

New Extension Program Aims to Educate Ag Service Providers About Maryland Agriculture

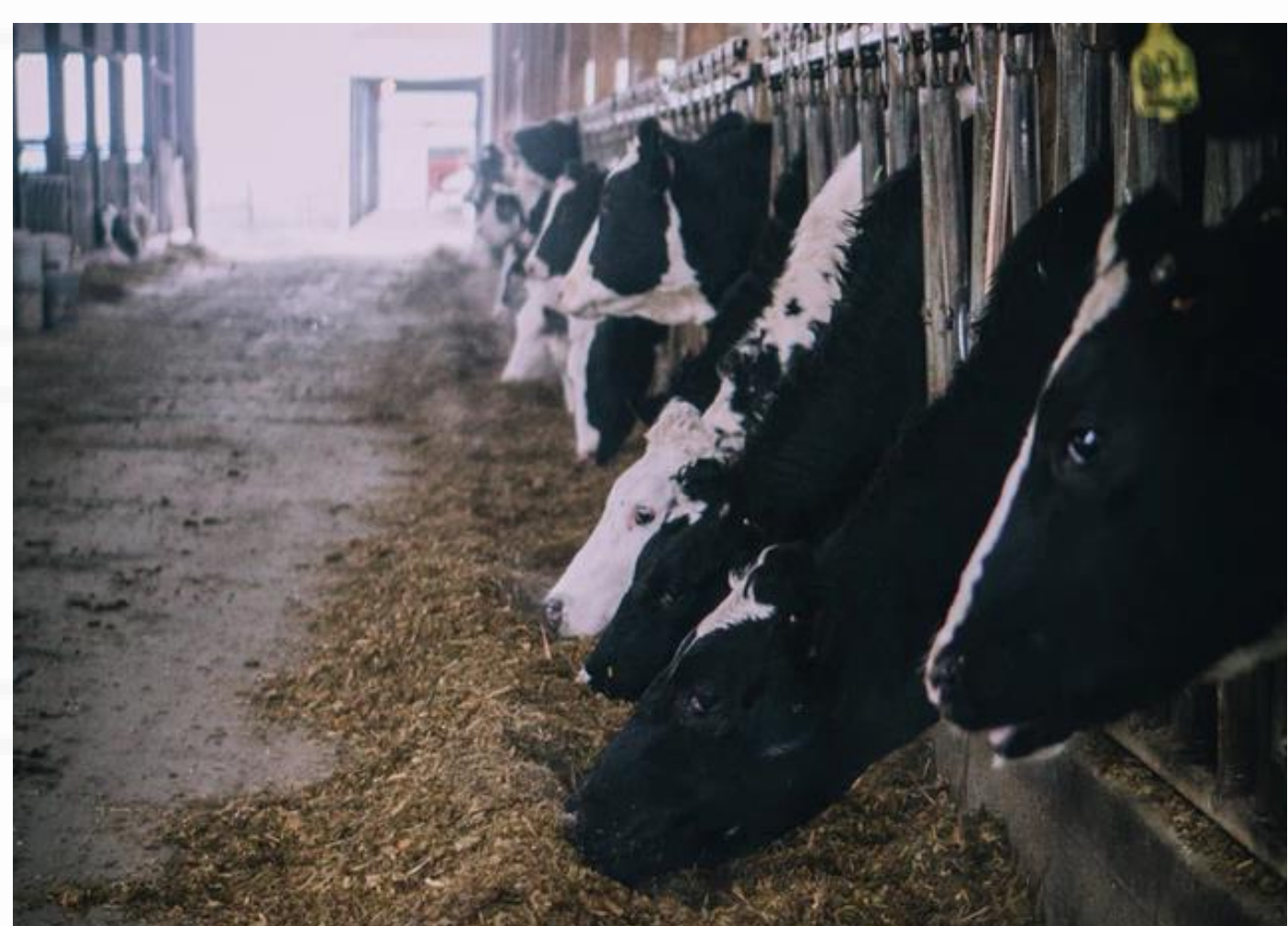


¹Andrew Kness, akness@umd.edu | ²Erika Crowl, ecrowl@umd.edu | and ³Darren Jarboe, jarboe@umd.edu

¹Extension Agent, University of Maryland Extension, Harford County | 3525 Conowingo Rd., Street, MD 21154

²Extension Agent Associate, University of Maryland Extension, Baltimore County | 1114 Shawan Rd., Cockeysville, MD 21030

³Director, University of Maryland Extension | 2115 Symons Hall, College Park, MD 20742



NEED & JUSTIFICATION

Ag service providers administer government programs and provide technical assistance to farmers. Ag service providers in Maryland include agencies such as:

- United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS)
- Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)
- Maryland Department of Environment (MDE)
- Local Soil Conservation Districts (SCD)

Employees within these agencies often have specialized technical backgrounds and degrees in areas such as biology, environmental science, engineering, policy, etc., but often have very little working knowledge of farming; yet are often working closely with farmers. This disconnect from basic on-farm knowledge creates a significant barrier to the job and prevents ag service providers from maximizing their efforts.

This gap in practical agricultural production knowledge needs to be addressed in order to keep farms viable into the future and service providers safe when on the farm.

PROGRAM PLAN TO ADDRESS THE NEED



A partnership was established between USDA-NRCS and University of Maryland Extension to develop an Ag 101 program to address the need to train ag service providers on Maryland agriculture.



The program will consist of classroom and on-farm instruction and will cover all major sectors of Maryland agriculture, biosecurity, farm safety, and professional conduct with farmers.



Ag 101 will be offered as a multi-day course in different locations throughout the state.



Participants will be surveyed to measure knowledge gain and program impacts.



Potential to offer an advanced Ag 201 course for those interested in learning more.

PROGRAM GOALS

1. Educate 120 ag service providers on common agricultural practices in Maryland, general agriculture, farm safety and conduct.
2. Evaluate the program through a survey to measure participant gain in knowledge and impact as a result of knowledge gained. This program will ultimately allow ag service providers to make better decisions regarding Maryland farming and offer better service to farmers, which will help keep Maryland agriculture strong and viable into the future.
3. Publish evaluation results in a professional journal or present them at a professional meeting.