



**Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC)**

**Market Analysis and Strategic Plan**

**2018-2028**

*Updated Draft – 10/11/18*

## Executive Summary

The region's agricultural economy had traditionally been based on a single crop (tobacco), it was clear that the decline of tobacco in the late 1990s would precipitate a substantial loss of the farmland in the area. To mitigate this loss, the Tobacco Buyout program was conceived in 2000, and SMADC was established to administer the buyout and help local farms transition to a non-tobacco-based model.

Maryland was one of 46 states to win the "Master Settlement Agreement" with the major tobacco companies in 1998. Maryland put its 25 year, \$4.5 - \$9 billion share of the settlement into a "Cigarette Restitution Fund," of which while it is ongoing, five percent goes to support Southern Maryland's Regional Strategy for Agriculture, with an emphasis on finding alternatives to tobacco. The funds are annually appropriated through the Maryland Department of Agriculture to the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland for SMADC programs. SMADC also seeks to secure outside funding through grants and its marketing programs, to provide further potential opportunities.

Since 2001, and the successful transition away from tobacco, new industries, agriculture models, and products have emerged and continue to evolve in Southern Maryland. SMADC continues to provide support, training, and guidance to those farmers that are diversifying their products and moving toward a market-driven and multi-commodity business model. In addition to helping individual farms transition away from tobacco, SMADC has also helped to shape an emerging new model of farming by supporting new farm products likely to be profitable in the region, and the infrastructure needed to facilitate them.

**Mission:** SMADC nurtures farms, farmers, and agribusinesses to foster positive agricultural economic benefits to the community.

**Goal 1:** Provide the resources, infrastructure and advocacy needed for market-driven farms and agribusinesses to thrive and be profitable

**Goal 2:** Expand the region's overall agricultural economic development

**Goal 3:** Preserve Southern Maryland farmland

**Goal 4:** Assure long-term viability of SMADC as a driving force of the regional agricultural economy

**Market situation:** A diverse range of agricultural products creates a stronger model of farming than one based on a single crop, and SMADC continues to facilitate these new and existing markets.

**Positive trends that impact agriculture in this region.** Southern Maryland farms are well positioned to take advantage of the continuing demand for the “buy local” philosophy. It’s important for SMADC to leverage these factors when considering marketing strategies, etc.

**Customer situation:** SMADC’s customers are farmers in the Southern Maryland region, and their consumers. SMADC is equipped with current technology, utilizing social media and interactive websites to provide farmers timely information and has continued outreach initiatives in place to keep the community informed of trends and opportunities in the agricultural community.–

**Product situation:** SMADC’s products include support and services for farms, farmers, and agribusinesses. This includes marketing, training, grants, navigating through state and federal regulations, exposing Southern Maryland farms to new markets, and more. Additionally, SMADC creates and distributes agriculture-related print guides, materials, and websites designed to inform the public about Southern Maryland farms.

One of SMADC’s major contributions to the region’s agricultural community has been to incubate building infrastructure to support the growth of ag industries, examples being the wine, dairy, and meat production. SMADC must leverage our knowledge in regulations with financial support of emerging businesses to increase on farm income and create jobs.

**Competition situation:** SMADC does not have competition in the traditional sense that retail businesses do, however, SMADC competes annually with other state agencies to receive State funds. SMADC must demonstrate its value to the farming community and analyze how SMADC complements other agencies’ missions. It is necessary to continually assess areas where the support and services SMADC offers can dovetail with offerings of other agencies and avoid overlap or redundancy.

**Partners:** SMADC partners with many other agriculture and rural development organizations and businesses in Maryland, such as:

College of Southern Maryland

Department of Natural Resources

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

F3 Tech Accelerator Program

Future Harvest Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture

Grow & Fortify

University of Maryland’s Institute of Applied Agriculture

MARBIDCO

Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation

Maryland Department of Agriculture and Maryland’s Best

Maryland Department of Commerce

Maryland Farm Bureau

Patuxent Environmental & Aquatic Research Laboratory (PEARL)

Rural Maryland Council

Southern Maryland Economic Development Offices

Southern Maryland Soil Conservation Districts

University of Maryland Extension (UME)

**Strengths/Challenges**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diverse board members</li><li>• Experienced, knowledgeable and dedicated staff</li><li>• Strong marketing and outreach presence</li><li>• Responsive to community needs</li><li>• Regional branding</li><li>• Partnerships with local, regional, and state agricultural entities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SMADC serves five counties but it is a division of the Tri-County Council which represents three counties</li><li>• SMADC Funding is uncertain after 2025</li><li>• Programs are multiplying and expanding faster than staff can support</li><li>• SMADC needs a permanent regional agricultural representative on the TCC Board</li></ul>

## Strategic Goals and Objectives

### Goal 1: Provide the resources, infrastructure and advocacy needed for market-driven farms and agribusinesses to thrive and be profitable

#### Objective 1.1: Enhance access to programs and resources

*Strategy 1.1A: Increase opportunities for agricultural education*

Initiative: Provide additional resources for ag classroom training (IAA and CSM)

Initiative: Provide scholarships/sponsorships for farmers to help off-set costs

*Strategy 1.1B: Expand agricultural outreach*

Initiative: Maintain/expand FarmLINK

Initiative: Maintain/expand Mentor Match Program

Initiative: Continue regional agricultural youth programs

**Strategy 1.1 Metric:** *Provide a minimum of 4 educational outreach events a year with a cumulative attendance of 100 people*

#### Objective 1.2: Increase consumer preference for the region's farm products

*Strategy 1.2A: Expand promotion of Southern Maryland farm products to consumers*

Initiative: Develop and distribute marketing and promotional materials to consumers

Initiative: Maintain digital platforms and initiatives for consumers

*Strategy 1.2B: Engage directly with consumers*

Initiative: Support local agricultural promotional events

**Strategy 1.2 Metric:** *Engage at least 1 million consumers annually*

#### Objective 1.3: Increase distribution of local farm products

*Strategy 1.3A: Create regional agricultural projects to increase distribution of Southern Maryland farm products.*

Initiative: Enhance Southern Maryland farm profitability by enabling Southern Maryland farm products greater entry to larger wholesale and retail markets

Initiative: Increase Southern Maryland's capacity to meet consumer demand for locally produced foods

Initiative: Enable Southern Maryland businesses to expand the use of local farm products

**Strategy 1.3 Metric:** *Create and/or support 5 regional agricultural projects*

*Strategy 1.3B: Expand the Southern Maryland Meats and Seafood Program*

Initiative: Provide USDA certified processing

Initiative: Develop a high-quality line of cut and wrap and valued-added meat products, including niche products

Initiative: Provide marketing and training relevant to the Southern Maryland Meats Program

**Strategy 1.3 Metric:** *Increase Southern Maryland Meats membership by 5% within 10 years*

#### Objective 1.4: Assist in navigating and streamlining the regulatory process for farms

*Strategy 1.4A: Expand opportunities for on-farm processing, value-added production/services*

Initiative: Provide regulatory assistance on all aspects of food and farm production/services (i.e. zoning, permitting, licensing, plan development)

Initiative: Continue to offer Acidified Foods Scholarships as funding is available

**Strategy 1.4 Metric:** Offer a minimum of one regulatory workshop per year in partnership with state and local organizations

## **Goal 2: Expand region's overall agricultural economic development**

### **Objective 2.1: Create new economic opportunities for the Southern Maryland region**

*Strategy 2.1A: Identify key emerging market opportunities most profitable for all local farms*

Initiative: Help farms identify value-added products, services, retail and wholesale opportunities

Initiative: Support ongoing research to identify and incubate new emerging products and trends

*Strategy 2.1 B: Channel resources toward new products*

Initiative: Partner with MARBIDCO to create financing options and grant for farms

Initiative: Provide funding towards grants, workshops and training

*Strategy 2.1C: Continue to evaluate and promote emerging markets for all local farms.*

Initiative: Develop and distribute farm guides

**Strategy 2.1 Metric:** Assist 100 producers with business creation and/or expansion within 10 years

## **Goal 3: Preserve Southern Maryland farmland**

### **Objective 3.1: Fund farmland preservation**

*Strategy 3.1A: Promote incentives for landowners to put land under state and/or local land preservation programs*

Initiative: Match county and state funds for farmland preservation programs  
prioritizing former tobacco land

*Strategy 3.1B: Explore innovative farmland preservation initiatives (land trusts, private partners)*

Initiative: Explore land trusts, private partners

**Strategy 3.1 Metric:** Preserve 35,000 acres of farmland in the 5 county region with direct SMADC funds within 10 years

## **Goal 4: Assure long-term viability of SMADC as a driving force of the regional agricultural economy**

### **Objective 4.1: Identify diverse funding streams for SMADC**

*Strategy 4.1A: Devise plan to generate self-sustaining revenue*

Initiative: Pursue external grants as well as external revenue generating activities

Initiative: Explore creating an ancillary SMADC entity that can receive donations and raised funds

**Strategy 4.1 Metric:** Secure minimum annual funding of \$950,000 for operating and programmatic support and \$1,000,000 for farmland preservation

### **Objective 4.2: Evolve SMADC programs and brands to meet anticipated future needs**

*Strategy 4.2A: Strengthen existing program brands such as Southern Maryland Meats, Buy Local Challenge, Trails, and Maryland FarmLINK*

## MEASURING OUTCOMES FOR THE SMADC STRATEGIC PLAN

Metrics have been identified for each of the goals listed above.

**Goal 1:** Provide the resources and infrastructure needed for market-driven farms to thrive and be profitable

**Objective 1.1:** Enhance access to programs and resources

**Strategy 1.1 Metric:** Provide 4 workshops a year with a cumulative attendance of 100 people

**Objective 1.2:** Increase consumer preference for the region's farm products

**Strategy 1.2 Metric:** Engage at least 1 million consumers annually

**Objective 1.3: Increase distribution of local farm products**

**Strategy 1.3 Metric:** Create and/or support 5 regional agricultural projects

**Strategy 1.3 Metric:** Increase Southern Maryland Meats membership by 5%

**Objective 1.4: Assist in navigating and streamlining the regulatory process for farms**

**Strategy 1.4 Metric:** Offer a minimum of one regulatory workshop per year in partnership with state and local organizations

**Goal 2:** Expand region's overall agricultural economic development

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