

ANNAPOLIS, MD (July 17, 2023) – The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) held a much anticipated Nutrient Management plan writing summit on Monday, July 17 at Anne Arundel Community College to present the overview of the re-imagined and improved nutrient management program. Following a June 1st announcement by MDA of changes to the way plans are written as well as listening sessions held throughout the State in the weeks following, MDA and the University of Maryland (UMD) have made the joint decision to reevaluate and reframe how the program is managed. Farmer and industry input contributed greatly to this decision.

During the July 17 Summit, MDA shared goals and objectives including:

- Evolving the nutrient management plan model through industry input to adapt to modern farming practices and operations;
- Improving the plan writing process through cost-free plans available to farmers;
- Grow and support plan writers by increasing the emphasis on Farmer Training Certification (FTC) Program;
- Incentivize individuals and organizations to offer plan writing services throughout the state;
- UME will remain engaged in this program by continuing to offer free nutrient management plan support as in the past.

“Throughout this process tough decisions and conversations had to occur to get us to this point of creating a solid plan going forward,” said Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks. “I thank our industry and their representatives for providing critical input throughout the listening sessions. In addition, I want to thank the University for stepping up and addressing our concerns. We look forward to further partnership as this process moves forward with renewed and enhanced engagement through University of Maryland Extension.”

Maryland law requires all farmers grossing \$2,500 a year or more or livestock producers with 8,000 pounds or more of live animal weight to follow nutrient management plans when fertilizing crops and managing animal manure. Nutrient management plans specify how much fertilizer, manure or other nutrient sources may be safely applied to crops to achieve yields and prevent excess nutrients from impacting waterways.

Because of their complexity, these plans must be prepared by a certified University of Maryland specialist, certified private consultant, or farmer who is trained and certified by the department to prepare his or her own plan.

“I want to thank the Maryland Department of Agriculture for working with us on priority changes to the statewide nutrient management program,” said University of Maryland’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Dean Craig Beyrouy. “We are very encouraged by the progress that has been made to re-introduce University of Maryland plan writers so that we may continue to offer the support our Agricultural community has come to trust and rely upon. I’m thrilled that the University of Maryland Extension (UME) will administer this new program. They provide research-based education with a deep understanding of farmers’ operations and environmental needs and will be excellent stewards for this important work.”

Lastly, the Department announced a new 30-member Farmer Taskforce, convening in August to provide guidance to MDA and UMD regarding ways to improve the nutrient management plan to be more practical for farmers to implement. The Task Force’s recommendations will be considered by the Nutrient Management Advisory Committee.