

Chapter 373

(House Bill 1063)

AN ACT concerning

Agriculture – Maryland Healthy Soils Program

FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Healthy Soils Program for certain purposes; requiring the Department of Agriculture to provide certain incentives to farmers to implement certain farm management practices that contribute to healthy soils; requiring the Department to determine whether the Program may be implemented in a manner to enhance other certain programs; defining certain terms; and generally relating to the Maryland Healthy Soils Program.

BY adding to

Article – Agriculture

Section 2–1901 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 19. Maryland Healthy Soils Program”

Annotated Code of Maryland
(2016 Replacement Volume)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Agriculture

SUBTITLE 19. MARYLAND HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM.

2–1901.

(A) (1) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(2) “HEALTHY SOILS” MEANS THE CONTINUING CAPACITY OF SOIL TO:

(I) FUNCTION AS A BIOLOGICAL SYSTEM;

(II) INCREASE SOIL ORGANIC MATTER;

(III) IMPROVE SOIL STRUCTURE AND WATER AND NUTRIENT HOLDING CAPACITY; AND

(IV) SEQUESTER CARBON AND REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS.

(3) “PROGRAM” MEANS THE MARYLAND HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM.

(B) THERE IS A MARYLAND HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM.

(C) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO:

(1) IMPROVE THE HEALTH, YIELD, AND PROFITABILITY OF THE SOILS OF THE STATE;

(2) INCREASE ~~THE~~ BIOLOGICAL ACTIVITY AND CARBON SEQUESTRIAN CAPABILITY OF SEQUESTRATION IN THE SOILS OF THE STATE BY PROMOTING PRACTICES BASED ON EMERGING SOIL SCIENCE, INCLUDING PLANTING MIXED COVER CROPS, ADOPTING NO-TILL OR LOW-TILL FARMING PRACTICES, AND ROTATION GRAZING; AND

(3) PROMOTE ~~MORE~~ WIDESPREAD USE OF HEALTHY SOILS PRACTICES AMONG FARMERS IN THE STATE.

(D) TO CARRY OUT THE PURPOSES OF THE PROGRAM, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

(1) PROVIDE INCENTIVES, INCLUDING RESEARCH, EDUCATION, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND, SUBJECT TO AVAILABLE FUNDING, FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, TO FARMERS TO IMPLEMENT FARM MANAGEMENT PRACTICES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO HEALTHY SOILS; AND

(2) DETERMINE WHETHER THE PROGRAM MAY BE IMPLEMENTED IN A MANNER TO ENHANCE OTHER STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2017.

Approved by the Governor, May 4, 2017.