

# Maryland Department of Agriculture Pivots Toward a More Options-Driven Nutrient Management Plan Writing Program

*Maryland Department of Agriculture*

**Annapolis, MD (June 1, 2023)** - The Maryland Department of Agriculture today announced a shift in its Nutrient Management Plan Writing Program that will focus on a new approach to education, training, and farmer empowerment. The decision to move to this new options-rich model comes as a greater demand for plan writing has increased following the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Maryland Department of Agriculture and the University of Maryland have enjoyed a long-standing partnership regarding Nutrient Management Plan writing and that will continue with this new program,” said Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks. “In addition to new incentives for farmers, this program will align with Chesapeake Bay goals while giving Maryland farmers the tools they need to succeed as strong stewards of the environment.”

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. Driven by input from industry, the nutrient plan writing program will expand Maryland farmers' access to nutrient management plan writers and plan writing services, helping farmers meet their environmental stewardship needs and grow compliance with statewide regulations.

The transition is anchored by a valued partnership and educational and training expertise provided by the University of Maryland's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, access to new, beneficial cost-share programs and plan-writing services offered by industry professionals.

The new program features a progressive approach that includes the following:

- Access to beneficial cost-share programs that will provide partial funding to all eligible farmers in Maryland to access plan-writing services from industry professionals;
- Opportunities and workshops to help nutrient management advisors become aware of plan writing employment through the private sector;

- Assisting current University of Maryland planners obtain business licenses to write plans privately;
- MDA funded UMD specialists providing expanded nutrient management plan writing workshops across the state for ALL Maryland farmers (underserved, small, medium, and large). Support may also be provided to write nutrient management plans for smaller operations;
- New opportunities for Maryland-based agricultural organizations to build alliances with privatized nutrient management planning services.

“The time is right to privatize and move in the direction that the department envisioned years ago, and we are supportive of this decision,” said University of Maryland’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Dean Craig Beyroudy. “As is our role and duty as a land-grant institution, AGNR is highly motivated to stay involved and help plan writers and producers with nutrient management education, tools, and advice.”

“We would like to recognize the University of Maryland’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and its Department of Environmental Science and Technology for their success and contributions over the years,” said Atticks. “We look forward to building upon their strong foundation to take this already successful program to new heights.”

For a list of frequently asked questions related to the future of this program please visit the Maryland Department of Agriculture’s website at [mda.maryland.gov](http://mda.maryland.gov).