



# Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Farmers pleased with withdrawal of PMT regulations**

Maryland farmers believe their voices were heard. Just before the close of business on Friday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) announced it will withdraw its proposed regulations to implement the new Maryland Phosphorus Management Tool (PMT) from consideration by the Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive and Legislative Review (AELR).

The controversial PMT is designed to be more sensitive to the potential for phosphorus to move from farmland. However, there were many unanswered questions and concerns about the regulation that many believe would have destroyed the business model of the largest economic sector on the Eastern Shore.

“We are pleased that MDA and the Governor recognize the impact of the proposed change on farmers and withdrew the proposal,” said Patricia Langenfelder, Maryland Farm Bureau president. “We especially want to thank all of the farmers who took time from their busy fall harvest to attend the briefings and file comments with MDA.”

MDA officials said they withdrew the regulations “as a result of concerns identified in the public meetings and public comment process.” This action also cancels the AELR hearing on the regulation scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 20. However, MDA said it will “consider all comments and critical issues raised by stakeholders, develop an approach that addresses concerns raised to date, and resubmit a new proposal to AELR in 2014 that includes a phased implementation schedule for the new tool.”

“Our battles are not over, but the science is simply not ready and the cost-benefit analysis has not been conducted,” Langenfelder said.

The Maryland Farm Bureau Board of Directors unanimously opposed the adoption of the PMT, saying the restrictions would dramatically limit the use of locally produced organic fertilizer to much of the land on the lower Eastern Shore and in many other

areas of the state. This limitation will have far reaching negative economic impacts on individual poultry growers, dairymen, grain operators, support businesses and local communities.

“Our members strongly believe that it makes no sense to impose this burden on farmers when at 130% we are the only sector to reach our Bay cleanup goals in the most recent analysis and are, in fact, doing more than our fair share,” Langenfelder said in a letter to MDA last week.

“Additionally, we are concerned that replacing organic slow-release fertilizer with water-soluble chemical Nitrogen will have a much greater impact on the Bay. Chesapeake Bay Foundation agrees with this concern in their October 2013 Pennsylvania Fact Sheet entitled, *Manure: Not the Leading Cause of Nitrogen Pollution to the Chesapeake Bay*. In it they emphasize that “in the case of nitrogen pollution, manure is not the leading source; rather, chemical fertilizers applied onto agricultural lands are the leading source of nitrogen pollution...” And since no study has been conducted to analyze the potential impact of switching from organic to chemical fertilizer, it is possible that the effort to address a perceived Phosphorous problem on farms will cause a new Nitrogen concern.

“And we say ‘perceived Phosphorus’ problem because we know that the Chesapeake Bay Model does not currently give credit for most of the phosphorus control measures we have already taken on Maryland farms. It is possible that once the model is corrected and the new numbers are run, Maryland farmers will have already met their Phosphorus reduction goals, without the need to implement the onerous PMT,” she concluded.

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 37,000 member families that belong to the state’s 23 county Farm Bureaus.

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