

Local Farmers and Agricultural Enterprises Receive Financial Support Through USRC and Regional Partners' Micro Ag Grant Program

CHESTERTOWN, MD (October 17, 2022) — In 2022, 34 farmers and agricultural enterprises in Maryland's Upper Shore region were awarded funding through the Micro Ag Grant program, a joint effort of the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) in partnership with the Cecil County Office of Economic Development, the Kent County Economic & Tourism Development, and the Queen Anne's County Department of Economic Development. For this grant cycle, funds of \$48,000 were distributed in Cecil County, \$52,519 in Kent County, and \$48,000 in Queen Anne's County.

These grant funds provide farmers with the capital to support the development, expansion, and coordination of farms, agricultural enterprises, and initiatives along the Upper Shore region. The Micro Ag Grant program aims to improve the regional food system by creating a cohesive relationship between economic development offices and farmers.

“We want to encourage farmers and agricultural enterprises in the Upper Shore region to work together to promote the ‘Buy Local’ movement and increase access to fresh food in our rural communities,” says USRC Executive Director Susan O’Neill. “The Micro Ag Grant program seeks to provide opportunities for resource sharing and partnership throughout the Upper Shore, ultimately helping to create a vibrant and economically sustainable rural community.”

The 2022 Micro Ag Grant recipients are:

- Blue Heron Farm
- Brewer's Hideaway
- Bull & Goat Brewery
- Cecil County Farm Museum and Regional Agricultural Center
- Centreville Farmers Market
- Coops and Crops
- Crow Vineyard
- Cult Classic Brewing Company
- Delmarva Crop Queen
- Diversified Natural Processing, LLC
- Eastern Shore Permaculture Institute
- Flying Plow Farm
- Fresh Source Farms
- Galvinell Meat Co
- Helen Edith Farm LLC
- Hopkins Game Farm
- Jade Farm
- King Mushrooms, LLC
- Land's End
- Lockbriar Farms

- Melissa Yaeger
- Misty Rose Farm
- Oksana's Produce Farm
- Orchard Point Oyster Company
- Patriot Acres, LLC
- Robert Baldwin
- Round Woods Farm and Nursery
- Southern Cattle
- Stafford Angus
- Stafford Pork
- SunKissed Flower Farm
- Talisman Therapeutic Riding
- Unity Church Hill Nursery
- Zambuto Farms

Cecil County farmer, Jessie McGee, is a 2022 Micro Ag Grant recipient for her farm, Jade Farm. She raises pasture-raised poultry (chickens, turkeys, ducks, and egg-laying hens) as well as woodland-raised pork and honeybees. “The grant funds helped us to buy an improved automated mechanical chicken plucker, which saves time and improves the quality of our product. We were also able to buy a high tunnel (a chicken coop feature) to keep our laying hens safe and warm during the winter and allow us to expand into growing vegetables to sell and use for value-added products.”

Rachel Ross is the owner and grower at SunKissed Flower Farm, which focuses on producing quality cut flowers and eco-conscious farming practices. As a Queen Anne's County recipient, she purchased a flame weeder, beneficial insects, compost, nutritious amendments, and natural fertilizers. These purchases helped her to enhance soil and crop health, control weeds without herbicides, naturally control pest populations and keep toxic chemicals off the farm. “The grant funds were incredibly helpful,” says Rachel. “I'm a one-woman farming operation. The funds helped me acquire many useful tools for my farm, reduce financial stress, and have allowed me to share more local flowers with my community. I'm very grateful to the Micro Ag Grant Program for helping my little farm chase big dreams!”

Farmer RJ Baldwin started raising and selling mums four years ago on his Kent County farm. He mixed the soil and potted them individually by hand and was able to process 1,000 plants per year. After receiving funds from the 2022 Micro Ag Grant program, he purchased a potting machine to help with soil mixing and pot filling and increased his production to 6,000 mums this year. The grant also helped him purchase a cold box for refrigeration and storage. “The cold box keeps produce fresh for an additional 2-3 days, meaning less waste and more revenue,” says RJ. “Without the funds from the grant program, I wouldn't have been able to scale up.” RJ's goal is to be a full-time farmer.

A new grant cycle will soon be starting for 2023. Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties will begin accepting applications on January 2, 2023. The deadline to apply is January 31, 2023. Farmers and owners of agricultural enterprises are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity and apply for the grant program. For more information about the Micro Ag Grant program, visit:

<https://usrcmd.org/agmicrogrant>

About the Upper Shore Regional Council: Since 2003, the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) has fostered planning and development in Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties. USRC affords federal, state, county, and local governments a regional forum to identify issues and opportunities. USRC plans and implements programs to improve the quality of life in the Upper Shore Region of Maryland.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Nisha Stephens

nisha@platinumpr.com

240-608-4442