



Wm. Donald Clifton II  
Secretary of Agriculture

# JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE

## FISCAL YEAR 2027



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE



WE WORK FOR YOU EVERY DAY



## AGRICULTURE

### DELAWARE'S NO. 1 INDUSTRY

#### FAMILY FARMS

On 520,000 acres of farmland, Delaware's 2,150 family farms produce a wide variety of agricultural products. These include corn, soybeans, wheat, poultry, fruits, and vegetables. For livestock, the First State is home to more than 276 million broiler chickens and 10,500 head of cattle.

#### ECONOMIC IMPACT

Food and agriculture industries provide 76,243 direct jobs and more than \$31 billion in total economic activity to the state, including \$3.8 billion in direct wages.



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# DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## VISION AND MISSION

### VISION

*The Delaware Department of Agriculture supports farmers and consumers alike, working to sustain and grow our industry, promote fresh and seasonal products, and build consumer trust in Delaware.*

### MISSION

*The staff of the Delaware Department of Agriculture strive to effectively and efficiently sustain and promote the viability of food, fiber, and agricultural industries in Delaware through quality services that protect and enhance the environment, health, and welfare of the general public.*



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# DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## OPERATING BUDGET AND STAFFING

**\$13.0  
Million**

**Recommended  
Budget**



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| Delaware Department of Agriculture Sections                                   |                             |                                |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Administration (Office of the Secretary, Communications & Marketing, Finance) | Standardbred Breeders' Fund | Plant Industries               |
| Aglands Preservation & Planning   | Food Products Inspection    | Poultry & Animal Health        |
| Agricultural Compliance   | Nutrient Management         | Thoroughbred Racing Commission |
| Delaware Forest Service   | Pesticides                  | Weights & Measures             |
| Harness Racing Commission   |                             |                                |

192 FTE and casual/seasonal employees in 13 sections





# DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## OPERATING BUDGET AND STAFFING

### Vacant Positions

Long Term  
vs  
Short Term



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| Delaware Department of Agriculture Vacant Position Summary |   |                                  |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Section  | Long –Term (2 years or more)                        | Short – Term (Less than 2 years) |
| Administration   |   | 1 -Deputy Attorney General V     |
| Food Products & Inspection                                 | 2 – Meat Inspectors<br>2 – Meat Compliance Officers |                                  |
| Delaware Forest Service                                    |   | 1- Forester (Sussex)             |

- Position Updates:
  - Administration – DAG position offer was accepted (9/25) awaiting DOJ to hire a replacement
  - Food Products & Inspection – Interviews to be scheduled for Meat Compliance Officers and planned recruitment for Meat Inspectors is June 2026
  - Delaware Forest Service – Interviews are currently being scheduled
  - DDA is reclassifying three long term vacant positions to assist with the Nutrient Management Turf Regulations and Weights and Measures EV inspections.



# AG PRODUCTION INSURANCE ASSISTANCE

## RECOMMENDED: \$2 MILLION

- First year complete after HB 87 was signed into law in July 2024 to assist producers with acquiring adequate coverage of crop insurance to ensure the viability of Delaware’s agriculture production.
- This program has been well received and beneficial to many First State farmers with 420 participating farms and six participating insurance providers.

| AG Production Insurance Assistance Program |               |
|--|---------------|
| New Castle                                 | 104,876 Acres |
| Kent                                       | 32,867 Acres  |
| Sussex                                     | 129,814 Acres |
| Kent/Sussex Bee Colonies                   | 791 Colonies  |

- The new MOU was completed to make programmatic improvements to ensure that the program reached more qualified farmers.





## DDA PERFORMANCE MEASURES/HIGHLIGHTS

- **\$ of gross receipts for Delaware farmers markets (millions)**
  - **\$4.589 million:** For the fourth year in a row, Delaware farmers markets have set a record in sales, indicating consumer support for family farms producing **Delaware Grown** produce and value-added products, which in turn bolsters the local economy.
- **# of pet food/animal/livestock feed products approved for registration**
  - **20,295:** The funds from these registrations through our Agriculture Compliance Lab are provided to the Division of Public Health's Office of Animal Welfare to conduct its spay and neuter program, which reduces unwanted litters, pet homelessness, and the risk of zoonotic disease to the public.
- **% of timber harvests that follow a management plan (acres)**
  - **41 percent:** Through active forest management of state-owned and private lands, we increase the chance of optimal forest health and contribute to the dynamics of a sustainable forest market. In addition, this benefits all Delawareans by providing improved air quality, water quality, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and forest vigor to reduce wildfire risk.





## DDA PERFORMANCE MEASURES/HIGHLIGHTS

- **Weights and Measures – By The Numbers**
  - **12,485:** Petroleum meters inspected
  - **4,507:** Small/large scales tested
  - **2,721:** Petroleum meters rejected
  - **705:** Licensed weighmasters
  - **372:** Price verifications performed
  - **370:** Technicians registered
  - **250:** Vehicle tank meters tested
  - **70:** Truck scales tested
  - **42:** Delaware State Police enforcement scales tested







## DDA PERFORMANCE MEASURES/HIGHLIGHTS

- **# of avian influenza (AI) tests & # of positive AI tests**
  - **6,555 tests; 5 positive tests:** An indicator of the number of flocks sent for processing. When/if there is a positive result, it shows the testing system working, which prevents the monitored flock from ever leaving the farm. We had extraordinary cooperation last winter as we dealt with a handful of positive AI tests.
- **Tons of poultry litter/manure relocated for land application**
  - **7,094 tons:** Our farms are finding a use for a valuable soil amendment, which, when applied in accordance with a landowner's nutrient management plan, decreases the need for chemical fertilizers and protects waterways.
- **# of saved acres in Aglands Preservation Foundation Rd. 29 easements**
  - **2,883 acres:** The 29th round of easement purchases, announced in October, included 36 new easements (out of 101 total offers) across all three counties, covering more than 2,800 acres at a cost of \$14.9 million. Since the **Aglands Preservation Foundation's** inception almost three decades ago, more than 1,250 First State farms and almost 160,000 acres have been preserved. In 2020, the **American Farmland Trust** ranked Delaware's Aglands Preservation Program as the best example of its kind in the nation.





# AGLANDS PRESERVATION PROGRAM

## UPDATE

### Round 30

- **350** farms undergoing appraisal, including **90-plus** new applications.
- **Demand remains high:** This is the second highest number of applications received by DDA since the late 1990s.
- **Popular program throughout the state:** A portion of this last year's easements were boosted by contributions from each county:
  - **Sussex County: \$1,917,156** for eight easements
  - **New Castle County: \$225,769** for one easement
  - **Kent County: \$100,000** for seven easements
- **Anticipated announcement:** Late summer/early fall 2026.



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## DELAWARE FOREST SERVICE

### FOREST SERVICE

#### Forest Resiliency through Active Management

- Forest Permitting for timber harvesting on one acre or more with 251 active harvesting permits.
- Forest management has taken place on over 138,000 acres of privately owned forests that have been sustainably managed by our staff.
- Active forest management is a proven climate mitigation tool that results in forest resiliency if done professionally.
- State Forests are actively managed for resiliency and are the only state lands to have professionally developed forest inventories to guide management decisions (21,000 acres).





## DELAWARE FOREST SERVICE

### URBAN FORESTRY – WILDLAND FIRE

#### Building Urban Forests for Climate Adaption

- Ordinances for adoption for all 57 municipalities
- Advisory boards for tree protection/projects
- Certified ISA professional management
- Forest health monitoring
- Incorporating planting and forest retention into develop design at the local levels.



#### Wildland Fire Protection

- Supporting local volunteer fire companies with operational support and funding.
- New for 2026, the Forest Service is taking requests for the Department of Defense's Firefighter program which is designed to provide surplus military equipment to VFCs (estimating procuring \$1 million dollars in equipment during 2026).
- Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) 1,189 fires last year in natural land settings.



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## DELAWARE FOREST SERVICE

### STATE FOREST UPDATE – TIMBER REVENUE

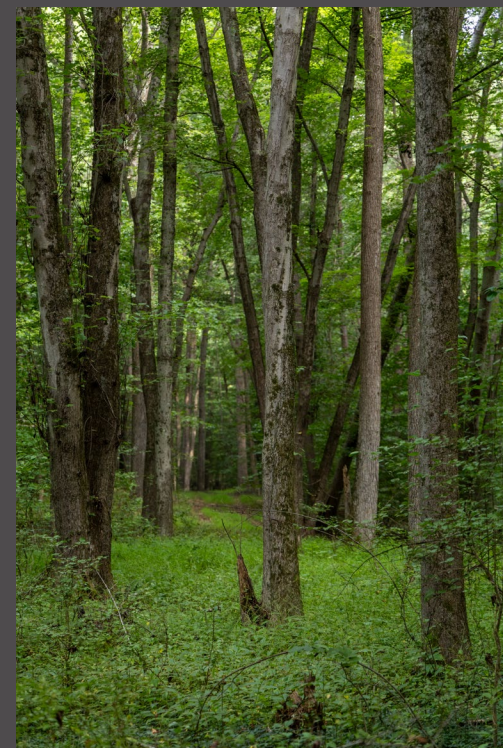
Forest markets continue to be of concern. Lack of industry and markets is contributing to a loss of ASF revenue and straining the general fund budget allocation of \$74,900 for Contractual, Supply, and Energy which supports management on 21,000 acres, 33 historical buildings, specialized equipment and DFS's vehicle fleet.

#### **2025 Timber Sales Revenue: \$113,215**

- Sales needed to support State Forest Operations and manage our lands: \$505,000

#### **Long-Term Outlook**

- Developing Bio-Mass markets at the state/national levels for fuel production (24 months).
- Cut to Length Systems
- Pulp markets for other related fiber products.







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