



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Entrepreneurs can apply for the Farm Bureau Challenge to earn \$145,000 in startup funds

Davidsonville, MD (May 13, 2016) – Maryland Farm Bureau (MFB) encourages all entrepreneurs of food, fiber and fuel to apply for the American Farm Bureau Federation’s (AFBF) 2017 Rural Entrepreneur Challenge to earn up to \$145,000 in startup funds for their business.

The competition provides an opportunity for individuals to showcase ideas and business innovations that benefit rural regions of the United States. It is the first national rural business competition focused exclusively on innovative entrepreneurs working on food and agriculture businesses.

“This is a great opportunity for our Maryland Farm Bureau members to show the rest of our country’s agricultural industry how innovative our farmers can be,” said Chuck Fry, President of MFB and member of the AFBF Board of Directors. “We are already ‘outside-of-the-box’ thinkers due to strict regulations in our state, so I know there are many successful rural startups out there that could benefit from this challenge.”

Businesses related to food and agriculture include farms or ranches, value-added food processing, food hubs, community-supported agriculture programs (CSAs), farm-to-table restaurants, farmers' markets, wineries, breweries, cideries and distilleries. Businesses can also support food and agriculture such as crop scouting, agri-tourism, ag advertising agencies and ag technology companies.

All applications, which include a business plan, video pitch and photo, must be submitted online by June 30 at <http://www.strongruralamerica.com/challenge>. Judges will review the applications and provide feedback to the participants. The top 10 teams will be announced in October. This includes six teams who will each win \$10,000 in startup funds. The final four teams will compete in live competition at AFBF’s 98th Annual Convention in Phoenix on January 8 to win:

- Farm Bureau Entrepreneur of the Year award and \$30,000 (chosen by judges);
- People's Choice award and \$25,000 (chosen by public vote);
- First runner-up prize, \$15,000; and
- Second runner-up prize, \$15,000.

The Entrepreneur of the Year award and the People's Choice award will be awarded to two different teams. The team that wins the Entrepreneur of the Year award will not be eligible for the People's Choice Award. The competition timeline, detailed eligibility guidelines and profiles of the 2015 and 2016 finalist teams are available at <http://www.strongruralamerica.com/challenge>.

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Maryland Farm Bureau is a private, non-profit membership organization. It is controlled by its members through the democratic process and is financed by voluntary membership dues. Its strength comes from the active participation of over 36,000 member families that belong to the state's 23 county Farm Bureaus. For the last 100 years, Maryland Farm Bureau has served to promote and protect Maryland agriculture and rural life.