnostics and decision-making. This event covers common pests in row crop and vegetable production systems.

Cost is \$10 and includes lunch. Register [online](#) or contact Hayden Schug at hschug@umd.edu or (301) 226-7502.

Farm Financial and Business Lunch and Learn Web Series

Emily Zobel, Senior Agriculture Agent Associate | ezobel@umd.edu
University of Maryland Extension, Dorchester County

There is more to running a farm business than just planting and harvesting. Join us for a Lunch and Learn series to learn more about the business and financial side of running a farm.

Wednesday's from September 30 to November 18, 2026 | Noon to 1:00 p.m. online via Zoom

- 9/30 - Farm Business Entities with Paul Goeringer, UMD, ALEI
- 10/7 - Business Planning with Neith Little, UME
- 10/14 - Budgets and Financial Record Keeping with Dr. Xuan Wei, UME
- 10/21 & 10/28 - No lecture
- 11/4 - Intro to Farm Taxes with Nicole Cook, UMES, ALEI
- 11/11 - Intro to Farm Insurance for Produce Farms with Samantha Capaldo, UMES, ALEI
- 11/18 - How to Accept Supplemental Nutrition Benefit Payments with Megan Todd, UMD, ALEI.

Sessions are independent of each other. Sign up once to attend one or all. **Registration at**
<https://go.umd.edu/BFFBLL26> or call Emily Zobel at (410) 228-8800.

If you need reasonable accommodation to participate in this event or activity, please contact Emily Zobel at (410) 228-8800 by September 13, 2026.

This program is offered in Spanish upon request.

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number SNE25-005.



TAKE YOUR BUSINESS ^{TO} THE NEXT LEVEL



Farm and Food Entrepreneurs! Considering launching a new product? Applying for a grant or loan? Expanding into a new market?

This accelerator program will host an eight-week cohort focused on business planning, marketing, and financial strategies. This course is not for beginners looking to gain basic knowledge of agriculture or business planning. If you are looking for educational resources to help you start a business, please check out our Maryland Beginning Farmer Success program.

If you are a current farmer or food entrepreneur, please complete the application to participate in this intermediate course designed to help you take actionable steps towards achieving your business goals, securing funding, and expanding their market reach.

The next round of the course starts Sept. 28 and ends Nov. 20, 2026.

You will complete online coursework at your own pace. Extension faculty will meet with you via Zoom office hours to discuss your goals and provide feedback on your draft materials.

At the end of the course, a professional business consultant will review your plan and provide tailored feedback from a financing perspective.

Apply to join our next cohort: go.umd.edu/AgCoaching or contact Andrea Franchini at (301) 226-7416 or andrea1@umd.edu.

This training is offered at no cost to you, thanks to a grant from AgriProspects, a project of the Extension Foundation and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Manure Transport Program

Maryland Department of Agriculture [press release](#)

The Manure Transport Program helps cover the cost of transporting manure to farms with low phosphorus fields or to alternative use facilities. Payments of up to \$28 per ton are available to eligible farmers or registered manure brokers. Go to Maryland Department of Agriculture's [website](#) to find out how to become a registered manure broker.

Haul Now, Apply Later FastTrack Option to Transport Poultry Manure

Farmers who want to switch to poultry manure should check out our *Haul Now, Apply Later FastTrack Grants*. With our *FastTrack* grants, farmers or manure brokers can haul poultry manure now, and apply for cost-share reimbursement later. Please download an [application](#) and [claim form](#).

Standard Option to Transport Poultry Manure

Our standard transport grants to move poultry manure are still available to eligible farmers or manure brokers.

- Farmers apply through the local soil conservation district.
- Registered manure brokers apply directly to the Maryland Department of Agriculture.
- The applicant submits a current nutrient management plan that contains: Nitrogen-based nutrient recommendations for fields with a soil phosphorus Fertility Index Value that is 100 or less; Phosphorus-based nutrient recommendations for fields with a soil phosphorus Fertility Index Value between 101 and 150.
- Receiving farm fields with a phosphorus Fertility Index Value that is greater than 150 are not eligible to participate in this program.

Requirements for Poultry Manure Transport

Farmers or manure brokers may apply for grants to move poultry manure using either a standard application or the Haul Now, Apply Later FastTrack option. In both instances, the following rules apply:

- Qualifying farmers or manure brokers receive up to \$28 per ton to transport poultry litter.
- The sending farm must be located in Maryland and raise

broiler chickens for one of the participating Delmarva poultry companies.

- Poultry litter must be transported more than 7 miles from the sending farm.
- Transported poultry litter must be land applied as a nutrient source for an agricultural crop, OR sent to an approved alternative use facility.
- Either the farmer or the manure broker (not both) may apply for cost-share reimbursement to transport a load of poultry manure. This must be worked out ahead of time between the parties. MDA is not involved in the financial transactions between buyers and sellers.
- For detailed information about the rules and requirements for the Manure Transport Program, [please read the regulations](#).

Grants to Transport Dairy and Livestock Manure

A simplified application process is now in place for dairy and other non-poultry livestock producers who need to move manure:

- Cost-share grants pay up to 87.5% of all eligible costs.
- Payment rates are based on the transport distance and type of manure, either liquid or solid.
- Receiving farm fields are required to have a Maryland soil phosphorus Fertility Index Value below 101.
- Manure must be transported more than 1 mile from the sending source.
- Only operations receiving the manure may apply for transport grants.
- Manure must be applied to crops or hay fields containing less than 25 percent legumes.
- Grants to transport dairy and livestock manure are based on the following maximum application rates: 6,000 gallons per acre for liquid/slurry manure or 10 tons per acre for solid/semi-solid manure.

For additional information or questions, contact Jason Keppler, Program Manager, at (410) 841-5864.



**SAVE
THE
DATE!**



**JANUARY
14-15, 2027**



**THE MARITIME
CONFERENCE CENTER
LINTHICUM HEIGHTS, MD**

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?



Livestock
Producers



Meat
Processors



Chefs



Meat
Retailers



Ag Service
Providers

Join industry leaders, experts, and peers to strengthen our local food system and build a more resilient and profitable meat industry.

For More Details,

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/mid-atlantic-meat-summit/>

We're excited to announce the upcoming Mid-Atlantic Meat Summit on January 14-15, 2027 at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Heights, Maryland.

The summit will bring together livestock producers, meat processors, chefs, meat retailers, agricultural service providers and others involved in the regional meat industry for two days of education, networking, and discussion about strengthening the Mid-Atlantic meat supply chain.

The event will feature Farm Babe (Michelle Miller) as the keynote speaker, along with educational sessions on important issues facing today's meat industry. Day two will include tours providing participants with an inside look at regional livestock and meat operations.

For more information and updates, please visit:
<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/mid-atlantic-meat-summit/>

Educational Grants Available to Support Mid-Atlantic Meat Industry

The University of Maryland Extension is soliciting Requests for Proposals (RFP) for educational programming support through the Developing a Sustainable Livestock Industry by Empowering Northeast Farmers Through Sustainable Meat Processing initiative. This regional effort seeks to strengthen local meat value chains throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast by supporting educational programs that improve knowledge, skills, collaboration, and economic opportunities related to livestock production, meat processing, and local meat marketing. Funding is available to support local or regional educational events, workshops, demonstrations, trainings, field days, farm tours, or other outreach activities focused on meat processing and local livestock systems.

Up to \$700 is available per project. Funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis following completion of approved activities and submission of required documentation.

Eligible applicants include: land-grant universities and colleges, cooperative extension, nonprofit organizations, for-profit businesses and agricultural enterprises, producer groups and agricultural associations.

Applications will be accepted through October 30, 2026 for future projects and for reimbursement of previous projects.

****All awarded funds must be fully expended and reimbursed by May 1, 2027****

Applications must be submitted through the online application portal: <https://go.umd.edu/MAMPgrant>. If you require a paper-based application or have any questions, please contact Andrew Kness at (410) 638-3255 or akness@umd.edu.

This funding opportunity is part of a broader regional effort led by the University of Maryland Extension through Northeast SARE project number MPP25-001 to increase the resilience, sustainability, and profitability of local livestock and meat processing industries through education, workforce development, and stakeholder collaboration. The initiative includes educational programming, training sponsorships, regional meetings, and the development of outreach resources for producers, processors, entrepreneurs, and consumers throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED
TO THE HARFORD SOIL
CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S
ANNUAL COOPERATORS' DINNER



**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2026
LEVEL FIRE HALL
3633 LEVEL VILLAGE ROAD
HAVRE DE GRACE, MD 21078**

***MENU:** BBQ Meatballs, Cheese/Cracker Trays, Chicken Cordon Bleu, Meatless Baked Ziti, Mashed Potatoes w/Gravy, Broccoli & Cauliflower, Tossed Salad w/dressings, Rolls/Butter, Fruit Cobbler, Ice Cream*

RSVP BY: OCTOBER 7, 2026



QUESTIONS?
Call (410) 638-4828
E-Mail: donna.stanley@maryland.gov

Silvopasture Field Day at Falls Creek Farm

Falls Creek Farm Education Center, 2704 Conowingo Road, Bel Air, MD 21015, Harford County

November 12th, 2026, from: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Generously Sponsored by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Falls Creek Farm Education Center and the Harford Soil Conservation District Office in collaboration with Trees for Graziers and the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Healthy Soils Program

Target audience: Technical assistance staff, farmers and other interested landowners. Trees for Graziers will focus on providing basic training and resources for technical assistance staff to plan, design and implement silvopasture systems. Material covered will also be valuable for farmers and other landowners considering implementing a silvopasture system.

Cost: Free, lunch is provided. Please bring a reusable water bottle.

Registration: The event is free but registration is required by Wednesday November 4th, 2026. Please contact Ruth Cassilly at (443) 926-3567 to register or to ask questions. Alternatively, register using the online form by clicking [here](#).





AG NOTES

University of Maryland Extension | Harford County

Dates to remember

04 Sept. Agroforestry Field Day. 10:30-1:30 PM. Seven Springs Perennials, Havre de Grace. Free. Register by calling Nick Miller at (410) 980-2350.

16 Sept. Practical Experiences in Nutrient Management. 9-3:30 PM. Central MD Research & Education Center, Upper Marlboro. \$15. Register [online](#) or call (301) 226-7403.

21 Sept. Pasture Walk. 5-7:30 PM. Grazy Days Farm, Union Bridge, MD. Free. Register [online](#) or call (301) 226-7575.

24 Sept. Crop Scouting School. 9-2:45 PM. Central MD Research & Education Center, Ellicott City. \$10. Register [online](#) or call (301) 226-7502.

Maryland State Fair. Aug. 27-30, Sept. 3-7, and Sept. 10-13.

10 Nov. Pesticide Training. Exam: 9-11 AM; Recerification: 1-3 PM. Harford County Extension Office. Call (410) 638-3255 or email akness@umd.edu to register.

12 Nov. Silvopasture Field Day. 10-2 PM. Falls Creek Farm, Street, MD. Free. Register by calling (443) 926-3567.