

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 699 (Senator Colburn)
Judicial Proceedings

Dorchester County - Right to Farm

This bill authorizes the Dorchester County Commissioners to adopt an ordinance or regulation, or take any other action considered necessary, to protect a person's right to farm or engage in agricultural or forestry operations.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: None. Adopting a right to farm ordinance would not affect Dorchester County's finances.

Small Business Effect: Meaningful effect on small businesses as discussed below.

Fiscal Analysis

Small Business Effect: This bill allows Dorchester County to adopt an ordinance or regulation protecting a person's right to farm. The impact on farmers depends on the details of any ordinance or regulation adopted, but it could be meaningful. There are 347 farms in operation in Dorchester County, with the average size farm totaling 357 acres. Approximately one-third of the county's land area is devoted to farming. However, over a ten-year period (1982-1992), the number of farms in operation have decreased by over 20% and the amount of land devoted to farming have declined by around 11%. Agricultural related businesses, including both farming and food processing, serve as the major employers in the county. Cash receipts from agricultural commodities in Dorchester County totaled \$64.1 million in 1992, the latest year in which data is available. In addition, based on 1995 employment data, food processing facilities provided around 1,500 jobs.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 13, 1997

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