

SOUTHERN MARYLAND TOBACCO CROP CONVERSION PROGRAM

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FY 2004 (July 2003 - June 2004)

TOBACCO BUYOUT:

- Eighty six percent of the 1998 eligible tobacco has been taken out of production forever for human consumption as 877 growers will have taken Maryland's Tobacco Buyout by January 2005. This represents 7.80 million pounds of tobacco and 94% of the producers.
 - A sophisticated automated database was created and implemented in FY 2003 to assist in processing and tracking the Buyout contracts and annual renewal forms.
 - We have met and/or exceeded the target goals in our number one-priority program.

AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION:

- 1,454 acres have been directly preserved by the program in five counties of Southern Maryland in FY 2004, resulting in 5,763 acres cumulative over the three years of the program.
 - Leveraging: These program funds enabled the five counties to make additional offers for agricultural land preservation and has leveraged the counties to be place over 5,200 acres placed under agricultural land preservation in this fiscal year alone.
 - Two counties have used this incentive to renovate and improve two farmer's markets (see Farmers' Markets below).
 - We have met and/or exceeded the target goals in our number two-priority program.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT / INFRASTRUCTURE "What Next":

A market trends analysis of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Community in the first year of the Buyout identified the needs and opportunities. The needs specifically included *Marketing support and Leadership development*. Among the key opportunities identified were: *green products (horticulture / nursery), livestock, produce and value-added processing, tourism, grapes/wine, hay, and the equestrian industry*.

MARKETING SOUTHERN MARYLAND

- ***So. Maryland, So Good*** -- a direct marketing campaign launched September 2003. In addition to facilitating marketing links, this campaign is a branding campaign with the goal of adding value to locally produced or processed agricultural products through the use of an identifiable brand. It also directly links farms with retail and wholesale buyers (stores, restaurants, caterers, universities).
 - ***Promotional materials*** were developed for farmers, stores, food handlers, and restaurants to help the consumer identify truly Southern Maryland products. The materials have been used in advertisements by local grocers and restaurants, on menus, at farmers markets and stands in Southern Maryland, and Washington, DC. With these promotional materials in hand, we are working to increase the number of stores, restaurants and other institutions that buy and sell Southern Maryland farm products. Sixty farms participated in the first year of the program, and as a result of the spring and summer, 12 additional farms have joined. Farmers and stores are thrilled with the promotional materials, and several local businesses are using the logo in their newspaper ads, newsletters, and even on their menus.
 - ***Direct contact facilitation*** provides direct links between farms and retail and wholesale buyers (stores, restaurants, caterers, universities). In 2002-3, 46 stores were listed in the program, but by mid-2003, all of the corporate chain stores no longer purchased local products due to corporate changes in policy. Starting over again, as a result of the combined efforts of all parts of the program, in the local/metro area, 18 stores, 13 restaurants, 1 broker, and 2 universities are currently purchasing from local producers in the program, with new ones coming on board almost every week. One of the local county public school systems would like to participate, and we will be working to help facilitate this.

- ***A creative and assertive campaign advertises*** the logo in conjunction with a wide selection of farm/seafood products, and encourages and educates consumers to shop and dine at businesses that feature local products. Ads are run in area newspapers, magazines, and a regional radio station.
 - ***A website (www.somarylandsogood.com)*** has been developed to feature farm products, the farms, stores and restaurants and other institutions. The website also links directly to the farms and other participants and will enable direct communication. Under development now, the site will include upcoming events, what's in season, grant opportunities, and a special section for kids and teachers. This strategic merging will also provide a seamless connection between the directory and the So. Maryland, So Good campaign in consumers' eyes.
 - ***Two media events*** were held (Fall 2003 and Spring 2004) to showcase the program and educate and excite consumers. More such events are envisioned across the region to showcase the broad array of quality products available and to educate the public about the importance of supporting local farms.
 - The campaign was officially launched in September, 2003, in Calvert County. The event was primarily informative, and targeted elected officials and agency representatives. Several news articles ensued, and requests from the public and farmers for more information and how to participate, and where to buy farm products.
 - The **Spring** event, held at a Charles County Agritourism farm was particularly successful resulting in significant media interest. Over 70 people attended with wide representation, from 30 area farms including organic, specialty flower, and bedding plant producers, meat & poultry producers, seafood, and agritourism farms. The event also drew elected officials and representatives from tourism, economic development, and cooperative extension. The notable and ongoing results generated full-page editorials and numerous follow-up articles in 3 local newspapers, several new restaurants wishing to join the program, and over 20 immediate calls from the public in requesting the Harvest Directory. In addition to the new introductions, the event successfully partnered farms with restaurants seeking producers of high quality products for their menus.
 - ***Southern Maryland Harvest Directory*** – From Arugula and Alpacas to Zinnias and beyond, this Guide leads customers to some of the finest and freshest farm products the region has to offer. The Guide, first developed in late 2002, was updated for 2004 and lists farms, products, businesses, and services throughout Southern Maryland. It is widely distributed to tourist centers, farmers' markets, fairs, chambers of commerce, libraries, and other locales, and the nearby metro areas. The Directory also includes an array of services offered by the farms, including Agritourism, holiday and special events, and provides a sample list of restaurants that buy and promote local products, as well as farm service businesses and agencies. Maps of each county are included, along with descriptions of the farms and markets where products can be found as well as contact information. Farmers have expressed great appreciation for the Directory. Farmers report increased calls and sales as a result of being listed, and have said it brought them more business directly to their farms than anything else to date.
 - A total of 143 farms were listed by April '04 (Anne Arundel: 22, Calvert: 41, Charles: 32, Prince George's: 20, St. Mary's: 28). As new farms come in, they will be included in the on-line virtual farm guide once the new database is completed.
 - ***A Directory Website*** was developed (www.southernmarylandharvest.com) to periodically list the directory as a "virtual farmers market". This website will be combined with www.somarylandsogood.com in the fall of 2004 so that information will be timely and can be more easily updated.
- ***Farmers Markets -- Promotional advertising*** -- increased Market sales for over 179 Southern Maryland growers for 14 Farmers' Markets in the five counties. Sales in 2002 from these markets averaged \$1.6 million.
 - ***Southern Maryland Regional Farmers Wholesale Market -- The region's only wholesale*** produce and plant auction market for Southern Maryland (Cheltenham) continues to be supported by program funds and a grant from MDA. This wholesale market supports over 200 Southern Maryland farmers and buyers and brings in annual sales of \$450,000 to regional farmers.

- **Calvert Country Market – An indoor, year-round farmers’ market** in Calvert County was established with the support of program funds. Much along the lines of our envisioned “Everything Southern Maryland”, this market provides permanent, conditioned space for Southern Maryland farmers and their goods. The market features fresh produce, seafood, cut flowers, crafts, a bakery, ice creamery and deli. Twenty- two vendors currently use the market. Funds or services in-kind are matched on a one-to-one basis by Calvert County.
- **St. Mary’s Northern Farmers’ Market -- predominantly features Amish and Mennonite** farmers and is exceedingly popular for consumers and tourists. Revenues from this market alone exceeded \$600,000 in 2003. The market site is in great need of expansion as it is rapidly outgrowing the current capacity. Funds have been encumbered to assist this expansion. Funds or in-kind services are matched, one-to-one, by St. Mary’s County. This market features approximately 17 vendors and begins in early May. This six-day market is unique in that operates almost daily throughout the summer. On Saturday attendance averages well over 500 visitors.

AGRITOURISM

- **Celebrate the Bounty of our Lands and Waterways – Southern Maryland Agritourism Brochure** – a special brochure was developed to showcase farms, and heritage sites, and events that highlight the bounty of Southern Maryland’s lands and waterways. The brochure was printed in May 2004. This brochure has proven to be immensely popular, and thousands of copies have been requested. An Agritourism Field Day is planned for August 2004, followed by a hands-on field trip for area farmers to visit successful grassroots Agritourism destinations in North Carolina later in the year.
 - A total of 84 agri-tourism farms, business and events featuring agriculture and natural resources are listed. Additionally, a map of 15 area farmers’ markets with directions and contact information is included.

AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- **Southern Maryland Agri-Business Park and Regional Processing Kitchen (Park)** -- Program Description: With the advent of the Maryland Tobacco Buyout, the need to diversify and increase income from Southern Maryland (SMD) farms is stronger now than ever before. The vision of the Park was to serve as a launching pad for beginning and existing SMD businesses, as well as an attractant for larger agricultural businesses into the region. The Park could provide services to the community such as education, information and training on processing, manufacturing, marketing, and business management, as well as initial test marketing and distribution. Target opportunities include expand of the existing wholesale market (see above), a value-added manufacturing center, and a distribution center for horticultural products. A study conducted through the Maryland Food Center Authority in late 2003/ early 2004 was inconclusive, but stated that the current site of the Cheltenham Market was unsuitable for the project because of its limited acreage and lack of water and sewage. Other sites are currently being investigated along Rt. 301 in Prince George’s, with the vision of a statewide multi-purpose agri-business park. Discussions with the State have been initiated.
- **Grape and Wine Potential in Southern Maryland** -- The potential for grapes and wine processing in Southern Maryland is high, but as yet, undeveloped. Interest in the region continues to expand. An extension of a previous grant was awarded to the Southern Maryland Cooperative Extension for continued research on grape varieties, production practices, and wine processing in SMD. The research involves on-farm trials, and research on the Cooperative Extension Research Station in Upper Marlboro. Twenty-seven varieties have been evaluated to date and several meetings for area growers have been held.
- **Livestock Processing, Marketing, and Value-Added Opportunities** -- Livestock production is on the rise in Southern Maryland as many farmers transition away from tobacco. There is no current livestock slaughter or processing facility in Southern Maryland for retail sales of meat products. Farmers now ship live animals to auctions or houses in Baltimore, Westminster, or Virginia. Because of this lack of infrastructure, most farmers say it is not cost-effective to consider retail sales of value-added meat. In March 2004, a meeting

was held with regional farmers in which the call for a local slaughter/ processing facility was strongly brought forth. We are actively pursuing the possibilities with the farm community and other state and federal agencies. A value-added livestock and meat-processing field day and workshop are planned for October 2004.

- **Regional Butcher Shop** – Program funds were used to complete the establishment of a butcher in the Calvert County Farmers’ Market. Currently, the butcher buys beef from regional livestock producers, but due to the lack of a near-by processing facility, local pork is no longer available. Considering that stuffed ham is one of the most famous Southern Maryland holiday dishes, clearly this presents additional incentive for a local facility.
- **Nursery Opportunities** – Opportunities with Bell Nursery (a Maryland business, based on a growers’ network) have been considered as a possibility for Southern Maryland’s many former tobacco greenhouses. Several Bell nursery growers are currently in Southern Maryland, but interest from Bell in further expansion appears to be limited at this time. We will continue to explore nursery options, as this is one of our key areas of opportunity.
- **Maryland Sand and Gravel** – Requested by the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the Commission oversaw a study for the State on sand and gravel operations.

LEADERSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Southern Maryland Farm Viability Enhancement Grant Program:** provides business planning assistance to farmers on strategies to diversify operations, add value to farm products and/or services, and gain better market access. Thirteen farms have developed or are developing business plans. Eight of these farms joined in 2002 (including five tornado-hit farms), three in 2003, and two in 2004. Funds for the special session of the tornado-hit farms in 2002 were matched by Charles County. The last round of grants were targeted at the Greenhouse/nursery industry, Grapes/wineries, Agritourism, and Value-added processing. The farms which received funds or are developing business plans are engaged in the following activities:
- **New grants:**
 - Greenhouse production for bedding plants and fall flowers and crops (2004)
 - Local winery business (2004)
 - Wetland plant species – production for wetlands restoration programs (2003)
 - Extended-Season fruits and vegetables through Greenhouse production (2003)
 - Expanded Nursery stock and bedding plants through Greenhouse production (2003)

Previous grants

- Agri-tourism, value-added apple products, and retail sales on-farm (2002)
- Nursery plants, high value produce, and livestock for value-added beef (2002)
- Early season bramble berries and expanded marketing strategies (hydroponics) (2002)
- Cow-calf operations (victim of the spring 2002 tornado) (2002)
- Livestock for Value-added beef (tornado victim) (2002)
- Nursery plants, high value produce, higher value grain production (tornado victim) (2002)
- Educational, diverse, innovative farm for school children (tornado victim) (2002)
- Grain and produce production and improved storage (tornado victim) (2002)

EDUCATION

- **Leadership and Entrepreneurial Development and Education**

Advanced Level Education:

LEAD Agriculture Maryland: Scholarships for Southern Maryland participants to attend the LEAD Agriculture Maryland course are on going. One new applicant sponsored in 2003-4 is currently engaged in specialized oyster production. (Partially funded through a separate grant.)

Farmer Seminars/Workshops: Two seminars were co-sponsored: Livestock Grazing seminar (Calvert, 2003) and a Nursery workshop (Charles, Feb. 2004). Both were well attended, and follow-up workshops are planned for Fall 2004.

Our Farms, Our Future: Sixty of Southern Maryland's most successful farms participated in a daylong event in March, 2004. The event was designed to energize, motivate, and creatively build a series of action plans for the future of Southern Maryland's agriculture. Farms actively working in the hay, livestock, nursery, Agritourism (including grape and wineries), wholesale produce, and direct-marketing sectors were invited. Local food was featured, and the groups were divided by sector and encouraged to "think outside of the box". Each group developed a series of recommendations and actions, both personally, and for the Commission (see attached report). The group hopes to come back together in the late fall or winter 2004-5 to report on follow-up activities. It is envisioned that this could become an annual event for the farmers of Southern Maryland.

Elementary and Teen Education:

Kids Cook – This activity, although *more challenging than anticipated* to start due to the Federal "Leave No Child Behind" Educational Mandate fits very well into the stated goals of the current Maryland Executive Administration of Education and Health. By tying two themes together in unique ways to excite and interest children and their families about the connection between tasty foods, nutrition, long-term health benefits and the support of local agriculture, we hope to have a lasting impact on health, education and the farm economy. The program is designed to educate children and their families about the importance of supporting the local farm economy and the nutritional value of consuming fresh, local farm goods. During these unique field trips, children learn about farming, the importance of supporting local farms and related businesses, and get to prepare and taste food they pick or purchase with chefs. In this initial pilot project, two elementary school classes participated in trips to farms and markets, and at least 94 children and adults participated in winter holiday program held at a regional library, featuring the natural bounty of local farms. One class visited an organic farm, learning earth science and land use history, the second class visited one-on-one with Amish farmers at a market and Amish bakery, learning about agriculture and a culture quite different from the mainstream. With local food professionals, both classes also prepared and tasted the farm products they'd picked or purchased, thus learning that fresh food is not only good for you, but can also be exciting and tasty. Children were then given coupons to encourage their families to buy at local farmers markets and stands. (Partially funded through a separate grant).

Curriculum Development: The Kids Cook project also developed new curriculum designed to meet Maryland state standards incorporating agriculture and the concepts of buying local (4th grade level). (Partially funded through a separate grant).

Cornelia and the Farm Band Coloring Book -- A design competition was conducted throughout the region in the winter of 2004 for an agricultural mascot. Approximately 250 students responded with so many creative designs that a coloring book was developed to encourage children and their families to support the local farm economy in a fun and humorous manner. The coloring book uses the student-inspired designs to teach subtle messages about the diversity of local farm products and services available in Southern Maryland, and gives the parents a message to "buy local".

The coloring book was published in early summer of 2004, and by late summer farms, local businesses and civic groups that support local farmers, have requested thousands of copies. The theme has been picked up by local educational newspapers, and will be distributed to all schools in the region in the fall of 2004. It is also hoped that the book will be widely used throughout the school systems this coming school year.

Mobile Science Agricultural Laboratories: 10 weeks of agricultural education to children in K-12 was sponsored through the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation's mobile science laboratories. Weeklong sessions in Agricultural Products, Aquatics, and Biotechnology were offered to eight schools in the region. (Funded through a separate grant.)

Take Me Out to the Ballgame: A creative, highly entertaining and informative video, highlighting Maryland's top agricultural products, was sponsored through funds to the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation. The video highlights agriculture's importance in the daily lives of all Marylanders and became available for elementary school teachers in Fall 2003. (Funded through a separate grant.)

4-H: Program funds sponsored a regional horticulture workshop for youths.

Public Education -- So. Maryland So Good: All of the materials that have been developed regarding the program (see all of the above) are being continuously displayed at fairs, local community events, 4-H shows and more throughout the spring and summer of 2004. A special display is being created for the five county fairs in 2004 that will include attractions for adults and children, to actively promote Southern Maryland's agriculture.

For more information regarding this program, please contact the following:

Dr. Christine L. Bergmark, Director, or Cia Morey, Administrator
Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
P.O. Box 745, Hughesville, MD, 20637
Telephone: 301-274-1922 FAX: 301-274-1924
[email: cbergmark@tccsmd.org](mailto:cbergmark@tccsmd.org)
web: www.somarylandsofgood.com
Street Address: 15045 Burnt Store Road, Hughesville, MD