Southern Maryland has some great story tellers. I submit to you that farmers are among the best of them. Perhaps it’s due to the ample opportunity to turn each thought and polish every word in their mind while working the land, moving cattle, or putting a crop up. I have done some of my best thinking cutting seemingly endless rows of hay. Or, perhaps farmers have more stories to tell because they live a full and varied life with lots of experiences to recount. Let’s face it- not much changes between the four walls of an office every day.

Lately, it seems we are hearing more negative stories from the well-meaning but often misinformed non-farming populace. We no longer have the benefit of a population that understands what it means to have a farm or more importantly be a farmer because they once practiced the profession, or at least knew a relative or friend that did. The closest many folks get to agriculture is their encounter three- times a day at break fast, lunch and dinner.

I’m not making the case that our population doesn’t care. I believe they do care. In fact, there is not much more fundamental to being than the food you eat. We can see this in the renewed interest in local food, the increase in gardening and the “back to the land” movement. However there is still a large disconnect; a widening gap between the practical essentials of those who produce our food and the population that consumes it. This gap leaves a void, which if left unfilled, will gather with layers of misinformation and in the end misunderstanding. So who cares? We all should. Farmers are fewer and farther between, and the safe and abundant supply of the food we eat relies on their hard work and ultimate success.

So, what’s the solution? In part, I believe that farmers must tell their stories. The really good ones. Don’t spare the details. While not part of the everyday farm job, taking what opportunities you are given to talk about what you do is essential. If you want to be more pro-active, invite folks to the farm, sponsor a field trip, talk with your community, be a good neighbor. Let them know what it really means to be a farmer- both the good and the bad with a little humor of course.

There is a great opportunity to sit down with your non-farm neighbors coming up in April. Seasons on the Farm is a year-round initiative that increases transparency and familiarity with farming by inviting people to meet farmers and see how food is produced today. Supported by farmers and farm organizations, the goal of the program is to create meaningful and sustained dialogue about food production between farmers and their neighbors. Throughout the year, social media posts and e-newsletters keep consumers engaged in what’s happening on the farm, and twice a year, the program sponsors an on-farm dinner.

If you’ve ever wanted to sit down at a table with today’s consumer and tell them how and why you do what you do on the farm, here’s your chance. On April 12, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at Serenity Farm, we’ll have a barn full of consumers and farmers talking food and farming. If you’re interested in representing your industry as a Farm Ambassador, contact Susanne Zilberfarb at Susanne@hammondmedia.com or (703) 437-0995. A brief 4-hour Farm Ambassador training session will be held the week of March 24-28, 2014.

Here’s to good stories. I hope the upcoming spring planting season is filled with them.

-Ben Beale
**Upcoming EVENTS**

**March 4, 2014**
Nutrient Voucher Recertification- 5:00-7:00 p.m.  
Private Pesticide Recertification- 7:00-9:00 p.m.  
Ag Services Center, Leonardtown MD

**March 6, 2014**
Hog Production Meeting  
White Marsh Elementary School, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**March 11, 2014**
Southern Maryland GAP Training  
8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Ag Services Center

**March 15, 2014**
Be Smart... Drench Smart...Small Ruminant Integrated Parasite Management  
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Central Maryland Research and Education Center

**April 5, 2014**
36th WYE Angus Sale- 12:00-4:00 p.m.  
Wye Research & Education Center, Queenstown MD

**April 11, 2014**
So. MD Region Poultry and Rabbit /Slaughter Processing Training Workshop  
Calvert County Economic Development Building

**May 3-4, 2014**
Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival  
Howard County Fairgrounds

**Private Pesticide Recertification and Nutrient Voucher Recertification**

March 4, 2014  
St. Mary’s Agriculture Services Center

A Private Pesticide Recertification class will be held on March 4, 2014 at the St. Mary’s Agriculture Services Center in Leonardtown. The Recertification class will be held from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. This will be the last recertification session for the season, so if your license expired Dec 31, 2013, be sure to attend.

St. Mary’s Extension Office will also host a Nutrient Voucher Training the same evening from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. This class will provide the required credits for Nutrient Voucher holders. If your Nutrient Voucher expires this spring, you may consider attending this update class.

**Hog Production Meeting**

March 6, 2014  
White Marsh Elementary School, Mechanicsville  
6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

University of Maryland Extension is sponsoring a hog production meeting on March 6. Dr. Tom Hartsock, UMD Swine Specialist-Emeritus will join us for a discussion on production issues facing producers. Informational handouts will be available. Bring your questions for an informative meeting.

**Food Safety Trainings for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Producers**

Winter Schedule 2014

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and University of Maryland Extension (UME) will be conducting a series of regional food safety training workshops for fruit and vegetable producers. These one-day workshops, offered across Maryland, are important for small- and large- scale producers who want to understand how to meet current and proposed U.S. Food and Drug Administration food safety requirements or are considering Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) certification. The training will provide assistance in writing and implementing a GAP program for both wholesale growers and direct marketers. Topics to be covered include: highlights of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act; Good Agricultural Practices such as addressing pre-harvest and post-
harvest water quality issues; an update on current food safety research; writing a food safety plan; and MDA/University of Maryland programs to assist producers in implementing GAP. A large portion of the training will be spent helping producers write their own food safety plans. Producers are encouraged to bring their own personal laptops. Laptops will also be provided to those who cannot bring them.

Each workshop will take place from 8:30am to 4pm. The fee for the program will be $25, and will cover lunch costs and materials provided to each participant, and attendees will receive a certificate of participation following the program.

Participants are encouraged to register online at: http://ter.ps/MDgaps. If you have questions or encounter difficulties registering online, please contact the organizer for the specific location. Registration is required to ensure adequate materials are available. The workshop schedule for 2014 is as follows:

March 11, 2014-Southern Maryland GAP training.
St. Mary’s Ag. Services Center. 26737 Radio Station Way, Leonardtown, MD 20650.
Please contact Ben Beale, bbeale@umd.edu, 301-475-4481.

March 18, 2014-Central Maryland GAP training.
Baltimore County Extension office, 1114 Shawan Rd, Cockeysville, MD 21030.
Please contact David Martin, dmarti@umd.edu, 410-771-1761.

MDA offers two GAP certification programs for fruit and vegetable producers. Nationally recognized USDA GAP/GHP and USDA Harmonized GAP pre-harvest and post-harvest certification is provided through a cooperative agreement with USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service and meets the requirements of many wholesale buyers. USDA specialty crop grant funding is available for cost share of the USDA audit fees. MDA GAP certification is geared toward direct marketers or other that want to start with a basic food safety program, and is available to Maryland fruit and vegetable producers at no cost. For more information on these programs, contact Deanna Baldwin with the Maryland Department of Agriculture at Deanna.baldwin@maryland.gov or 410-841-5769 or Donna Pahl with University of Maryland at dpahl@umd.edu or 301-405-4372.

Be Smart... Drench Smart...Small Ruminant Integrated Parasite Management

March 15, 2014
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Central Maryland Research and Education Center,
205 Largo Road
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774

During the all day workshop, participants will learn about gastrointestinal parasites that badger small ruminants (sheep and goats), anthelmintic resistance and practices to mitigate or manage parasite burdens. The 3 hour morning session will serve as the introduction for the afternoon hands-on training session which will allow participants to get certified on the use of the FAMACHA© score card and learn how to conduct fecal egg count. Registration fee of $20 includes workshop, handout materials, and lunch. To register or for more information contact Candy Walter, UMES Farm Management Specialist at 301-868-9366 or cjwalter@umes.edu. You may also pre-register online at www.umes.edu/1890-mce.

SO. MD Region Poultry and Rabbit Slaughter/Processing Training Workshop

April 11, 2014

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) in partnership with University of Maryland (UMD) and Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission will conduct a training workshop for poultry and rabbit slaughter and processing on Friday, April 11 at the Calvert County Economic Development building meeting room at: 205 Main Street Prince Frederick. This full-day workshop is a voluntary certification program. It is designed to assist small poultry and rabbit operations to meet the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s ‘approved source’ requirements for producers who want to become certified to sell their poultry and/or rabbits (off the farm) at farmers’ markets or to restaurants and retailers in Maryland. The MDA
training and certification program is great opportunity for small agricultural businesses to expand into new markets and meet the increasing consumer demand for farm fresh, local products. If interested call or email SMADC Southern Maryland Meats assistant Jeanne Herbert at 301-274-1922 ext. 1 or jherbert@smadc.com.

MARYLAND SHEEP & WOOL FESTIVAL

May 3 & 4, 2014
9am - 6pm on Saturday
9am - 5pm on Sunday
(Always the first full weekend in May)

Come join us for a fun-filled weekend of live animals, crafts and supplies, entertainment and more. Check out our schedule and events pages for more details about the Festival. Howard County Fairgrounds, 2210 Fairground Rd., West Friendship, MD 21794-9604. No dogs - Please leave your pets at home. Contact us at office@sheepandwool.org or leave message at 410-531-3647. To contact Gwen Handler, chairman, e-mail chair-man@sheepandwool.org.

Maryland Energy Administration Announces the 2014 Kathleen A.P. Mathias Agriculture Energy Efficiency Grant Program

Mathias Ag Program provides financial assistance to minimize costs associated with energy efficiency upgrades to farms and businesses in the agriculture sector.

Annapolis (February 4, 2014) — The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) announced today that the Kathleen A. P. Mathias Agriculture Energy Efficiency Grant (Mathias Ag) Program is now open for applications. The Mathias Ag Program will provide grants to farms and businesses in the agriculture sector to cover 50% of the cost of energy efficiency upgrades at sites that can achieve at least 20% savings in the building or areas improved. Named after the late Kathy Mathias, one of the Eastern Shore’s leading advocates and the wife of Maryland State Senator James N. Mathias, the program is now in its second year.

“Last year’s program demonstrated that an investment in Maryland’s agriculture sector helps our farms and farm businesses save money and energy,” said Abigail Ross Hopper, Director of the Maryland Energy Administration. “This not only helps the State reach its goals of reducing overall energy consumption 15% by 2015, and increasing our renewable energy generation to 20% by 2022, but also helps our agriculture sector stay competitive and innovative.”

Through the Mathias Ag Program, MEA will distribute grants ranging from $25,000 to $200,000 to ease the costs of installing eligible energy efficiency technologies. Examples of eligible farms and businesses in the agriculture sector include dairy, orchard, poultry/egg, greenhouse, vegetable, animal, vineyard, grain dryer, processor, sawmill, and aquaculture. The measures must enable a minimum 20% energy savings in the buildings or areas where they are installed. Awards will cover 50% of the project cost after any other incentives have been applied. Applications must be received by March 15, 2014.
"My children, Lauren and Trevor, and I are both humbled and honored that Kathy’s life continues to be memorialized through this program," said Maryland State Senator James N. Mathias, Jr. (D - Lower Eastern Shore) and Kathy’s husband. “Kathy was fully dedicated to the people and lifestyle of the Eastern Shore and very fond of our rural and farming communities. Even through her most difficult challenges, Kathy continued to renew her boundless energy and positive attitude which exemplifies this program. The MEA has continued to help farmers use best practices to promote energy efficiency while saving money.”

Applications must be submitted by the March 14, 2014 deadline. Prior to applying you should contact MEA’s technical assistance sub-contractor EnSave at 800-732-1399 for application or technical assistance. They can help you determine whether your project will meet the program’s requirements.

Institute of Applied Agriculture
College Forward Plan Offered
(Source: Lower Eastern Shore Ag Newsletter)

The Institute of Applied Agriculture (IAA) is a two year academic certificate program at the University of Maryland- College Park (UMCP). Housed in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, students can receive certificates in subjects such as agricultural business, turf management, or ornamental horticulture. The IAA has produced stellar results, with at least ninety percent of their students finding employment by graduation.

The IAA is now expanding its efforts to train ag students by offering the College Forward plan. In a recent seminar at the Dorchester Agronomy Day, Dr. Angus Murphy, head of the Plant Science and Landscape Architecture Department, explained that it was an opportunity to get rural students into UMCP. Students who may not have been admitted into the College of Ag and Natural Resources can still apply to get into IAA.

Glori Hyman, who is the director of the IAA, explains that College Forward gives a great advantage to students who want to study agriculture. She describes the program as a path to start at IAA and then transfer into an agricultural baccalaureate at UMCP. This makes a University of Maryland degree “more accessible” to agriculture students.

The IAA has thirty slots available the first year, and students can live on campus like everyone else. The IAA has its own admissions policy, and applicants who would like to pursue a bachelor’s degree should say so when they apply. This allows advisors to select the best courses to lead towards a bachelor’s degree in various agricultural majors.

To transfer from the IAA into a bachelor’s degree program successfully, students must complete thirty credit hours in their first year with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. Otherwise they can continue at IAA and receive their certificate. Once students earn their certificates, they may apply to transfer as a degree-seeking student at UMCP or UMUC (online). If students prefer to begin their careers, their probability of finding employment through their IAA certificate is very high.

This is an important tool for those who would like to pursue a degree in agriculture at the University of Maryland. As the world continues to be globally connected, and technology keeps advancing, future farmers and agribusiness leaders will be more successful with higher education. Farmers on Delmarva are already aware of precision farming technology. Upcoming agribusinesses may include using drones to scout crops, which requires remote sensing and ag engineering skills. These are opportunities for bright kids from rural backgrounds to stick with their roots while using their wits.
Grain Marketing Outlook for Early 2014
UME Grain Marketing Update
(Source: Lower Eastern Shore Ag Newsletter)

On February 7th, a grain marketing update was held by University of Maryland Extension at Chesapeake College.

Kevin McNew, President of Grain Hedge, presented his 2014 outlook for corn, soybean, and wheat. McNew explained that while global stocks of grains were up, so were usage for both corn and soybeans. The increase in usage was in direct response to lower grain prices. This is a good indicator that there is “strong underlying demand” for both corn and soybeans. For corn usage, Ethanol is making better profits on lower corn prices this year, but meat production is still not growing as expected. In addition, China’s recent cancellations of U.S. corn is being picked up by other Asian countries. China has filled most of its corn orders already, and there is not much left for them to cancel. Overall, McNew saw some upside potential in corn, but “don’t hold out for high prices.”

South America is having a bumper crop of soybeans, but China has not started cancelling soybean orders from the US. McNew explained that China may be waiting, possibly because South America had difficulty shipping orders last year. The “logistics” of moving and shipping grains also plays into U.S. sales. Both the Ukraine and Canada are countries who currently have some difficulty bringing grains to the marketplace.

Although China has not cancelled beans yet, they still have a lot of outstanding sales and could still cancel their orders. As of the beginning of February, this had not occurred.
The demand for soybeans by China is being met by production in the U.S., Brazil, and Argentina. If one of these countries has difficulty, the market could get excited.

Overall, McNew sites that both corn and soybean have strong underlying demand on world markets. Wheat, on the other hand, does not have an underlying demand. Drought issues in the Pacific Northwest may have a greater impact on wheat prices.

Grain Marketing Strategy
“Keep it Simple”
(Source: Lower Eastern Shore Ag Newsletter)

John Hall, grain consultant for Allendale, spoke at the Grain Marketing Update on February 7th. To survive in this market, Hall suggests that you should know your production costs, so that you can lock in a break-even price. Having a crop budget done by November is best when planning for the next year’s production.

When you know your production costs you can set a bottom easier. You can use a “forward contract” with the elevator to set prices in advance. You can also purchase a “put” option from a brokerage firm. The put option will give you the right to sell when prices are falling. An opposite issue may occur when dealing with weather risk. If unexpected drought causes a loss in crop yields, prices can increase. The “call” option protects against the upside, in case grain prices increase after you have done a forward contract.

When looking at grain market trends, Hall looks at harvest months, which include December (corn), November (soybeans), and July (wheat). He suggests that you develop your marketing plan in November, and set a floor price for 50% of your expected production. You should have a realistic price that you are willing to sell for. If you wait for prices to rise or fall, you may miss out on at least breaking even. By contracting 50% of your expected production, you can lock in a floor on some of your grains. Then you can use either the put option if you believe prices may fall, or the call option to protect against an increase in prices.

We have a good reserve of grains relative to who wants to use them, so prices could decline. If the Ethanol mandate by the EPA is decreased and we have less cattle production due to drought, corn prices may fall. This could be offset by poor weather conditions in producing countries. It is difficult to master or predict politics or mother nature, which is a good reason to use forward contracting and options. According to Hall, farmers in South America are more likely to use these tools than U.S. farmers.

When following grain marketing outlooks, future prices can change quickly due to weather or even
politics. Creating a budget, the use of contracting, and options can help you weather the volatility.

Maryland FarmLINK Adds Mentor Match Program

Maryland FarmLINK was created by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission in 2010 to fill a void. At the time, there was no website to link up land owners wishing to sell or lease their land in Maryland with farmers seeking land to farm. During website development, other farmer resources were added, including a “person-to-person” section to ask for advice, a “farm forum” for discussions or alerts, and a resources page. The resources page (“Everything Ag”) has been expanded to include workshops and events, farm equipment for rent, a soils tutorial, a zoning tutorial, a land preservation guide, and a realtors’ guide for selling or leasing farmland.

In mid-2013, Maryland FarmLINK announced the new Mentor Match Program, available at www.marylandfarmlink.com, which pairs experienced farmers (mentors) with new or transitioning farm owners/operators (mentees) for one-on-one training, advice and interaction. The year-long mentoring experience is enhanced with support from the Maryland FarmLINK Mentor Team, which provides technical assistance in farm production, business management, regulations, marketing and funding resources. Applications to be a mentor or a mentee are accepted throughout the year. However, to ensure your application is considered for the 2014 growing season, we suggest that you apply online as soon as possible. This program is the product of a collaborative grant project headed up by University of Maryland Extension and funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission.

New Quadris Label for Target Spot Control on Tobacco Transplants in the Greenhouse

Quadris (azoxystrobin) has received a Section 24C Special Use label in Maryland for use on tobacco transplants in greenhouse float bed systems for control of target spot. Target spot is caused by the sexual stage of Rhizoctonia solani, known as Thanatephorus cucumeris. Symptoms include small, water-soaked lesions which appear on leaves. These lesions can expand rapidly during periods of warm temperatures (greater than 75° F) and high humidity, conditions which are frequently found in float bed systems. Target spot is a recurring problem in Maryland float bed systems causing losses each year. Pathologists have found that Quadris has provided excellent control of this disease in extensive field research in Virginia and Kentucky. Quadris currently has a Section 3 label for use in the field after transplanting. Only one application is allowed per year in the greenhouse.

Application Directions: Apply 6 fl oz/A or 0.14 fl oz (4ml)/1000 ft2 in enough water for thorough coverage (recommend 5 gal/1000 ft2). Make only one application prior to transplanting. Follow up applications can be made in the field according to the Quadris federal label. A copy of the 24C label must be in the possession of the user at the time of application.

Link to the Maryland FarmLINK website: www.marylandfarmlink.com
Nutrient Management Plan Update
Spring 2014

Now is the perfect time to update your Nutrient Management Plan before you get the next crop in the ground. Please remember that regulations do not allow us to write your plan for the 2014 season after the crop has been planted. After the crop has been planted we can only provide recommendations for the following year. Below is a list of items that will need to be addressed in order to update your plan:

1. **Soil tests** must be less than three years old.
   - Fields with differing crop or nutrient application histories, as well as differing soil types should be sampled separately.
   - Please keep in mind that Pastures should be sampled as well, even if no nutrients are currently being applied.
   - We have plenty of soil sampling supplies here in the office that you may use.

2. **Manure samples**, if applicable, must be taken every year, and analyzed before manure is spread.
   - If manure is collected from animals and spread onto crop or pastureland, samples of that manure must be analyzed before spreading.

3. **Animal units**, if applicable, should be documented.
   - Type of animal, average weight, confinement time, and bedding material.

4. **Field histories** should be updated, showing crops from previous years.
   - Multiple cropping scenarios can be planned for. A plan can be developed that covers many different crops that you may want to plant in each field!
   - Manure/Sludge, as well as Legume histories should be documented.

5. **Yield Goals** for every crop should be developed based on prior yield records.
   - If you are unsure, or have no realistic yield goals developed, we can help!

Plans should be updated **every year**, depending on the type of operation. So if you are ready to have your plan updated, or if you are unsure, please give me a call at (301)-934-5403, or email me at fwarring@umd.edu and I will do my best to meet your needs. I look forward to hearing from you and wish everyone a wonderful spring season. –Francis Warring

On the Lighter Side

When the English tongue we speak.
Why is break not rhymed with freak?
Will you tell me why it’s true
We say sew but likewise few?
And the maker of the verse,
Cannot rhyme his horse with worse?
Beard is not the same as heard
Cord is different from word.
Cow is cow but low is low
Shoe is never rhymed with foe.
Think of hose, dose, and lose
And think of goose and yet with choose
Think of comb, tomb and bomb,
Doll and roll or home and some.
Since pay is rhymed with say
Why not paid with said I pray?
Think of blood, food and good.
Mould is not pronounced like could.
Wherefore done, but gone and lone -
Is there any reason known?
To sum up all, it seems to me
Sound and letters don’t agree.

My Clever Spell Check

Eye halve a spelling checker
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques for my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.
Eye strike a key and type a word
And weight four it to say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me strait a weigh.
As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the error rite
It’s rare lea ever wrong.
Eye have run this poem threw it
Eye am shore your pleased two no
It’s letter perfect awl the weigh
My checker tolled me sew.
Wishing you a good spring and productive 2014!

Benjamin E. Beale, Extension Educator
UME – St. Mary’s County
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Francis Warring, Nutrient Mgmt. Consultant
UME – Charles County
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Jennifer Horton, Master Gardener Coordinator,
Program Assistant
UME – St. Mary’s County
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Jamie Fleming, Administrative Asst. I
UME – St. Mary’s County

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