

Ag-Tourism Signing Program

This program is currently under review but applications are being processed

Introduction

The Maryland State Highway Administration's (SHA) Office of Traffic & Safety (OOTs), in conjunction with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED), has developed the following guidelines for the application, fabrication, installation and maintenance of Ag-Tourism highway signs along Maryland state maintained roadways. The program is intended to notify drivers of Ag-Tourism destinations in Maryland. Ag-Tourism highway signs are special signs in the interest of travelers and are limited to conventional roads.

MDA and the SHA have approved the Ag-Tourism highway sign design shown in Figure 1 below. The costs for new and replacement signs will be borne by the Ag-Tourism Facilities that meet the program criteria and are approved for signing.

Figure 1 –Ag-Tourism Mainline Sign



Definitions

An *Ag-Tourism Facility*, as defined under this program, is an agricultural destination located on a working farm that is open to random visitation by customers and tourists, has on-site sale of local agricultural products, has established an educational tour that can be provided by a knowledgeable guide upon request and/or has public events in order to qualify for signing along a Maryland state highway.

An *Educational Tour* is a tour of an Ag-Tourism Facility, educational and informative in nature, and guided by a knowledgeable employee of the Facility upon request or in accordance with a publicly-available schedule, or self-guided with sufficient interpretive signing and information to provide clear instruction and guidance throughout the area of the Facility open to the public.

A *Public Event* is an event, such as a festival, fair or workshop, which is hosted on an Ag-Tourism Facility's premises, where knowledgeable staff is on-site and able to answer Facility-related questions during all hours the Facility is open to the public. The public events must take place for a minimum of six (6) hours, in order to be used as an eligibility requirement for signing along Maryland state highways.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for signing along the Maryland state highway nearest to the Facility, the destination must be recognized by the SHA and the MDA as an Ag-Tourism Facility and must meet the following criteria:

1. The location shall certify in writing that the Facility is in full compliance with all applicable Federal, State and local laws, rules and ordinances, including the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and all applicable license and permit requirements; and
2. The Ag-Tourism Facility shall:
 - a. Be open for random visitation by customers and tourists a minimum of six (6) months of the year, for at least four (4) days per week and for at least six (6) hours per day; and
 - b. Establish the following:
 - i. An educational tour; or
 - ii. Scheduled public events (minimum of three (3) per year with a minimum duration of six (6) hours each); and
 - c. Have a permanent sign posted on-site in a conspicuous and prominent location that is visible to customers entering the Facility and states the name of the Facility; and
 - d. Have a sign(s) posted in a conspicuous location stating:
 - i. The days and hours of operation; and
 - ii. If educational tours are provided, language conveying that they are available upon request; and
 - e. Provide the following:
 - i. On-site public restroom facilities; and
 - ii. Drinking water suitable for public consumption; and
 - iii. A telephone in case of emergencies; and
 - f. Offer samples and/or sales of local agricultural products; and
 - g. Be able to accommodate customers in a permanent, all-weather structure, and have adequate on-site parking available within a short walking distance of the structure; and
3. **If the Facility's driveway/entrance is not directly along a state roadway, the Facility must have trailblazer signs installed along the local road network. The trailblazer sign must be approved by the local jurisdiction and installed prior to requesting signs along a Maryland state roadway.**

Application

The Ag-Tourism Signing Program Application must be completed by an Ag-Tourism Facility in order to be considered for signing along Maryland state highways.

The Application must be submitted with the associated \$250 Application Fee, payable to the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The check should identify the name of the specific Ag-Tourism Facility and the county of jurisdiction, and be mailed to:

**Maryland Department of Agriculture
Marketing and Agribusiness Development
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401**

Application packages must include the following information:

Ag-Tourism Facility with Driveway/Entrance Located Directly Along A State Highway:

- \$250 Application Fee; and
- Complete Application with Signed Certification.

Ag-Tourism Facility with Driveway/Entrance NOT Located Directly Along A State Highway:

- \$250 Application Fee; and
- Complete Application with Signed Certification; and
- A written approval letter from the County or Municipality where the Facility is located stating that the local jurisdiction is committed to installing and maintaining trailblazer signs located along the local roadway network. **Please note that an application will not be reviewed without this information and signs will not be installed along the state highway system until trailblazer signs are installed along the local roadway system.**

Ag-Tourism Signing Program Costs

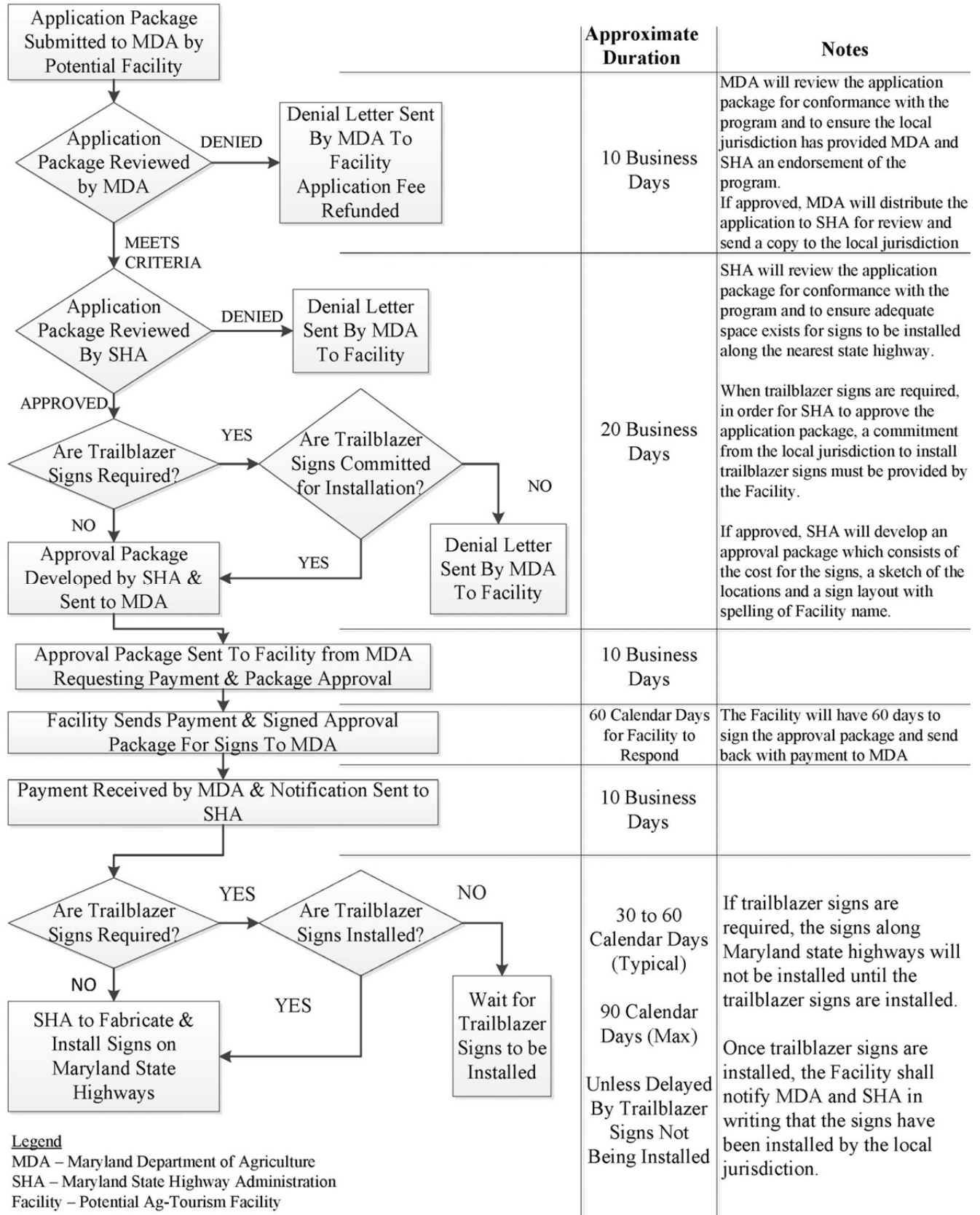
If an Ag-Tourism Application is approved by MDA and SHA, the Ag-Tourism Facility will be responsible for the cost of the signs to be installed along the Maryland state highway. Please see below for the current program costs:

	Sign Fabrication	Sign Installation	Total
Mainline Sign (Large) 108"x60"	\$496.00	\$1,160.00	\$1,656.00
Mainline Sign (Small) 84"x40"	\$369.50	\$1,160.00	\$1,529.50
Sign Modification (Overlay)	\$100.00	\$200.00	\$300.00
Application Fee	-	-	\$250.00
Re-Application Fee	-	-	\$100.00

Application Review & Approval Process

Please see flowchart on page 4 for the Ag-Tourism Signing Program Application Review, Approval and Installation Process.

Ag-Tourism Signing Program Application Review, Approval & Installation Process



Legend

MDA – Maryland Department of Agriculture
 SHA – Maryland State Highway Administration
 Facility – Potential Ag-Tourism Facility

Ag-Tourism Sign Guidelines

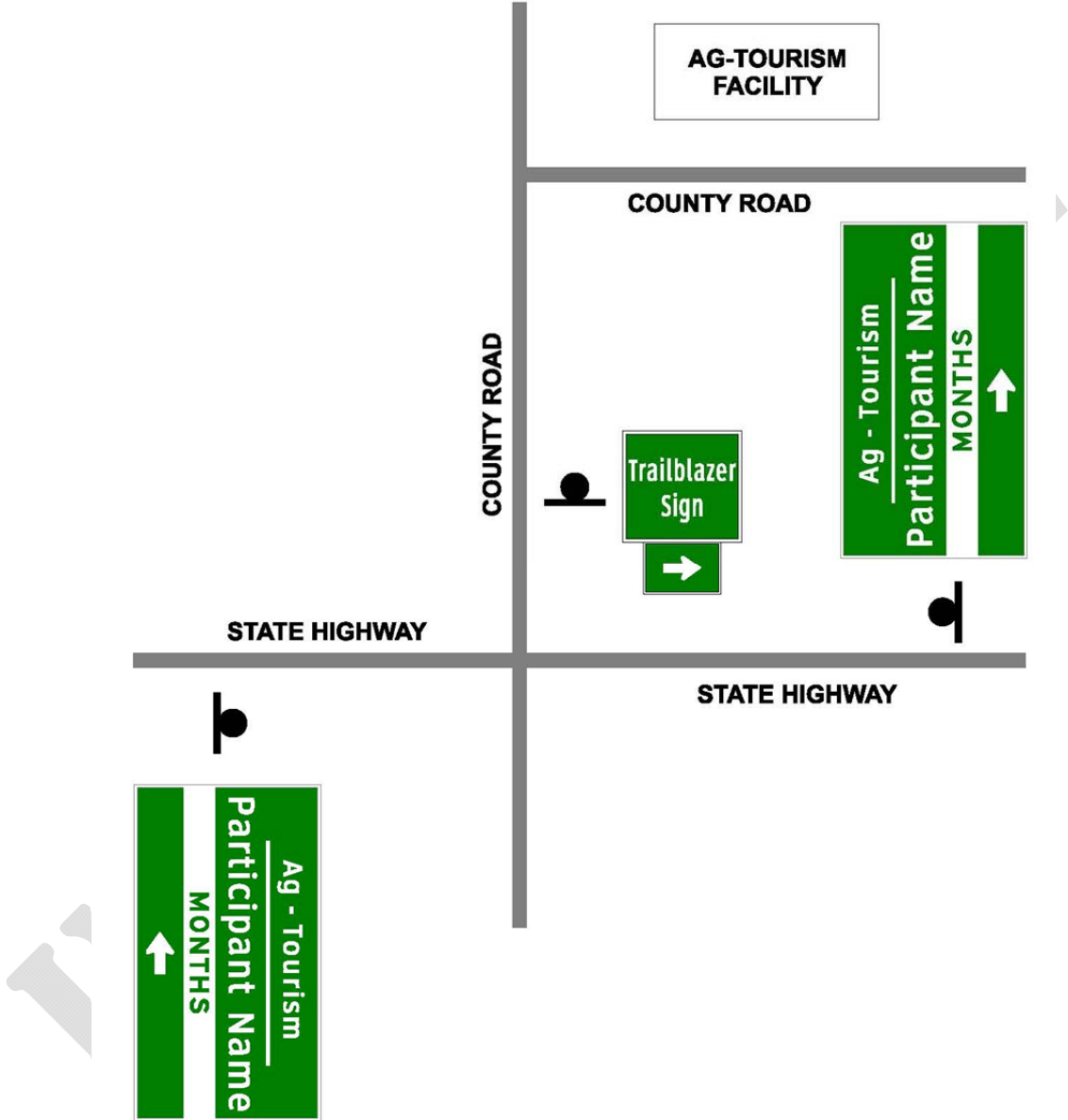
The following guidelines apply to the fabrication, installation and maintenance of Ag-Tourism highway signs along Maryland state highways:

1. Ag-Tourism Signs shall not be placed along expressways, freeways or interstate highways.
2. The Facility will only be signed along one Maryland state highway. One Mainline Ag-Tourism Sign will be installed for each direction of travel along the Maryland state highway nearest to the Facility, except where the nearest Maryland state highway is an expressway, freeway or an interstate highway. SHA will determine the nearest intersection to the facility with a Maryland state highway. If the Ag-Tourism Facility has a driveway/entrance located directly along a Maryland State Highway, signs will only be installed in advance of the driveway/entrance to the Facility.
3. The size of the signs along Maryland state highways will be determined by SHA and is based on the prevailing speed along the road in order to meet federal and state requirements. The smaller mainline sign will be installed along highways with a prevailing speed below 40 MPH. The larger mainline sign will be installed along highways with a prevailing speed greater than or equal to 40 MPH. Trailblazer signs are to be installed along County or Municipality roadways by the local jurisdiction, as necessary, where a change in direction is required to access the Ag-Tourism Facility. Figure 2 illustrates an example of sign placement.
4. Mainline signs will display the name of the Facility, months of operation, and a directional arrow. The name of the Facility on the mainline sign will be limited to one (1) line of text with a maximum length of approximately twelve (12) characters including spaces and punctuation. Mileage will be included on the sign for Facilities located more than 1 mile from the Maryland state highway.
5. Signs along Maryland state highways will be installed and maintained by SHA Forces.
6. Signs along County or Municipal roadways are independent from this state Ag-Tourism program and will be installed and maintained by the County or Municipality jurisdiction in accordance with their guidelines.
7. When the driveway/entrance to an Ag-Tourism Facility is not located directly along a Maryland state highway, signs will not be installed along the Maryland state highway until the installation of the trailblazer signs along the County or Municipal roadways has been completed.
8. All signs installed along Maryland state roadways shall be located within SHA rights-of-way. If right-of-way is not available the Ag-Tourism application will be denied.
9. If, at any time, a particular Ag-Tourism Facility ceases to be functional, MDA will formally notify SHA OOTS TEDD in writing so that the signs may be removed. SHA District Traffic and the County or Municipality will be included on all such correspondence.
10. All Ag-Tourism Signs along Maryland state roadways require MDA and SHA approval.

11. In the event that a sign is damaged or missing, the cost for replacement of the sign may be borne by the Ag-Tourism Facility.
12. An example of an Ag-Tourism mainline sign for installation along a Maryland state highway is shown in Figure 1.
13. The Ag-Tourism Facility shall not attach supplemental signs or flyers to signs located along Maryland state highways.
14. If SHA determines that a sign replacement or modification is necessary, a new application may be required. At that time, the Facility will be required to meet all current program criteria and requirements.
15. If a participating Ag-Tourism Facility foresees a change in ownership, the Facility shall notify MDA so that sign removal can be scheduled. If the new owner wishes to retain the existing signs, the new owner shall provide written notice to the MDA within 30 calendar days of the recorded transfer of ownership date. To retain his or her predecessor's signs, the new owner is required to submit a new application with an associated re-application fee of \$100 to MDA within 30 calendar days of the recorded transfer of ownership date. Where sign message modifications (overlays) are necessary due to changes in the Facility name and/or months of operation, the Facility owner shall be responsible for the associated costs. The Ag-Tourism Facility is required to meet all current program criteria and requirements.
16. Should MDA or SHA find that a participating Ag-Tourism Facility is not in compliance with the Ag-Tourism requirements herein, MDA must notify the Ag-Tourism Facility that it will be given 30 calendar days to bring the Facility into compliance or the Facility will have their Ag-Tourism signs removed. If the signs are removed and the Facility applies for reinstatement, the request will be handled in the same manner as a request by a new applicant. If MDA or SHA determines that a Facility is not in compliance twice within a two year period, the Facility will have their Ag-Tourism signs permanently removed and the Facility may not reapply under the same ownership. In the event that an Ag-Tourism Facility is removed from the program, MDA will not be required to refund any program costs paid by the Facility.
17. SHA will make a reasonable effort to maintain all Ag-Tourism signs however, SHA reserves the right to:
 - a. Cover, relocate, or remove any Ag-Tourism signs for maintenance or construction operations, or when deemed to be in the best interest of SHA or the traveling public, without advance notice; and
 - b. Remove signs when roadway improvements or changes in the roadway cross-section or configuration will no longer accommodate the existing signs; and
 - c. Relocate or remove Ag-Tourism signs if a need for a higher-priority regulatory, warning, guide, supplemental, service, or any other sign is identified.
18. MDA and SHA reserve the right to terminate this program or any Agreement for Ag-Tourism signs, or any portion thereof, by furnishing the Ag-Tourism Facility with written notice of such intent not less than 30 calendar days prior to the termination.

- 19. MDA and SHA reserve the right to waive, increase and/or reduce the application fees in certain, limited instances.
- 20. If signs are permanently removed for any reason, the signs will be available for pickup by the Facility from an SHA office or shop.

Figure 2 – Sample Sign Placement



**Maryland State Highway Administration and Maryland Department of Agriculture
Ag-Tourism Signing Program Application**

(Please print)

CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME OF APPLICANT

TITLE

COMPANY

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/TOWN

COUNTY

STATE

ZIP

TELEPHONE

FAX

E-MAIL

FACILITY WEB ADDRESS

AG-TOURISM FACILITY LOCATION DATA

NAME OF AG-TOURISM FACILITY AS IT APPEARS ON YOUR SITE

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/TOWN

COUNTY

STATE

ZIP

NEAREST STATE ROUTE (MD 2, US 1)

BILLING INFORMATION *(If all requirements are met, you will be sent an approval package with a request for payment prior to installation of signs)*

BILL TO

TITLE/POSITION

BILLING ADDRESS

CITY/TOWN

COUNTY

STATE

ZIP

FED ID

PHONE NUMBER

FAX NUMBER

EMAIL ADDRESS

Ag-Tourism Facility Name: _____

AG-TOURISM FACILITY CRITERIA

MONTHS OPEN:
(i.e.: May – September) _____

DAYS/HOURS OPEN:
(i.e.: Monday: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm)

Sunday: _____

Monday: _____

Tuesday: _____

Wednesday: _____

Thursday: _____

Friday: _____

Saturday: _____

Please circle either “yes” or “no” for **all** items listed below:

Open at least 6 months annually	yes	no
Open to public at least 4 days per week	yes	no
Open to public at least 6 hrs per day – all activities available during hours of operation	yes	no
On-Site Parking available within short walking distance of Ag-Tourism Facility	yes	no
Public Restrooms and drinking water access	yes	no
Telephone available in case of emergency	yes	no
Have an educational tour available upon request completed by a knowledgeable employee	yes	no
Have on-site staff, able to answer questions, during all hours open to the public	yes	no
Offer samples and/or sales of local agricultural products	yes	no
Have a permanent all weather facility provided for customers	yes	no
Have a permanent sign posted on-site in a conspicuous and prominent location that is visible to customers entering the facility which states the name of the facility	yes	no
Have a permanent sign posted on-site with the days and hours of operation and notification of educational tour (if provided)	yes	no
Written approval from County or Municipality attached	yes	no
Host public events (see note below)	yes	no

Note: *In order to qualify the Facility must provide an educational tour, or host three (3) public events per year which are a minimum of six (6) hours in duration. Include schedule of public events as an attachment.*

IMPORTANT NOTE: In order for your application to be approved for participation in this program, **all criteria must be met.** If all criteria are not met, your application will be denied.

All applications will be reviewed and verified by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the State Highway Administration (SHA) which are subject to all Federal, State, County and City/Town regulations. If, during the life of this program, any Acts are passed or Regulations adopted which affect the rights herein granted, the said Acts and Regulations shall be applicable to this program from the date on which they come into force.

Ag-Tourism Facility Name: _____

CERTIFICATION

I certify that the above statements are true and correct and that I will inform the Department of Agriculture of any changes to the above indicated information that may affect the applicability of the sign and/or sign messages within 30 calendar days of the change. Furthermore, I certify that the subject Ag-Tourism facility is in full compliance with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws, rules and ordinances, including the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and all applicable license and permit requirements.

Signed: (Applicant) _____ Date: _____

Falsification of the above statements will result in the Denial or Revocation of this Application.

The Application must be submitted with the associated \$250 Application Fee, payable to the ***Maryland Department of Agriculture***. The check should identify the name of the specific Ag-Tourism facility and the County, and be mailed to:

Maryland Department of Agriculture
Marketing and Agribusiness Development
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401
Attention: Ag-Tourism Signing Program