



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the nation moves away from an agrarian-oriented society to a manufacturing, technology and service-oriented society, fewer people have the opportunity for first-hand experience with the production of food, fiber and other products upon which their lives depend for survival. It is important for both children and adults to be knowledgeable about agriculture for making informed decisions as consumers, citizens, voters, and leaders.

The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) Inc is a 501(c)3, non-profit, non-governmental organization established in 1989. The Foundation was incorporated following recommendations of a Governor's task force which reviewed the status of agriculture in education in Maryland. The task force recommended establishing an independent organization whose purpose would be to educate Marylanders about the important role agriculture plays in their lives. MAEF operates under the guidance of a twenty-five-member Board of Directors, with the mission "to promote the understanding and importance of agriculture in our daily lives."

MAEF conducts a variety of educational and agricultural awareness programs throughout the state using agriculture, nutrition and natural resources as the tools for teaching core subjects, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and Next Generation Science.

MAEF is funded through a variety of ways including the ag tag program, grants, program fees, racing funds, individual and corporate contributions, commodity sponsorships, fundraising programs and endowment development.

Since MAEF's inception, well over one million Maryland students have been reached with our message of agricultural literacy. In 1990, the only program conducted was a teacher workshop. The mobile science lab program was added in 1995, with a second lab added in 1997 and a third in 2000.

Today the foundation's programs have grown tremendously:

- There are four mobile labs for school programs and two showcases which provide public education;
- Professional development classes for teachers have moved online;
- Natural resource workshops welcome members of the public;
- Agriculturally based lesson plans are indexed on MAEF's website; and
- Lively social media campaigns help Marylanders discover agriculture.

MAEF began providing leadership for the development and support of secondary and post-secondary agricultural education programs in partnership with the Maryland State Department

of Education (MSDE) in 2005. Today, there are agricultural education programs in at least one high school in each of Maryland's twenty-four local school systems (LSS), courses and/or programs at most community colleges and an agricultural teacher education program at both the University of Maryland College Park and UM Eastern Shore. Staff also provide leadership and support for a thriving Maryland FFA Association which is an integral component of middle and high school agricultural education programs. Additionally, MAEF recently has expanded its services into the area of Farm Based Education (FBE) by providing leadership and support to these programs. Another area of emphasis for MAEF staff continues to be the networking and collaboration with local, state and national agricultural and related organizations, businesses and government and educational agencies.

Following MAEF's 30th anniversary, it was determined that a new strategic plan was necessary to move the organization purposefully forward. This planning process included the Board of Directors and longtime advisors, MAEF staff and external partners and supporters.

Within the state's agricultural community, there is significant interest in and support for agricultural education. Ag education is consistently one of the Top Three legislative priorities identified by Maryland Farm Bureau members. And in 2019, when the General Assembly asked the Maryland Department of Agriculture to create a strategic plan for Maryland agriculture, ag education was one of the top priorities. Maryland's State Department of Education (MSDE) has been actively exploring demand for ag industry recognized credentials and pursuing articulation agreements with higher education to provide college credits for students who complete certain ag science programs.

Agriculture is the state's largest commercial industry, part of a resource-based economy with an economic impact of \$23.3 billion each year, supporting more than 94,500 Maryland jobs and generating nearly \$902 million in state and local taxes (BEACON, 2015).

While production farmers make up less than 2 percent of the American population, agricultural jobs provide almost 11 percent of U.S. employment (USDA ERS). Beyond farming, jobs in agriculture include education; research; biotechnology; food and beverage production; environmental services; energy; crop protection; animal care; finance; marketing and communications; sales; national and international trade; management; food services and eating and drinking places; textiles, apparel, and leather products; and forestry and fishing (USDA ERS).

What these broad sectors of agriculture need the most are graduates or certificate holders who are familiar with the field and understand the unique needs of agriculture, natural resources and food production and distribution. With so few people being "born and raised" into the farming tradition, the industry needs increased emphasis on agricultural career exploration and agricultural education to prepare the students of today to lead and serve the agricultural industry of tomorrow. To fulfill these roles and respond to a changing marketplace, Maryland needs to equitably draw from an inclusive student base capable of infusing our industry with diverse backgrounds, viewpoints and experiences.

Maryland's agricultural education community can build a stronger pipeline to well-paying and satisfying careers in agriculture and natural resources and improve the agricultural literacy of all Marylanders given a strategic and intentional path and the resources to achieve it.

This plan will serve as direction for MAEF professional staff and will be reviewed at MAEF Board of Directors meetings as a way to gauge on-going success of the organization. Depending on economic, social, environmental, financial and other influences, this plan can be adjusted and updated to reflect current and ever-changing situations.

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION

STRATEGIC PLAN: 2021- 2026

MISSION

The mission of the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc. is to promote the understanding and importance of agriculture in our daily lives.

VISION

To be a leader in agricultural education and agricultural literacy, supporting an environment which provides opportunities to pursue the study of agriculture and careers in agriculture, and creating a culture in which the importance of agriculture in our daily lives is appreciated by all.

VALUES

- **Accountability:** We keep commitments, achieve results, exercise sound judgment, and accept responsibility for our performance in all our decisions and actions.
- **Collaboration:** We embrace our shared responsibility in working toward productive solutions. We will work to facilitate the most favorable solutions for those we serve; to build consensus in the face of adversity; and to empower others to build lasting partnerships.
- **Diversity:** We embrace and respect differences. Diversity in all its forms is key to our collective success. We encourage inclusivity of perspective, experience, abilities, and ideas to identify needs and create opportunities.
- **Gratitude:** We value agriculture for its contributions to Maryland's economy, environment and quality of life, and we value the people of Maryland agriculture for all they do as professionals and volunteers.
- **Integrity:** We believe it is not only important to know the right thing to do, but equally important to do the right thing and be above reproach in all we do.
- **Leadership:** We strive to be innovative, compassionate, and diligent in our efforts to serve as the respected resource for agricultural education in Maryland.
- **Transparency:** We provide information that will empower stakeholders to make informed decisions.
- **Quality:** We strive for excellence in all that we do.

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION

2021-2026 STRATEGIC GOALS:

1. Provide every K-12 student in Maryland at least two opportunities to obtain some knowledge of agriculture by 2026.
2. Coordinate a MAEF internal curriculum review process by 2022.
3. Provide an opportunity for middle school youth in public and private schools to explore careers in agriculture through a mobile lab, online curriculum and other strategies by 2026.
4. Explore and expand partnerships for a “web” of agriculture experiences in Maryland.
5. Petition Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to initiate programs for high school students to obtain Ag industry recognized credentials.

Strategic Goal 1: Provide every K-12 student in Maryland at least two opportunities to obtain some knowledge of agriculture by 2026.

Current situation: As of Fall 2021, there are approximately 894,000 students in Maryland public schools, 143,000 in private schools and approximately 40,000 students in home schools, for a total of 1,077,000 students. Maryland is the 25th largest school system in the United States. To achieve this goal, MAEF would need to reach 430,800 students per year each year.

Action Steps:

- Research and identify pocket populations that have limited MAEF Ag education/literacy opportunities by 2022
- Develop targeted Ag education materials for identified pocket populations using population specific social media by 2023
- Expand Middle School programming to include careers in agriculture and related fields
- Expand the mobile science lab program to all Maryland elementary schools (perhaps to at least 10 new schools each year)
- Utilize innovative educational platforms for increased ag education experiences for students
- Broaden audiences beyond the public school system by 2023 to create an awareness of agriculture at all grade levels
- Petition MSDE and Local School Systems to increase the Ag Science Footprint in Maryland so that every high school student has a readily available opportunity to study
- Recognize Ag Science as a High School Science Graduation Requirement, allowing more students to explore and prepare for agriculture and natural resources careers
- Infuse Maryland's Environmental Literacy Standards with agriculture

Success measures:

Short term:

- # of students reached by grade
- # of local school systems/schools reached
- # of private/homeschool schools reached
- # of middle schools reached
- # of students reached

Long term:

- Increase in ag science enrollment at high school level
- Increase in student enrollment in Ag Science as a high school science requirement
- Increase in schools offering Ag Science programs
- Recognition of Ag Science as a High School Graduation Requirement

Strategic Goal 2: Coordinate a MAEF internal curriculum review process by 2022.

Current situation: MAEF programs and curriculum are currently initiated by staff or board direction, without a process to review feasibility, quality, content and relevance to the Strategic Plan.

Action Steps:

- Contact UMd faculty for framework for curriculum and program review
- Identify team for review process
- Facilitate the curriculum and program review with MAEF staff collaboration
- Make adjustments as needed for existing MAEF curriculum and programs
- Develop a rotation for curriculum reviews
- Develop a process for reviewing new curriculum and programs

Success Measures:

Short term:

- Create curriculum and program review process by 2022, including schedule for reviews
- # of reviews completed

Long term:

- More consistent messaging from MAEF
- Increase in quality and relevance of MAEF curriculum and programs
- Improved public understanding of agriculture

Strategic Goal 3: Provide an opportunity for middle school youth in public and private schools to explore careers in agriculture through a mobile lab, online curriculum and other strategies by 2026.

Current situation: MAEF's Middle School program reached 6,269 contacts during the 2019-2020 school year, which was affected by the pandemic shutdown.

Action Steps:

- Update existing MAEF mobile labs to meet curriculum requirements for middle school students by 2023
- Coordinate effort with MSDE for development of middle school careers curriculum focus on agriculture industry and related fields to include in-person and virtual learning platforms by 2023
- Explore and collaborate with MSDE for the development and inclusion of Ag science (elective or CASE) program at the middle school level
- Explore market for an "Ag Course for All" introductory course

Success measures:

Short term:

- # of lab lessons adapted for middle school career exploration
- Development of middle school careers curriculum
- Development of middle school ag education programs
- Development of "Ag Course for All" course
- # of middle schools which integrate ag education programs

Long term:

- # of students enrolled in high school ag education programs
- # of students enrolled in college agriculture programs

Strategic Goal 4: Explore and expand partnerships for a “web” of agriculture experiences in Maryland.

Current situation: MAEF supports “Maryland Farm & Harvest” television, partners with the My Maryland Farmers blog and social media campaign and supports agricultural organizations and farm-based educators (FBE) conducting agricultural literacy programs, which offer diverse platforms for citizens to explore Maryland agriculture in-person, online and on broadcast. Together, these opportunities reach more than 4 million Marylanders per year to improve agricultural literacy.

Action Steps:

- By June 30, 2022 coordinate and convene an Ag Literacy/Education Summit to optimize ag literacy opportunities in Maryland
- Expand high school Ag Science/Literacy curricula by 2026
- Create and/or modify educational materials appropriate for farm-based educators (FBEs) and/or ag tourism sites by 2026, including professional development for these site educators
- Increase and strengthen partnerships developing possible new revenue streams
- Explore market for an “Ag Course for All” introductory course to agriculture beyond middle school market
- Promote the conversion of Maryland to a FFA Affiliation State, allowing each agriculture education student to automatically become a member of FFA.

Success Measures:

Short term:

- # of attendees at Ag Literacy and Education Summit
- # of attendees at Farm-Based Educator professional development
- # of strategic partners/MOUs developed
- Conversion of Maryland FFA to an affiliation state

Long term:

- Improved agricultural literacy in Maryland by aligning/coordinating messages among communicators
- Increased agricultural education opportunities at high school level and beyond
- Stronger FBE network and more robust individual FBE sites

Strategic Goal 5: MAEF will petition Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to initiate programs for high school students to obtain Ag industry recognized credentials by the end of FY23.

Current situation: MSDE and MAEF are working to identify Ag industry recognized credentials as part of an overhaul of CTE programs in Maryland schools.

Action Steps:

- Identify Ag Industry Recognized credentials that high school students may be eligible/qualified to receive
- Collaborate with industry partners, MSDE, Ag science educators and FFA Advisors to create process for credentialing in specific subject matter areas, appropriate for high school students
- Implement courses for high school students resulting in industry recognized credential
- Continue expanding articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions.
- Encourage the dismantling of barriers to students obtaining credentials by encouraging the state to underwrite testing fees for the Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE) and Certified Professional Horticulturist (CPH) completers.

Success Measures:

Short term:

- # of new industry recognized credentials offered to/obtained by high school students
- # of new credentials available for high school students
- # of new articulation agreements signed with post-secondary institutions
- # of student completers who take and pass tests for CASE and CPH

Long term:

- More qualified workforce available to support Maryland agriculture
- Ag education provides flexible and responsive credentials to meet current industry needs
- High school graduates with credentials earn higher wages than non-credentialed peers

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