

Thrive

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Sustainable Agriculture in Calvert County

Welcome

... to **Thrive**, a quarterly newsletter focusing on sustainable agriculture in Calvert County, Maryland.

The Board of County Commissioners of Calvert County formed The Sustainable Agriculture Workgroup with members from the Soil Conservation District, the Department of Economic Development, the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Office, the County Health Department and the Department of Planning and Zoning look for way to promote agriculture.

In 2008 the County permanently preserved over 600 new acres of farm and forest land through the County's Transfer of Development Rights Program. Calvert has preserved 26,322 acres out of our goal of 40,000 acres. However, land is only part of the equation. A thriving agricultural community needs economically successful farmers too! We hope you will be one of them.

Turning Back Time on the Biscoe Gray Farm

By Kirsti Uunila of the Department of Planning & Zoning

You may remember that Calvert County purchased the Biscoe Gray property on Gray's Road with Rural Legacy funds in 1996. The county has received a Preserve America grant to fund a master plan for a heritage farm on the property. The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm will be a fully-functioning small-scale farm that was typical in Calvert around 1950.

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm will be a unique asset to make the connection between the land and people's lives in the past. The public will see and experience a working mid-20th-century small-scale, sustainable farm and will be invited to participate in agricultural pursuits, archaeological exploration and a host of other activities. The core of the Heritage Farm will be the George Rice House and outbuildings. The planning phase of the project will enable the county to responsibly restore the farmstead which will, when the plan is implemented, serve as a residence for a farm manager who will assist with demonstrating life on a sustainable small farm, including caring for animals, raising a house garden, and food preservation. The barns and other buildings will be used for farm activities to support agriculture on the property and also for activities to engage the visiting public. The county anticipates that the restoration and reuse of these historic structures will encourage owners of other rural buildings in the larger community to do likewise, for example, by encouraging the development of private agri-tourism sites and B&Bs.

Most important, the project will allow the preservation of historic rural landscapes that will be returned to supplying food crops for local markets, including potential partnerships with farmer's markets for which the demand currently exceeds the supply. It will also preserve the knowledge and skills possessed by shrinking numbers of older farmers who know how to run a small scale farm, and will promote intergenerational cooperation in a public way. This project will help preserve a historic sense of place for Calvert County.

Now we need your help to think the project through and to be involved with the others who plan to participate—including the Soil Conservation District, 4-H, Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Natural Resources, the Department of Economic Development, Calvert County Public Schools, and others. We need to ensure that the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm fairly represents sustainable agriculture as it was, and offers new opportunities to make local agriculture sustainable into the future.

Kirsti Uunila can be reached at uunilak@co.cal.md.us or (410)535-1600 x 2504

Calvert County Farm Tour

The 11th annual Calvert County Farm Tour was held on Sunday, October 19, 2008 at the Running Hare Vineyard in Prince Frederick. More than 400 people visited this new Calvert County vineyard and winery. Activities at the 300-acre site ranged from horse-drawn wagon rides to wine tastings and the sale of fresh produce.

The Running Hare Vineyard farm manager was very pleased with the event and comments from participants and visitors alike were favorable. Spider Hall Farm in Prince Frederick will host the Sunday, October 18th, 12th annual Farm Tour. If you are interested in hosting a future farm tour, please contact Jan Ashworth at ashworjs@co.cal.md.us or 410-535-4583.

Since 1998, the Calvert County Farm Tour has been held at various farm locations throughout the County. The Farm Tour is conducted to showcase how farming is evolving in Calvert County, as well as to help new residents become familiar with agricultural methods and the County's rich agricultural tradition.

Upcoming Events – Mark your calendar!

State & Federal Incentive Programs, Thursday, February 26, 2009, 6:30pm – 8:30pm; See article for details. RSVP: Jennifer Snoddy or Craig Mask at 410-535-1521 x 3

Write a Farm Business Plan Seminar February 26, 2009 9:30am to 3:00pm at the Howard County Extension Office in Ellicott City. \$80 Registration. Contact Kathy Zimmerman (410)313-6500 or register online at www.hceda.org/agriculture

Women in Agriculture Forum, March 5, 2009, 8:30 am – 3:00pm, Howard County Fairgrounds, 2210 Fairgrounds Road, West Friendship, MD. \$20 Registration. Contact Kathy Zimmerman (410) 313-6500 or kzimmerman@hceda.org.

Joel Salatin Speaks at Calvert Library Prince Frederick Thursday, March 19th, 3:00pm with the Young Farmers on Farming & Marketing Practices and 7:00pm on Economic, Ecological & Ethical Advantages of Grass Farming. See article for details. Register at (410)535-0291 or www.calvert.lib.md.us

Start a Career in Sustainable Agribusiness ENV510, April 22-29 from 6:00pm to 9:30pm at Anne Arundel Community College, Arundel Mills location. Call Dr. M. Linda Martinak at (410)777-2912 to register.

Fifth Annual SMILE Livestock Expo, June 26-28, 2009 at St. Mary's County Fairgrounds in Leonardtown, MD. Registration packets for livestock, horse and dog owners ages 8-21 years will be available in May. www.somarylansogood.com/events or call Susan McQuilkin at SMADC on (301)274-1922 for more information.

STATE AND FEDERAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS FOR THE FARMING COMMUNITY

The Calvert Soil Conservation District, in conjunction with the Calvert County Agriculture Commission, will be hosting an evening seminar Thursday, February 26, 2009. The seminar will concentrate on local, state, and federal incentive programs that are available to our county farmers. Presenters will be coming from the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. We will be discussing the current federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the upcoming revised state Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) which adds additional incentives to the federal program. Included in the discussions will be information on the new federal Farm Bill and changes to the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). The Soil Conservation District will present information on their equipment rental program and discuss additional local programs available to farmers.

The seminar will be held on the lower level of the Economic Development/Parks and Recreation building at 205 Main Street (brick building at the corner of Duke Street and Main Street). Times will be from 6:30 to 8:30 PM and refreshments will be provided. If you are interested in attending please call Jennifer Snoddy or Craig Mask at 410-535-1521 x-3. Come and learn about incentive and cost-share programs that can help you now and prepare you for the future.



Calvert County farmers inspect Soil Conservation District's new 4' No Till Drill



On-Farm Home Processing

By Lisa Laschalt, R.S., M.P.H., Calvert County Health Department

The Code of Maryland Annotated Regulations 10.15.03 limits the types of food available for sale at farmers markets, for vendors that are not licensed as an on-farm home processor, to fruit jams and jellies, certain fruit butters, and non-potentially hazardous baked goods. These foods must be naturally acidic, having a pH value below 4.6, or have a water activity less than 0.85. The Code of Maryland Annotated Regulations 10.15.04 addresses other products that farmers desire to produce, such as pickles, pickled beets, relishes, and herb vinegars. An On-Farm Home Processing license is available to farmers who want to produce certain products in their home or domestic kitchen located on the individual's farm. In order to obtain an On-Farm Home Processing license, an individual must attend a minimum of 8 hours of training in a course approved by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, which addresses sanitation, cross contamination control, and food security. The producer must have recipes approved by a process authority to ensure that the recipe produces food that is safe for consumption. The producer's water supply must pass potability testing, and an inspection by the State of Maryland, Division of Food Control must be completed. An individual cannot gain approval to manufacture the following products through an On-Farm Home Processing license: low-acid canned foods, cured or fermented foods, seafood products (with certain exceptions), apple cider or other juices, Grade A milk product or manufactured grade milk, and frozen desserts. To learn more about obtaining an On-Farm Home Processing license, please contact the State of Maryland, Division of Food Control at (410) 767-8400.

Value-Added Food Summit

By Veronica Cristo, Planning & Zoning

Growing fresh fruits and vegetables in Calvert County can sometimes be challenging, but the rules on selling them are not. Raw, unprocessed produce can be sold with minimal regulatory oversight; however, once a farmer looks to process and add value to a product, the regulations can quickly become overwhelming. The type of produce, how it is being processed, where it will be sold and who the end user is all change which regulations apply. One goal of the *Sustainable Agriculture Workgroup* is to help farmers identify which regulations apply to their situation - especially farmers looking to expand to a new market or add a new product.

The County held a first Value-Added Food Summit on October 9th with a goal of producing a comprehensive list of the various regulations that apply to value-added goods. Staff members from

various County agencies were able to sit down with officials from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Maryland Department of Agriculture to ask questions and address concerns.

As a result of the Calvert Value-Added Food Summit, Jody Menikheim from the MD Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene and Deanna Baldwin from the MD Dept. of Agriculture put together a chart on Processing & Selling Value-Added Food Products in Maryland. The chart is included as a special insert in this newsletter. It won't answer every question, but it's a start.



Resources

Calvert County Health Department <http://www.calverthealth.org/community/environmentalhealthservices>

■ Can address most of your value added questions. Call (443)532-5636 or email llaschalt@dhmh.state.md.us too.

MD Department of Health & Mental Hygiene <http://www.cha.state.md.us/ofpchs/html/new.html>

■ Information for Farmers and Farmers Markets

MD Dept. of Agriculture http://www.mda.state.md.us/feed-food_safety-grading/food_qual_assur/index.php

■ Maryland Egg Law and Guidelines for Small Egg Producers

Calvert Agriculture Website www.calvertag.com

■ General information about agriculture in Calvert including lists of local farm products, news, links and organizations

**Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
c/o Board of County Commissioners
175 Main Street
Prince Frederick, MD 20678**

Help the County Save Resources
and Benefit the Environment –
Request to receive this newsletter
electronically. Send your request to
cristova@co.cal.md.us and be sure
to include your full name. We will
email you a link every time a new
edition is produced. You can also
view current and past editions at
www.calvertag.com.



Joel Salatin to speak at Calvert Library Prince Frederick on March 19th

The truck that delivers Joel Salatin's farm products has a sign on it that says "On Delivery from Polyface Inc. Follow me to the Best Restaurants in Town." According to author Michael Pollan, that is pretty much the case. He says that most of the best chefs in Charlottesville, Virginia buy from Polyface Farm. The farm, located in Swoope, Virginia, produces about 30,000 dozen eggs, 12,000 broilers, 800 stewing hens, 50 beeves, 250 hogs, 800 turkeys and 500 rabbits a year on about 100 open acres, as reported in Pollan's book, the Omnivore's Dilemma.

Mr. Salatin raises his beef on grass, but that is only part of the story. His chickens help to fertilize the pasture. His hogs help to produce compost. Everyone works on Polyface Farm which relies on management-intensive grazing for its incredible productivity.

Polyface chicken, steaks, hams, and eggs can find their way from the farm to the consumer by five possible routes: direct sales from the farm, farmer's markets, metropolitan buying clubs, small shops in Staunton, VA and the panel truck which makes deliveries to restaurants every Thursday.

On Thursday, March 19 at 3:00 p.m. at the Calvert Library Prince Frederick, the Young Farmers are hosting a visit from Mr. Salatin, where he will talk about specific farming and marketing practices at work for him. At 7:00 p.m., Mr. Salatin will be the presenter at the Civil Discourse for a Sustainable Calvert series. He will speak to a broader audience about the economic, ecological, and ethical advantages of being a 'grass farmer' who sells directly to his customers.

Civil Discourse for a Sustainable Calvert is sponsored by All Saints Episcopal Church, Calvert County Family Network, Calvert Library, the College of Southern Maryland, the Community Mediation Center of Calvert County, and Friends of the Calvert Library.

Registration is requested. You can call 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862 or register through the library website at calvert.lib.md.us.

We hope you can join us for what promises to be a lively and dynamic presentation.

