

The Farm Bill and Maryland



The federal Farm Bill provides over \$31 million per year in conservation assistance through cost-share payments, rental payments, easement payments, or technical assistance provided to Maryland farmers. That funding helps farmers and ranchers be better stewards of Maryland's soil, woods, waters and wildlife, and it provides conservation and economic benefits throughout the state.

Working Lands – in 2018, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program provided nearly \$18 million for farmers in the state, and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) provided over \$1 million to aid Maryland farmers. The funds helped farmers put in place nutrient management strategies and adopt conservation practices like cover crops and conservation crop rotations. The 2017 contracts provided conservation benefits on over 23,000 acres of farm land in Maryland. Over the past five years, these two programs have put conservation practices and systems in place on over 100,000 acres in Maryland, representing the equivalent of about 5% of the state's 2 million acres of farmland.

Conservation Reserve Program – over 2,700 Maryland farms have Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, covering over 50,000 acres of land. The contracts provide \$11 million in annual rental payments to farmers. Most of the acres enrolled provide filter strips in fields and buffer strips to protect local streams and lakes and the Chesapeake Bay from runoff. Nearly 46,500 acres are part of the Maryland Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, which provides incentives for farmers to plant buffer strips along streams, restore wetlands and provide wildlife habitat, although that number has declined. Altogether, 95% of Maryland CRP acres are high value ('continuous signup') contracts like buffer strips, shelter belts, and wetlands. Nation-wide, only about one-third of CRP acres are in these special initiatives, so Maryland is doing far more to target CRP acres where they will do the most good.

Wetland and Farmland Easements – The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program provided over \$10 million from 2014 through 2018 to protect 1,879 acres of wetland and farmland in Maryland. Because of budget cuts for easements included in the 2014 Farm Bill, the number of wetland easements protected nationwide dropped dramatically.

Crop Insurance – Of the acres of Maryland crops insured under the federal crop insurance program, 97% are soybeans (46%), corn (37%), or wheat (14%), according to the USDA. About 78% of soybeans, 72% of corn, and 33% of wheat acres are enrolled in crop insurance in Maryland. Some farms also have whole-farm revenue insurance or nursery stock insurance under the program.

Izaak Walton League and Maryland

The Izaak Walton League of America was founded in 1922 to conserve outdoor America for future generations. The League's 54 founders, who were avid anglers, named the organization after Izaak Walton, 17th century author of *The Compleat Angler*, a classic book about the art and spirit of fishing. We are one of the earliest of America's conservation organizations, setting a course to defend wild America by changing public policy.

The Izaak Walton League has 13 local Chapters throughout Maryland, with nearly 5,000 active members. The League has been involved in agricultural policy since 1937, when a League resolution called for a national program to retire fragile fields in mountainous areas from agricultural use.