



GREETINGS

My appointment as Maryland's eighth Secretary of Agriculture by Governor Martin O'Malley in February was one of the greatest honors of my career in agriculture. Agriculture has given me so much, and I am honored to be able to give something back.

I am proud to join the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), an agency established in 1973 to provide Marylanders a safe and healthy food supply and environment, fairness in the marketplace, and a strong agricultural industry through education, regulation, promotion, service and preservation activities. Over the past three decades MDA has served the agricultural industry and all the citizens of Maryland well and will continue to do so.

We are also working to address the industry's priorities of ensuring an adequate base of well-managed agricultural land, enhancing profitability, and advancing research, education and the advocacy of agriculture, which all came out of the "Statewide Plan for Agriculture and Natural Resources" last year. In order to develop implementation strategies for the recommendations contained in the Plan, we must be armed with accurate and timely information about the scope and nature of agriculture in our state.

In Maryland, we are lucky to have the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service State Field Office housed right in our own building at MDA. We thank Maryland State Director Barbara Rater and Deputy State Director Dale P. Hawks and their entire staff for all their hard work and for the assistance they provide to us. We will use the important statistics published in this report and others by the USDA NASS Maryland Field Office as we work together to maintain and strengthen agriculture, Maryland's most important industry.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roger Richardson". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Roger L. Richardson
Secretary