



Agriculture

RECOMMENDED FY27 BUDGET

\$1,612,814

FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS

5.90

MIKE SCHEFFEL, DIRECTOR

MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Agriculture's mission is dedicated to advancing Montgomery County as a regional and national leader in agriculture. We champion the agricultural industry by preserving farmland for future generations, supporting the success and resilience of our farm community, and fostering public awareness of agriculture's vital role in our economy, environment, and quality of life. Through strategic partnerships, education, and advocacy, we work to ensure agriculture remains a thriving and integral part of the County's future.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The total recommended FY27 Operating Budget for the Office of Agriculture is \$1,612,814, an increase of \$80,299 or 5.24 percent from the FY26 Approved Budget of \$1,532,515. Personnel Costs comprise 63.05 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 seasonal or temporary positions and may also reflect workforce charged to or from other departments or funds. Operating Expenses account for the remaining 36.95 percent of the FY27 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

- Developing a comprehensive plan to establish a Farm Incubator program at the Agricultural History Farm Park. This initiative is designed to create meaningful opportunities for beginning farmers, including those from historically underserved communities. The Farm Incubator program will provide access to land, shared equipment, mentorship, hands-on training, and other essential resources to support the successful launch and growth of new farm enterprises.
- Developing an outreach strategy to personally engage with farmers of color ahead of the next USDA Agricultural Census in 2027. The office will support and assist under served communities to ensure their representation in the upcoming census.

INNOVATIONS AND PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS

☀️ Transitioned to a more reliable broadband system in order to improve productivity and limit downtime.

PROGRAM CONTACTS

Contact Jacqueline Arnold of the Office of Agriculture at 301-590-2859 or Seamus McNamara of the Office of Management and Budget at 240-777-2755 for more information regarding this department's operating budget.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

☀️ Agricultural Services

The Office of Agriculture (OAG) supports and promotes Montgomery County's agricultural industry through a wide range of services. These include implementing agricultural policies and programs, providing financial and technical assistance to farmers, managing agricultural education initiatives, and supporting partner agencies with funding and staffing. OAG also serves as a liaison between the Executive Branch and the agricultural community through its work with the Agricultural Advisory Committee, Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, and the Montgomery County Farm Bureau.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY24	Actual FY25	Estimated FY26	Target FY27	Target FY28
Technical assistance contacts with farmers	1,534	1,824	1,824	1,824	1,824
Acres of land under easements inspected by Agricultural Services	5,363	5,796	5,800	5,800	5,800
Percent of easement acres under most restrictive easement disallowing development	35%	36%	36%	36%	36%

FY27 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	1,045,102	5.00
Increase Cost: Two and a Half Percent Inflationary Adjustment to Non-Profit Service Provider Contracts	3,089	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.	49,226	0.00
FY27 Recommended	1,097,417	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 FY24	Actual FY25	Estimated FY26	Target FY27	Target FY28
Soil conservation contacts with farmers and landowners to provide technical assistance	8,141	8,942	8,942	8,942	8,942
Water quality plans completed	72	106	106	106	106
Percent of interagency site visits coordinated within one business day of agricultural complaint	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Tons of carbon dioxide reduced through conservation and best management practices ¹	N/A	12,430	12,430	12,430	12,430

¹ When reviewing this data, it is important to note that it is based on reported values from best management practices (BMPs) implemented on farms. These values are entered into a model that uses various assumptions to estimate the total number of tons.

FY27 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	197,577	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.	6,142	0.00
FY27 Recommended	203,719	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 nonformal education accessible to all Montgomery County residents. Adults, families, and youth are the primary 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 Office faculty and staff engage and rely upon a large network of over 2,000 volunteers to support the 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 FY24	Actual FY25	Estimated FY26	Target FY27	Target FY28
Nutrient management plans completed	25	55	55	55	55
4-H youth development program participants	464	437	437	437	437
Average pre- to post-test score increase of Close Encounters with Agriculture participants on agriculture, nutrition, and the environment	48%	50%	50%	50%	50%

FY27 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	289,836	0.00
Increase Cost: UME Annualization and Operating	21,842	0.00
FY27 Recommended	311,678	0.00

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY25	Budget FY26	Estimated FY26	Recommended FY27	%Chg Bud/Rec
COUNTY GENERAL FUND					
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Wages	700,840	757,190	743,108	791,824	4.6 %
Employee Benefits	194,387	211,921	203,827	225,075	6.2 %
County General Fund Personnel Costs	895,227	969,111	946,935	1,016,899	4.9 %
Operating Expenses	525,460	563,404	575,408	595,915	5.8 %
County General Fund Expenditures	1,420,687	1,532,515	1,522,343	1,612,814	5.2 %
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	80,152	80,152	80,152	80,152	—
Miscellaneous Revenues	24,268	0	0	0	—
County General Fund Revenues	104,420	80,152	80,152	80,152	—
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	—
FTEs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	—
REVENUES					
Investment Income	16,367	0	0	0	—
Miscellaneous Revenues	54,697	0	0	0	—
State Grants	(25,000)	0	0	0	—
Grant Fund - MCG Revenues	46,064	0	0	0	—
DEPARTMENT TOTALS					
Total Expenditures	1,420,687	1,532,515	1,522,343	1,612,814	5.2 %
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	150,484	80,152	80,152	80,152	—

FY27 RECOMMENDED CHANGES

	Expenditures	FTEs
COUNTY GENERAL FUND		
FY26 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION	1,532,515	5.90
<u>Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)</u>		
Increase Cost: FY27 Compensation Adjustment	37,245	0.00
Increase Cost: UME Annualization and Operating [University of Maryland Extension (UME)]	21,842	0.00
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY26 Compensation Increases	8,316	0.00
Increase Cost: Motor Pool Adjustment	5,378	0.00
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY26 Personnel Costs	4,339	0.00
Increase Cost: Two and a Half Percent Inflationary Adjustment to Non-Profit Service Provider Contracts [Agricultural Services]	3,089	0.00
Increase Cost: Printing and Mail	2,202	0.00
Decrease Cost: Retirement Adjustment	(2,112)	0.00
FY27 RECOMMENDED	1,612,814	5.90

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Name	FY26 APPR Expenditures	FY26 APPR FTEs	FY27 REC Expenditures	FY27 REC FTEs
Agricultural Services	1,045,102	5.00	1,097,417	5.00
Soil Conservation	197,577	0.90	203,719	0.90
University of Maryland Extension (UME)	289,836	0.00	311,678	0.00
Total	1,532,515	5.90	1,612,814	5.90

CHARGES TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Charged Department	Charged Fund	FY26 Total\$	FY26 FTEs	FY27 Total\$	FY27 FTEs
COUNTY GENERAL FUND					
Environmental Protection	Water Quality Protection	618,413	3.10	639,731	3.10
CIP	Capital Fund	142,443	1.00	151,532	1.00
Total		760,856	4.10	791,263	4.10

FUNDING PARAMETER ITEMS

CE RECOMMENDED (\$000S)

Title	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31	FY32
COUNTY GENERAL FUND						
EXPENDITURES						

FUNDING PARAMETER ITEMS

CE RECOMMENDED (\$000S)

Title	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31	FY32
FY27 Recommended	1,613	1,613	1,613	1,613	1,613	1,613
No inflation or compensation change is included in outyear projections.						
Labor Contracts	0	8	8	8	8	8
These figures represent the estimated annualized cost of general wage adjustments, service increments, and other negotiated items.						
Subtotal Expenditures	1,613	1,621	1,621	1,621	1,621	1,621