



Calvert County News

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Calvert County Economic Development Hosts 2025 Farm Tour

PRINCE FREDERICK, Md. – Oct. 17, 2025 – Local and state officials explored Calvert County’s agricultural landscape during the annual Calvert Farm Tour, hosted by the Calvert County Department of Economic Development on Wednesday, Oct. 22. The 2025 tour, themed “Agriculture’s Impact on the Economy,” brought together policymakers, local producers and agricultural partners to highlight the evolving landscape of Calvert’s farming industry.

This year’s tour focused on the northern end of the county, with stops in Owings and Dunkirk. Participants visited Wilson Dowell Farms, Freedom Hill Horse Rescue, Sassafras Farms and Swann Farms.

Participants included Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks, Commissioner President Earl “Buddy” Hance, Commissioner Vice President Todd Ireland, Commissioner Mark C. Cox Sr., Commissioner Catherine M. Grasso and County Administrator Linda Turner. Representatives from the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, Maryland Farm Bureau, Calvert Farm Bureau and other local resource partners, organizations and businesses also attended.

“Each year, the Farm Tour offers a unique opportunity to connect with the people and businesses driving Calvert County’s agricultural economy,” Economic Development Director Julie Oberg said. “This year’s focus highlights the diversity of our farms and their critical role in sustaining both our economy and community.”

As part of the tour, Atticks hosted a roundtable discussion with local producers at Sassafras Farms. The tour featured visits to agricultural businesses throughout northern Calvert County, including:

- **Wilson Dowell Farms-** www.wilsondowellfarms.com/
 - A fourth-generation, 320-acre family farm rooted in the Dowell-Leavitt legacy, where the name honors their grandfather, Wilson Dowell Jr. Originally a tobacco farm, it has transitioned over the decades into a sustainable, pasture-based livestock operation. Under the leadership of Judy Leavitt—and later her son Jason and his wife, Kristen—the farm has shifted to raising grass-fed beef and pasture-raised pork through rotational grazing and regenerative practices. Established as Wilson Dowell Farms LLC in 2010, the farm sells meat directly to consumers and participates in local agricultural education and events.
- **Freedom Hill Horse Rescue-** www.fhhr.org/
 - A nonprofit rescue founded in 2004 by Melody Trecartin to rescue foals from the pregnant mares' urine (PMU) and nurse mare industries. Freedom Hill has expanded to rehabilitate and rehome abused, neglected, abandoned and owner-surrender horses. The rescue has helped more than 470 horses and is verified by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries. Operated by volunteers and donors, the organization provides community education and equine-assisted services. As a certified Maryland Horse Discovery Center, it offers equine-assisted learning programs where rehabilitated horses help youth and families build life skills through hands-on, ground-based activities.
- **Sassafras Farms-** www.sffarmsmd.com/
 - A diversified farm that began operations in 1962, covering approximately 226 acres across two locations, and is owned by the Smart family. Chad and Curk Smart became a fully registered Black Angus cattle operation in 2010, with an emphasis on natural, high-quality beef through advanced breeding techniques. In 2015, the farm expanded by establishing its registered Black Angus herd, and in 2021 it added registered Berkshire pigs, chosen for their marbling, tenderness and flavor. Sassafras Farms sells locally grown, hormone-and antibiotic-free beef and pork at its Dunkirk location.
- **Swann Farms-** www.swannfarms.com/

- A sixth-generation family farm established in the 1850s along the Patuxent River. Originally focused on tobacco and grain crops, the farm shifted in the 1990s to growing fruits and vegetables, including sweet corn, peaches, berries and tomatoes. Today, the farm operates a wholesale produce business serving local grocery stores, restaurants and roadside stands across Southern Maryland and features 20 acres of pick-your-own produce along with seasonal agritourism experiences like sunflower and pumpkin picking. Recognized for its conservation practices and community involvement, the Swann family was inducted into Maryland's Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2016.

For more information about Calvert County agriculture, visit www.CalvertAg.com.

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