



Contact: Christine Bergmark, Executive Director
Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
301-274-1922 / Ex. 1
cbergmark@somarylandsogood.com

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2010 Southern Maryland Farm Grants Available

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) is offering a round of farm viability grants to farms in Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's counties. These funds are being made available as a continuation of the Agriculture Commission's ongoing **Southern Maryland Farm Viability Enhancement Grant Program**. This program was established to increase the sustainability of existing farms and encourage the development of continuing and new farming enterprises in the five county region of Southern Maryland.

The Farm Viability Enhancement Program has been strategically important in assisting in the transition from growing tobacco to establishing other commercially successful farm enterprises in the Southern Maryland region. With the assistance of a team of experts, program participants develop farm viability plans which may include the addition of agri-tourism activities and other enhanced farm operations and practices. "The grant process has introduced farmers to emerging technologies with an eye towards aiding marketing and production", states Christine Bergmark, executive director of SMADC. Since inception of the program, 23 farms have been impacted and over 3,000 acres with an agricultural covenant. Program eligibility is based on owning at least five acres of land in agricultural use. All grant awards require matching funds supplied by the farm owner.

Applications for the Farm Viability Grant are due to the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission by **February 22, 2010**. To acquire a grant application visit: www.SMADC.com, or contact the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission office at (301) 274-1922.

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission was established to promote diverse, market-driven agricultural enterprises, which coupled with agricultural land preservation, will preserve Southern Maryland's environmental resources and rural character while keeping the region's farmland productive and the agricultural economy vibrant. To learn more about additional programs and resources, contact SMADC, P. O. Box 745, Hughesville, MD 20637; phone: 301-274-1922; fax: 301-274-1924; email info@somarylandsogood.com; or visit www.SMADC.com