



Please accept this testimony on behalf of Future Harvest – The Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture (Future Harvest). My name is Carrie Vaughn and I am an organic vegetable farmer at Clagett Farm in Prince George’s County as well as the President of the Board of Directors of Future Harvest.

**Future Harvest writes today in support of Senate Bill 597/ House Bill 687.** This legislation will support sustainable farming as businesses that give back to their local communities.

Future Harvest is an organization that supports and represents the sustainable farmers of Maryland, northern Virginia, Delaware and eastern West Virginia.

Farmers using sustainable practices are a growing, youthful, vibrant population. We have 800 members, the majority of whom are Maryland farmers. Future Harvest received upwards of 200 applicants to its Beginning Farmer Training Program this year, and had 700 attendees at its recent annual conference. These numbers just continue to increase as sustainable farming becomes a popular and practical choice.

Most sustainable farmers in Maryland almost exclusively sell what they grow locally - strengthening local economies and communities. A University of Maryland economic study showed that every dollar spent by customers with local farmers will get cycled another \$2 to \$3 worth within the local community. This compares with only 20 cents of a dollar spent at major grocery chains cycling locally.

All this is to say that this is a farm economy on the rise, and one which needs to be recognized and its farming practices given equitable funding through Maryland’s taxpayer dollars.

Our sustainable farmers grow a diversity of crops and livestock using a wide array of farming techniques, but we do have a few things in common. Future Harvest members who raise livestock believe in pasture as the best way to raise a healthy animal in a healthy environment.

For those of us who grow vegetable or grain crops, we use multispecies cover crops - the best way to feed and protect healthy soils during dormant periods. Multiple research studies indicate that cover crop mixes of rye along with other species is approximately as

effective at taking up nitrogen as planting rye alone. On Clagett Farm, cover crops are a mix of hairy vetch, crimson clover, and rye. This mix of plants provides flowers for pollinating insects, and the bacteria living on their roots take nitrogen from the air, and provide it back to the cash crops we plant the following spring.

Mixed-seed cover crops allow farmers at Clagett to reduce or eliminate the amount of fertilizer applied in the next year, and it's held in the soil--in the creatures, roots and decomposing plant matter--in a way that reduces the likelihood that it will wash away. The combination of species is more expensive to plant, but it offers more benefits to our future crops, to the soil health, and to our downstream water quality.

By passing Senate Bill 597 / House Bill 687, Maryland will ensure incentives for farmers making positive choices for the environment – like planting mixed seed cover crops and contributing to their local economies through direct local sales of produce, meat, and dairy products.

**Future Harvest urges your favorable report on Senate Bill 597 / House Bill 687.**

**Future Harvest- A Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture** (Future Harvest-CASA) is a nonprofit organization representing a regional network of farmers, agricultural professionals, landowners and consumers living and working in the Chesapeake region. Future Harvest-CASA promotes profitable, environmentally sound and socially acceptable food and farming systems that work to sustain communities. [www.futureharvestcasa.org](http://www.futureharvestcasa.org)