
ORIGIN & FUNCTIONS

The Department of Agriculture traces its origin to the Maryland Agricultural College, chartered in 1856. After the federal Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 offered each state proceeds from sales of federal lands to fund a college teaching agriculture and mechanical arts, the College became Maryland's land-grant institution in 1864. While certain agricultural duties were assigned briefly to the Superintendent of Labor and Agriculture in 1867, they later became the responsibility of the College (Constitution of 1867, Art. 10). As the State agricultural agency, the College regulated fertilizers (1886), and live stock sanitation (1888), and inspected nurseries, trees, feeds, tobacco, seeds, honeybees, and fruit. The College acquired an agricultural experiment station under the federal Hatch Act of 1887. Professors of the College and Experiment Station served as State Entomologist, State Pathologist, and State Horticulturalist to identify and eradicate insect pests and diseases (Chapter 289, Acts of 1898). Farmers' institutes were held during winter months until replaced by the Agricultural Extension Service, created by federal and State laws in 1914.

In 1908, the Board of Trustees of the Maryland Agricultural College became ex officio the State Board of Agriculture (Chapter 161, Acts of 1908). When the College merged with the University of Maryland in 1920, the University's Board of Regents assumed the responsibilities of the State Board of Agriculture. Although duties of the former trustees of the Agricultural College were solely concerned with agriculture, the Board of Regents became responsible for an entire university of diverse interests. To respond to the special needs of agriculture, the State created the Department of Agriculture in 1972 (Chapter 342, Acts of 1972). All regulatory and advisory functions were reorganized and transferred to the new Department, while agricultural research functions and the Extension Service were retained by the University.

Since agriculture is vital to Maryland's economy, the Department's main purpose is to help farmers produce high-quality commodities. To this end, the Department eradicates disease in livestock and poultry, controls insect pests and weeds which threaten field crops, inspects seeds and fertilizers to ensure maximum yields, and disseminates market reports and statistics to help farmers plan farm production. The Department also protects the environment by regulating the use of pesticides, implementing sound soil conservation methods, and preserving valuable agricultural land. In addition, the Department protects consumers by inspecting and grading agricultural commodities to ensure market quality, oversees the practice of veterinary medicine, and inspects the weighing and packaging of a wide range of products. Finally, the Department promotes Maryland agriculture, seeks out new markets, and implements new initiatives such as aquaculture.

Under the Secretary of Agriculture, the Department is organized into five main offices: Administrative Services, Animal Health and Consumer Services, Plant Industries and Pest Management, Resource Conservation, and Marketing and Agricultural Development. The Department also is served by the Board of Review and the Maryland Agricultural Commission. The Secretary of Agriculture appoints the State Chemist, State Veterinarian, and the Chief of Weights and Measures.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

The Office of the Secretary provides executive direction for the Department. The Secretary is the chief executive officer and is appointed by the Governor with Senate advice and consent. Responsible for day-to-day operations, the Deputy Secretary is appointed by the Secretary with the Governor's approval.

The Office of the Secretary includes the Office of the Assistant Attorney General, internal audit, intergovernmental and public information functions, Office of Aquaculture Programs, and Office of Administrative Services (Code Agriculture Article, secs. 2-101 through 2-108).

BOARD OF REVIEW

Charles E. Brown, *Chairperson*, 1993

Appointed by Governor (who also designates chair) with Senate advice & consent: John C. Herbst, 1992; Harold H. Holbrook, 1992; Roger L. Richardson, 1993; Paul A. Crowl, 1994; Arthur Howard Peck, D.V.M., 1994; Richard W. Wright, 1994.

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The Board of Review hears and determines appeals from any decision of the Secretary of Agriculture or agency of the Department subject to judicial review under the Administrative Procedure Act (Code Agriculture Article, secs. 2-401 through 2-405).