

# **Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program**

## **Testimony given March 10, 2020**

My name is Dr. Donald Darnall, I am the Executive Director of the Maryland Food Center Authority, and also serve as the Chair of the Agricultural Subgroup for Maryland Food for Maryland Institutions. I support Senate Bill 608/House Bill 305.

In response to the Senate Bill 608/House Bill 305, the Maryland Food for Maryland Institutions Study Group. The relevant work was divided into 2 Primary Sub-Groups: 1) Procurement; and 2) Agriculture.

The Agriculture Sub-Group consists of:

Senator Katie Fry Hester,

Delegate Lorig Charkoudian,

Members from the Maryland Department of Agriculture,

Department of Juvenile Services,

MARBIDCO,

Maryland Food Center Authority,

Maryland Vegetable Growers Association,

Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission,

Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit,

Maryland Farm Bureau,

Future Harvest,

CASA,

University of Maryland Extension,

University of Maryland Eastern Shore Extension,

Fair Farms,

Maryland Department of Education,

Maryland Association of Counties,

Maryland Department of Health,

Farm Alliance of Baltimore, and

Caroline County Public Schools.

After multiple meetings since May 2019, the Agriculture Sub-Group agreed on its **Primary Goal:** "To Increase the Amount of Locally Grown and Produced Food served in Maryland Institutions" and achieving this Primary Goal by adopting the following two processes:

### **1: Create a Certified Local Farm (CLF) Enterprise Program**

The Agriculture Sub-Group evaluated the current Minority Business Enterprise Program (MBE) and used it as a guide for developing a similar program for the procurement by State Agencies of locally grown food.

The Agriculture Sub-Group recommended that the proposed Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program (*Program*) be managed by the Maryland Department of Agriculture, in a similar way to how the Maryland Department of Transportation is responsible for administering the MBE program. (Figure 1)

Since Maryland farmers are required to participate in the Maryland Nutrient Management Program, (one of the strictest nutrient management programs in the Nation) and does more to protect the environment than other nutrient management programs, the Agriculture Sub-Group adopted participation in this program as a requirement to participate in the Certified Local Farm Enterprise program. Since Maryland farmers already meet these requirements, they will only have to notify the Maryland Department of Agriculture of their desire to participate in the program and provide a list of food products they produce on their farm.

**The Agricultural Sub-Group recommends that the Maryland Department of Agriculture maintain a list of all the farmers who have met the requirements necessary to participate and who have also opted in**

# CERTIFIED LOCAL FARM ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

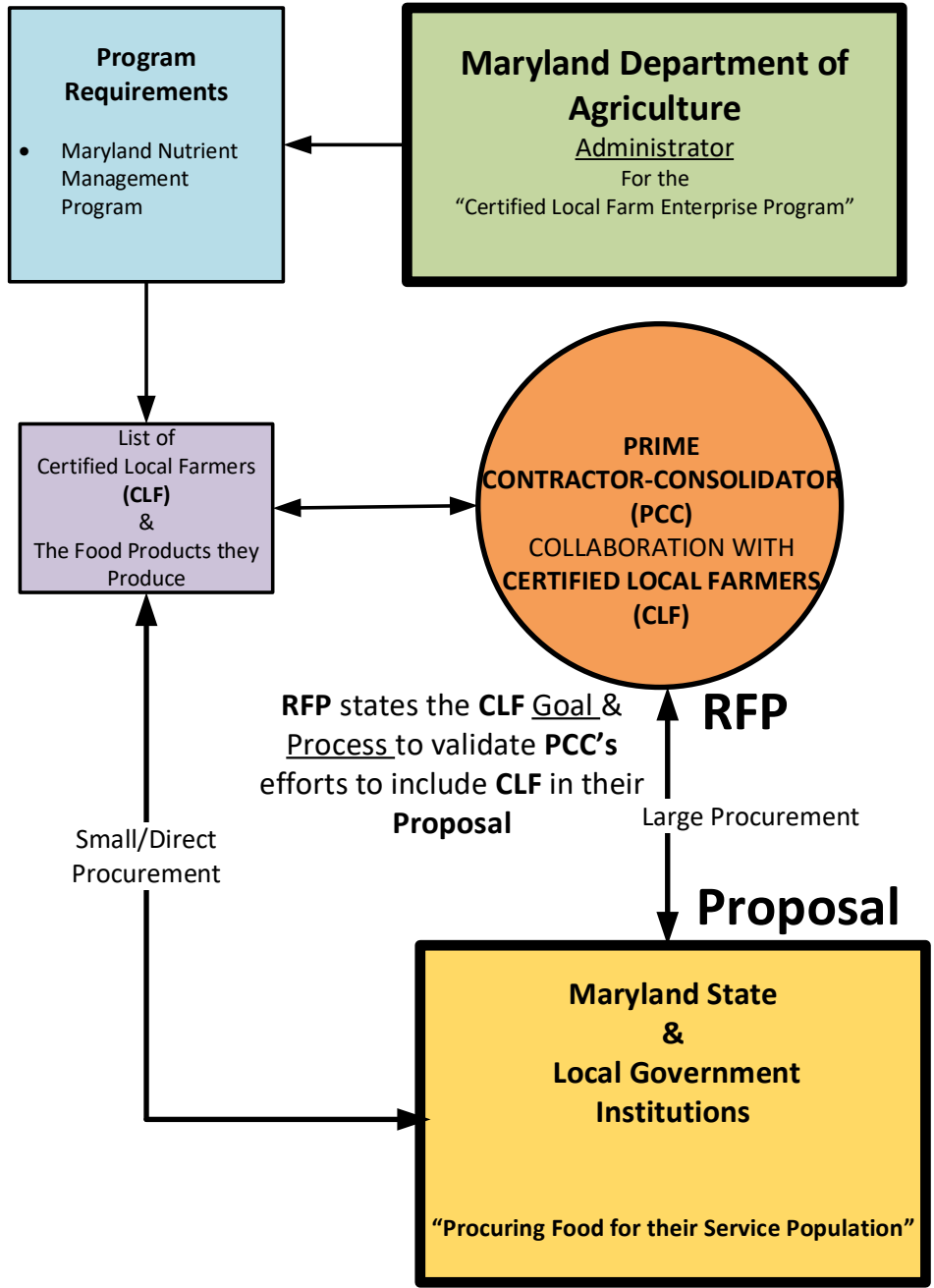


Figure 1

The list of CLF's will be made available to prime contractors/consolidation companies so they can easily access CLFs for participation in the State's procurement process regarding food. The Maryland State Institutions which procure food for the populations they serve should be required to include in their Request for Proposal (RFP) a goal for CLF participation as a subcontractor to the prime contractor/consolidator. Similar to the MBE program, prime contractors/consolidators will have to provide evidence they contacted CLFs and made a good-faith effort to develop a subcontractor arrangement regarding the RFP.

Maryland State Institutions will also have access to the list of CLFs when purchasing food considered to be a small procurement, and not subject to the RFP process.

The Agriculture Sub-Group hopes the success of Phase 1 will encourage local government institutions to also adopt the CLF Enterprise Program as part of their procurement process.

The Agriculture Sub-Group prepared a proposal the group believes will create more opportunities for small and midsize farmers, as well as large farmers seeking to diversify their current crops to compete for state contracts (**Task 4**). This proposal is recommended as Phase 2:

## **2: Certified Local Farm Food Aggregation Centers**

Ideally, these regional food aggregation centers (*Centers*) would be located on, or very near, the campuses of Maryland State high schools, community colleges, and/or universities.

One of the Sub-Group's goals is to develop a way for these Centers to be economically self-sufficient. By locating these Centers near learning institutions, the Centers could be used by the learning institutions to enhance their hospitality, agricultural, and culinary programs.

Additionally, these Centers would provide students direct access to the local farm community, thus enhancing the students' understanding of the farm-to-fork agricultural process. The goal is by having the farmers work together, along with the institutions of higher learning, the cost of operating the centers could be shared by both groups. A model of the Center is presented in **Figure 2** below.

# CERTIFIED LOCAL FARM ENTERPRISE FOOD AGGREGATION CENTERS

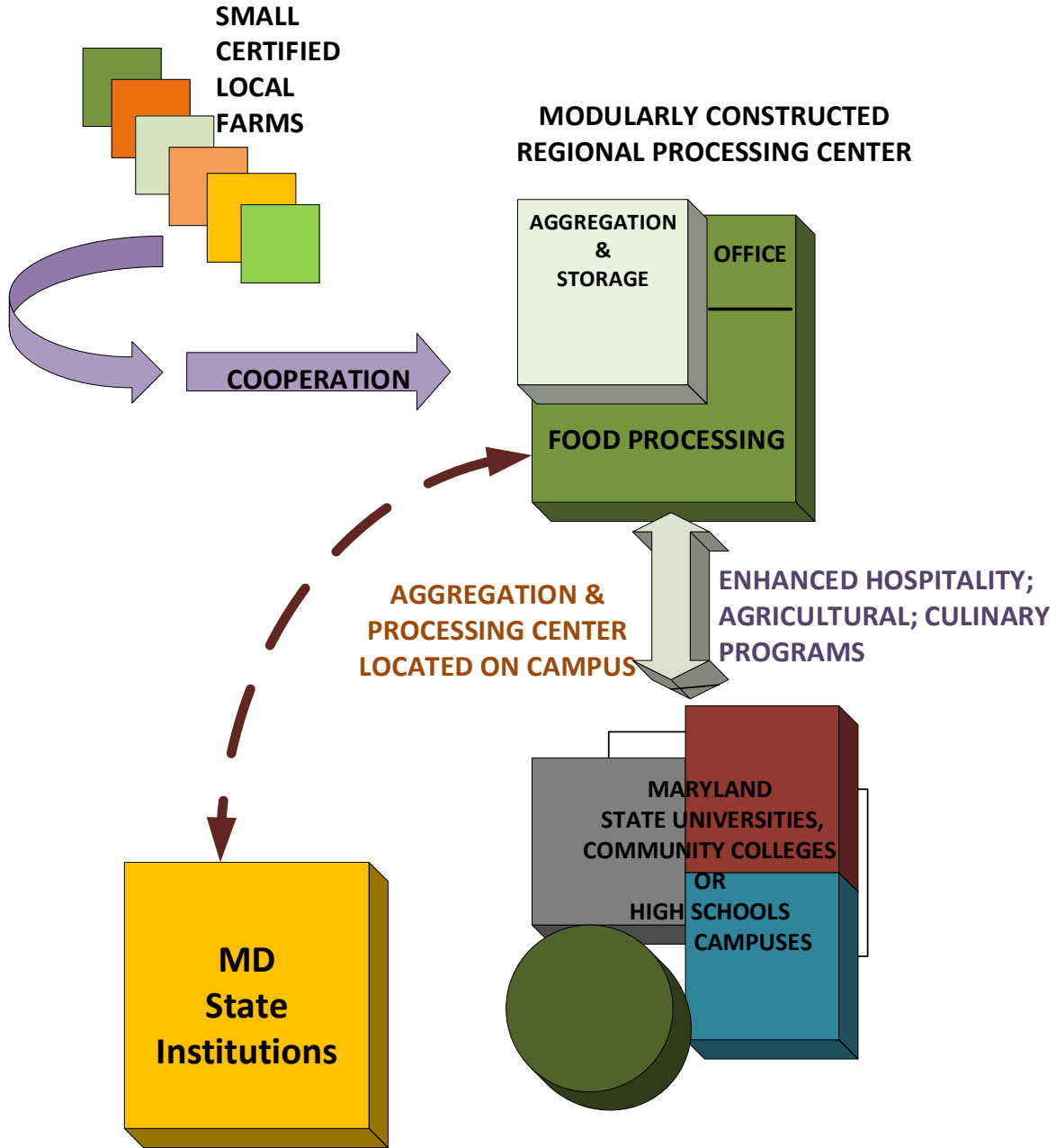


Figure 2

The Agriculture Sub-Group also recommends that the Centers be constructed in a cost-effective manner. Therefore, the Sub-Group recommends working with design specialists to develop a universal design concept for the Centers. The universal design concept allows for easy, cost-effective construction, using a design which allows for expansion/reduction and contains parts (such as refrigeration equipment and insulated panels), that are universal for all Centers across the State of Maryland.

The Agriculture Sub-Group believes the process outlined in Part 1, combined with the multiple regional processing and aggregation centers outlined in Part 2, would enhance the ability of State Institutions to purchase direct, small quantities from CLFs, and create opportunities for CLF's to work collaboratively in providing State Institutions with direct, large quantity purchasing.

The recommendations of the Agriculture Sub-Group stated above are designed to build a stronger local food supply system that meets many state goals, such as the following: a stronger local farm economy, farmland preservation, environmental sustainability, and improved physical health.

Members of the Agriculture Sub-Group presented these recommendations at multiple Regional meetings with stakeholders to get their feedback:

November 6, 2019  
SMADC  
15025 Burnt Store Rd.  
SMECO Auditorium  
Hughesville, MD 20637

November 13, 2019  
CCPS Support Services Center (Old VFW)  
11348 Greensboro Rd.  
Denton, MD 21629

November 18, 2019  
MARBIDCO  
Maryland Department of Agriculture  
Conference Room 114  
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, MD 21401

November 18, 2019  
Harford County Agricultural Center  
3525 Conowingo Rd.  
Street, MD 21154

December 3, 2019  
Winchester Hall, 3rd floor meeting Room  
12 E Church Street  
Frederick, MD 21701

December 9, 2019  
Maryland Farm Bureau Annual Convention  
Breakout Session  
Clarion Fontainebleau Resort  
10100 Coastal Highway  
Ocean City, MD 21842

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the attendees were very supportive of these recommendations.