

What is Agriculture?

Objectives:

At the end of the session, students will be able to

1. Define the words agriculture, crop, livestock, commodity
2. List the top crops grown and livestock raised in Maryland
3. List the top three agricultural products for their county
4. List three reasons why agriculture is important to them

Materials needed:

- Corner Cards labeled 1 not important, 2 somewhat important, 3 very important
- Reading selection
- Copy of Maryland Commodity map (available at www.maefonline.com/content/documents/MDAgMaplarge.pdf)

Build Background:

Ask students to respond to each of these questions that are written on the board:

- What is agriculture?
- What are crops?
- What are livestock?
- What is a commodity?

Record their responses under each question.

Place the numbered signs 1, 2, and 3 with the wording below in corners of the room.

Ask students to move to the corresponding corner of the room that rates the importance of agriculture in their lives where

- 1 Agriculture is **not** important
- 2 Agriculture is **somewhat** important
- 3 Agriculture is **VERY** important.

Ask several students in each group why they choose the group they did. Record the number of students in each group to compare with the selection they will make at the end of the lesson.

Teaching the Lesson

- Provide the informational reading sheet for students and Maryland commodity maps.
- Students read the selection and answer the questions that follow.
- Review the questions and answers.
- Have students return to their corners at the end of the lesson. How have the numbers changed? Ask several students why they moved from one number to another.
- Students should share verbally or in writing at least 3 reasons why agriculture is important to them in their daily lives

Evaluation

- Review the answers to the questions
- Have students return to their corners and record the numbers. Have they changed? How have they changed?

At Home Connection



Look in your kitchen and refrigerator and make a list of any products that could have been grown at a local farm. Check labels to see where they were produced. What are some things that probably had to be grown elsewhere?

Check out your local Farmers Market and buy something that was grown nearby. It will be fresher, taste better and support your local economy.

What is Agriculture?

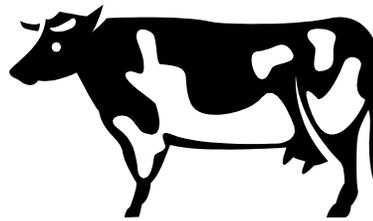
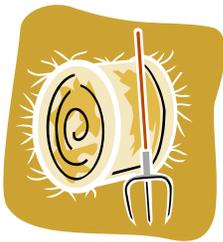
What is agriculture? Have you ever been to a doctor to have a throat culture? Did you realize that a throat culture grows any germs that are in your throat? Agriculture is kind of like a throat culture.

Agriculture comes from two words:

Agri comes from a word that means land.

Culture comes from a word that means to grow.

So, **agriculture** means **growing things on the land**. Agriculture is another word for farming – plowing the land, producing crops, raising livestock, producing commodities.



Some things that grow on the land could be **crops** such as corn, wheat, or soybeans. Other things that grow off of the land are **livestock** animals such as dairy cows, beef cows, sheep, goats, or chickens. These animals graze off the land and are also fed crops such as corn, hay, and soybeans that are grown on farms.

Look at the Maryland Commodity map. A commodity is an item that is bought or sold. It is usually a raw material - one that is not processed. Use the map legend to discover some of the major commodities produced in Maryland. Look at the county where you live. What are its top three commodities?

It is easy to see that Maryland agriculture provides us with so many foods we enjoy such as chicken, eggs, wheat for bread, watermelons, corn, steak, milk, ice cream and even the ingredients for pizza! But, agriculture does much more. It provides cotton for jeans and t-shirts, leather for baseballs and footballs, paper and paper products, ethanol for our cars, and even products that are used in tires for bicycles and cars! There is never a day that goes by that you don't use agriculture in dozens of ways. You can thank hard working farmers for all of the things that they provide.

What do you remember about agriculture?

Name: _____

1. Agriculture is
 - producing crops
 - raising livestock
 - farming
 - all of the above
2. Livestock on a farm could include
 - sheep, chickens, and goats
 - chickens, dairy cows and monkeys
 - dairy cows, beef cows and corn
 - chickens, soybeans, and cattle
3. A commodity is
 - a map that shows farm products
 - a pizza
 - a product that is raised on a farm
 - a farmer that produces corn
4. Commodities shown on the Maryland map include
 - cotton
 - tobacco
 - crabs
 - nursery and greenhouse products
5. How important is agriculture in your life?
 - 1 agriculture is **NOT** important
 - 2 agriculture is **SOMEWHAT** important
 - 3 agriculture is **VERY** important

Explain why you chose the answer you did in question number 5.



Farm Trivia

Did you know???

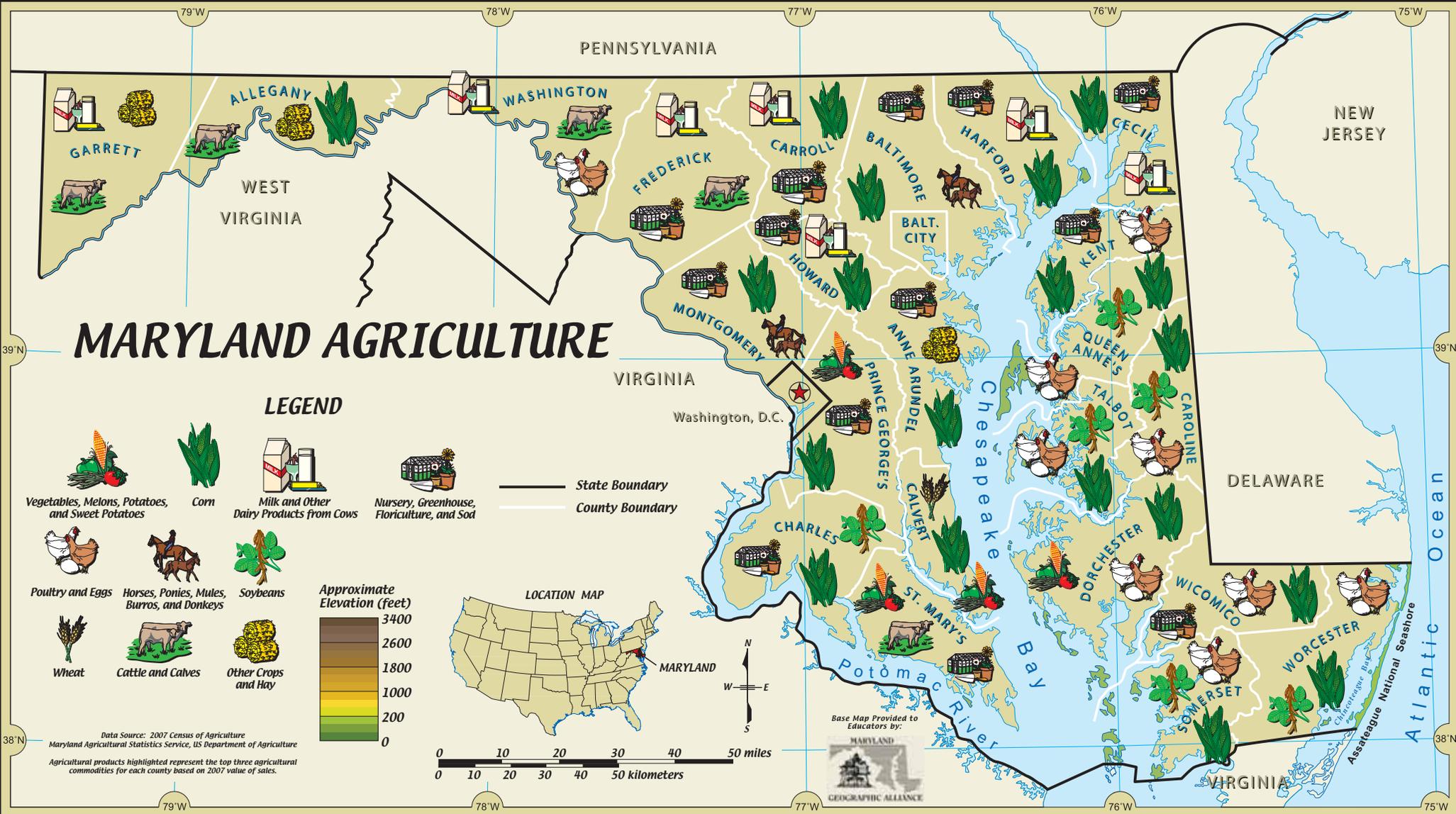
*In 1940, one farmer could produce enough food to feed 19 people.
By 1970, one farmer could produce enough food to feed 73 people.
Today, one farmer can produce enough food to feed 155 people!*



www.maefonline.com



jmueller 2010



This map was made possible by the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

Designed by Tom Rabenhorst and Joe School, Department of Geography & Environmental Systems, University of Maryland Baltimore County ©2010



What products can go directly from the farm to your school cafeteria or your lunch bag?

Farm to School

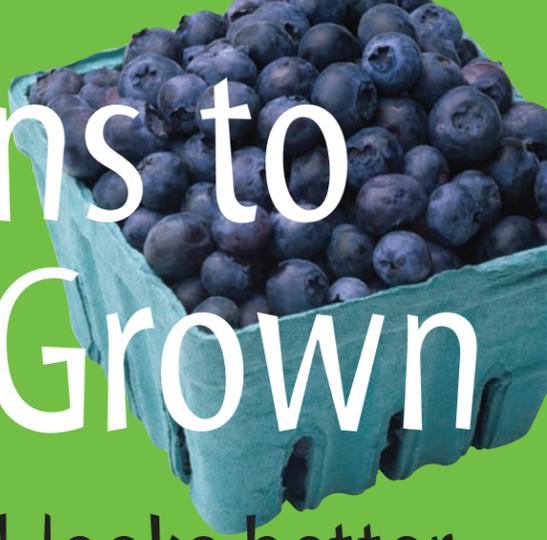
How do students benefit from Farm to School products?

How does Farm to School help the environment?

How does Farm to School help the local economy?



10 Good Reasons to Buy Locally Grown



1 Locally grown food tastes and looks better.

Crops marketed close to home are picked at their peak and usually sold within 24 hours of harvesting. Food imported from far away must travel on trucks or planes and then it is stored in warehouses.

2 Local food supports local families.

The wholesale prices that farmers get for their products are usually very low, sometimes not more than the cost of producing them. Local farmers who sell directly to consumers cut out the middleman and can get full retail price for their food—which helps farm families be able to afford to continue farming their land.

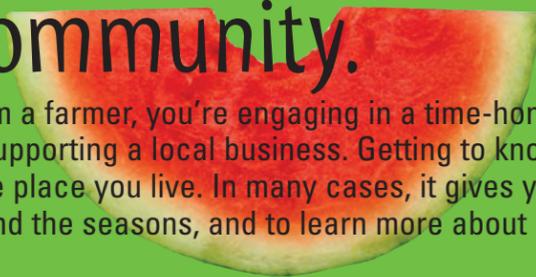


3 Local food builds trust.

With all the issues related to food safety and homeland security, there's an assurance that comes from looking a farmer in the eye at the farmers' market, or driving by the fields where your food comes from.

4 Local food builds community.

When you buy direct from a farmer, you're engaging in a time-honored connection between eater and grower and you're supporting a local business. Getting to know folks who grow your food helps you know more about the place you live. In many cases, it gives you access to a place where you can go to enjoy nature and the seasons, and to learn more about how food grows.



5 Local food preserves open space.

When farmers get paid more for their products from nearby shoppers, they're less likely to sell farmland for development.



6 Local food keeps taxes down.

According to several studies, farms contribute more in taxes than they require in services, whereas most residential development contributes less in taxes than the cost of required services.



7 Local food benefits the environment and wildlife.

Massachusetts farmers are leaders in the use of environmentally sound growing practices. Our farms encompass a patchwork of fields, meadows, woods, streams, and ponds that provide essential habitat for wildlife.



8 Local food makes a lighter carbon footprint.

On average our food travels 1,500 miles from farm to plate. Moreover, each calorie of food produced requires an average of 10 calories of fossil-fuel inputs from travel, refrigeration and processing. Purchasing locally-grown food is a simple way to address the increasing expense of fossil fuels and the adverse effects of global warming from increased carbon emissions.

9 Local food preserves genetic diversity.

In industrial agriculture, plants are bred for their ability to ripen uniformly, withstand harvesting, survive packing and last a long time on the shelf, so there are only a few varieties in large-scale production. This leaves our food supply vulnerable to disease or disaster. Smaller local farms, in contrast, often grow many different varieties to provide a longer season, an array of colors, and the best flavors.



10 Local food is an investment in our future.

When you buy locally grown food, you're helping to preserve the strength and character of our community for our children and grandchildren.

