

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 143 (St. Mary's County Delegation)

Commerce and Government Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs

St. Mary's County - Right to Farm

This bill authorizes the St. Mary's 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. The county commissioners must first hold a public hearing and provide reasonable notice of the hearing.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not directly affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: St. Mary's County could handle the bill's requirements with existing county resources.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law: St. Mary's County does not have the authorization to adopt a right to farm ordinance or regulation. This authority has been granted to several other counties including, Garrett County (Chapter 403 of 2001), Washington County (Chapter 442 of 1999), Somerset County (Chapter 739 of 1998), Dorchester County (Chapter 677 of 1997), Charles County (Chapter 64 of 1996), and Carroll County (Chapter 58 of 1994).

Background: Approximately 30% of the land area in St Mary's County is devoted to agriculture. There are 621 farms in operation in the county, with the average size totaling

116 acres. The total value of agricultural commodities produced in St. Mary's County is estimated at \$21.1 million. In recent years, St. Mary's County has experienced considerable growth, with its population increasing by 13.5% from 1990 to 2000 and by 196% from 1950 to 2000.

Small Business Effect: According to statistics provided by the Maryland Department of Agriculture, agricultural activity in Maryland contributes approximately \$17.6 billion to the State's economy and employs 400,000 people. To the extent that the bill would further strengthen agricultural activity in St. Mary's County by granting farmers additional protections, small businesses involved in agricultural activities would be positively impacted.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): St. Mary's County, Maryland Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Legislative Services

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ncs/hlb

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