



Agriculture

RECOMMENDED FY26 BUDGET

\$1,532,515

FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS

5.90

 MIKE SCHEFFEL, DIRECTOR

MISSION STATEMENT




The Office of Agriculture (OAG) was created in 2016 and exists to promote agriculture as a viable component of the County's economic sector, as well as to preserve farmland as a resource for future agricultural production. The goal of the OAG is to promote Montgomery County as a leader in the agricultural industry and strengthen the agricultural economy by providing support to our farm community and working to educate our residents.

BUDGET OVERVIEW



The total recommended FY26 Operating Budget for the Office of Agriculture is \$1,532,515, an increase of \$76,563 or 5.26 percent from the FY25 Approved Budget of \$1,455,952. Personnel Costs comprise 63.24 percent of the budget for ten full-time position(s) and no part-time position(s), and a total of 5.90 FTEs. Total FTEs may include workforce charged to or from other departments or funds. Operating Expenses account for the remaining 36.76 percent of the FY26 budget.

COUNTY PRIORITY OUTCOMES

While this program area supports all seven of the County Executive's Priority Outcomes, the following are emphasized:

-  **Thriving Youth and Families**
-  **A Growing Economy**
-  **A Greener County**

INITIATIVES

-  The OAG recently completed building its Composting Education Hub at the Agricultural History Farm Park. This initiative was done in partnership with the Institute for Local Self Reliance and University of Maryland Extension Master Gardeners. The project goals include increasing on farm composting within the County for the purpose of generating compost, increase access to compost for agricultural producers, reducing reliance on and limit the use of fertilizers, improve soil quality and health, encourage waste management and permaculture business development, increase rainwater absorption, reduce municipal food waste and diverting food waste from landfills.
-  Moco Microhub Cold Storage - The MoCo Microhub was created in partnership between the OAG and the Montgomery County Food Council (who obtained a grant to fund the purchase of the cold storage unit). The unit which will be managed

and maintained by the OAG will support small county farms with aggregation and storage of their products after harvesting before distribution to food programs for residents, including farm to school, farm to table, and farm to foodbanks.

- ★ The OAG submitted a high tunnel policy reform which eliminated the permit fee and the need for a building permit on non-agriculturally assessed properties. This initiative has made it considerably easier and less expensive for urban and suburban growers, particularly in historically disadvantaged and low-income areas, to utilize high tunnels for food production. As a result, it is expected to boost racial equity in agriculture, increase local food production, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with food transport. Moreover, it enhances urban access to nutritious food, improving customer satisfaction and positively contributing to the community's health and environmental sustainability.

PROGRAM CONTACTS

Contact Jacqueline Arnold of the Office of Agriculture at 301-590-2859 or Natasha Joseph-Wilkerson of the Office of Management and Budget at 240-773-0052 for more information regarding this department's operating budget.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

✧ Agricultural Services

The Office of Agriculture (OAG) provides the following services: implement agricultural policies and programs; provide financial and technical assistance to farmers; manage agricultural education programs; provide financial and staff support to its partner agencies; serve as a liaison between the Executive Branch and the agricultural community via the Agricultural Advisory, Agricultural Preservation, and Montgomery County Farm Bureau Boards; oversee various land preservation programs; co-sponsor farmers' markets, an annual farm tour, and other activities that promote agricultural businesses and products; and provide mentoring and specialized business training programs. Additionally, OAG collaborates with its partner agencies, which are all co-located at the Agricultural History Farm Park in Derwood to provide seamless one-stop client interactions and program offerings. These Federal, State, and local partners include the University of Maryland-Extension, the Montgomery Soil Conservation District, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Farm Service Agency.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimated FY25	Target FY26	Target FY27
Technical assistance contacts with farmers	1,964	1,534	1,600	1,600	1,600
Acres of land under easements inspected by Agricultural Services	2,481	5,363	5,363	5,363	5,363
Percent of easement acres under most restrictive easement disallowing development	34%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Percent of participants who learned or benefitted from Agricultural Services event, training, or farm tour	100%	92%	100%	100%	100%

FY26 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY25 Approved	995,736	5.00
Increase Cost: Three Percent Inflationary Adjustment to Non-Profit Service Provider Contracts	3,584	0.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	45,782	0.00
FY26 Recommended	1,045,102	5.00

✧ Soil Conservation

This program is comprised of staff and other resources from Federal, State, and local agricultural agencies. It provides technical and outreach educational assistance to farmers/rural landowners for implementing best management and conservation practices. The Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) assists the County to achieve the nationally mandated, State-assigned, Rural MS4 Permit - Chesapeake Bay Nutrient Diet - Watershed Implementation Program (WIP-III) goals. Failure to achieve the WIP-III goals will likely result in the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) instituting the backstop measure which will negatively impact the County and the agricultural community by denying all permits moving forward and harming the County's rural economy/infrastructure with increased regulatory requirements. In addition, the district provides technical assistance to the County with technical reviews and regulatory requirements associated with county stormwater management facility retrofit projects associated with the County's MS4 permit requirements regulated by the EPA and State of Maryland.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimated FY25	Target FY26	Target FY27
Soil conservation contacts with farmers and landowners to provide technical assistance	1,113	8,141	8,000	8,000	8,000
Water quality plans completed	96	72	75	75	75
Percent of interagency site visits coordinated within one business day of agricultural complaint	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

FY26 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY25 Approved	187,546	0.90
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	10,031	0.00
FY26 Recommended	197,577	0.90

University of Maryland Extension (UME)

The Montgomery County Extension Office serves as the non-formal outreach and education arm of the University of Maryland. This agency is funded cooperatively through local, State, and Federal governments to make non-formal education accessible to all Montgomery County residents. Adults, families, and youth are target audiences. Extension programs serve across four major program areas: Agriculture and Food Systems; Family and Consumer Science; Environment and Natural Resources; and 4-H Positive Youth Development. Educational programs for farmers include raising crops and livestock, protecting the environment through good agriculture practices (GAP) and nutrient management advising and plan writing, farm and business management, reducing farm stress (financial, emotional, and physical wellbeing), marketing commodities, and integrated pest management (IPM). Programs for families include home horticulture, financial literacy, and nutrition education. 4-H youth programs focus on healthy living and nutrition, leadership development, civic engagement, public speaking, and agricultural programs to learn how to care for, raise, and show livestock. The Close Encounters with Agriculture (CEWA) program engages over 3,000 4th grade students annually, from across Montgomery County, to learn about agriculture through a hands-on learning experience at the Agricultural History Farm Park. Extension faculty and staff engage and rely upon a large network of over 2,000 volunteers to support facilitation of program delivery. Over 100,000 information requests are received annually, and UME faculty, staff, and volunteers help to field and respond to these inquiries with research-based solutions. Outreach education efforts are facilitated through one-on-one consultations, telephone assistance, responses to internet inquiries, classes and workshops, field days, website, radio, television, and print media publications.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimated FY25	Target FY26	Target FY27
Nutrient management plans completed	75	25	50	75	75

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimated FY25	Target FY26	Target FY27
4-H youth development program participants	507	464	500	500	500
Average pre- to post-test score increase of Close Encounters with Agriculture participants on agriculture, nutrition, and the environment	49%	48%	50%	50%	50%
Percent of Food Supplement Nutrition Education youth participants who try new healthy food	42%	77%	77%	77%	77%
Percent of participants who purchase produce they learn about from Food Supplement Nutrition Education farmers market programming	92%	29%	29%	29%	29%
FY26 Recommended Changes			Expenditures		FTEs
FY25 Approved			272,670		0.00
Increase Cost: University of Maryland Extension (UME) FY26 Annualization Costs			17,166		0.00
FY26 Recommended			289,836		0.00

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY24	Budget FY25	Estimate FY25	Recommended FY26	%Chg Bud/Rec
COUNTY GENERAL FUND					
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Wages	676,521	715,014	700,994	756,692	5.8 %
Employee Benefits	185,324	192,254	194,861	212,419	10.5 %
County General Fund Personnel Costs	861,845	907,268	895,855	969,111	6.8 %
Operating Expenses	487,849	548,684	548,642	563,404	2.7 %
County General Fund Expenditures	1,349,694	1,455,952	1,444,497	1,532,515	5.3 %
PERSONNEL					
Full-Time	10	10	10	10	—
Part-Time	0	0	0	0	—
FTEs	5.90	5.90	5.90	5.90	—
REVENUES					
Other Intergovernmental	(3,688)	63,064	63,064	80,152	27.1 %
Miscellaneous Revenues	13,705	0	0	0	—
Other Licenses and Permits	(100)	0	0	0	—
County General Fund Revenues	9,917	63,064	63,064	80,152	27.1 %

GRANT FUND - MCG

EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Wages	0	0	0	0	—
Employee Benefits	0	0	0	0	—
Grant Fund - MCG Personnel Costs	0	0	0	0	—
Grant Fund - MCG Expenditures	0	0	0	0	—
PERSONNEL					
Full-Time	0	0	0	0	—
Part-Time	0	0	0	0	—

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY24	Budget FY25	Estimate FY25	Recommended FY26	%Chg Bud/Rec
FTEs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	—
REVENUES					
Investment Income	8,508	0	0	0	—
Miscellaneous Revenues	63,866	0	0	0	—
Grant Fund - MCG Revenues	72,374	0	0	0	—

DEPARTMENT TOTALS

Total Expenditures	1,349,694	1,455,952	1,444,497	1,532,515	5.3 %
Total Full-Time Positions	10	10	10	10	—
Total Part-Time Positions	0	0	0	0	—
Total FTEs	5.90	5.90	5.90	5.90	—
Total Revenues	82,291	63,064	63,064	80,152	27.1 %

FY26 RECOMMENDED CHANGES

	Expenditures	FTEs
COUNTY GENERAL FUND		
	FY25 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION	1,455,952 5.90
<u>Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)</u>		
Increase Cost: FY26 Compensation Adjustment	39,977	0.00
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY25 Compensation Increases	18,635	0.00
Increase Cost: University of Maryland Extension (UME) FY26 Annualization Costs [University of Maryland Extension (UME)]	17,166	0.00
Increase Cost: Motor Pool Adjustment	4,883	0.00
Increase Cost: Three Percent Inflationary Adjustment to Non-Profit Service Provider Contracts [Agricultural Services]	3,584	0.00
Increase Cost: Retirement Adjustment	2,664	0.00
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY25 Personnel Costs	567	0.00
Decrease Cost: Printing and Mail Adjustment	(10,913)	0.00
	FY26 RECOMMENDED	1,532,515 5.90

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Name	FY25 APPR Expenditures	FY25 APPR FTEs	FY26 REC Expenditures	FY26 REC FTEs
Agricultural Services	995,736	5.00	1,045,102	5.00
Soil Conservation	187,546	0.90	197,577	0.90
University of Maryland Extension (UME)	272,670	0.00	289,836	0.00
Total	1,455,952	5.90	1,532,515	5.90

CHARGES TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Charged Department	Charged Fund	FY25 Total\$	FY25 FTEs	FY26 Total\$	FY26 FTEs
COUNTY GENERAL FUND					
Environmental Protection	Water Quality Protection	587,973	3.10	623,981	3.10
CIP	Capital Fund	137,646	1.00	142,443	1.00
Total		725,619	4.10	766,424	4.10

FUNDING PARAMETER ITEMS

CE RECOMMENDED (\$000S)

Title	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31
COUNTY GENERAL FUND						
EXPENDITURES						
FY26 Recommended	1,533	1,533	1,533	1,533	1,533	1,533
No inflation or compensation change is included in outyear projections.						
University of Maryland Extension (UME) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	0	19	39	61	86	86
Annualization of County portion of funding for the University of Maryland Extension (UME) employees.						
Labor Contracts	0	2	2	2	2	2
These figures represent the estimated annualized cost of general wage adjustments, service increments, and other negotiated items.						
Subtotal Expenditures	1,533	1,554	1,574	1,596	1,621	1,621