



Montgomery County, Maryland

Preserving Our Agricultural Heritage
Connecting Our Past... With Our Future

Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve is an important environmental resource for future farm enterprises. Its strong agricultural heritage provides a diverse business community and an economic base. Combining these strengths with a commitment to farmland preservation makes Montgomery County an attractive place to live, work, and farm!

Agricultural Overview

Agricultural activities occupy about one-third of the County's land area. The County has 583 farms, of which 69% are farmed as a primary occupation. The top crops include corn, wheat, soybeans, sod, and hay, covering 45,543 acres. The County's diverse agricultural industry produces millions of dollars in economic contributions from farm products and operations. 92% of Montgomery County farms are family-run operations, many reaching back several generations. Agriculture in the County employs more than 10,000 residents. The County has 330 farms that produce table food crops/products for direct human consumption and has the highest percentage of farms selling directly to consumers. Over 110 farms produce locally grown products that directly serve local communities. Additionally, the County ranks number one in the State for total acres planted in berries.

Horticulture

During the past 36 years, the horticulture sector has grown dramatically. The 2,323 horticultural businesses employ more than 7,000 of the people working in agriculture. Horticulture is one of the largest sectors in agriculture and includes nurseries and landscaping/lawn care companies, arborists, sod farms, greenhouse businesses, landscape architects/designers, floriculture, and horticulturalists.

Equine Industry

Horses and equestrian facilities are a major component of the County's agricultural industry. There are approximately 2,814 reported horses in the County. The equine industry is a tremendous economic driver for farmers in terms of the supplies, services, and products needed to support the horses. Equine operations also draw high-quality veterinarians to provide services to horses, which become available for other livestock operations in the County.

**Equine metrics pending update following the release of the 2024 MDA Equine Census.*

Agriculture for the Future

Montgomery County is committed to sustaining a viable agricultural industry. The Agricultural Reserve, established in 1980 by the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan, provides 93,000 acres for farming. A variety of organizations assist farmers in Montgomery County: Montgomery County Farm Bureau, Montgomery Agricultural Producers, Agricultural Advisory Committee, Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, Montgomery County farmers markets, University of Maryland Extension, Montgomery Soil Conservation District, and Farm Services Agency.

Farmland Preservation

Despite increasing development pressures, a high cost of living, and land values that are some of the highest in the State, Montgomery County has successfully maintained large areas of contiguous farmland and a viable agricultural industry. Over three-quarters of the 93,000-acre agricultural reserve is preserved through the transfer of development rights or easement purchase initiatives. Over 70,000 acres of farmland are protected through various easement programs (MALPF, AEP, RLP, MET, BLT, TDR). Montgomery County has one of the highest percentages of farmland under agricultural land preservation easements IN THE NATION.

Agricultural Economy

Between 2017 and 2022, the total net income for farming quadrupled, and the net cash income per farm grew by 389%. Despite facing a steep increase in total farm production expenses and significant decreases in government funding, Montgomery County's agricultural economy remains a vital component and contributor to the County's economic sector.



2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE



MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATISTICS

Total land in Montgomery County	316,800 acres
Publicly owned lands (Federal, State, County, WSSC)	58,500 acres
Agriculturally assessed land	71,009 acres
Land in farms	69,759 acres
Percent of land in farms	22%
Number of farms	583 farms
Percent of family farms	92%
Average farm size	120 acres
Percentage of principal occupation farms	69%
The average age of farm operator	57.5 years
Cropland	51,340 acres
Harvested cropland	46,247 acres
Woodland (public 31,513 & private 57,487)	89,000 acres
Licensed nursery operations (growers & greenhouses)	124
Landscaping businesses (landscape architects, designers, horticulturalists)	2,323
Percent of farms with internet access	88%

FARMS BY TYPE OF ENTERPRISE

Type of Farm	Number of Farms	Production	Bushel/Tons
Beef	64	2,844 cows	
Horse	207	*2,814 horses	
Dairy	5 (two commercial operations)	144 cows	
Sheep	56	974 sheep	
Goats (milk & meat)	74	1,106 goats	
Hogs & pigs	23	283 hogs/pigs	
Poultry	6	5,338 chickens	
Vegetable	53	456 acres	
Wheat	22	4,681 acres	404,439 bushels
Fruits/orchards	42	336 acres	
Sod	6	1,830 acres	
Christmas trees	1		
Corn for grain	39	13,585 acres	2.5 million bushels
Corn for silage	0	0	0
Soybeans	39	18,000 acres	930,367 bushels
Forage-Hay	161	7,447 acres	15,907 tons

*Equine Metrics to be updated by 2024 MDA Equine Census Data

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY & PRODUCER DEMOGRAPHICS

	2022	% change since 2017	Producers	2022	2017	2012	2007
				(\$)			
County Total	(\$)	-	Male	670	534	545	545
<i>Market value of products sold</i>	70,914,000	+67	Female	526	492	439	368
<i>Government payments</i>	126,000	-89	White	1135	953	874	856
<i>Farm-related income</i>	15,544,000	+7	Asian	28	21	13	9
<i>Total farm production expenses</i>	75,892,000	+23	Black or African American	23	22	7	12
<i>Net cash farm income</i>	10,691,000	+402	American Indian/Alaska Native	2	4	2	6
Per farm average	(\$)	-	Hispanic/Latino, Spanish Origin	34	27	38	13
<i>Market value of products sold</i>	121,637	+59	New/Beginning Farmer	415	274		
<i>Government payments</i>	3,933	-73	More than one race	8	26	3	3
<i>Farm-related income</i>	75,090	+13					
<i>Total farm production expenses</i>	130,175	+18					
<i>Net cash farm income</i>	18,339	+389					

Statistics by U.S.D.A Census 2022 Summarized by the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture