

# A Local Government Guide to the Chesapeake Bay

## UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING YOUR AGRICULTURAL ALLIES

A Local Government Guide to the Chesapeake Bay is an eleven-module series created to support decision making by local officials. As a local leader, your decisions set the course for your community. Your actions determine the health and vitality of your jurisdiction, as well as that of local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. You can achieve win-win outcomes by prioritizing local economic development, infrastructure resiliency, public health, and education while also protecting your environment. This fact sheet accompanies a module about agriculture, including how to work with and support your local farmers.

### YOUR AGRICULTURAL ALLIES

Agriculture is responsible for 40% of the nitrogen, 45% of the phosphorous, and 62% of the sediment entering the Chesapeake Bay annually<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, farmers in your community present a sizeable opportunity to improve the health of your local waterways. Farmers also have many positive impacts within your community.



According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, agricultural products sold in the Bay watershed states totals **\$21.8 billion** per year. Farms employ over **184,000** people in the watershed states<sup>1</sup>.



Food insecurity disproportionately affects populations that are minority, immigrant, rural, and economically vulnerable. Local agriculture can improve access to healthy foods.



Tax revenue from the agriculture industry can be substantial. Since farms are often on large tracts of land, they contribute financially to local school systems and other infrastructure. In addition, **48%** of Americans surveyed in 2020 would choose a rural area or town if they could live anywhere.



More than **65%** of school food authorities in the US have some sort of “farm to school” program. These programs provide healthy foods to schools and introduce younger generations to farming<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>[2017 Census of Agriculture](#)    <sup>2</sup>[Farm to School Census](#)

### SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE

You can support farmers and maximize benefits to your community.

- ✓ Slow or reverse farmland conversion with zoning and ordinances
- ✓ Partner with farmers, soil and water conservation districts, and others
- ✓ Support funding for resilient agriculture
- ✓ Support farmer's markets and other opportunities for local farmers
- ✓ Champion programs for local agriculture at food banks and schools



Photos by W. Parson (Chesapeake Bay Program)

# PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY

## WHAT YOU CAN DO



**Connect with and act as liaison** between farmers, technical service providers, nonprofits, and funders.

- Consider hosting a networking breakfast or highlighting a sustainable farm in your municipal newsletters.



**Champion the connection between clean water and agriculture.**

Appeal to your state or the federal government to support farmers.



**Collaborate towards mutual wins** like using agricultural BMPs to meet your community's storm water management permitting requirements.

- Learn about the Revolving Water Fund: <https://www.revolvingwaterfund.com/>
- Visit Wetlands Work (<https://www.wetlandswork.org/>) to see programs that help farmers restore wetlands on their properties, including funding sources.

## A FEW RESOURCES

Beyond this module, here are a few other resources you may find useful.

VA Cooperative Extension

<https://ext.vt.edu>

Find and use tools, information, and subject matter expertise to help you support local farmers.

American Farmland Trust's Farms Under Threat

<http://bit.ly/FarmsUnderThreat>

Read how to plan for and protect agricultural lands.

Chesapeake Bay Commission's Boots on the Ground Presentation

<https://bit.ly/CBC-BootsOnTheGround>

View the slides for information on agricultural technical assistance and funding.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Farm Forward Report

<https://bit.ly/FarmForwardReport>

Read the PDF for information on the role farms can play in improving water quality, mitigating climate change, and supporting local economies.