



greetings...

*A*griculture is Maryland's leading industry. Agricultural statistics provide the best data to assist in developing sound policies, informing business decisions and instilling a deeper understanding of the importance of

agriculture within the non-farming public. With current environmental concerns, consumer interest in local products, economic struggles and exciting technological innovations, agriculture is changing more quickly than ever. NASS data help us to understand these changes and to communicate the impact of agriculture to our everyday lives and our economy to keep Maryland smart, green and growing.

Earlier this year, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Maryland Agricultural Commission gathered stakeholders for the Governor's 2010 Agricultural Forum to lay out a 15-year strategic plan to enhance the future of Maryland agriculture. Data collected by the Maryland Agricultural Statistics Service informed the strategic planning process with the most accurate and timely information about the scope and nature of agriculture in our State.

The USDA's unbiased, statistical information is invaluable to farmers, public policy-makers and agriculture-related businesses to keep our agricultural industry strong and profitable. The Maryland Department of Agriculture uses the information in our programs and services to preserve and protect agricultural resources and the environment, promote profitable agriculture, to ensure consumer confidence, and enhance the quality of life for all Marylanders.

In Maryland, we are fortunate to have the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service State Field Office housed in our headquarters building in Annapolis. We thank Maryland State Director Barbara Rater and her entire staff for their invaluable assistance and look forward to working closely with them for many years to come.

Earl F. Hance
Secretary