

Ag Notes

Harford County Newsletter

UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
EXTENSION



July 2024

The Extension office will be closed July 4 & 5 in observance of Independence Day



University of
Maryland Extension

Harford County
Agricultural Center

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M—F 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Extension.umd.edu/harford-county

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Hello, Harford County!

Happy Fourth of July! July is our hottest month of the year, and the recent weather patterns are looking to hold true to trend. Unfortunately, drought has also come with the heat, coupled with many days of sustained winds make for a recipe for drying the soil very rapidly. At the Extension office we have had only 2.1 inches of rain during the month of June—1.8 inches of that fell in a single rain event 3.5 weeks ago. For perspective, we get approximately 4 inches of rain in June in an average year, so we are certainly short on moisture.

The lack of rain has made for a smooth small grain harvest and an earlier than usual harvest, which will benefit double-crop soybeans (assuming the ground isn't too hard to plant them). Corn is showing symptoms of heat and drought stress with rolled leaves but fortunately most of the crop is not yet near the growth stages where water is most crucial. Research indicates that drought stress before V13 has very little affect on yield. However, from V13 to silking, drought stress will significantly hinder pollination and cause major corn grain yield reductions; so let's hope moisture returns while we still have yield potential.

For soybeans, the most critical time for them to have adequate moisture is R4-R5. Even if soybeans abort pods early in reproductive stages, they have the ability to make up, or even exceed, what was lost by growing larger beans as long as they have the moisture in the late grain fill stages (R4-5). I sure hope we are not still talking about drought come August! However, if we don't get some moisture in the soil to germinate the double crop beans then that could be a problem.

I know there is a lot of concern over the droughty conditions right now, but fortunately we do still have time before we realize any major yield impacts.

As we get into July, I hope to see many of you at the Harford County Farm Fair, July 20-27. We greatly appreciate all of the support we get for our 4-H and FFA youth here in Harford County, so don't miss seeing all of their hard work! Have a safe and happy Fourth of July!

Until next time,
-Andy





ENERGIZE YOUR SOIL

Plant Cover Crops Maryland's 2024-2025 Cover Crop Sign-up

The Maryland Department of Agriculture has announced the annual sign-up period for the Cover Crop Program will take place at soil conservation district offices statewide from June **21 through July 17, 2024**. One of the department's most popular initiatives, the program provides farmers with cost-share assistance to offset seed, labor, and equipment costs to plant fall cover crops protecting local water quality, building healthy soils, and capturing carbon from the atmosphere. Grants are available to farmers who plant a variety of small grains, brassicas, and forage radish on their fields following the fall harvest. To help create diversity, eligible cover crop species may be mixed with radish and legumes, including clover, Austrian winter peas, and hairy vetch, using a variety of two- and three-species mixes. The department has allocated approximately \$20 million for its 2024-2025 Cover Crop Program.

"This year, we are providing higher incentive payments to farmers who use highly valued cover crop planting practices that deliver increased water quality and soil health benefits," said Maryland Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks. "For soil health farmers, our Cover Crop Plus+ option offers enhanced payment options for cover crops planted in the same field for three years."

Fall-planted cover crops are not just a farming practice; they are a vital part of maintaining the health of the Chesapeake Bay and the productivity of soil resources. As cover crops grow, they recycle unused plant nutrients from the preceding summer crop while fortifying the soil for spring planting. Once established, cover crops will work all winter to combat erosion, supply the soil with organic matter, reduce weeds and pests, and protect fields from drought and extreme rainfall. As an added environmental bonus, cover crops help to mitigate climate change by removing CO₂ from the atmosphere and storing it in the soil.

Farmers who sign up for the Traditional Cover Crop Program can receive up to \$105/acre in cost-share grants to plant cover crops in their fields this fall. This includes a \$50/acre base rate and up to \$55/acre in incentives. The maximum payment for aerial seeding with incentives is \$90/acre. A late-season planting option pays a flat rate of \$40/acre. Certain restrictions apply.

The Cover Crop Plus+ option offers enhanced rates to farmers who agree to plant a multi-species cover crop in the same field for three consecutive years using conservation tillage practices that leave at least 30 percent crop residue. The base rate is \$125/acre. A combination of add-on conservation practices increases the maximum payment to \$180/acre.

Cover crop grants are administered by the department's Conservation Grants Program and the state's 23 soil conservation districts. Applicants must be in good standing with the program and in compliance with Maryland's nutrient management regulations. A completed and signed [Current Nutrient Management Plan Certification](#) is required at signup. Other restrictions and conditions apply. Funding for the 2024-2025 Cover Crop Program is provided by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund.

Farmers should contact their local soil conservation district by July 17 to apply in person for our cover crop grants. Those who participated in last year's program should check their mailboxes for an information packet. For details on the Traditional Cover Crop Program, please contact Dawn Bradley at 443-978-3302 or dawn.bradley@maryland.gov. For more information on our Cover Crop Plus grants, please contact Sarel Cousins at 410-980-6697 or sarel.cousins2@maryland.gov. Additional information is also available on the department's [website](#).

Dairy Farm and Processing Funding

NORTHEAST

DAIRY BUSINESS
INNOVATION CENTER

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center offers several different grants and contracts for farms and processors. Go to <https://nedairyinnovation.com/grants/#FarmerGrants> to learn about all the different opportunities that may be a fit for your operation.

Tick Risk Assessment Survey

*Rachael Slattery, Dairy and Beef Extension Program Coordinator
University of Maryland, College Park*

Previous research done by the Midwest and Northeast Centers of Excellence for Vector-borne Disease (NEVBD) would suggest the most efficient way to get information related to perceived risk and preventative measures concerning ticks and tick-borne illnesses in both the rural and urban population in Maryland is via survey. My colleague Dr. Megan Fritz and I are currently collaborating on a survey project with NEVBD that has been designed to tell us: perceived exposure risk through their occupation and/or recreation, level of concern for themselves and their animals, as well as preventative measures they may be taking to protect themselves. This information will allow us to understand and develop tickborne disease educational materials based on community-described needs, as well as create statewide extension programming that will meet the current and future needs of all our clientele - both rural and urban. The survey is confidential, and participants' rights will be protected.

Completing the survey should take no more than 5 minutes. All data collected will be stored on a secure server with access restricted to members of the research team. Participation is voluntary and in no way will affect a participant's ability to take advantage of UME programs. All participants must be 18 years of age or older and residents of the state of Maryland. This research has been approved by the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board (IRB #205598-1).

The easiest way to complete the survey is through our survey link either via web browser on your computer or smartphone or via the link: <https://go.umd.edu/tick-risk-survey>.

If you need any further information on the survey or how the results will be used, please contact either Racheal Slattery, Principal Investigator (rslatt@umd.edu, 301-405-1392) or Dr. Megan Fritz, Co-PI (mfritz13@umd.edu, 301-405-3945).

High Energy Bills?



Access Funding for Energy Efficiency & Renewable Systems

- Poultry House Cooling Fans or Heating Systems
- Grain Dryer Replacements
- Irrigation Pumps and Controls
- Office Building HVAC Systems
- Dairy – Milk Cooling Systems and Fans
- Greenhouse Lighting and Refrigeration Systems
- Meat Producer & Restaurant Coolers/Freezers

Visit mdcleanenergy.org/reap for more info about FREE technical assistance and grant application support for Maryland-based rural agricultural producers and rural small businesses to access USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) funding.

If you are interested in value-added agriculture but don't know where to start, we have a fact sheet that can help. University of Maryland Extension EBR-2020-0635 is a reference table for many common value-added products/enterprises. Download the fact sheet at https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/publications/FAQForValue-AddedProducers_EBR-2022-0635_ada.pdf or contact the Extension office for a hard copy.

extension.umd.edu

EBR-2022-0635 | August 2023

Frequently Asked Questions for Value-Added Producers

Introduction

This publication summarizes frequently asked questions and answers for the cottage food producers and on-farm home processors. It includes definitions of common terms as well as guidance and recommendations surrounding manufacturing, processing, packaging,

labeling, and selling of foods or food products produced by the Maryland cottage food businesses and on-farm food processors. If producers and processors have further questions regarding liability insurance based on their business model, the authors recommend visiting The University of Maryland's Agriculture Law Education Initiative (ALEI).

COMMON QUESTIONS IN MAKING YOUR PRODUCT	COTTAGE FOODS PRODUCERS	ON-FARM HOME PROCESSORS (LICENSE)
<i>Should I be Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified showing that I am using food safety practices to grow, harvest and hold produce?</i>	Optional. Customers may require Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification.	Optional. Producer growers may require Good Agricultural Practices certification.
<i>Do I need to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule for growing, harvesting, packing, or holding produce?</i>	Not Needed.	Likely not, unless you are only drying and packaging (e.g. herbs).
<i>Do I need to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act Preventive Controls Rule for manufacturing food?</i>	Not Needed.	Your compliance depends if you are covered or exempt as defined by the Final rule.
<i>Should I have my practices, SOPs, farm/processing area layout, and records organized in a Food Safety Plan?</i>	Optional but recommended.	You may be required depending on the product (e.g. acidified canned goods, some type of pickles).
<i>Should I pursue Liability Insurance?</i>	Optional but recommended.	Maybe, depending on business model.
<i>Must I work with a Processing Authority to obtain a scheduled process for manufacturing my product?</i>	No, unless you need to verify your food does not contain potentially hazardous ingredients.	You may be required depending on the product (e.g. acidified canned goods, some type of pickles).
<i>Do I need to comply with current Good Manufacturing Practices regulations (cGMPs)?</i>	Not Needed.	Yes.
<i>Do I need a Copacker to package and label my product?</i>	Not Needed.	Optional, depending on product and scale.
<i>Am I required to register my facility with the FDA using form 3537?</i>	Not Needed.	Not Needed.
<i>Can I sell my products online?</i>	Yes, but you can only sell and ship within Maryland directly to consumers (e.g. farmer's market, mail delivery) or to a retail food store (includes additional requirements).	Yes, and food can be sold across state lines.

Transplant Stem Necrosis From Heat

*Emmalea Ernest, Extension Fruit & Vegetable Specialist
University of Delaware*

By this time most warm season vegetables have already been established. However, if you are putting in plantings in late June and July, high temperatures and long, sunny days can make it challenging to establish transplants on black plastic mulch. On hot, sunny days, heat builds up in black plastic mulched beds. Very hot air moves from under the plastic out through the transplant holes. When that hot air hits the transplant stem, necrosis, girdling and plant death occur. We tend to see this problem most often with peppers.

There are several strategies you can use to protect transplants from heat necrosis.

- Use larger transplants (i.e. 72 cell size rather than

128) that will have thicker stem diameters.

- Make sure transplants are not water stressed during establishment.
- Make a larger hole in the plastic when transplanting and make sure that the transplant stem is in the center of the hole, not touching the plastic.
- Reduce bed temperatures temporarily by using shade cloth or by spraying white particle films (clay or lime based) over the mulch.
- Reduce bed temperatures for the entire growing season by using white, rather than black mulch.



E Ernest, University of Delaware

D. Owens, University of Delaware

Pepper and tomato transplants that were girdled by heat necrosis (top). Black plastic mulch has been sprayed with particle film to protect eggplant transplants from heat necrosis (bottom).



E. Ernest, University of Delaware



E Ernest, University of Delaware



E Ernest, University of Delaware

In 2022, shaded peppers planted on June 1 had much better establishment than unshaded peppers.

University of Maryland Extension [press release](#)

Foodborne illnesses are a concern for all Americans, causing sickness, loss of productivity, and loss of income – both for consumers and businesses. But safety measures can be put in place to help protect the food supply from potential cross-contamination due to mishandling during harvest, packing, and transport of fresh produce.

“The link to food safety starts with workers. The workers are the greatest risk to food safety on a farm,” says University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) Extension legal specialist Nicole Cook. “No farmer wants to sell food that makes people sick so, required or not, most farms have as many precautions and practices in place to reduce that risk as much as possible.”

The most effective practice for farms is employee training of proper food safety and handling procedures. To assist owners and managers in providing better training, University of Maryland Extension (UME) senior agent and affiliate to the Department of Nutrition & Food Science, Dr. Shauna Henley, is working with UMES, New Mexico State University, and The Acheson Group (TAG), to create a new, more adaptable training program for small and medium farms.

The “Produce TRAINER” program was developed specifically to strengthen food safety culture on small farms, and reinforce worker training – a requirement under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule which prioritizes preventive tactics and preemptive safety measures.

The Produce TRAINER – or “Targeted Resources Addressing Identified Needs” in worker training and food safety culture in Maryland – is a fully adaptable, mixed media toolkit for training farm employees on proper food handling and focusing on the top food safety issues on farms: cleaning and sanitizing, personal hygiene, and cross-contamination when working with both animals and fresh produce.

“There are a lot of training resources out there, but we heard from a lot of growers and owners who said time and money were an issue, and materials weren’t specific enough for their operations,” said Henley. “So we have created these new materials from their feedback, and built in ways for this program to be customizable to a farm’s operations and employees.”

Lessons are provided in a variety of formats to cater to different learning styles, as well as a manual for supervisors to assist in the teaching process. “Everyone learns differently, and we have workers whose first language isn’t necessarily English,” said Cook. “The way we approached creating the tools makes for better learning, especially for adult learners. You’ve got to provide multiple ways for people to access the materials – verbally, visually, and even online.”

The Produce TRAINER program, funded by a USDA-National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grant, and was greatly supported by the late Deanna Baldwin, Maryland Department of Agriculture’s Food Quality Assurance Program Manager. The Food Safety Outreach Program funding aims to open the door to continuous discussion about food safety culture on the farm. Materials include a supervisor’s manual and a worker-informed farm training toolkit, consisting of an introductory video on risk assessment; an interactive worst-case farm scenario, or “eye spy”; a visual, interactive tool, and printable Standard Operating Procedures (or SOPs); and an interactive this-or-that risk assessment through a harvesting day.

The team is now looking to beta test the Produce TRAINER materials on small and medium farms in Maryland to get further feedback from growers. Farmers who implement the new training program during this testing phase will receive the full toolkit and trainer manuals, as well as some fun incentives for participating.

“The new training program benefits the farm owner, the workers, the supply chain, and ultimately, the public,” said Henley. “Training not only helps reduce risk for the farmer, but also the consumer. People are interested in where their food comes from; hopefully they can also get an appreciation for all of the things growers have to keep their eyes and ears open to, to provide fresh, healthy produce.”

If you are a small- to medium-sized produce grower in Maryland and would like to participate in the beta testing of the new Produce TRAINER program, please contact Shauna Henley at shenley@umd.edu to determine your eligibility. For more information on food safety resources from Farm to Table for Marylanders, go to <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/food-safety-farm-table-resources-marylanders/>.

New Corporate Transparency Act

Raj Goel, Deputy Director
Harford County Economic Development

Under this federal law, many small businesses must submit a Beneficial Ownership Information Report to the U.S. Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, providing details identifying individuals who are associated with the small business. The deadline for making this filing is December 31, 2024.

The challenge is that most small businesses are completely oblivious to these federal reporting requirements. Knowing the intricacies of this federal law and its potential impact is essential for small businesses. Otherwise, they may incur criminal or civil penalties for not filing or updating this report.

To educate the small businesses in Harford County, Harford County will be hosting a presentation about this federal law, with particular emphasis on which small businesses are subject to the law and how these small businesses can comply with the law. This presentation will be the second presentation in our Business Essentials Series, a quarterly series to provide relevant, cutting-edge information to Harford County's businesses community.

The presentation will occur on Tuesday, **July 16, 8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.** at the TUNE Building located on the campus of Harford Community College. While there is no cost to attend, we request individuals to register in advance using the following link: <https://bit.ly/BES-0724>. **Editor's Note:** I will include more detailed info on how this affects farm businesses in the next issue, but I wanted to share this now in case you wanted to attend the July 16 seminar.



Summer Vegetables Twilight Tour

August 20, 2024
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Wye Research & Education Center
211 Farm Lane Queenstown, MD

Featuring:
Watermelons,
Sweet Corn and
Tomatoes

Scan here to
register



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Great resources are just a click away!

Andrew Kness

Andrew Kness
Senior Extension Agent,
Agriculture and
Food Systems



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Back-issues can be found at: <https://extension.umd.edu/locations/harford-county/agriculture-and-nutrient-management>



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Ag Business

General Interest

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Dates to remember

- 09 Jul.** Women in Ag Webinar: Setting Up Farm Chart of Accounts. 12 noon. Online via Zoom. Register [online](#).
- 20-27 Jul.** Harford County Farm Fair.
- 01 Aug.** Agronomic Drone School. 8:30-1:30 PM. Wye Research & Education Center, Queenstown. \$10. Register [online](#) or call (410)-638-3255.
- 02 Aug.** Agronomic Drone School. 8:30-1:30 PM. Central MD Research & Education Center, Upper Marlboro. \$10. Register [online](#) or call (410)-638-3255.
- 20 Aug.** Vegetable Twilight Tour. 5:30 PM. Wye Research & Education Center, Queenstown. Free. Register [online](#) or call (443) 988-8595.

AG PLASTIC RECYCLING @ HWDC

All plastics should be as clean as possible and stored under cover to minimize moisture. Farms should separate plastic by type. All types of Ag Plastics are received in Supersacks that are provided by Office of Recycling. Harford County farms only.



ACCEPTABLE ITEMS-FREE DROP OFF

Bale Wrap- Debris-Free
Black and White Silage Bags/Bunker Covers(without Plastic Baler Twine)
Woven Plastic Feed Bags & Supersacks #4
Softener Salt & Pellet Stove Bags #4
Animal Feed Bags #4
Plastic Baler Twine
Greenhouse Cover
Drip Tape
Flats, Trays, & Flower Pots
Clear Stretch Film
Plastic Pallets



TO SCHEDULE A DROP OFF PLEASE CALL

410-638-3417

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