

foreword

Following several years of drought, few would have predicted that 2003 would be one of the wettest years on record. Above average rainfall throughout 2003 had a significant impact on the quality of wheat and barley, prevented and delayed some planting of corn and soybeans, and limited the supply of quality produce. This edition of “Agriculture in Maryland” documents how wet conditions affected all sectors of agriculture in Maryland from their production levels to cash receipts. In addition, data are published back to 1998 for some commodities to reflect revisions based on completion of the 5-year Census of Agriculture. This publication is made possible through funds provided by the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Our agency’s mission is to “provide timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to Maryland agriculture.” Reliable and consistent agricultural data are needed to empower those that make important decisions affecting our industry. The statistics represented in this publication are used to administer many of the USDA farm programs that are currently available, in determining the feasibility of new ventures affecting our state’s farmers and their products, and in directing research programs designed to enhance our state’s farm economy.

Data presented in this publication are a direct result of, and only made possible by, the voluntary cooperation of our Maryland farmers and agribusinesses that have taken time over the past year to respond to our surveys. The support provided by Maryland farmers reinforces our belief that current information is a powerful tool; and our farmers are the best source for this information.

Our efforts would not be possible without the continued support of our county extension educators, Farm Service Agency county directors, and employees of the Maryland Department of Agriculture. Appreciation is also expressed to the office staff of the Maryland Agricultural Statistics Service for their dedication in compiling all statistics included herein and to our “front-line” enumerators for their perseverance and skill in collecting data throughout the year. All of our staff are dedicated to serving the Maryland farm community and to providing the highest quality service possible for our data users.

Data included in this publication can also be accessed through the Maryland Agricultural Statistics Service homepage on the Internet at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/md>. If you require additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us by e-mail, telephone, or personal visit anytime! We also welcome your comments regarding our programs or this publication.



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