

**Department of Fiscal Services**  
Maryland General Assembly

**FISCAL NOTE**  
**Revised**

Senate Bill 50 (Senator Craig, *et al.*)  
Economic and Environmental Affairs

Referred to Environmental Matters

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**Task Force on the Future of Maryland Agriculture**

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This amended bill establishes a 22-member Task Force on the Future of Maryland Agriculture. The task force is required to examine issues relating to the future of agriculture as a viable economic and social component of the State, with particular emphasis on land use and taxation policies. The task force's findings and recommendations are due to the Governor, General Assembly, Senate Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee, and House Environmental Matters Committee by July 1, 1998. The Maryland Office of Planning with the assistance of the Department of Agriculture, is required to provide primary staff support.

The bill takes effect on June 1, 1997 and sunsets on June 30, 1998.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None. Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for the Office of Planning and the Department of Agriculture are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources, as discussed below. Revenues would not be affected.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None. Small businesses are not directly affected; however, recommendations leading from the task force could have a meaningful impact on small businesses as discussed below.

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**Fiscal Analysis**

**State Effect:** The Office of Planning advises that four additional contractual employees (Planner V, Planner IV, Economist, and Office Secretary) at a cost of \$66,400 would be

required to provide staff support for the task force. Existing staff would provide administrative direction and oversight for the staff assigned to the task force. An additional \$8,700 would be required for travel, printing, and other expenses related to the task force.

The Department of Fiscal Services advises that staff support could be provided with existing State personnel at no additional cost. The Office of Planning has indicated that existing staff would provide general administrative direction and oversight for the task force and the Department of Agriculture has indicated that existing staff would provide assistance to the task force. Additional staff support to assist in certain “technical areas” could be provided by other State agencies, such as the Department of Business and Economic Development. It is quite common when staffing a State task force for the primary staffing agency to contact other State agencies to serve as a secondary staffing agency and to provide technical support.

Task force members would serve without compensation but would be reimbursed for expenses under the standard State travel regulations. Any such expenditures would depend upon the time, location, and frequency of the task force’s meetings. It is expected that reimbursements for the governmental members could be handled with the existing resources of the governmental entities represented on the task force. Likewise, reimbursements for the non-governmental members could be handled within the Executive Department’s existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** Any task force recommendation leading to the promotion of the agricultural industry would have a direct impact on small businesses. In fiscal 1995, the average size farm totaled 154 acres and generated a net income of \$16,797. However, the number of farms in operation in the State and the amount of land available for farming continue to decrease. For example, the number of farms in the State has decreased from 14,500 in 1994 to 14,300 in fiscal 1995, which is the third year in a row that the number of farms have decreased. In addition, approximately 20,000 acres of farmland each year is lost to development (or approximately 1% of the State’s total farmland). Currently, approximately one-third of the State’s land area (2.2 million acres) is devoted to farming.

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**Information Source(s):** Department of Fiscal Services, Department of Agriculture, Office of Planning

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 13, 1997

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