A bit of snow was not enough to prevent the Lower Shore from coming together for Agronomy Day. Over ninety participants attended to hear discussions about sorghum, soybeans, kudzu bugs, and the new phosphorus management tool (PMT). Dr. Josh McGrath’s presentation on the PMT was so popular, everyone almost forgot there was Taylor’s BBQ for lunch. Attendees also received continuing education credits for their professional certifications. We would like to thank all of our participants, speakers and sponsors for making it another great event.

Trucking regulations could relax for Maryland Farmers

Forums are being held across Maryland to discuss the implications of the new federal MAP-21 regulations. There are exemptions for agriculture under the “covered farm vehicle” category. According to a Jan. 28 article in The Delmarva Farmer, a covered vehicle is considered anything with a Farm Truck license plate.

An exemption guide has been provided by the Maryland Farm Bureau. Regulations for which covered farm vehicles are exempt include: drug and alcohol (382); CDL (383); driver qualifications (391); hours of service (395); and vehicle maintenance (396). Duane Pearce of the Maryland State Highway Administration explained that although you are not exempt from preventative maintenance, “you just don’t have to keep records of it.” Covered farm vehicles which weigh less than 26,001 pounds are exempt anywhere in the United States. Any vehicle over that weight is only exempt in the state of registration OR within 150 air miles of the farm or ranch.

For more information contact Duane Pearce: 410-582-5719 or dpearce@sha.state.md.us.


UME Agriculture Contacts

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The Institute for 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 bachelors degree should say so when they apply. This allows advisors to select the best courses to lead towards a bachelors degree in various agricultural majors.

To transfer from the IAA into a bachelors 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.

**Mentor Match**

A new tool for young farmers is being offered by Maryland FarmLINK. The website now includes Mentor Match, a tool to help pair experienced farmers with new or transitioning farmers. Applications are accepted year long, but it is recommended that you sign up as soon as possible for 2014. One of your best resource for learning about agribusiness will always be experienced farmers!

**Institute of Applied Agriculture**

**College Forward Plan Offered**

**4-H Children’s Farm Tour**

The 4-H Children’s Farm Tour will be offered again this year at Beechnut Dairy Farm in Mardela Springs. This event is designed to help young children gain an up close view of real agriculture and why it’s so important to our lives. Volunteers are needed to help man the learning stations. You can volunteer for one or all three days!

**Where:** Beechnut Dairy Farm, Mardela Springs

**When:** May 6, 7, and 8

Please contact Kay at the Wicomico 4-H Office: 410-749-6141 x 101 or kriall@umd.edu
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 market place.

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.

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 suggest 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.
**Nutrient Management News and Updates**

- The Annual Implementation Report (AIR) is due to the MDA by March 1st. This form provides information on the applications of manure and fertilizer farmers applied in the past year. If you have not done so, please fill out the AIR and return it to the MDA.

- The Maryland Department of Agriculture recently solicited proposals for demonstration projects that offer technologies or services for manure management and utilization. The MDA has $2.5 million available to invest during State Fiscal Year 2014 for alternative manure uses.

- The Lancaster Farmer (01/28) reported that Wicomico County officials are considering a facility that would convert solid waste into energy. This process could utilize chicken manure as a solid waste source, producing energy and leaving behind a charcoal material. This charcoal, also known as “biochar”, still contains phosphorus and has potential as a fertilizer source.

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**Nutrient Setback Regulations Took Effect January 1, 2014**

New regulations require 35 foot setbacks from surface water for nutrient application, including both perennial and intermittent streams.

Surface water definitions may include **field ditches**. Please contact your nutrient management advisor or soil conservation office to find out if your ditches may fall under this regulation.

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**Financial Aid Available for Manure Incorporation**

According to the [MDA website](http://www.mda.state.md.us), cost-share grants are available for manure injection and incorporation. Farmers who inject all types of animal manure, including operators who import manure, are eligible.

Cost share rates range from $10 to $55 per acre, depending on the type of equipment or services. Restrictions may apply.

Contact your local soil conservation district to apply as soon as possible. For more information contact the MDA at 410-841-5864.

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**New Agricultural Educator for the Lower Shore Counties**

Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester

Jarrod Miller is our new Agricultural Educator for the Lower Shore, with his home office located in Princess Anne.

Jarrod grew up on a dairy and grain farm in Darlington, MD, which is located near the Susquehanna in Harford County. He and his siblings were involved in both dairy and hog 4-H projects as kids, and his older sister currently runs their dairy operation. They all grew up milking, baling, and riding on corn silage wagons.

He received both his BS and MS from the Crop and Soil Environmental Science Department at Virginia Tech and his PhD in Soil Science at the University of Kentucky. If you have any ideas, concerns, or questions about agriculture on the Lower Shore, don’t hesitate to contact him.

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Dan Manternach (Doan Advisory Services) remarked on the broiler outlook at the Sperry Van Ness Agriculture Forum in Fruitland, MD. He sees rising broiler stocks and production keeping prices lower into the spring. Other pressure on the broiler market could come from U.S. economic conditions and record beef prices. If beef prices are high, consumers may choose poultry as a cheaper alternative.

The Feb. 12 edition of the Somerset Herald reported that a bill proposing a 5-cent tax on chickens was withdrawn following Governor Martin O'Malley's promise to veto it. An additional hearing was set for Feb 25th.

A poultry growers meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 12 at the Somerset County Extension Office. The topics are “Legal Issues” and “Management of Bird Welfare”. Please contact Jon Moyle (jmoyle@umd.edu) or Jenny Rhodes (jrhodes@umd.edu) for more information.

Three Locations for Your Convenience:
Session 1- 8 am Delaware Electric Cooperative Conference Center
14198 Sussex Hwy., Greenwood, DE  19950

Session 2- 1pm Carvel Research & Education Center
16483 County Seat Hwy., Georgetown, DE 19947

Session 3- 6 pm Somerset County Civic and Ag Center
11828 Crisfield Lane, Princess Anne, MD 21853

Seating is limited to 125 per session. Priority will be given to growers. Door prizes will be awarded. Delaware Nutrient Management credits will be available. RSVP to Lisa Collins @ lcollins@udel.edu (302)856-7303 Ext 1702

Topics covered include:
Broiler response to light
Brooding options
Types of LED bulbs, Investment Cost, Color and Payback
Updated lighting Research
Dimming issues
Energy audits and cost share opportunities

Maryland Farm and Harvest is online! Watch all of the episodes over the internet: http://video.mpt.tv/program/maryland-farm-harvest/

Shows will be rebroadcast through August and new episodes will premiere in late October.

Tuesdays—7pm
Thursdays 11:30pm
Sundays—6am
EXTENSION EVENTS

3/5  Private Pesticide Applicator Training - Wicomico Extension
3/11 Annual Organic Production Meeting - Chesapeake College
3/11 Delmarva Broiler Lighting Conf - 3 locations, see page 5
3/12 Private Pesticide Applicator Exam - Wicomico Extension
4/5  Small Farms Workshop: Grafting Tomatoes - UMES
4/12 Small Ruminant Parasites Management—UMES
4/26 Growing High Tunnel Crops - Newark, MD
5/6-8 Children’s 4-H Farm Tour - Beechnut Dairy Farm
5/12 Poultry Growers Meeting - Somerset Extension

OTHER EVENTS

3/8  Somerset Young Farmers Auction - Somerset Civic Center
4/05 Mt. Hermon Plow Days - Salisbury, MD

Want to receive this newsletter electronically? E-mail jarrod@umd.edu and type LES AG Newsletter into the subject line.