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#5: February 21, 2020

This week in Annapolis Maryland Farm Bureau was more active in committee bill hearings as the Maryland General Assembly is now in high gear. Early in the week, MFB board of directors and staff had a great meeting with Governor Larry Hogan to thank him and his administration for supporting Maryland farmers and [discuss issues](#) they are facing . We want to thank the state FFA officers and students who came to Annapolis for Maryland FFA Day. We encourage any members interested in submitting written testimony or coming down to testify on any bills, to contact us, and we will help with that process. Maryland Farm Bureau staff is preparing for another busy week in Annapolis.

The following bills will be heard next week:

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

[SB 540](#) - Member-Regulated Cooperatives - Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020)

Senator Hershey, FIN at 1:00 PM in 3 East Miller

This bill establishes a process to allow cooperatives to become member-regulated. The intent of this bill is for a member-regulated cooperative to make decisions about electric rates and additional offerings to members, like broadband, by vote of its board of directors with input from members. The member-regulated cooperative would then not be required to get approval from the Public Service Commission on these matters. This bill specifically would allow Choptank Electric the ability to provide reliable broadband service to its members through it's existing 650 miles of middle-mile fiber. Reliable broadband is necessary for farmers to be competitive with new and emerging technologies.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We support legislation to allow utility cooperatives to apply for grants in order to extend broadband service to underserved rural areas.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB 540

[SB 597](#) / [HB 687](#) - Agriculture - Cost-Sharing Program - Fixed Natural Filter Practices

*Senator Young, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller
Delegate Stein, E&T at 1:00 PM in 250 HOB*

This bill starts by prohibiting the use of Maryland Ag Cost-Share funds (MACS) to fund a conservation practice that does not address a natural resource concern identified by NRCS or results in a conservation benefit. The bill authorizes both MACS and Bay Restoration funds to be made available for fixed natural filter practices in addition to cover crops and other NRCS approved best management practices. The bill removes the tons of soil saved or an amortization formula for determining the value of the BMP. Finally, the bill requires that multi-species cover crop mixes receive the same cost-share rate as a single species cover crop like rye.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We oppose taking productive agricultural land out of production for the purpose of meeting requirements for forest conservation, buffers, and mitigation measures. The state should conduct a survey to determine the loss of acreage of food producing land for these purposes.
- We favor voluntary incentive-based programs for establishing riparian buffers. Grass species or natural vegetation is preferred. When forest buffers are established provisions should be made for the future harvest of such trees without penalty.
- We support maintaining the cover crop portion of the Bay Restoration Fund at no less than 40% of all funds collected from septic users.

Maryland Farm Bureau Opposes SB 597 & HB 687

[SB 689](#) - Unlawful Taking of Oysters From Submerged Land Leases and Water Column Leases - Penalties

Senator Klausmeier, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller

This bill establishes a minimum fine of \$2,000 and maximum fine of \$3,000 for unlawfully taking oysters from a submerged land lease or water column lease. It also requires a person that is convicted to take a class on Maryland's Commercial Fishery Laws and, until that class is completed, the person's commercial fishing licenses will remain suspended.

Several aquaculture operations have significant theft annually and, in many cases, it is very tough to catch the thieves in the act. However, when they are caught, they get minimal fines and basically a slap on the hand. Stiffer penalties need to be put in place for both the person stealing oysters and the companies that knowingly purchase the stolen oysters.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB 689

[SB 964](#) / [HB 510](#) - Agriculture - Hemp Research and Production - Prohibitions

*Senator Hettleman, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller
Delegate Stein, E&T at 1:00 PM in 250 HOB*

This bill would remove the ability for the Maryland Department of Agriculture to issue a permit to grow hemp on a farm that is within 2 miles of a residential community of 10 or more residents. This restriction would be for both the hemp pilot program and the regular

farm program that was approved in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We support responsible and workable actions designed to permit and protect the privilege and rights of farmers, commercial fisherman, and aquaculturalists, to produce without undue or unreasonable restrictions, regulations or harassment from government or the private sector.
- We support the right of Maryland farmers to grow hemp as an agricultural crop.

Maryland Farm Bureau Opposes SB 964 & HB 510

SB 985 - Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Fund - Establishment

Senator Hester, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller

This bill establishes the office for the Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), as well as the Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Fund through the Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO). This bill would encourage units that procure food within the state to try and meet a 20% total dollar value goal of their contracts being made with certified local farm enterprises. Sponsors of this bill worked closely with Maryland Farm Bureau, MDA, MARBIDCO, and other stakeholders during the interim to make this bill beneficial for farmers in Maryland.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We encourage state and local agencies and institutions to purchase all types of Maryland agricultural commodities and products.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB 985

HB 574 - Agriculture - License to Produce Hemp - Limitation

Delegate Cardin, E&T at 1:00 PM in 250 HOB

This bill would prohibit the ability for the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to grant a license to produce hemp if the land is located within 25 feet of a property or properties with three or more individual residences, unless the person agrees to produce hemp in an indoor facility that exhausts its fumes to the outside with approved purifying apparatuses to adequately reduce all odors.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We support responsible and workable actions designed to permit and protect the privilege and rights of farmers, commercial fisherman, and aquaculturalists, to produce without undue or unreasonable restrictions, regulations or harassment from government or the private sector.
- We support actions to ensure that farmers are protected from undue liability and nuisance suits when carrying out normal production practices.

Maryland Farm Bureau Opposes HB 574

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

HB 856 - Unlawful Taking of Oysters From Submerged Land Leases and Water Column Leases - Penalties

Delegate Boyce, E&T at 1:00 PM in 250 HOB

See bill summary for SB 689 that's being heard on Tuesday.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB 856

Thursday, February 27, 2020

SB 650 - Vehicle Laws - Title Service Agents - Out-of-State Vehicle Titles and Registrations

Senator Young, JPR at 12:00 PM in 2 East Miller

This bill prohibits a title service agency from issuing an out-of-state title, registration, or registration plate for a vehicle or trailer that is required to be titled and registered in the state of Maryland.

Because of the high cost of tagging every farm trailer in Maryland, many farmers use out-of-state options like the one in Maine to not only tag a trailer for a considerably lower cost, but also for a significantly longer period of time. This bill would eliminate the ability for a farmer to use an out-of-state vehicle or trailer registration.

Maryland Farm Bureau Opposes SB 650

Friday, February 28, 2020

SB 707 - Task Force on the Tourism Industry in Maryland

Senator Carter, FIN at 12:00 PM in 3 East Miller

This bill establishes the task force on the tourism industry in Maryland to study challenges and opportunities within Maryland's tourism industry. The task force will review current funding, seek input from all sectors that contribute to tourism, including rural areas and agritourism, and make recommendations to the governor by January 1, 2020 regarding additional funding, training, and other resources needed to increase diversity and inclusion in the tourism industry.

Agritourism is a great way for farmers to gain more interest in their products while educating the public on farming and where their food comes from.

Amendment: We ask for a representative from the agritourism sector to be included on the task force.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB 707 with an Amendment

[HB 336](#) - Renewable Energy Development and Siting (REDS) – Evaluations and Tax and Fee Exemptions

The Speaker (By Request - Administration), ECM at 1:00 PM in 230 HOB

This bill would allow the Maryland Department of the Environment to waive the fees and requirements for remediation of brownfields, landfills and other contaminated properties if clean or renewable electrical generation sites are being created as long as they are not causing a disturbance to the soil that could cause a negative environmental impact.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We encourage that brownfields, and urban areas be utilized to assist with the clean energy mandate in lieu of prime and productive farmland.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB 336

Maryland Farm Bureau members are urged to contact their legislators and members of the relevant committees in support of Farm Bureau's positions on the bills listed above. To contact legislators and follow important bills, visit Maryland Farm Bureau's [action center](#) and select "key legislation".

Committees & Room Numbers:

Senate: Budget & Taxation (B&T), 3 West Miller; Education, Health & Environmental Affairs (EHEA), 2 West Miller; Finance (FIN), 3 East Miller; Judicial Proceedings (JPR), 2 East Miller

House: Appropriations (APP), 120 HOB; Economic Matters (ECM), 230 HOB; Environment & Transportation (E&T), 250 HOB; Health & Government Operations (HGO), 240 HOB; Judiciary (JUD), 100 HOB; Ways & Means (W&M), 130 HOB

In Other Ag News

Department to Phase Out Regular Use of Chlorpyrifos

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) announced that it will develop regulations to immediately phase out the regular use of chlorpyrifos, a pesticide used in agricultural production and turf management. [Read more here.](#)



Statement on Regulatory Phase Out of Chlorpyrifos



Maryland Farm Bureau urges the General Assembly to maintain the integrity of the current regulatory framework used to administer crop protectant usage by supporting Maryland Department of Agriculture's (MDA) proposal for a swift phase-out of chlorpyrifos, a pesticide used by farmers to mitigate the damage caused by harmful insects to crops. [Read more here.](#)

Farmers Join Forces for Sustainability and Responsible Climate Policy

Twenty-one farm and ranch groups representing millions of U.S. farmers and ranchers are launching Farmers for a Sustainable Future (FSF), a coalition committed to environmental and economic sustainability. This coalition will serve as a primary resource for lawmakers and policymakers as they consider climate policies. [Read more here.](#)



Partners Hold Seventh Annual Grain Bin Safety Contest



Each year, farmers and grain handlers risk their lives when they enter large grain bins to remove clumped or rotting grain while machinery is still running. Much like quicksand, flowing grain can bury a worker within seconds. Because these accidents have become all too common, Nationwide and Maryland Farm Bureau are launching the seventh annual [Nominate Your Fire Department Contest](#) in recognition of Grain Bin Safety Week. [Read more here.](#)

Trucking Forums Offered

There's still time to register for Maryland Farm Bureau's farm trucking forum in Wye Mills on March 20th. All Maryland Farm Bureau members, farmers, and truck drivers are invited to this forum to discuss the issues facing farmers on rural roads and state highways. [Register here.](#)



Sign-Ups for Young Farmers and Ranchers Conference 2020



You won't want to miss the AFBF 2020 YF&R Leadership Conference! There will be great speakers, breakout sessions and evening events to bring together Young Farmers & Ranchers volunteer leaders from across the United States. [Register today!](#)

Register for AFBF's Trust Engagement Training

The registration is open for the 2020 Farm Bureau Target: *Trust Engagement Training* hosted by the AFBF Promotion & Education Committee. This year they are heading to Fair Oaks Farms in northwest Indiana on April 2-4, 2020. Fair Oaks Farms has been recognized as the #1 agritourism destination in the



Midwest and you might want to bring the family so they can explore one or all of three exciting onsite adventures. [Register today!](#)

"SILO" Film Screening



Maryland Farm Bureau and Nationwide are sponsoring a free screening of the film "SILO". SILO is the first ever feature film about a grain entrapment. Inspired by true events, SILO follows a harrowing day in an American farm town. Disaster strikes when teenager Cody Rose is entrapped in a 50-foot-tall grain bin. The movie screening is on March 26, 2020 from 6-9 PM at North Caroline High School. [More here.](#)

Member Benefit: Case IH

The sight of a freshly planted field. The excitement of a newborn calf. We know how it feels to farm because Case IH equipment is built by farmers, for farmers. Use your Maryland Farm Bureau discount to receive \$300-\$500 off your next Case IH purchase. Find out more, by visiting [here.](#)

