

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FY 2002 (July 2001-June 2002)

Goal 1. Transition Maryland growers away from tobacco production for human consumption

- 79% eligible tobacco taken out of production forever (6.412 million pounds).
- 654 growers (66%) have signed contracts.
- Covenants placed on land prohibition tobacco production for human consumption for 10 years.
- As of January '03: 6.8 million pounds (83%) and 711 growers (71%).

Goal 2. Assist farmers and businesses to diversify and develop market-driven agricultural enterprises

Farmers and agri-businesses diversified and on-farm and related income increased

- SMD Farm Viability Enhancement Grant Program underway.
 - Provides expert outside business and agricultural planning assistance to farmers on strategies to diversify operations, add value to farm products and/or services, gain better market access.
 - 4 farms developing plans currently.
 - 5 additional tornado victim farms through special session matched by Charles County Commissioners.
 - Partnership with the Southern Maryland Small Business Development Center.
- Agricultural business / kitchen incubator concept underway.
 - Large enough to attract businesses that could underwrite the costs of operation.
 - Space for small / mid-scale producers to add value (e.g.: fresh pack, salsa).
 - Co-packer to develop a line of SMD products using SMD produce, raw goods.
 - Business planning and technical assistance for producers.
 - Test marketing, and initial marketing distribution.
 - Partnership with the Maryland Food Center Authority.
- Fifteen grants have been awarded since FY'01. Examples and how presented:
 - Innovative, state-of-the-art hydroponic system enabling top dollar for early season raspberries (Trade Fair).
 - Cut flower processing / storage space from converted tobacco stripping room enhanced market sales by storing flowers for as much as two weeks (farm tour, Trade Fair).
 - Grape production and financing opportunities (research, seminars, field tours, workshops, Trade fair).
 - Ethnic vegetable production and marketing for SMD (research, farm tours, Trade Fair).
 - Northern Neck of Virginia educational farmer trip to visit model produce wholesale produce distribution center operated by a farmers' association, observe a successful agrotourism and produce operation, a successful beef operation, and a large vineyard and nursery.
- Trade Fair and Educational Showcase entitled "Opportunities for Profit" provided information on farm diversification and successful examples of marketing niches, attracted over 320 farmers.
 - Several enterprises evolved (e.g.: grower interest supporting a soy-processing value-added /Heartland Fields).
 - Participants and exhibitors gave considerable positive feedback. Many asked that it be repeated in the future.
- Agrotourism introductory seminar held.

Targeted marketing programs

- Everything Southern Maryland combined market, kitchen, restaurant feasibility study conducted.
- SMD Farm Product and Service Directory developed.
 - Targeted for consumers and farm community.
 - Based on voluntary responses to a survey sent 5000 farmers.
 - Lists products offered and array of services offered by farms and business community.
 - E.g.: agrotourism, holiday events, cancer respite, sample list of restaurants.
 - Maps of each county, descriptions of farms and markets, contact information.
 - Printed Fall 2002, hard copies distributed, also to be available at website: www.tccsmd.org
- Southern Maryland Harvest Fresh Produce marketing program.
 - Facilitates farmers selling directly to grocery stores in SMD.
 - 60 farmers and 46 stores participating in pilot phase.
- Promotional advertising for 15 Farmers' Markets in SMD in five counties (over 221 SMD growers).
- Supported revitalization of SMD wholesale produce and plant auction market (Cheltenham).
 - Over 200 SMD farmers and buyers.

Information and education to enable the agricultural community to diversify farm and related operations

- See above.
- Financial Fair held to provide information to growers on investment opportunities, tax responsibilities pertaining to the Buyout, and estate planning.
- Farmers were also invited to attend the Mid-Atlantic Direct Marketing Association meeting in Pennsylvania.
- State agricultural leaders educated on ag. issues in SMD (LEAD Ag, MD- co-sponsored 3-day symposium).
- Scholarships for two SMD agricultural leaders, and partial funds for a third participant in LEAD Ag, MD.
- Support for Ag in the Classrooms in SMD – Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation
- Support 4-H clubs in four counties in traditional agricultural activities.
 - Hands-on educational learning through agriculturally related learning laboratory kits.
 - Develop career awareness for older 4-H teens about careers in agricultural industry.
- “Transitions” newsletter directly mailed to over 1500 farmers in SMD.
 - Features articles on alternative to tobacco (e.g.: grapes, medicinal herbs, nurseries, berries), program updates and opportunities, and upcoming events of interest.
- Mapping of the tobacco lands underway.
- A small resource library is beginning to be compiled with information on marketing and alternatives to tobacco production.

Goal 3. To promote and support agricultural land preservation in Southern Maryland.

Agricultural Land Preservation

- Over 2,209 acres have been directly preserved.