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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Poultry Production Benefits the Eastern Shore

By Chuck Fry, Maryland Farm Bureau president

The benefits of poultry production have been visible across the eastern shore of Maryland, with increased personal income, more jobs, more money to spend at restaurants and retail shops, more tax revenue and better schools. We must keep the benefits of diversification in mind as we work to balance the future growth of residential and farm operations in our state. When a farmer makes the decision to adjust his or her operation to produce a new product such as poultry, impact on the community, the environment and the farm business are always considered.

Farmers work with government agencies such as the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the UMD Extension when they make changes to their farms. They must make sound decisions about the location of poultry houses, manure storage structures, mortality compost facilities and buffer plantings of trees and grasses.

According to figures compiled by Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc., there were fewer poultry houses in operation at the end of 2015 than there were 10 years before. There were 6,300 chicken houses on the Peninsula in 1995; a lower count of 5,430 houses in 2005; and a still lower count of 4,840 in 2015. While growers and producers have increased efficiency over that same timeframe, total Delmarva chicken house capacity has increased just 4.6 percent in the past 20 years, far from out-of-control growth.

Maryland farm families are also working to meet water and air quality goals. Farmers are doing more, spending more and achieving more to clean up the Chesapeake Bay than any other sector. In fact we are doing more than our fair share since urban areas have been slow to make the necessary changes.

Market demand and community needs are at the forefront of what we do on our farms. But at the end of the day, farmers must be allowed to adjust their operations to include new technology, agricultural products, methods and animal health practices.

Maryland Farm Bureau asks that you keep the benefits of the poultry industry in mind as we work to balance the future growth of residential and poultry houses.