

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1247 (Somerset County Delegation)

Environmental Matters

Somerset County - Right to Farm

This bill authorizes the Somerset County Commissioners to adopt an ordinance or regulation, or take any other action necessary, to protect a person's right to farm or engage in agricultural or forestry operations. The bill also requires the County Commissioners to hold a public hearing and provide reasonable notice of the hearing before adopting an ordinance or regulation, or taking other action.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: The adoption of ordinances or regulations protecting a person's right to farm or engage in agricultural or forestry operations would not directly affect Somerset County operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful impact on small businesses.

Fiscal Analysis

Small Business Effect: This bill allows Somerset 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 345 farms in operation in Somerset County, with the average size farm totaling 161 acres. Approximately one-fourth of the county's land area is devoted to farming. However, over a 10-year period (1982-1992), the number of farms in operation has decreased over 16% and the amount of land devoted to farming has declined by around 10%. Agricultural-related businesses, including farming, food processing, seafood, and timber, serve as the biggest employers in the county. Cash receipts from agricultural commodities in Somerset County totaled \$102.9

million in 1992, the latest year in which data is available.

Information Source(s): Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 2, 1998

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