

Rural and Agricultural Business Grants, The Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation

\$2.0 Million (L00A12.20)

Purpose: Recovery Now Funding

The Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) shall provide grants to agricultural and rural businesses.

Program Highlights and Plans to Allocate Remaining Balance:

MARBIDCO was allocated \$2 million in RELIEF Act funding. Funds are being used to establish the following six grant programs to provide immediate pandemic adjustment and economic development assistance to agricultural and rural businesses in Maryland. Programs include:

- **Maryland Shellfish Aquaculture Relief Grants-** provides grants of up to \$2,000 to Maryland Shellfish Aquaculture leaseholders (oyster farmers) that hold one or more leases from DNR to help with spring production costs. Oyster farmers experienced very significant revenue losses during the pandemic and are required by law to maintain certain production on their leases.
- **Maryland Urban Farmer Relief Grants-** provides grants of \$500 to urban farmers to help with spring production costs. Urban farmers must be located in urban areas and have had at least \$1,000 in annual agricultural product sales.
- **Local Food Cold Storage Relief Grant Program-** provides a 50 percent matching grant up to \$15,000 to farmers and watermen to assist with costs related to the purchase and installation of cold storage equipment. Many farmers adjusting operations during the pandemic have needed cold storage facilities to better serve new or existing markets.
- **Maryland Livestock Processing Relief Grant Program-** provides up to a 75 percent matching grant up to \$100,000 for USDA-inspected meat processing facilities and \$70,000 for custom processing or mobile processing projects. Grant funds can be used to purchase livestock processing equipment and/or upgrade facilities to help expand production capacity in Maryland and help reduce the processing backlog that developed because of the pandemic.
- **Maryland Wood Products Industry Equity Incentive Relief Fund-** provides grants of 20% to 33% of a project's cost up to \$225,000, with the aim to help forest harvesters and wood fiber processors to purchase new equipment or construct facilities to increase the utilization and production of wood products in Maryland. The program will provide much needed assistance to a struggling Maryland forestry industry that has been affected by recent mill closures and the loss of wood fiber markets.
- **Maryland Market Money Program** – provides grant funding to the Maryland Market Money Program that offers food insecure Marylanders using WIC, SNAP, FMNP benefits at farmers markets with matching dollars to purchase fresh food directly from local farmers. These grant funds will be used during the spring farmers' market season at various markets located around the State.

Programmatic and/or Implementation Issues: Since the RELIEF Act passed, MARBIDCO has taken the following actions:

- Program information and application forms have been developed and are available now on MARBIDCO's website.
- MARBIDCO has held or participated in various outreach and informational meetings to increase awareness.

- MARBIDCO has provided informational material to our partners to help get the word out.
- MARBIDCO is also advertising the availability of these funds in the local agricultural media.

Distribution of Funds:

- At this time no funds have yet been distributed, although three dozen (complete and incomplete) applications have already been received.