



ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
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NEWS RELEASE *for Immediate Release*

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**Commissioners Sign Memorandum of Understanding with Southern Maryland
Agriculture Development Commission**

LEONARDTOWN, MD – The Commissioners of St. Mary's County signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission (SMADC) Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, to authorize funding for the construction of the Regional Agricultural Center (RAC) in St. Mary's County. The Commissioners agreed to provide additional funding for the \$4.7 million project. SMADC, which serves the five Southern Maryland counties (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's) contributed \$1.5 million for the RAC.

The RAC will add value to Southern Maryland agricultural and livestock products, aggregate and distribute those products, and provide instructional and regulatory-advice services for Southern Maryland farmers. Once constructed, the facility will include a butcher shop for cut and wrap, finer meats processing, a meat locker, cold storage, warehousing and distribution, commercial and instructional kitchen and product storage. The creation of a Southern Maryland Meats charcuterie brand is envisioned, along with apprenticeship and job training programs. It is forecast that the RAC will supply full-time employment for 17 Southern Maryland residents. The 8,300 square foot facility on New Market Turner Road is expected to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2023. SMADC has agreed to operate the facility under a long-term lease with the County.

This centrally located hub of value-added production, aggregation and sales will serve farmers, producers, and consumers in all of Southern Maryland and will be located in Northern St. Mary's County, near the intersection of Routes 5 and 6. The facility will be easily accessible to all five counties and conveniently located for producers within a few miles of The Barns at New Market, and the newly USDA Certified, Westham Butcher Shop.

“With the RAC project, we will be better able to serve all our agricultural communities, including farmers and producers, while bringing to our citizens the ability to acquire locally grown products. We are proud that this project, located in northern St. Mary's County, will be the first in the State of Maryland,” said Commissioner Todd Morgan, member of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, on the project.

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Commissioner President Randy Guy said, "This project is a great collaboration and one that will benefit so many of our farmers and residents."

"We are so excited to be moving forward on the Regional Agricultural Center facility. This is such an important project for Southern Maryland Agriculture and our growing Southern Maryland Meat industry. It will help to keep farms profitable which in turn preserves agricultural land. It will also help to promote our local meat industry, serve our consumers well and strengthen our food distribution system. Our Southern Maryland meat producers have been exceptionally patient as we worked to turn a "good idea" into reality. This will help an awful lot of people and we hope that it will serve as a role model for other areas interested in introducing similar programs," said Mary Wood, SMADC Chair, and St. Mary's County farmer.

SMADC is a division of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland.

For more information on economic development in St. Mary's County, please visit <https://www.yesstmarysmd.com/>.

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