



Maryland Farm Bureau

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Voting Delegates Adopt New State and National Policy During 103rd Annual MFB Convention

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During Maryland Farm Bureau's (MFB) annual state convention on December 2-4, 2018, nearly 200 county Farm Bureau voting delegates discussed and adopted new state and national policies. Over the next week, MFB staff will finalize the new policy book and will make it available to the public on the MFB website.

National Policy

The national policy resolutions that were voted on by the delegation will be sent to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) for further review by state delegates during the AFBF annual convention in January. MFB will be submitting two national policies on behalf of our members:

Animal Care

MFB opposes local governments/sheriff offices putting animal welfare groups in charge of inspection and enforcement of livestock animal welfare cases. The delegation has seen this type of practice used in some counties with negative results. It seems animal welfare groups use these types of cases as fundraisers against animal agriculture. MFB members believe the case should instead be inspected by licensed veterinarians and unbiased law officials.

General Aviation Airports

Throughout the past year, MFB has been informed about discussions of possibly removing congressional oversight of federal aviation. The fear with this is that small, more general aviation airports would lose federal funding to larger scale commercial aviation airports. This would move the funding needs of these small airports to the local governments and, in many cases, cause these more rural airports to be closed. Agriculture relies on these small, rural airports for production purposes, such as aerial seeding cover crops. In the US, roughly 71 million acres of agricultural land is treated annually using aircraft.

State Policy

The majority of the policy discussion during convention was related to state issues. Here are some highlights of the policy changes:

- **Agricultural Land Preservation** - the delegation voted to support amending state code to remove the loophole that developers use to keep from having to pay ag transfer taxes when transferring, developing, or taking land out of the ag use designation.
- **Air Quality** - the delegation voted to oppose the creation of a state carbon tax/fee, as well as oppose legislation that would require CAFO's to install air quality monitoring devices.
- **Crop Protection** - the delegation urges keeping all federally-approved crop protection products legal in the state, counties, and municipalities.
- **Dairy Industry** - The delegation voted to urge Maryland public schools to offer a minimum of 2% white milk and 1% flavored milk in their food option programs.
- **Energy Policy** - After much discussion, the delegation voted to change their stance on the in-state solar carve out within the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS). MFB's stance has been to oppose any increase to the solar carve out. However, the delegation voted to support an increase as long as the eligible projects are no larger than 2-megawatts. This change would allow projects that are currently allowed under the net metering law and would prevent large contiguous amounts of prime and productive farmland from being covered in commercial solar projects.
- **Noxious Weeds** - The delegation adopted several new policies in this section:
 - Members urge MDA to create a weeds of concern program that identifies weeds of concern, educates all stakeholders, and encourages those stakeholders to control these weeds.
 - Another popular policy was to ask the administration to expand the funding for the noxious weed program to better educate and enforce the control of noxious weeds and weeds of concern.
- **Nutrient Management** - A policy was approved that would ask for nutrient management plans to be made more flexible to allow the use of advanced nutrient management practices and technologies.
- **Public-owned Land** - Deer management was a popular topic during the annual convention and made its way into the public-owned land section of the policy book. The delegation voted to urge the state to require and implement a wildlife management plan for all public, wild, and forest land.

- **University of Maryland Systems** - Due to so many issues with weeds in Maryland, the delegation added new policy asking the University to fill and support the vacant weed science specialist position and focus on practical herbicide trials with proper dissemination of the results to farmers.

- **Wildlife Management** - Several policies were adopted in this section:
 - Members voted to urge the state to put pressure on the federal government to remove black-headed buzzards from the Migratory Birds Treaty Act.

 - Policy was also adopted to urge DNR to lower the ratio of deer per square mile, while urging the state to provide cost-share funding to construct deer fence around agricultural fields.

 - Lastly, the delegation voted to recommend that ATV's and other transportation be allowed for the purpose of harvesting deer on federal and state-owned land.

As you can see, the delegation was busy addressing needed policy during this year's convention. We encourage members to visit the "Advocating for You" page on our website to see the 2019 state policy once it's finalized, along with other initiatives MFB is working on. As the next legislative session gets closer, make sure to contact MFB staff if you have any questions or concerns you would like us to address so we can continue to represent our members and be the collective voice of Maryland agriculture.