



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of Resource Conservation

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Maryland's Agricultural Certainty Program

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Steps to Becoming a Certified Farm through the Maryland Agricultural Certainty Program

- Step 1** Ask your local soil conservation district (SCD) or the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) for a *Pre-Application and Eligibility Checklist*. Answer all questions and decide what type of review to request, **Full Certainty** or **Farm Evaluation Only**. You will receive an *Application and Farmer's Checklist* to begin the application process.
- Step 2** You will receive a letter from MDA within two weeks outlining eligibility determination and additional information about the type of review requested. Work with your Verifier to gather required documents.
- Step 3** Complete the *Application and Farmer's Checklist* and gather appropriate documents for your Verifier. The verifier will conduct a brief interview and discuss your current crop rotation, tillage, and fertilizer application.
- Step 4** Your Verifier will begin the following review process:
- A review of the Soil Conservation Water Quality Plan to verify that it is being implemented to address all nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment issues.
 - A farm visit to review the operation.
 - The nutrient management specialist for your region will be contacted to conduct a Plan Implementation Evaluation. The specialist will contact you directly to set up the review.
 - The verifier will use the Maryland Nutrient Trading Tool to evaluate the parcel to ensure that it meets baseline requirements established by Maryland's Total Maximum Daily Load.
 - The verifier will submit a completed Certainty Report and accompanying documents to MDA for review and approval.
- Step 5** MDA reviews the verifier's report.
- *Full Certainty* - MDA notifies the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) if the operation requires a permit. MDE will either approve the operation for participation in the program or outline conditions that need to be addressed. MDE may require a field inspection.
 - *Farm Evaluation Only* - MDA will notify the farmer of the review results.
- Step 6** Once MDA receives MDE approval, it will complete the review and make a final determination.
- Step 7** MDA approves the operation to become a Certainty Certified Farm.
- The farmer and MDA sign the 10-year Certainty Agreement which includes inspections every three years and annual reporting requirements.
 - After 10 years, the operation must comply with any new regulations.