



Maryland Department of Agriculture News



Celebrating Maryland Agriculture

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This is the time of year that we at MDA and in the farm community gather to recognize outstanding accomplishments, work with the [General Assembly](#) members on laws and policy, and plan for our upcoming crop season. This year, we saw the culmination of more than a year's work by the Agricultural Statistics Service with the release of the [2007 Census of Agriculture](#). These data will serve us well as we make our business decisions.

Earlier this month at the Maryland Agriculture Council's dinner, [Governor Martin O'Malley](#) honored the Griffith family from Anne

Gov. O'Malley Inducts Farm Families into Agriculture Hall of Fame

[Governor Martin O'Malley](#) joined more than 800 agricultural leaders and legislators from across the State on Feb. 5 to induct two farming families into the Governor's Agriculture Hall of Fame. The Harry Black Family of Frederick County and the Griffith Family in Anne Arundel County became the 36th and 37th recipients of the prestigious recognition during the annual Maryland Agriculture Dinner at Michael's Eighth Avenue in Glen Burnie. Department of Agriculture Secretary Roger L. Richardson joined Governor O'Malley during the presentation.



Sponsored by the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the Governor's Agriculture Hall of Fame was created in 1991 by then Governor William Donald Schaefer to honor agricultural leaders who exemplify high standards of achievement and commitment to the industry and their communities.

Click [here](#) for brief slideshows featuring each of the new Agriculture Hall of Fame families. Click [here](#) for the full news release.

2007 Census of Agriculture Released

The U.S. Department of Agriculture released its every-five-year [Census of Agriculture](#) showing that in Maryland since the last Census conducted in 2002 there are 636 or 5 percent more farms, 25,874 or 1 percent fewer acres of farmland, and 16 percent more female principal farm operators. The [latest figures](#) indicate that farmers enrolled 57 percent more farms and 48 percent more acreage in conservation programs between 2002 and 2007. From an economic standpoint, the value of agricultural products sold increased 42 percent to \$1.84 billion while production expenses increased by 137 percent to \$1.55 billion. Average net farm income increased 59 percent from 2002 to 32,161 per farm.



"These data show a true and increasing commitment by farmers to use conservation practices as part of their farm management and to protect the environment for future generations and I thank them for that commitment," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Agriculture is resilient and a critical part of our state's economy, quality of life, environment and food supply and one that we are committed to strengthening."

Arundel County and the Black family from Frederick County with [Agriculture Hall of Fame recognition](#). Just a few days before, I had the pleasure of presenting Preston Elementary School 3rd grader Tabitha Bednar with [Bonnie Plant's Annual Cabbage-Growing Award](#). Despite destruction by a tornado that uprooted her small plant, Tabitha showed true farmer determination and came away with a six-pound cabbage and a \$1,000 prize. In this edition, you'll read about an aspiring 12-year-old award-winning chef.

In planning for the upcoming cropping season, Maryland farmers can look back at mostly strong production and prices as well as a year of [outstanding conservation efforts](#). We look forward to sharing these environmental accomplishments with homeowners so that they can apply similar practices to their own backyards through a [public relations program](#). From a production standpoint, farmers will also be looking at a changing economic climate and new market opportunities for selling products [locally](#), nationally and around the world.

I look forward to hearing about your upcoming plans and accomplishments as we at MDA work with you toward a [smart, green and growing](#) future for Maryland

Thank you. I wish you all the best,
[Roger Richardson](#),
[MDA Secretary](#)

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2008 was a Strong Year for On-Farm Conservation

According to the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share Program's (MACS) [2008 Annual Report](#), the program provided Maryland farmers with \$11.3 million in conservation grants which were used to install 2,000 conservation projects on farms. Despite the economic downturn, farmers who received cost-share grants from MACS invested more than \$1.6 million of their own money into projects that will collectively prevent an estimated 2.4 million pounds of nitrogen and 138,300 pounds of phosphorus from entering Maryland waterways each year.

The Nutrient Management Program states through its [2008 Accomplishments Report](#) that as of Dec. 31, 2008, 98 percent of the state's 6,000 eligible farmers have filed nutrient management plans with MDA. In addition, Annual Implementation Reports describing how farmers implemented their nutrient management plans during the preceding year have been submitted for 99 percent of Maryland's farmland, or 1.2 million acres. Enforcement activities remained strong, with approximately 450 on-farm inspections. In 2008, MDA issued 1,700 warning letters to farmers who failed to file the AIRs, followed by 680 notifications of pending fines. Fines have been levied against 144 farmers who remain out of compliance.

March 1-7 is Weights & Measures Week

Every day, Marylanders decide what to buy - at the grocery store and the gas pump, home heating oil or a piece of jewelry, firewood or mulch. The department is responsible for regulating anything sold by weight, measure or count - it is the job of agency inspectors to make sure you get what you pay for in Maryland.

Approximately one-half of the U.S. economy can be attributed to some function of weights and measures activity. This year's observance of Weights and Measures Week will commemorate the 210th anniversary of the signing of the first weights and measures law in the United States on March 2, 1799.

Maryland's weights and measures officials test many different types of weighing and measuring devices including scales, price scanning equipment, gasoline pumps, meters to measure home fuel oil deliveries and highway truck scales. An important part of their job is to randomly check packaged goods to be sure they contain the quantity printed on the label.

For more information, or if you think the "cord" of firewood delivered to your home is short, the gasoline pump at the corner station is incorrect, or the weight or measure of any product you purchase is incorrect and you cannot get the seller to resolve the problem, click [here](#).



UMD College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Hosts Maryland Ag Commission

On February 11, University of Maryland President Dr. C.D. Mote, Jr., [College of Agriculture and Natural Resources](#) Dean Dr. Cheng-I Wei, and the leaders of each of the major programs within the College hosted the monthly meeting of the [Maryland Agriculture Commission](#). Commission members learned about the world-class offerings of the College and toured a number of the University's agriculture-related facilities on the College Park campus.

Dr. Mote outlined the University's commitment to its land grant roots and its [strategic plan](#), Transforming Maryland - Higher Expectations. Food safety, sustainability and enterprise development are areas in which the College is focusing many of its efforts under the University's strategic plan to develop leaders who can meet global needs and demands of the future. Two new initiatives described by Dr. Mote and Dr. Nick Place, Associate Director and Associate Dean of the University of [Maryland Cooperative Extension](#), include the [Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center](#) and a degree program in [Environmental Science and Technology](#) which is run by Dr. Frank Coale. Both of these initiatives, along with a drive for new research, advance recommendations in the Statewide Plan for Agriculture and Resource Policy led by the Maryland Agriculture Commission. Dr. Place also discussed the direction of extension as being one of specialists operating in regional clusters as a way to meet the needs of a diversifying agricultural industry.



Dr. Lars Olsen, chair of [Agricultural and Resource Economics](#), Dr. Micky Parish, chair of [Nutrition and Food Science](#),

Glori Hyman, interim director of the [Institute of Applied Agriculture](#) and Dr. Coale illustrated the outstanding research and academic programs that are garnering worldwide attention for the University, providing new technologies for industries including agriculture, and attracting top-notch students. Visits to the [research greenhouse complex](#), the [campus farm](#), the [turfgrass research and education facility](#) and the [College Park campus](#) of the [Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine](#) showed equally impressive, cutting-edge academic activity right here in our back yard. The veterinary school has received a large grant to conduct, with other university partners, one of the [highest profile veterinary projects](#) in the country. This project aims to understand the molecular basis for interspecies transmission and pathogenesis of avian influenza viruses, including vaccine development. This project is of great interest to our poultry industry and public health partners. Discussion wrapped up with a presentation about [4-H programs](#) by Kendra Wells, assistant director, 4-H Youth Development.

It became obvious to the Commission members through the tours and presentations by top faculty and researchers, that the University of Maryland is clearly on a path to transform Maryland. The breadth and depth of university activity is on track to help move forward agriculture, the State, and the world through leading research and the highest caliber graduates.

Tell Us What You Think

The State of Maryland is projecting a population increase of approximately 1 million more residents by the year 2030. This predicted growth will bring new jobs to our region but also impact our transportation systems, energy use, housing needs, land development, and natural resources.

With this in mind, we'd like to find out how you think Maryland is doing when it comes to growing and planning for the future, while at the same time protecting the environment and our quality of life.

Please click [here](#) and take a few minutes to complete a short, informal online survey. Your answers are completely confidential and anonymous but will greatly help us in our work. Click [here](#) to learn more about Maryland's Smart, Green and Growing Initiative.



Environment, Budget are the focus of the 2009 General Assembly

The current General Assembly session is shaping up to be a busy one. The Department of Budget and Management, along with the leadership of the General Assembly, has said that any bills with any cost attached to them would be scrutinized or outright rejected.

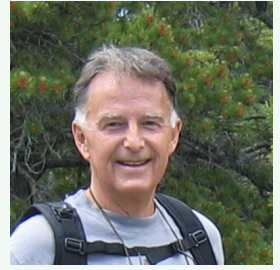
From a policy perspective, the Chesapeake Bay is a focal point of most if not all of the environmental legislation that will impact farmers. Several bills to reduce the level of phosphorous or tax fertilizer users have been introduced. In addition, MDA expects to see legislation to establish a reporting system for pesticide and fertilizer use. Legislation to expand allowable practices (wind/solar and natural gas) on farmland enrolled in the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), as well as a bill to increase mandatory inspections on MALPF properties have or will be introduced. Finally, a bill to expand the standing rights has been introduced by Senator Brian Frosh.

The O'Malley Administration has also put forward several [bills](#) for consideration. A number of these bills would implement recommendations from the Task Force on the Future for Growth and Development in Maryland, setting goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and modifying the oyster lease law to enhance the aquaculture industry in Maryland.

MDA is currently following more than 80 bills. MDA has also put forward departmental bills. A description of the bills, as well as information on the other bills MDA is monitoring can be found [online](#). For more information, please contact Joanna Kille, Director of Government Relations, at killejw@mda.state.md.us

People Profile: Donald Webster Chair, Aquaculture Advisory Council

Don Webster is chairman of the Aquaculture Coordinating Council. As a fisheries and aquaculture expert with more than 30 years' experience at the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension in research and education, he was part of the Task Force on Seafood and Aquaculture that led to the 2005 legislation establishing the Council. He has gladly and ably led the group as chair or vice chair through most of its years.



Because of his deep experience, Webster is uniquely qualified to lead the group that advises decision-makers and industry representatives on aquaculture policy. He explains some of the industry's history in the Bay region: "In the late 1970s, it became apparent that we were having problems with our natural resources, and I began working with aquaculture. We had one of the largest aquaculture extension programs in the country up to the 1990s. We worked on commercializing striped bass and hybrid aquaculture, developed recirculating crab shedding systems, and worked with many other fish, plants and production systems.

Shellfish aquaculture always made sense and ...in the early 1980s we began a series of educational programs to teach growers how to use 'remote setting' to produce oyster seed economically. That project changed when disease epizootics surged in the mid 1980s and forever changed the nature of the resource and the industry."

Webster's vision for the Council is that it will continue to be the principal aquaculture advisory group. Aquaculture is a clean industry and is one of the fastest growing parts of American agriculture. Maryland has many production and marketing advantages and is working to expand it. The Council has been a strong advocate for aquaculture as a means of increasing seafood production in Maryland, which is Webster's guiding principle. "I see it as a natural way to keep quality seafood in production and, in the case of shellfish, offer significant ecological benefits to our state as well."

After visiting aquaculture operations in the Chincoteague Bay area this past summer, Governor O'Malley requested a plan to advance and expand aquaculture. The Aquaculture Coordinating Council recommended a new bottom leasing program (revising for the first time a 103-year-old law), which the Governor submitted as part of his legislative package. If the bill is successful, Webster expects that Maryland will be able to attract the capital for investment into the industry that will provide economic growth and increase employment while gaining environmental benefits. In short, it is a way to find a private sector solution to a public sector problem. This legislation and the creation of industry Best Management Practices in 2006 are two of the Council's accomplishments of which Webster is most proud. Both will have lasting positive impact on the industry.

Featured Recipe: Eastern Shore Rockfish Special

Twelve-year-old Clear Spring, MD resident Eric Yetter bested nine other junior chefs from Maryland and Delaware competing in the [2nd Annual Junior Chefs Rockfish Cooking Contest](#) which took place on Jan. 24 as part of the 2009 East Coast Commercial Fisherman's and Aquaculture Trade Exposition in Ocean City and the winter time Rockfish Celebration. For a free brochure with the 10 finalists' recipes and further information about restaurants and retailers participating in the Rockfish Celebration this month, visit www.marylandseafood.org or call 410-841-5972.



EASTERN SHORE ROCKFISH SPECIAL

By Eric Yetter

- 2 pounds rockfish filets
- 1½ tablespoons Hellman's mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons Montreal Steak and Burger Rub by Ernst Market
- Old Bay seasoning
- lemon pepper
- Approximately ¼ to ½ cups olive oil

Mix about 1 ½ tablespoons of Montreal Steak and Burger Rub with the mayonnaise. Coat the rockfish filets with the mixture. Heat the oil in the pan and cook rockfish on medium to low heat until cooked. Use the remaining ½ teaspoon of seasoning to pinch on areas where fish needs seasoning added and pinch on the Old Bay Seasoning and lemon pepper while cooking. Serve on a bed of lettuce and garnish with cherry tomatoes if in season.

Upcoming Events

- [2009 Grape Growing Workshops](#) (Feb-July)
- [Weights and Measures Week](#) (March 1-7)
- [Rockfish Celebration](#) (Through February)
- [Westfield Annapolis Winter Farmers' Market](#) (2nd & 4th Sundays, 12:30-2:30 pm), Bestgate Road at the Nordstrom Parking Garage
- [National Nutrition Month](#) (March)
- [Maryland/National Agriculture Week](#) (March 15-21)



Join a CSA to Support Local Farmers and Get Delicious, Healthy, Fresh Produce All Summer!

Community supported agriculture (CSA) farms are another way for farmers to boost their profitability and for residents to buy fresh, locally-grown food. CSA members pay an upfront subscription fee to farmers in return for a share of the season's harvest, which is usually provided weekly throughout the summer.

Click [here](#) for a list of Maryland's CSA farms that have signed up with the department's Maryland's Best program.

We invite your feedback.

Thank you for reading our latest publication. We are always looking for ways to improve how we serve our constituents. Please send your comments, suggestions and ideas to mdanews@mda.state.md.us or call 410-841-5881.

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