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Governor Hogan Announces COVID-19 Relief for Agriculture and Seafood Producers

December 29, 2020

State Has Now Provided More Than $9 Million For Farmers, Watermen, and Producers;
Part of More Than $600 Million In Emergency Economic Relief

At the direction of Governor Larry Hogan, the Maryland Departments of Agriculture (MDA) and Natural Resources (DNR) have now provided more than $9 million in COVID-19 relief funding to farmers, watermen, and producers.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented hardship for so many, and while Maryland’s farmers and producers are certainly no exception, they have continued to work hard every single day to support our food supply chain,” said Governor Hogan. “We remain strongly committed to helping Maryland’s agricultural community as we weather this storm together.”

Photo by Pete Worch

This relief is part of the more than $600 million in emergency economic relief that the state has announced during the COVID-19 pandemic. MDA’s Maryland Farmer COVID-19 Relief Fund granted nearly $5 million to farmers impacted by the pandemic. DNR has dedicated $3 million for direct payments to commercial, for-hire, aquaculture, and seafood processing operations whose 2020 revenue has suffered a loss of greater than 35% due to COVID-19, plus $1 million to fund seafood marketing and business support for individuals in the seafood industry.

“This year has been a challenge unlike any other, and that is especially true for the state’s food production businesses,” said MDA Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. “While we understand this money will not make everyone whole, it is the least we can do to provide some relief to the men and women who have worked throughout this public health crisis to ensure that we continue to have reliable access to a safe food supply.”

The Maryland Farmer COVID-19 Relief Program was announced by Governor Hogan on October 19. The program provided direct payments to contract poultry growers at a rate of $1,000 per poultry house (capped at five houses per farm). Growers whose flocks were depopulated due to disruptions related to COVID-19 were eligible for an additional $1,500 per house. The program also provided 15% bonus payments to any Maryland farmer who received funding from the federal Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 1 (CFAP1). This covered a wide range of commodities, including grain, livestock, dairy, and produce.

The Maryland Farmer COVID-19 Relief Program paid $1.99 million to poultry growers and $2.86 million in CFAP1 bonus payments. In total, the program dispersed $4.86 million to 1,363 Maryland farm families. MDA worked swiftly to review applications within seven days of receipt. Approved applications were forwarded to the comptroller’s office for payment.

DNR began its program November 4, and already more than $330,000 has been paid out in the first round of funding. To date, the state received more 440 applications for relief to the seafood industry, and about 340 have already been approved; the department will continue its outreach until the application deadline of February 28, 2021. Additional money will be distributed to grantees in spring 2021.

“This funding provides much needed relief to help eligible individuals in the seafood industry get through these tough market conditions,” DNR Secretary Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio said. “With the governor’s leadership and our strong federal partnerships, we have worked to make the application process as seamless as possible for those who need it. We will continue working with industry on long-term strategies to recover and strengthen Maryland’s markets post-pandemic.”

Visit MDA and DNR online for more information on the agencies’ response to COVID-19.

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