

greetings



This has been a very positive and exciting year for Maryland farmers. We had bin-busting harvests and a double-digit increase in farm receipts. In addition, recent state policy changes are working to help farm profitability.

While we saw some of the best-ever weather and crop production in 2004, we were tested by a number of extraordinary events during the fiscal year. Working with many partners, we quickly contained the first avian influenza cases on Delmarva to be found in commercial broiler flocks bringing trade back to normal in the shortest amount of time possible; defended the state's beef industry when a case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or mad cow disease) was found in Washington state; addressed the introduction of pests and plant diseases including the emerald ash borer and sudden oak death; and, assisted farmers when Hurricane Isabel damaged crops and farm buildings. While some nurserymen experienced damage from the emergence of the 17-year cicada (*Magicicada septendecim*), people across the state and around the world took in this miraculous occurrence with great interest. Our effective response and continuing emergency and biosecurity training further secure our residents and their food supply.

Because of the data collected by the Maryland Agricultural Statistics Service and Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.'s support for the farm community, we know that Maryland has a strong and diverse farm economy. Working together through MDA's education, regulation, promotion, service and preservation activities, Marylanders can expect a safe and healthy food supply and environment, fairness in the marketplace, and that agriculture will remain a strong economic force. Thank you to Maryland State Director Norman Bennett and Deputy State Director Jeanne McCarthy-Kersey and their entire staff for their invaluable assistance in these endeavors.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lewis R. Riley".

Lewis R. Riley
Secretary