



# Maryland Department of Agriculture News



Celebrating Maryland Agriculture

February 2010

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## Secretary's Corner

Earl "Buddy" Hance

February has been anything but dull. For the first year in many, the weather was wonderful for the annual Agriculture Dinner at Michael's Eighth Avenue. At the dinner, [Governor Martin O'Malley](#) inducted the Prouty and Ramsburg families into the Agricultural Hall of Fame. He also presented the first-ever Smart, Green and Growing awards to agricultural conservation leaders Jeff and Terri King, Bill and Ann Collier, and the St. Mary's Soil Conservation District as well as Tony Geraci, a champion of buying and growing local foods for school systems.

The next day, it started snowing and

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

Governor Martin O'Malley joined more than 800 agricultural leaders and legislators from across the State to induct two farming families into the Governor's Agriculture Hall of Fame. [John A. Prouty & Family of Calvert County](#) and [Mehrle H. & Thelma Ramsburg Jr.](#) of Frederick County became the 38th and 39th recipients of the prestigious recognition during the annual Maryland Agriculture Dinner on February 4.

Governor O'Malley and MDA Secretary Buddy Hance also presented the first-ever Smart, Green and Growing Agriculture Awards to:

- **Tony Geraci**, head of the Baltimore City public school food and nutrition services for bringing national recognition and leadership to the farm to school effort by showing that getting fresh local foods into the cafeteria can be done.
- **Bill and Anne Collier**, Caroline County farmers, for their long-term, sustained agricultural stewardship of soil, water, air, and other natural resources in a production farm setting and their contributions to the advancement of Maryland's agricultural industry through conservation research.
- **St. Mary's Soil Conservation District** for their superior level of service to the community it supports and the agricultural industry through education, outreach and technical assistance.
- **Jeff and Terri King**, Dorchester County farmers, for their dedication to and participation in soil and water conservation activities on their farm, as well their strong conservation leadership in the agricultural community.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



almost two weeks later most of us are still digging out, assessing damage, and finding ways to recover our losses. MDA was represented very ably at the State Emergency Operations Center by Steve Malan and throughout the response by many staff including Art Senkel, our State Veterinarian's office and by the Maryland Volunteer Veterinary Corps. They helped to coordinate assistance during the storms for a number of producers who had serious problems on their hands.

MDA continues to work closely with the [University of Maryland Extension](#), USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), and a variety of state agencies, lenders and poultry companies to find ways to ease the financial and emotional pain that storm damage has caused. Our focus, and that of Governor O'Malley, is to help get producers who suffered losses back on their feet and in production as quickly as possible.

MDA is compiling damage reports from across the State to identify immediate needs and to understand where there may be gaps that we, with our federal, state and local partners, can help fill. I have spoken personally with a number of growers who experienced losses to express my concern and to hear what needs they have. It appears that damage is significant and widespread geographically and across agricultural sectors.

We have posted some [initial information](#) on first contact points, how to handle livestock and poultry mortality and disposal of building materials along with links to the FSA Livestock Indemnity and loan programs. That is a start. As we learn more about the needs in the agriculture community, we will try to fill those gaps. In the meanwhile, please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance. We are here to serve you.

[Buddy Hance](#),  
[MDA Secretary](#)

## 2009 is Record Year for On-Farm Conservation in Md.

Now in its 25th year, the [Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share \(MACS\) Program](#) helps Maryland farmers do their part to protect water quality in the streams and rivers that feed the Chesapeake Bay.

According to the [2009 MACS Annual Report](#), MACS provided Maryland farmers with a record \$19 million in conservation grants to install 2,370 projects on their farms to control soil erosion, manage nutrients and protect water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay in 2009. During its fledgling year in 1984, MACS provided Maryland farmers with \$434,000 in grants to install roughly 130 conservation projects.

In FY 2009, \$10.7 million in MACS grants were used to help Maryland farmers plant 239,000 acres of [cover crops](#) statewide. Doubling the acreage planted in cover crops is a prominent feature in Governor Martin O'Malley's suite of 27 ambitious [two-year milestones](#) aimed at accelerating the Bay cleanup.

Expanding the amount of [manure transported](#) annually out of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed from poultry farms with high soil phosphorus levels is another milestone outlined in Governor O'Malley's Bay restoration plan. In FY 2009, MACS helped Maryland poultry farmers transport 52,000 tons of poultry litter out of the Bay Watershed, exceeding the milestone goal by 168 percent. Click [here](#) to learn more about farmer conservation accomplishments.

## MDA Joins Md. Green Registry

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) was recently approved as a member of the Maryland Green Registry for its overall commitment to environmental sustainability.

"We are proud to be recognized for our sustainable practices at the Department and now encourage Maryland farmers and other agricultural-related businesses to join the Maryland Green Registry by [filling out the Registry application](#)," said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance. "We look forward to working with other participants to build a smart, green and growing future for Maryland."

Maryland's Green Registry includes more than 140 public and private-sector organizations that have implemented at least five practices toward a greener working environment and provides tips and resources for incorporating green practices. Click [here](#) to learn more.



## USDA Releases First Organic Farming Survey

According to the first-ever in-depth survey of organic farming in the United States, about 18 percent (more than double the national average) of Maryland organic sales were direct to consumers, via farms stands, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture operations (CSAs) and other arrangements.

In Maryland, the Organic Production Survey counted 129 organic farms during 2008. The 129 Maryland farms include USDA certified organic farms and farms that were exempt from certification. Maryland organic farms are smaller, on average, than all Maryland farms. Organic farms averaged 71.5 acres of land, compared with 160 acres for all farms. Maryland organic sales totaled \$10.4 million, including \$4.9 million in crop sales and \$5.5 million in sales of livestock, poultry and their products. Thirty-five percent of these farms have been in organic agricultural production for less than 10 years.

Maryland farmers reported using a variety of conservation and environmental practices on their organic certified and exempt farms in 2008. Among the most popular were the use of green or animal manure and the planting and maintenance of buffer strips.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released the results of the 2008 Organic Production Survey in early February. Click [here](#) for more details.

## Quick Links

[More About MDA](#)

[BayStat](#)

[Sign Up for Governor](#)

[O'Malley's E-Newsletter](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

[Join the Maryland  
Green Registry](#)

## Celebrate Maryland Weights & Measures Week March 1-7

Every day, Marylanders decide what to buy - groceries or gas, home heating oil or a piece of jewelry, firewood or mulch. These diverse purchasing decisions have one common thread: Maryland Department of Agriculture staff inspects the accuracy of weighing and measuring devices.

MDA inspectors keep pace with rapidly advancing technologies to ensure fairness in the marketplace. Business sectors currently use the most recent advancements in technology to determine quantities. Cutting-edge weighing and measuring equipment is also used by everyday places such as supermarkets and gasoline stations. "New innovations are being used more than ever, so it's extremely important that consumers and businesses are protected," said Weights and Measures Acting Program Manager Ken Ramsburg.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Maryland's Weights and Measures Program.



## MDA Connects Buyers & Growers

More than 250 regional retail and wholesale buyers and Maryland producers and processors participated in the trade show style event hosted by the Maryland Department of Agriculture on January 21. Click [here](#) for a short video from the event.

The Maryland Buyer-Grower Event is a great opportunity for Maryland farmers, producers and processors to increase sales by introducing them directly to food purchasing decision-makers. By the same token, buyers can find out what local products are available from the State's producers to meet consumer demand. Buyers can typically find fruits and vegetables, meats, cheeses, seafood, and other specialty products at the event.



*Photo: Pablo Solanet, FireFly Farm's Chef de Cuisine, along with the Hollands of Chesapeake Bay Farms, Inc. in the background, talking with potential buyers at the Maryland Buyer-Grower Event.*

## Junior Chefs Rockfish Recipes Lauded

Ten junior chefs from Maryland and Delaware competed for top honors in the 3rd annual Junior Chefs Rockfish Cooking Contest. Click [here](#) for all of the recipes. The contest was part of the [Maryland Rockfish Celebration](#) taking place at more than 50 Maryland restaurants and retail markets through the end of February.

The event, which was sponsored by the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Seafood Marketing Program and the Sea Grant programs of the universities of Maryland and Delaware, took place on Jan. 30 as part of the 2010 East Coast Commercial Fisherman's and Aquaculture Trade Exposition in Ocean City.

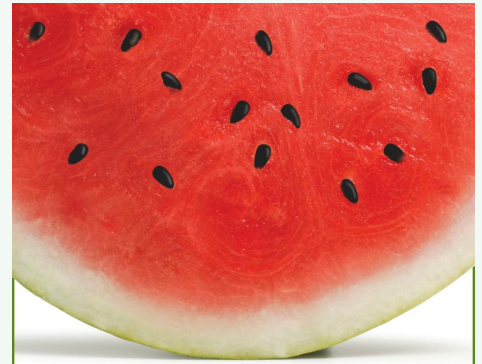


*Photo: Rockfish Romero prepared by Jonathon Romero, 16, Silver Spring, Md., first place winner of the 2010 Junior Rockfish Cooking Contest (13-17 year category).*

## MDA Helps Judge Mar-Del Watermelon Queen Contest

MDA Marketing Specialist Kate Mason was one of three judges for the 2010 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen Competition held in Cambridge on February 5-6. Congratulations to Parris Travers of Woolford, Maryland - the new Mar-Del Watermelon Queen!

The Mar-Del Watermelon Queen is crowned annually at the [Maryland-Delaware Watermelon Association](#)'s annual convention and serves as a public relations representative for both the association and the watermelon industry. Her primary role is to encourage increased consumption of locally grown, Mar-Delicious watermelons, nutrition education, and informing consumers and legislative officials of the economic importance of agriculture to our area.



**Buy Local, Eat Fresh**

**Mar-Delicious Watermelons  
Grown in Maryland and Delaware**

## People Profile: Robert F. Stahl Jr.

Robert "Bobby" F. Stahl, Jr. was named the new chair of the [Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation \(MALPF\)](#) Board in December, 2009. An active farmer who can trace his heritage back to Southern Maryland tobacco farming in 1717, Mr. Stahl owns and operates Jameson Manor Farm, where he and his family currently raise 75 head of Black Angus cattle, grain and hay.

A member of the board since 2004, his goal is to keep the program moving forward. His vision is to build on the good work MALPF has done over the past 30 plus years and continuously work with the ag community to preserve a strong agricultural land base in Maryland because it is such an important industry for the State. Mr. Stahl says the challenge will be to keep the program active during the short-term budget implications facing the State today. He has always felt that with the pressures on agriculture today, there must be mechanisms in place to preserve land. One way he wishes to pursue this is to work with the Administration on alternative financing structures that will carry the MALPF program into the future. "Right now there is tremendous interest in and knowledge of the program. Interest in the program has also risen because development pressure has dropped, so it's a great opportunity to concentrate on preservation," said Mr. Stahl.



Mr. Stahl is currently Director of Operations for the Town of La Plata. Through his work with municipalities, he is a true believer in "Smart Growth" and says the challenge is trying to balance land preservation with making sure development occurs where we want it. He believes that the key to preserving agriculture - the leading industry in Maryland - is to preserve the agricultural land base. He feels good knowing that every day he works to promote growth in municipal areas and while preserving other areas of the state. In his career with La Plata, he is directly involved with developing the Priority Funding Area (PFA). He believes that for the long term, we need to initiate development in PFAs to relieve pressure in farming areas and those areas specifically designated for preservation. He would like to see more incentives that tie farmland preservation with the development of areas designated for development (e.g., transfer of development rights).

He became interested in agricultural land preservation at a young age and grew up with a love for farming. Through a partnership with William Addison, who is now Secretary of the Maryland State Senate, Mr. Stahl raised tobacco in high school and college. He has been actively involved with agricultural land issues for the past 20 years. In addition to farming, Mr. Stahl was one of the original appointees to the [Maryland Rural Legacy Advisory Board](#) and served for 10 years. He served on the [Charles County Agricultural Land Preservation Committee](#) and managed land programs for Chaney Enterprises for more than 10 years each.

He earned a Master's degree in General Administration, Bachelor's in Agricultural Land and Resource Economics and an Associate's degree in Farm Production and Management all from the University of Maryland, College Park. Mr. Stahl

and his wife Alicia have been married for 21 years and have two children, Lizzie and Bobby, who are both involved with agriculture.

## BRAT: Bacon Rock & Tomato Sandwich

*Recipe by Benjamin Voshell, 11, Galena, Md., and first place winner in the 2010 Junior Rockfish Cooking Contest (7-12 year category).*

### Ingredients:

2 pounds boneless rockfish fillets  
4 tablespoon butter, melted  
Salt and pepper to taste  
4 thick slices of bread, toasted  
4 slices cooked bacon  
4 large slices tomato  
1 cup mayonnaise  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
1 teaspoon tarragon  
Garnish - fresh parsley and paprika

### Preparation:

Sprinkle rock fillets with salt and pepper. Drizzle with melted butter and place under hot broiler. Broil until fish is just cooked; don't overcook. Break bacon in half and place two bacon halves on top of toast. Next top with sliced tomato. Sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper. Combine mayonnaise, lemon juice, and tarragon. Spoon over fish. Return to broiler until hot and bubbly. Garnish with paprika and parsley. Serves 4.



## Upcoming Events

- [Westfield Annapolis Winter Farmers' Market](#), 1st & 3rd Sundays, (Bestgate Rd. at the Nordstrom Parking Lot)
- [2010 Governor's Agricultural Forum](#), February 19 (Annapolis)
- [Green Earth Expo](#), February 26-28 (Baltimore)
- [Taking the Roadblocks out of Growing your Farm Enterprise](#), March 2 (West Friendship)
- [PlanMaryland Public Forums](#), Multiple dates and locations
- [Maryland Wine & Grape Industry Annual Meeting](#), March 6, (Clarion Hotel, Oxon Hill)
- [Organic Grain and Hay Workshop](#), March 9 (Queen Anne's County 4-H Park)
- [Mid-Atlantic Nutrition Conference](#), March 24-25 (Baltimore)
- [Ag Entrepreneurship- Income Opportunities for Tight Times](#), March 31 (Fairplay)

**NOTE:** We regret that due to budget cuts and staffing limitations, **the 2010 MDA Open House has been cancelled.**

## 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](mailto:mdanews@mda.state.md.us) or call 410-841-5881.

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## **Go Green, Join a CSA, Enjoy Local Produce All Summer!**

Go green and buy local by joining a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm. CSAs are another way for residents to buy fresh, nutritious food directly from a local farmer and to better understand how our food is grown. Act today to reserve your spot. Click [here](#) for a list of CSA farms and to learn more.

[Forward email](#)

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