

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**  
**SOUTHERN MARYLAND**  
**AGRICULTURAL & AQUACULTURAL ANALYSIS**

**REQUEST BY:**

SOUTHERN MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (SMADC)  
A DIVISION OF THE TRI-COUNTY COUNCIL FOR SOUTHERN MARYLAND (TCCSMD)

15045 BURNT STORE ROAD  
HUGHESVILLE, MD 20637

**August 2023**



SMADC is a division of the  
TRI-COUNTY COUNCIL  
for SOUTHERN MARYLAND



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## **About Us**

SMADC's purpose is to support farms, farmers, and the future of agriculture in Southern Maryland and beyond. Our mission is to cultivate a dynamic food system that is profitable for farmers and producers, empowering for communities, and environmentally sound.

We believe in developing infrastructure that supports regional food systems where all members of the community can thrive. Our approach is rooted in a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship that creates economic opportunities for farmers and strengthens the health of our communities. We are dedicated to cultivating a food system that is delicious and empowering, one that recognizes the power of agriculture to bring people together and to nourish both body and soul.

### **SMADC Contact Manager for this Proposal:**

Shelby Watson-Hampton

SMADC Director

#240-304-8535

[swatsonhampton@smadc.com](mailto:swatsonhampton@smadc.com)

### **Southern Maryland Project Partners:**

Calvert County Department of Economic Development

Charles County Department of Economic Development

St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development

## **OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this study is to support the agricultural and aquaculture value chain in the Southern Maryland region of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties by identifying potential gaps and needs assessment in the regional food supply chain.

The study should focus on identifying the food supply chain from Southern Maryland farms to consumers and highlighting processing, aggregation, and/or distribution challenges to achieving a fully functioning supply chain. The final report should provide actionable recommendations for development and investment to support the growth of agriculture and aquaculture in St. Mary's, Calvert, and Charles counties, with a specific focus on improving the regional supply chain.



## **BACKGROUND**

The history of agriculture and aquaculture in Southern Maryland spans centuries, reflecting the region's rich natural resources and proximity to the Chesapeake Bay. The area's fertile lands and abundant waterways have played a vital role in shaping the local economy and culture. Over the past 50 years, significant changes have occurred in the agricultural and aquacultural sectors, driven by technological advancements, environmental concerns, and shifting market demands. Traditionally, Southern Maryland's agriculture focused on cash crops such as tobacco, corn, and wheat, which sustained the region for several centuries.

However, in the late 20th century, the tobacco industry faced decline due to health concerns and a decrease in federal support, leading farmers to seek alternative crops and diversify their agricultural practices. One of the most notable changes in Southern Maryland's agriculture has been the rise of specialty crops and niche markets. Many farmers have transitioned to growing fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants, capitalizing on the increasing demand for locally sourced, fresh produce. The region has seen a growth in farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and agritourism, as consumers increasingly prioritize sustainable and locally grown products.

Aquaculture, too, has undergone transformative changes over the past five decades. With the Chesapeake Bay's delicate ecosystem under pressure, traditional fishing practices faced sustainability challenges. To address this, aquaculture emerged as a viable and eco-friendly alternative. Oyster farming has become particularly successful in the region. By cultivating oysters in controlled environments, oyster farms can reduce the strain on wild oyster populations while meeting the market demand for this prized seafood.

The shift towards sustainable practices has also been crucial. Conservation organizations and government initiatives have encouraged the adoption of best management practices to reduce nutrient runoff into Chesapeake Bay, thereby mitigating its environmental impact.

In conclusion, the history of agriculture and aquaculture in Southern Maryland has witnessed remarkable changes over the past 50 years. From traditional tobacco farming to the rise of niche markets and sustainable practices, the region's agricultural landscape has evolved to meet the demands of a changing world, and this study will help determine what steps are needed next to continue its evolution and ensure a vibrant, environmentally sound, and economically robust agricultural and aquaculture industry.

### **GAP ANALYSIS**

Grant funding not to exceed \$75,000 has been made available to pay for the gap analysis. A complete budget with justification is required for all applicants.

### **BENCHMARKS**

Comprehensive Data Collection: The study should begin with a review of the current state of agriculture and aquaculture in the three counties. This should include existing farming and aquaculture practices, the size and scale of operations, available resources (land, water, labor), economic measurements, and market trends.

Stakeholder Engagement: It is recommended that the writer engage with farmers, aquaculture farmers, local communities, government agencies, environmental organizations, and other

relevant stakeholders to understand their needs, concerns, and aspirations for the agriculture and aquaculture sectors.

Infrastructure Assessment: Identify the existing infrastructure (e.g., transportation, irrigation, processing facilities, research institutions) that supports agriculture and aquaculture in the region. Evaluate its adequacy, efficiency, and potential for improvement to meet the envisioned vibrant and economically strong agricultural economy.

Market Analysis: Conduct a market analysis to identify potential growth areas for both agriculture and aquaculture in traditional areas, as well as in expanded markets such as institutional and restaurant sales.

Funding and Financial Support: Explore funding opportunities and financial support mechanisms to assist farmers and aquaculture farmers in expanding their operations.

### **Project Requirements:**

The awardee must report to the project administrator quarterly (4 times total) during the 12 months of the project for progress updates. Meetings will be held virtually and will not last more than one hour.

It is recommended that the awardee hold 2 stakeholder meetings to engage with industry representatives to receive feedback, suggestions, and concerns. Meetings must be held in a hybrid format with both in-person/call in capabilities to provide the most access to stakeholders and will need to be one hour at minimum. The stakeholder meetings should include the following groups:

- Farmers & Watermen
- Supply Chain Providers
- Applicable Gov/Non-Profit/Commodity group

### **Stakeholders List**

The list of stakeholders who may be contacted for their expertise should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- The Maryland Watermen's Assoc.
- Calvert County Watermen's Assoc.
- St. Mary's County Watermen's Assoc.

- Charles County Watermen's Assoc.
- Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources
- Maryland Commerce Dept.
- Maryland Dept. of Agriculture
- The MD Farm Bureau
- The Calvert County Farm Bureau
- The Charles County Farm Bureau
- The St. Mary's County Farm Bureau
- Future Harvest
- The Southern Maryland Economic Development Association
- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
- University of Maryland Extension Regional Offices
- Soil Conservation District Regional Offices
- Local food system end users and retailers
  - Local grocery stores like those below and others found:
    - Nicks Grocery in Charles & Calvert Co.
    - Chesapeake's Bounty
    - The Good Earth Natural Foods Company
    - Mom's Organic Market
  - The Southern Maryland Farmers Market Managers
  - Southern Maryland Farm Stands
  - Southern Maryland School System Food Procurement Officers

**Proposal Submission Requirements:**

Proposals must include the following information.

1. Cover Letter
2. Name of Firm
3. Employer Identification Number or Social Security Number
4. Point of Contact (name, title, phone number, mailing address, and email address)
5. Business must be in good standing with the State of Maryland and listed in the Statewide Business Express Portal for the State of Maryland  
(<https://businessexpress.maryland.gov/manage/maintain-good-standing-status>)
6. Overview of your organization's experience in conducting feasibility studies for the agricultural or aquaculture industry.

7. Qualifications of business, including prior experience in similar services for non-profits and local governments, as well as any relevant accolades.
8. Proposed methodology, including data collection and analysis techniques, to be used in conducting the feasibility study.
9. Team composition, highlighting the expertise and qualifications of the individuals who will be involved in the project.
10. Timeline for the completion of the feasibility study and business plan.
11. Cost estimate, broken down by deliverables and associated expenses.
12. Samples of bidder's work similar to items listed in the Scope of Services.
13. Three (3) references within the past 3 years who can attest to the provider's knowledge and experience relating to the criteria detailed above, with contact information.

### **Evaluation criteria**

Proposals shall be evaluated for suitability, utilizing a point system according to following scale:

1. Expertise and Experience: Bidder has successfully provided similar services and has the qualifications to undertake this RFP (0-25 Points)
2. Prior work demonstrates a proven track record for excellence (0-25 Points)
3. Provider's business philosophy and approach and description of how bidder will provide services to SMADC (0-25 Points)
4. Pricing (0-25 Points)

SMADC reserves the right to request additional information from applicants to clarify information submitted in the proposal.

The scoring may result in the selected proposal not necessarily being the lowest cost.

SMADC reserves the right to award a contract by individual items, in the aggregate, or in any combination.

**Direct any questions to the SMADC Contact Manager for this Proposal:**

Shelby Watson-Hampton, SMADC Director

#240-304-8535 - swatsonhampton@smadc.com

**Contract Period:** Upon acceptance of the proposal SMADC will prepare a contract agreement to be executed by both parties. The agreement shall be for 12 months. (October 2023 - October 2024).

**Proposal Due Date and Time:** Proposals must be submitted electronically by 4:00 p.m. EST on September 25<sup>th</sup> to Shelby Watson-Hampton at swatsonhampton@smadc.com

**2023 Timeline**

**August 18<sup>th</sup>** - RFP Issued

**September 25<sup>th</sup>** - Proposals Due

**October 2<sup>nd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup>** - Selection Committee Review

**October 6<sup>th</sup>** – Selected Vendor Notified

**October 16<sup>th</sup>** - Agreement Start Date

**2024 Timeline**

**January - July:** Progress updates & Stakeholder meetings as listed in the Project Requirements portion of this document.

**September 10<sup>th</sup>** - Final Feasibility Report Due

**September 16<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>** - Time for any clarifying questions or amendments

**October 30<sup>th</sup>** - Contract end.





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