Nutrient Management Funds Increased To Aid Maryland Farmers

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Substantial new funds sought by Governor Parris N. Glendening to share with farmers the cost of writing nutrient management plans were approved, and funds for the popular cover crop program were largely maintained during 2002 Maryland Legislative Session that grappled with budget limitations. Agricultural land preservation also gained continued support as part of Governor Glendening's multifaceted Smart Growth initiative.

"In a year when budgets are being scrutinized carefully and cut deeply, we are fortunate that Governor Glendening and the Maryland Legislature remains committed to helping farmers meet environmental requirements for improving water and soil quality, and to preserving farm land" said Maryland Agriculture Secretary Hagner R. Mister. "Given the difficult fiscal climate, the Governor and the General Assembly gave Maryland's providers of food and fiber a high priority."

Two primary themes of the state's agricultural programs are

to help farmers remain profitable as agricultural techniques, land use trends, and markets shift; and to protect the environment. Toward those ends, funding to share the cost of writing nutrient management plans with farmers topped the list of agriculture priorities. To help meet this need, the Governor sought, and the Legislature appropriated, a 350 percent increase to \$987,409. Without increased funding, many farmers would be unable to afford to develop the plans, which are required by the Water Quality Improvement Act of 1998 to help restore the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

A program that encourages farmers to plant winter cover crops to absorb excess nitrogen left over from primary crops was funded at \$2,398,000, 98 percent of the 2002 level. A bill also passed to repeal the scheduled sunset of the Manure Transport Pilot Program, which supports the transport of animal manure from farms with high nutrient levels to those that need those resources in the soil, and helps to find new uses for manure. Funding of \$250,000, will support continued operations in the most critical areas.

Maryland's Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, a nationally recognized program that buys development easements on agricultural land so that it remains in farming, was funded at \$15 million. This will allow the program to continue to work along with other Smart Growth preservation programs including GreenPrint and Rural Legacy, to preserve farms and other open space throughout the state.

Other Department of Agriculture bills that passed the General Assembly in support of farming, the environment and consumer services include:

• A \$2 per ton assessment on commercial horse feed will benefit the valuable and growing equine industry by raising funds

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for research, education and promotional projects as determined by the Maryland Horse Industry Board.

• The establishment of a State Agricultural Mediation Program provides private citizens and government agencies with a voluntary process to settle agricultural-related disputes in a non-adversarial setting and with assurances of full confidentiality. Currently functioning under USDA regulations, the program has been successful in resolving conflicts between farmers and lenders, suburban neighbors, and others.

• Beginning October 2002, regulations promulgated by the USDA pursuant to the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 will supersede state organic laws. Legislation was passed that will allow Maryland to take the steps necessary to comply with the federal regulations, including raising fees to cover inspection and certification costs of this rapidly growing industry and providing for confidentiality.

• A new law would revise the definition of shell eggs in the Maryland Egg Law to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to regulate eggs that have been modified by treatments used to control pathogens. These eggs fell outside of current legal language. By including them and providing for the imposition of civil penalties to improve compliance with the requirements of the Maryland Egg Law, the public will be further protected from the health risks associated with salmonella enteritidis contamination.

• A law authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture to apply for an administrative search warrant and enter property to test for infectious and contagious livestock and poultry diseases.

Lancaster County Conservancy Elects 4 New Board Members

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — The Lancaster Count Conservancy, a non-profit land trust and open space preservation organization, has elected four new directors to its board of directors.

Elected for a three-year term are: Jared E. Miller, tax manager with Miller and Miller CPAs; Jeff Phillips, has been a senior designer and illustrator with Dean Design/Marketing Group; Howard B. Mann, landscaper and farmer; and Thomas M. Showers, vice president/ commercial loan officer, Bank ot Lancaster County.

Current Conservancy board members elected to second terms include Katherine Pandelidis Granbois, Esq.; Margaret L. Veltre, CPA; and Lance Robson, P.E. The 2002 officers elected are:

The 2002 officers elected are: Kenneth J. Alexander, president; Margaret L. Veltre, vice president and treasurer; Dr. D. Eugene Rannels, vice president for land stewardship; Ronald L. Laughlin, vice president for land acquisition; and M. Brooke Minnich, secretary.

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Location (town, state)):
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Beef Industry Partnering To Meet Demand

DENVER, Colo. — Beef producers have teamed up with Taco Bell to help meet consumers' continuing demand for steak in restaurants. The focus of the partnership has been to promote the new Grilled Steak Taco, Steak Grilled Stuft Burrito, and most recently the new Taco Bell Steak Quesadilla.

During 2001, the beef checkoff-funded partnership with Taco Bell helped move more than 27 million pounds of steak through steak product promotions. The beef industry and Taco Bell anticipate the Steak Quesadilla promotion in 2002 will be equally successful as it has already displayed strong sales.

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"It's exciting to work with Taco Bell to help boost a new steak product, especially after our great successes together in 2001, said Bartow, Florida, beef producer Sid Sumner, vice chair of the Joint Industry Food Service Committee."Taco Bell is committed to satisfying consumer demand for steak products," said Jeff Fox, vice president of national marketing, Taco Bell Corp. "This is revealed in the current promotional slogan: 'Winners Eat Steak.' We are also letting people know that they can 'upgrade to steak' at Taco Bell. Steak is part of an important strategy for us in providing top

quality products for consumers on the go."

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As part of the partnership, the "Beef Check" logo appears on all promotional materials.

McDonald's, one of the beef industry's largest customers, has also stepped up to partner with cattlemen across the U.S. by taking steps to help ensure that U.S. beef remains safe.

Cattlemen have answered a challenge grant for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) research from the McDonald's Corp., with a \$600,000 beef checkoff investment. McDonald's has invested \$500.000 in this food safety partnership. The research will focus on the development and implementation of additional firewalls to prevent BSE from ever entering the U.S. cattle population."Food safety is everyone's business," said Ken Koziol, assistant vice president of McDonald's World-Wide Quality Assurance. "We have the world's safest food supply here in the U.S. and these grants are designed to help keep it that way. Funding the best and the brightest in our industry is not only worthwhile, it is the right thing to do on behalf of the consumer." "While a recent report from Harvard University said the U.S. was at low risk for a BSE outbreak, cattlemen and allied industries must move to strengthen the proven firewalls," said Bo Reagan, Ph.D., executive director of research for NCBA. "This grant is important for research initiatives that continue to keep America BSE free."



The focus for the 2002 partnership will be promoting the Taco Bell Steak Quesadilla. As part of the beef checkoff partnership program the Beef Check logo will appear on all Quesadilla promotional materials as it did with the Grilled Stuft Burrito. Nearly 6,300 Taco Bell restaurants nationwide will participate in the promotion this year.

