

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: USING A SOCIO-CULTURAL FRAMEWORK
TO EVALUATE FARMLAND
PRESERVATION POLICY SUCCESS IN
MARYLAND

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The intent of Maryland's farmland preservation policy has remained constant over the past three decades -- *to preserve productive farmland and woodland for the continued production of food and fiber for all of Maryland's citizens*. Therefore, thirty years after this statutory goal was made, how effective have Maryland's farmland preservation programs been in reaching this goal? This study addresses the absence of cultural and social analysis in the evaluation of farmland preservation program success in Maryland's metropolitan counties.

In utilizing a socio-cultural framework of analysis, this study shows that farmland preservation policies (in their drafting, implementation, and evaluation) are a cultural process, the outcomes of which create and sustain a particular social space and cultural landscape. Theories on the social production of space and landscape are relevant to the task of farmland preservation and agricultural economic development in metropolitan areas. The failure of farmland preservation policy in Maryland has,

in part, been the failure to take culture seriously. Quantitative indicators show that Maryland's state farmland preservation program has achieved moderate success in securing a productive agricultural land base over its first three decades, but has not been successful in preserving farming as a viable "way of life," has not stopped the erosion in the value of agricultural sales, and has not reversed the marketplace alienation between producers and consumers in the state.

USING A SOCIO-CULTURAL FRAMEWORK TO EVALUATE FARMLAND
PRESERVATION POLICY SUCCESS IN MARYLAND

By

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study develops a new framework with which to analyze and evaluate the success of farmland preservation programs in Maryland. It brings a distinct approach of socio-cultural analysis in assessing the impact of farmland preservation policies on land use, the agricultural economy, and the meaning of landscape in the state's metropolitan counties.

Since 1977, the Maryland state government has spent \$490 million dollars to permanently protect over a quarter-million acres of farmland (MALPF 2009). Maryland's county governments have made a similar investment to protect nearly a quarter-million more acres of farmland from conversion to non-farm uses. Land under agricultural protection easements now represents 8% of Maryland's total land area. Government programs of this magnitude inevitably serve more than one objective and more than one set of stakeholders.

The reasons for protecting agricultural land are varied. The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), the entity established by the Maryland General Assembly in 1977 to oversee the state's farmland preservation program, has six objectives in its mission. (MALPF 2008a). They are as follows (the first four are statutory goals and the last two are ancillary goals):

- To preserve productive farmland and woodland for the continued production of food and fiber for all of Maryland's citizens;
- To curb the expansion of random urban development;
- To help curb the spread of urban blight and deterioration;
- To help protect agricultural land and woodland as open space;
- To protect wildlife habitat; and
- To enhance the environmental quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries

These six objectives in Maryland are representative of what Bryant and Johnston (1992:21) have identified as the four functions of farmland in peri-urban areas – production, protection (environmental), place, and play.

The recent discourse of farmland preservation in Maryland has shifted away from a previous, single emphasis on protecting a productive agricultural land base. Continual shifts in national and global agricultural markets, as well as population growth and urban development pressures, create on-going challenges for Maryland's farmers. At the same time that these forces exert pressure on the agricultural land base and profitability, new cultural forces are changing the way farmers, consumers, and local and state governments seek to address the challenges facing peri-urban agricultural landscapes and economies.

Today's farmland preservation discourse borrows from new agrarianism, a philosophy that adds an environmentalist element to established agrarian concerns of land, community, and economy. New agrarianism, in the context of farmland preservation and local agricultural economic development, is defining a new type of cultural landscape, what I am calling *commensal landscapes*. A commensal landscape is an area in which sustainable practices and stewardship of the land, along with community-driven relationships between food producers and consumers, result in the creation and maintenance of a culturally agrarian landscape. Several counties in Maryland have adopted the discourse of new agrarianism and commensalism in hopes that such a cultural shift will lead to better success in protecting farmland and maintaining a viable agricultural economy.

Commensal landscapes are working landscapes, producing food for human consumption. A new cultural politics of food have brought the complicated cultural

meanings surrounding food production and consumption into public debates over land use and agricultural policies. The new cultural dynamics of food (alternative, sustainable, organic, local, etc.) make land use change in agricultural area socially and politically charged.

Therefore, in assessing the success of farmland preservation policies, it is necessary to employ a metric which takes into account the important cultural meanings and anxieties over current and future food production. Even though farmland preservation programs across the state of Maryland exhibit a multiplicity of goals, program evaluation is either non-existent or employs an inadequate evaluation metric. Each one of the aforementioned MALPF objectives would require its own set of multiple indicators to measure success. This study restricts itself to the first statutory MALPF objective -- *to preserve productive farmland and woodland for the continued production of food and fiber for all of Maryland's citizens.*

1.1 Research Problem

Maryland is considered a national model for farmland preservation, having protected nearly 500,000 acres through a variety of state and county-level programs (MALPF 2008b). The objectives of Maryland's state farmland preservation program prioritize protecting food and fiber production, as well as protecting the environment, rural ways of life, and curbing sprawl. I contend that these goals derive from cultural understandings of community, economy, and human relationships with the natural world. Yet when evaluating the success of the state's farmland preservation program, often the sole evaluative indicator used is the total number of acres preserved. How should

program success be measured when objectives extend beyond the mere protection of an agricultural land base?

1.2 Research Purpose and Need

The purpose of this study is to address the absence of cultural and social analysis in the evaluation of farmland preservation program success in Maryland's metropolitan counties. This project has four major components – 1) establishing a theoretical framework for the cultural and social values underpinning the land use and food system goals of farmland preservation programs; 2) making explicit these values contained within the state and county farmland preservation programs in Maryland; 3) constructing an evaluation metric using specific indicators to evaluate the success of these programs in reaching stated goals; and 4) the application of this evaluation metric to county-level case studies in several Maryland metropolitan counties.

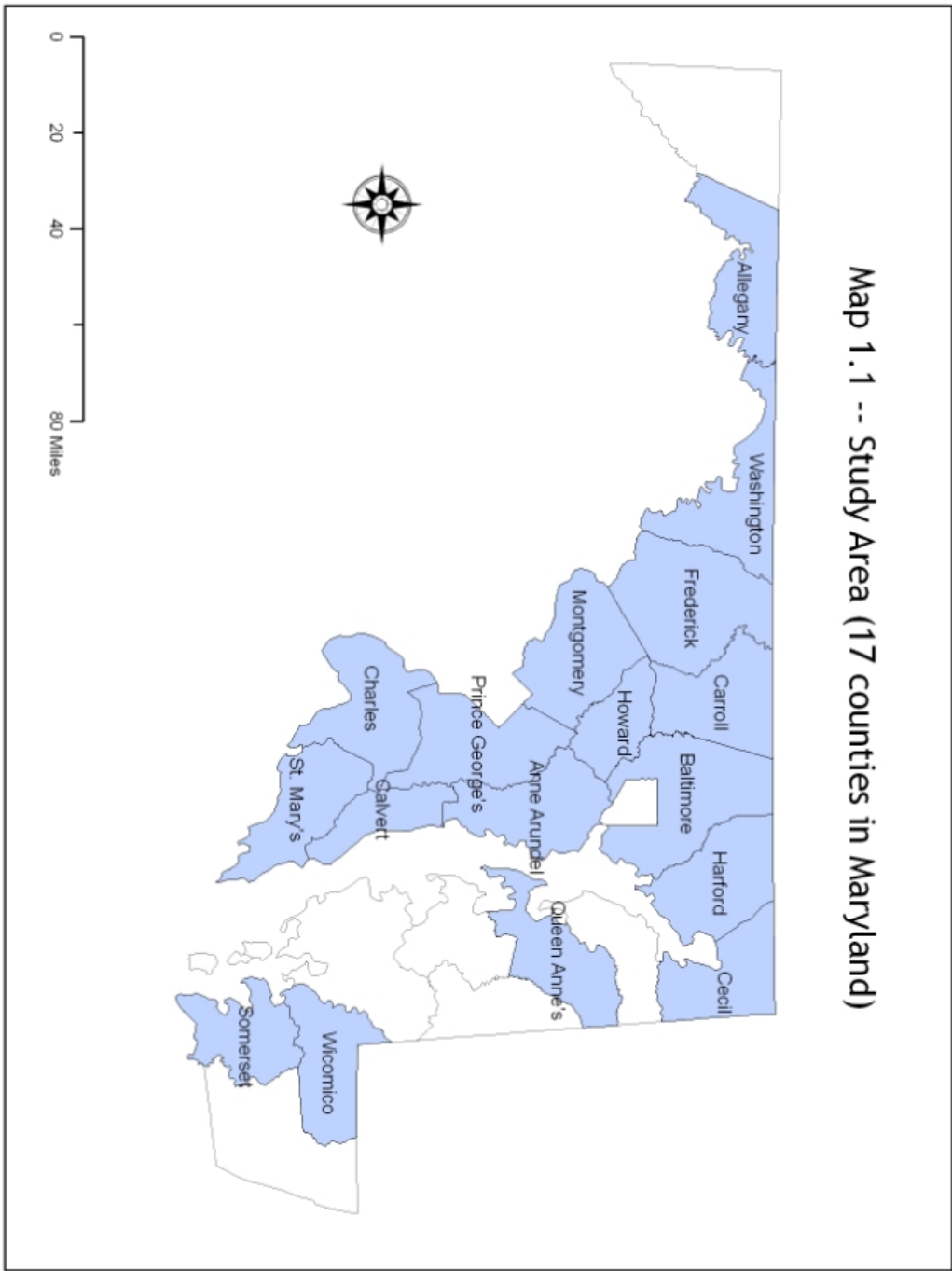
This study analyzes Maryland's farmland preservation programs within a framework which draws from theories of landscape meaning and the social production of space. In utilizing this socio-cultural framework of analysis, I show that farmland preservation policies are grounded in specific cultural understandings of space and economy with respect to food production and consumption.

After substantiating the dynamics of cultural and social meaning in Maryland's farmland preservation programs, this study uses an evaluation metric consisting of fourteen indicators to measure program success. This metric is designed to help policymakers and other concerned stakeholders identify areas of relative weakness and

strength, allowing them to make new judgments with regards to program effectiveness and future policy directions.

The loss of farmland to urban decentralization over the past three decades has been a major concern of farmers, the general public, state and county officials, planners, and many in academe. State and county governments employ a raft of land use policies and economic strategies in order to prevent farmland conversion to developed uses. Much of the academic literature on farmland preservation analyzes the effectiveness of these strategies from an economic efficiency perspective. Studies on farmland preservation by agricultural economists focus on assessing the effectiveness of economic levers and policy mechanisms in preserving farmland acreage (e.g. Tavernier and Li 1995; Lynch and Musser 2001). However, at the level of cultural meaning, the scholarly literature on farmland preservation and local food systems are poorly connected to the policy realm. Studies on local food systems, mostly by rural sociologists and geographers, focus on short food supply chains, reconnecting producers and consumers, and the meaning of community (e.g. Marsden 1998; Pirog et al. 2001; Hinrichs 2003). What is missing is an evaluative process which assesses the success of farmland preservation policy through a unified framework of cultural and quantitative data analysis.

Map 1.1 -- Study Area (17 counties in Maryland)



1.3 Research Questions

Since the goals of Maryland's state and county agricultural land preservation efforts focus on food production and cultural concerns of land and economy, the primary research question is:

- How effective have Maryland's farmland preservation programs been in attaining their stated goals?

Additional questions tied to the purpose of this study include:

- How does the application of theories of landscape meaning and the social production of space and landscape explain the challenges in coming to a common understanding of local agricultural land use and a local food economy?
- How have the various cultural models operating among stakeholders influenced the establishment of farmland preservation goals, the drafting and implementing policy, and the evaluation of success?
- What indicators might we use to develop a new metric by which to assess the success of farmland preservation programs in reaching social and cultural goals?
- How has the policy focus on *land* rather than *people* affected program success?
- Can farmland preservation programs which adopt the discourse of commensalism prevent the further erosion of the agricultural landscape and economy in metropolitan counties?

1.4 Cultural geography and public policy analysis

This study is titled an evaluation of farmland preservation policy. Though this research is not based in a school of public policy nor being conducted by a student of public policy theory, it is necessary to situate this effort at policy evaluation within the discussion of policy sciences. The recognized founder of modern "policy sciences" was Harold Lasswell (1902-1978), who did his graduate work and early years teaching at the University of Chicago. Lasswell's vision of policy science is that it was to be multidisciplinary, problem-oriented, and "explicitly normative," fully considering human values. He saw his framework as building "a policy science of democracy" (Fischer

2003:3). Lasswell's multidisciplinary vision of policy science never came to pass, as the quantitative revolution that took hold of the social sciences in the 1960s created a "technocratic" field that still dominates policy analysis to this day. This one-sided methodology in policy analysis over-emphasized numerical calculations of efficiency and effectiveness as central policy goals, creating a "technocratic form of governance" based on an aura of "scientific decision-making" (Fischer 2003:5).

As social scientists began to adopt post-positivist theories and methodologies during the 1970s, policy analysis began to take on the multidisciplinary character that Lasswell had set out for the field. University of Cambridge geographer Ron Martin, a strong voice in the discipline for policy relevant research, affirms that public policy analysis "has to be pluralistic, not monistic." He calls for "more interesting and imaginative ways" of conducting policy analysis, using mixed methodologies (2001:203).

Though there is an academic journal devoted to applied geography, and a specialty group of applied geographers within the Association of American Geographers, applied cultural geography remains on the margins of the discipline. This study, conducted within a theoretical framework grounded in cultural geography scholarship, applies cultural theory to understanding and evaluating current land-use policies. Martin has called human geography's reluctance to engage in public policy analysis and research a "missing agenda." According to Martin (2001:190),

the reality is that policy-making of one kind or another is a prominent and pervasive feature of modern society, affecting the daily lives of us all. As geographers we should be striving to inform and shape the process and improve the outcomes.

Martin bemoans that fact that geographers are rarely tapped by public officials or citizens groups to solve pressing issues of the day. According to him “other social, political and environmental scientists, even journalists and media pundits, shape public perception and government policy in areas where we as geographers could – indeed, should – be having much greater influence” (2001:192). Martin sees the effects of the concurrent processes of globalization and localization as a policy realm that should be the natural academic territory of geographic analysis. In particular (2001:205), the “embryonic new localism and regionalism” provide “unprecedented opportunities for geographers to contribute to public policy discourse and deliberation.” Thus, with the subject of this study, lies an opportunity to apply cultural geography in the analysis of public policy. It is my hope that it will contribute to current and future discussions around the intent and efficacy of farmland preservation programs in the state of Maryland.

1.5. Organization of Chapters

Chapter Two, establishes the theoretical framework of this study. The framework is supported by the following literatures: theories of the social production of space and landscape, farmland preservation, new agrarianism and commensalism, and cultural models. This literature review informs my assertion that current farmland preservation programs in Maryland must be viewed and evaluated as cultural policy, not as just land use or economic policy. Chapter Two concludes with an explanation of the methods used to conduct this study.

Chapter Three presents an overview of agriculture in Maryland, focusing on the past fifty years. This chapter demonstrates the diversity of the state’s agricultural

economy and landscapes, which complicates policy development beyond the local or regional level.

Chapter Four provides background to farmland preservation policy in the United States , followed by an in-depth analysis of the discourse of farmland preservation in Maryland. This qualitative data establishes the discursive point of departure for further analysis.

In Chapters Five and Six, the results and analysis of the data collected and generated by the study's evaluation metric are presented. Chapter Five presents the findings of quantitative data generated by the evaluation metric in the form of cross-county comparisons against a regional baseline. Findings from interviews conducted with county agricultural land and agricultural economic development specialists are presented. In Chapter Six, the quantitative indicators are combined with themes from the Chapter Four discourse analysis and applied to the case study of Southern Maryland. The region is illustrative of a government-directed development of a commensal landscape in an area undergoing rapid population growth and radical change in its agricultural economy and landscape. Results from this analysis are applicable to other rapidly growing metropolitan counties attempting a commensalist approach to farmland preservation and agricultural economic development. The case study of this historic tobacco-growing region (until the year 2000 when the state tobacco buyout began) can also inform the increased academic attention given to transitions in post-tobacco agricultural landscapes and economies.

Conclusions in Chapter Seven discuss the implication of the study's findings to evaluating farmland preservation programs in Maryland and suggests future research needs and questions.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This research project is intended to be an example of policy-relevant, applied cultural geography. While “pure” research acts to extend the boundaries of a discipline through the development of new theories and methods, applied research uses existing methods and theoretical standpoints in order to answer questions and solve problems (Pacione 1999: 4). Pacione explains that conducting applied geographic research can take three forms, based on Habermas’ theory of the three principal types of science.

They are as follows (1999: 9)

- 1] empirical-analytical – “to predict the empirical world using scientific methods of positivism”
- 2] historical-hermeneutic – “to interpret the meaning of the world by examining the thoughts behind the actions that produce the world of experience”
- 3] realist-emancipatory – “to uncover the real explanations governing society and encourage people to seek a superior social formation”

The implication is that an applied study would primarily embody just one of these types of scientific inquiry through a specific theoretical framework and set of methods. However, in the present study of the cultural meaning of farmland preservation policies and an evaluation of their effectiveness, elements of all three types of scientific inquiry come into play. This study is historical and hermeneutic because it seeks to uncover the cultural meanings embedded in the drafting, implementation, and evaluation of farmland preservation policies. This study is empirical and analytical in that it uses empirical data to predict the continued failure or success of policies in reaching social goals. Finally,

this study is also realist and emancipatory in the sense that, if the evidence proves convincing, its findings might lead to policy improvement.

I am conducting this study under what Daly and Farley (2004:43) consider to be the two presuppositions of public policy; the policy environment (the world) is neither deterministic nor nihilistic. In a nondeterministic world, real alternatives exist. In a nonnihilistic world, we can define and choose a better state of things from a worse state. Therefore, policy alternatives, if the status quo is found unsatisfactory, matter.

2.1. Social production of space

The social production of space is a concept that did not gain prominence among Anglophone social scientists and philosophers until the 1991 translation of Henri Lefebvre's *La production de l'espace* (1974). In the time since, Lefebvre's arguments and observations are widely accepted among cultural geographers. Lefebvre argued that space was not an empty container in which human actions took place, but that it was dialectically produced from interactions between the abstract space of state power and the everyday spatial practices of ordinary people. In other words, "spatial structure ... articulates social structure" (Livingstone 1992:333).

For Lefebvre, "space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies" (in Soja 1980:210). From this perspective, it is easy to see why many (even competing) schools of post-positivist thinking could incorporate the social production of space as a relevant concept. Marxists, feminists, post-modernists and post-colonialists were all able to make Lefebvre's ideas to work for them. According to his

critics (e.g. Unwin 2000), this ecumenical adoption is possible because Lefebvre's written interpretations of space and place are not consistent.

Lefebvre's "conceptual triad" of conceived, perceived and lived spaces focused primarily on urban public space, though they are applicable to all spaces subject to state power and market forces. This triad includes (McCann 1999:172):

- Representations of space (conceived) – "the space of planners and bureaucrats, constructed through discourse ... conceived rather than directly lived."
- Representational space (perceived) – the work of artists, photographers and poets who create "the spaces of the imagination through which life is directly lived."
- Spatial practices (lived) – "the everyday routines and experiences that 'secrete' their own social spaces" and mediate between conceived and perceived social spaces.

The push to protect farmland in metropolitan areas is an outcome of this "socio-spatial dialectic" (Soja 1980); the preservation movement mediates between the abstract zoning polygons of the planner and the aesthetics of a drive down rural roads. The highly-charged battles over land use and zoning in local communities are infused with cultural meaning and aspirations. Land bureaucratically-zoned into agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial parcels presents an incomplete picture of a landscape. Human aspirations, both individual and group, are evident in the discourse of these public battles and are often woven into policy and local comprehensive land-use plans. Complicating the situation is the fact that a community's own spatial practices often conflict with its aspirations and perceptions of space.

Lefebvre's essential concern was with the spatial constructs of power and the ability of marginalized groups to challenge these conceived spaces. Contesting the normative position of space is about contesting power relations. According to Soja

(1980:215), “the survival of capitalism has depended upon [its] distinctive occupation and production of space, achieved through bureaucratically controlled consumption, the differentiation of centers and peripheries, and the penetration of the state into everyday life.”

With consumption controlled (and encouraged) by national governments and supranational bureaucracies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), to the advantage of multinational enterprises, the social spaces for local, cooperative, or non-market production are constrained. In the arena of food production, state bureaucracies, under the guise of public health regulations, make it exceedingly difficult for local, small-scale farmers and food processors to sell directly to the public.

For example, in an abstract conception of public space, the Fairfax County government in Virginia instituted a ban on home-cooked or church-kitchen meals donated to the homeless, due to concerns over food-borne illnesses (Salmon 2006). Even knowing that the county’s homeless often resort to digging through dumpsters, county regulations require that all food being served to the public be prepared in facilities that must have a set of expensive equipment that includes: “a commercial-grade refrigerator, a three-compartment sink to wash, rinse and sanitize dishes, and a separate hand-washing sink.” One church minister asked, "Why do [they] think that the traditional way of fixing a home-cooked meal is going to poison people off the street?" (Salmon 2006). The outcry over the regulation led to it being repealed within a week, a small victory in the socio-spatial struggle between the bureaucratically-constructed “representations of space” (the homeless engaging in public dining) and actual “spatial practices” (citizen groups feeding the homeless in their private, communal spaces).

While Lefebvre's works might need a double-translation (from French to English and then from "academese" to the vernacular), the themes of power and marginalization inherent in the discussion of the social production of space are easily recognizable. At the very least, people are able to understand that their everyday lived experiences do not always conform to the dominant conceived space of the state nor the perceived space of their art and media.

2.2 Landscape Theory – From Landscape as Product to Landscape as Process

The preservation of farmland is the preservation of cultural landscape. Landscape is essentially a cultural construct, even as the physical environment provides the basis for human activity and the tableau for cultural meaning. Landscape studies have been an important feature of geographic study since the late 1800s. Donald Meinig has proclaimed geography "the science of landscape." This section will quickly cover the historical development of landscape theory in human geography, leaving out much of the details that others have chronicled in great detail (Livingston 1992; Unwin 2000). The goal of this section is to highlight landscape theory as it has been developed by "the new cultural geography" of the 1980s onward. It ends with a look at three recent geographers (Olwig, Schein, and Rose) who have moved the theoretical understanding of landscape from *product* to *process*. This shift in understanding landscape is central to the theoretical framework of this study.

2.2.1 Definitions of landscape

This study assumes that people are central to landscape. Landscapes are cultural whether they are the result of human activity or human visual consumption. Usage of the word *landscape* often implies a space without people. Landscape scholarship and planning have begun to focus on understanding landscape as the result of ecologically-interdependent systems (physical, human, and non-human biotic).

International organizations involved in environmental and heritage conservation have generated working definitions of landscape. For example, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) defines landscape as “areas of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological, and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity” (1994). Out of the same body of work conducted by the IUCN on protected landscapes comes a very elegant explanation of what landscape is (Phillips 2002: 5) – “nature *plus* people; the past *plus* the present; and physical attributes (scenery, nature, historic heritage) *plus* associative values (social and cultural).” The Council of Europe adopted the European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000), aiming to bring quality landscape protection, management, and planning to all of Europe’s landscapes, the ordinary as well as the “outstanding” (COE 2000). Through this convention, Europe has an official definition of landscape. Landscape is “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and or human factors” (COE 2000).

2.2.2 *Landscape studies in human geography*

Landscape has been a pre-occupation of academic geography since its beginnings as a modern academic discipline in the 1800s. George Perkins Marsh in his 1864 book *Man and Nature*, established a conversation on the impact of human actions on the landscape and the conservation of natural resources that continues among geographers today (Lowenthal 2000). The modern study of cultural landscapes within American geography developed under the leadership of Carl O. Sauer at the University of California, Berkeley from 1923 until 1957. Sauer adhered closely to European concepts of landscape, but rejected both environmental and social determinism. In his famous 1925 essay, “The Morphology of Landscape,” Sauer wrote that “culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result” (in Norton 1989: 38). This straight-forward approach ended up being more controversial than one would suspect.

Meinig (1979) moved the analysis of landscape beyond the Sauer’s morphological approach. Though few would consider Meinig a member of the “new cultural geography” school of thought, as editor of a 1979 volume on landscape interpretation, he provided a prominent venue for geographers to take a fresh look at landscape meaning and interpretation, sharing the stage with more “traditional” cultural geographers such as Lewis. Meinig’s work does not attempt to completely uproot these earlier approaches. As a first step in studying symbolic landscapes, he calls for a mapping of “morphological types” in a landscape in order to “build a geographic context for the assessment of individual [symbolic landscapes]” (1979:173).

British geographer Denis Cosgrove expands on Meinig's concept of the symbolic landscape, integrating the treatment of landscape in art and literature with theoretical explorations of the social production of personal and group identity. Cosgrove has written the foundational text (*Social Formations and Symbolic Landscape*, 1984) expounding on the "new" cultural geography's concept of the symbolic landscape. Landscape shoulders a heavy burden in this framework – landscape is "a way of seeing the world," "a social product," and "an ideological concept" (1984:13-15). As a "new cultural geographer", Cosgrove also seeks to move geography's study of landscape beyond the limitations of the morphological approach and positivist science. According to Cosgrove, landscape expresses a "dual ambiguity." Is it subjective or objective? Is it personal or social? (1984:19). Of course, the meaning of landscape can be all of these, which is why Cosgrove argues that the "aims and methods" that geographers must employ to understand landscapes are "more closely aligned to those of the humanities and their hermeneutic modes of understanding than with the natural sciences" (1984:15). Yet the humanities alone are not adequate. Cosgrove seeks to employ an analysis of landscape that combines the humanities' personal and subjective modes of inquiry with the dialectical approaches of the social sciences, which view landscape as an object of social production.

The symbolic idealization of rural and agricultural landscapes is a common critique of the farmland preservation movement. It is also a topic of inquiry among cultural geographers who are interested in understanding the symbolism of the "countryside" and the meaning of "rurality" (cf. Michael Bunce, Paul Cloke, Keith Halfacree, Jo Little, Michael Woods). Bunce (1994) aims "to broaden the analysis of the

countryside ideal” beyond its treatment in the disciplines of literary criticism and intellectual history, while still drawing on that body of literature. Focusing on Anglo-America, Bunce contends that unlike in Europe, the symbolic landscape of the countryside ideal in Canada and the United States entails more than just protecting the “picturesque.” The idealization of rural landscapes in Anglo-America symbolizes “agricultural progress and bygone lifestyles” (1994:36).

Nostalgia and the countryside ideal seem to go hand-in-hand. Nostalgia is a bad word in the planning literature. Authors qualify their critiques of the “placelessness” of modern landscapes by saying they are not calling for a nostalgic return to traditional forms, materials, and processes. Though current usage of nostalgia implies a treacherous recreation of the past, the traditional meaning of the word is “bittersweet longing” or “homesickness” (from the Greek *nostos*, meaning “home”). Like the Welsh word *hiraeth*, nostalgia is a longing for a home that has been lost or left behind (Morris 2002).

In fact, geographer Stephen Daniels (1989:205) suggests that a cultural “lament” for a time when humans were not alienated from the land has been evident for at least 300 years in England. This element of emotion “is probably built into the very idea of landscape.” Bunce (1994) pushes the origins of this nostalgia for the countryside back to the beginnings of urban civilization, well beyond the advent of the Renaissance city and birth of modern capitalism. According to geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1974), nostalgia for the country emerges at times when urban civilizations reach their zenith (in Bunce 1994:1). Examples of this nostalgic longing for the countryside and concomitant critique of the city go back to the essays of Hesiod in the 8th-century BCE (*Works and Days*). I present this discussion of nostalgia to establish that this tension between country and city

has been a central conflict in our consciousness as humans, which extends beyond the particulars of any given culture or moment in history, since we settled down into cities and many of us no longer worked the land.

Our idealization of the countryside is more than just “simplistic urban sentimentalism and escapism” (Bunce 1994:1-2). It represents our values, our relations with nature and the land, and how we chose to order and shape our landscapes, whether rural, urban or suburban.

2.2.3 Recent Landscape Theory – From Product to Process

Over the course of the 20th-century, there has been a shift in landscape study from morphological to symbolic interpretations (see Table 2.1). Both approaches understand landscape more as a product than a process. Social process and social product are certainly intertwined.

Table 2.1 – Key developments in landscape theory in human geography

Author(s)	Year	Contribution to landscape theory in geography
<i>Landscape as Product</i>		
Sauer	1925	Morphological approach; historical study of landscape features
Lewis	1979	Reading the landscape; landscape as a book; landscape observation tells us something about its occupants
Meinig Cosgrove	1979 1984	Landscape as symbolic; its occupants want it to say something to observers
Duncan & Duncan	1988	Landscape as text – mediated by the “positionality” of the reader
<i>Landscape as Process</i>		
Olwig	1996	Landscape as a political community
Schein	1997	Landscape as “discourse materialized”
Rose	2002	Landscape as practice

As *product*, landscape becomes more rigid, its meaning often “frozen in time” through the commodification of visual reproduction (painting, photography). Landscape as a (valuable) commodity becomes something that needs to be preserved. *Process* emphasizes the continual activity, both collective and individual, which defines and maintains symbolic/cultural landscapes. Three geographers since the mid-1990s have articulated visions of landscape as process that are useful in the analysis of the cultural landscapes that result from land use planning (Table 2.1).

Landscape is a word that entered the English language from its North Germanic brethren. Geographer Kenneth Olwig (1996) has traced the meaning and usage of the word from its origins in its Germanic homelands, to its adoption in English, and then finally to its meaning as subject of geographic inquiry. The German word is *Landschaft*, a compound word that in English could be (and has been) rendered as “landship.” The *landscape* variant of this word came to English via Low German dialects in the Netherlands and Friesland (*landschap* or *landscap*). Olwig contends that much of the original meaning of the word has been lost through the ages, and that the meaning of landscape has been further altered by academic geographers since.

The suffixes *-schaft* and *-ship* (which also appears in *township*) mean “creation, constitution, or condition” and is related to the word *shape* (1996:633). Olwig’s etymological research shows that the meaning of *landscape* is much more than either territory or scenery; it also denotes community, a body politic, and a locus for customary law. Similarly, the meaning of the word *township* in colonial North America meant both a group of people and the legal entity which represented them, as well as the land shaped

by this political community. This expanded meaning of *landscape*, drawn from its earlier usage in English and other Germanic languages, dovetails nicely with the distress that many scholars, writers, and planners feel toward modern landscapes. Today's landscapes not only appear, but feel as though they lack the coherence of people culturally embedded in place.

Olwig's understanding of landscape as a "body politic" opens up new ways of engaging in landscape planning in the United States. With land-use decisions decentralized to the county, town, and township level, communities in the U.S. have the potential to create a common landscape built on a foundation of common purpose and shared identification with the land.

Introducing a "conceptual framework" in which "the cultural landscape becomes the discourse materialized," Schein (1997:663) opens the door wider toward a reorientation of landscape interpretation beyond the symbolic. Within any given landscape, explains, Schein, there are several "discourses materialized." Examples of such discourses can be found in zoning, historic preservation, insurance mapping, neighborhood associations, landscape architecture, and consumption (1997:665). Though landscapes in this framework are still "tangible articulations," they are "continually implicated in the ongoing reconstitution of a discourse, or set of discourses, about social life" (1997:664). As "discourse materialized," landscape has both a "disciplinary" and "empowering" effect on human agency. Schein wishes his approach to be seen not as a "model" but as an "aid to interpretation."

**Figure 2.1 – Discourse Materialized in Montgomery County, Maryland
(Photo: R.A. Russo 2008)**



Discourse is a process. In order for a discourse to hold, or remain dominant, its stories must be told and retold. In the context of agriculture and farmland preservation, one of the dominant storylines in the U.S. is that agriculture and urbanization are mutually exclusive. Farmland must be protected and urban development must be strictly set apart from agriculture (Figure 2.1). So as discourse changes, so do the material aspects of the landscape. The materialization of a discourse is an exercise in power.

Departing down a different path, Rose (2002:457) views the work of both the “traditional” landscape geographers and the “new cultural” landscape geographers as structuralist. Though Rose awkwardly develops his post-structuralist understanding of cultural landscape on French philosopher Georges Bataille’s concept of “the labyrinth,” he otherwise makes some very salient points. Cultural landscapes represent more than symbolic meaning. For Rose, landscape becomes “relevant through practice.” According to Rose, Bataille’s labyrinth represents

a set of incongruent practices invested in the landscape and making it matter ... its presence is not engendered by features in the landscape itself, but by various ways it is called for and put to task. In this sense, the only thing that the landscape ever *is* is the practices that make it relevant (2002: 462-3).

The impact of practice and performance on landscape is perhaps the “hottest” topic in cultural landscape theory at the moment. In June of 2009, “Living landscapes: an international conference on performance, landscape and environment” will convene at Aberystwyth University in Wales for a multidisciplinary exploration of intersections between these three subjects (LEP 2009).

This perspective of landscape as practice or performance resonates with Lefebvre’s concept of the “space of everyday life.” Which daily practices take place on farmland in the metropolitan counties of Maryland today? How have they changed over the past thirty years? What are the economic and symbolic (both cultural) activities that are performed in this landscape? Who are the actors? According to Bunce (1994:110), rural landscapes surrounding the metropolis have been transformed from productive areas of a natural resource economy to landscapes of “leisure, refuge, and alternative living.” As the daily practice of agricultural *production* continues to diminish in peri-urban areas, do the performances in the city’s countryside become as Bunce describes them, processes of landscape *consumption*?

2.2.3 *Farmland Preservation as Landscape Planning*

According to Stilgoe (1982:3), “a landscape happens not by chance, but by contrivance, by premeditation, by design.” This statement does not mean that our cultural landscapes were all planned in advance or somehow lack organicism or

authenticity. It means that the landscapes we see before us are the result of deliberate actions – a farmer’s decision to plant specific crops, a homebuilder’s design decisions, a county government’s road building plans, an entrepreneur’s eye for profit. Stilgoe (1982:4-5) sees American landscapes before the Civil War as the products of “common knowledge,” which he describes as a mix of folk culture (“the little tradition”) and activities of government, business, scholars, and professional designers (“the great tradition”). Today, however, the balance has tipped decidedly in the favor of the “great tradition.” Because the average American has little direct impact in shaping landscapes of significant spatial extent, the task for creating landscapes has been largely abdicated to the “experts” (Buchecker et al. 2003 in Selman 2006:54).

Land use planning is essentially landscape planning, though the term is rarely used in the United States. In Europe, landscape management is part of “spatial planning,” whereas landscape management in the U.S. is referred to as “land use planning” in suburban and rural areas and as “urban planning” in built-up environments. Spatial planning encapsulates a more holistic understanding of landscape beyond the built-environment or governing the use of particular parcels of land. It also includes concerns for community, economy, environment, and less tangible aspects such as heritage, identity, and values (Selman 2006). According to Selman, spatial planning is “sustainable development of ‘peopled’ landscapes.” Therefore, spatial planning needs to take in account how people view their landscapes, tensions between local and globalized identities, cultural preferences for particular settings, cultural understandings of nature, and the social capital residing in a given landscape (2006:52-3).

Selman sees landscape as “a core, integrative concept, enabling the delivery of sustainable development from a multifunctional perspective.” This concept of spatial planning has only just begun to make the jump across the North Atlantic. In much of North America, landscape remains “a sectoral interest associated with amenity” (2006: 25). From a planning perspective, landscapes should be sustainable and not just “pretty.” Landscapes should be recognized as spaces through which there are capital flows – natural, financial, and social.

Landscape planning in peri-urban areas, especially in North America, exists in the theoretical gray area between urban planning and natural resource planning. The preservation of agricultural lands in North American metropolitan areas is complicated by the often binary thinking in planning, operating as though urban functions and rural functions cannot coexist nor are they interdependent. Some observers of landscape believe that present-day urban, industrial (and post-industrial) globalization has created landscapes that are meaningless (e.g. Meinig 1979; Kunstler 1993).

Meinig sees urban Americans as directionless, casting about for a landscape that would symbolize a “good urban society.” The landscapes of modernity fail to tell a “valid and convincing story” of the people who live there and their values (Selman 2006:173). The stories we tell about our surroundings, from private storytelling to public discourse, are central to how we organize our landscapes (Ryden 1993:56). Selman calls this aspect of planning “landscape fidelity.”

Meinig proposes a new model symbolic landscape for urban America that he views as more faithful to our aspirations – the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California. This proposal is likely to make many in America immediately cringe, but it’s

precisely the area's reputation as a "fertile seed bed" of experimentation and innovation that created, in Meinig's view, an urban landscape that is poised to handle the ecological and cultural challenges facing our society. The Bay Area landscape presents "attractive townhouse living, the vibrancy of social heterogeneity, ... a deeper sense of history and of place, and a greater emphasis upon the humane rather than the material aspects of life" (1979:187).

Though Meinig's portrait of the San Francisco Bay Area is perhaps more symbolic than real, his proposal has partially played itself out. In particular, the region's early focus on landscape planning in a metropolitan context inspired and informed other such projects nationwide. SustainLane, an urban sustainability think-tank, ranks San Francisco as the second "greenist" metropolitan area in the U.S., after Portland, Oregon. SustainLane also ranks San Francisco first in the nation with respect to sustainable land use planning, calling the city "a shining example" (Karlenzig et al. 2007:25). In addition, the alternative food movement, both the organic and local camps, germinated in the Bay Area. Now, across the country, sustainable planning and alternative food systems, together, have begun to write a new story for metropolitan area landscapes. This story is about how land and food might bind us together in communities built on cooperation and reciprocity.

2.3 New Agrarianism and Commensalism

Recent farmland preservation discourse in several of Maryland's metropolitan counties is focused on creating and protecting *commensal landscapes*. The convergence of two cultural factors – new agrarianism and a new cultural politics of food – informs

this discursive push. This section explores these two cultural factors, followed by an explanation of how they have come together in farmland preservation and agricultural economic development discourse to create a new form of cultural landscape – the commensal landscape.

2.3.1 New Agrarian Philosophy

The best introduction to new agrarianism is to provide an example of one of the many forceful indictments its proponents have made against the outcome of industrialization and economic globalization.

“By most accounts, our efforts toward homecoming have ended in failure. Our unprecedented prosperity, rather than being founded in a convivial wholeness with the earth and with others, is predicated on the systemic exhaustion and destruction of life’s sources ... and the communities that inspire, define, and support our being. Our failure – as evidenced in flights to virtual worlds and the growing reliance on ‘life-enhancing’ drugs, antidepressants, antacids, and stress management techniques – suggests a pervasive unwillingness or inability to make this world a home, to find our places and communities, our bodies and our work, a joyful resting place” (Wirzba 2002:*vii*).

New agrarianism is a term frequently used to describe “an evolving collection of ideas and rhetorical strategies” (Smith 2003:15) which is employed by a wide range of groups advocating for alternatives to the prevailing land ethic and agrifood system in the United States. According to Allen (2004:119), the latest incarnation of agrarianism maintains late 19th-century Populist opposition to “the industrialization of agriculture and the loss of market control.” What makes this new agrarianism different from its earlier forms is its willingness to challenge some of the economic and cultural assumptions of past agrarianisms, such as the unchallenged sanctity of personal property rights, and

antiquated and often pernicious perspectives on race and gender. New agrarianism, as exemplified by Wendell Berry, one of its leading scribes, is an “ecological agrarianism.” “Green” new agrarianism differs significantly from Populist-era agrarianism, which lacked “ecological sensitivity” (Smith 2003:27).

Despite these differences with earlier agrarians, new agrarians share their central concerns with land, fertility, food production, healthy families and communities, and a commitment to place. According to Smith (2003:3), Richard Hofstadter’s critique of agrarianism (*Age of Reform*, 1955) remains the dominant discourse in academe – that it is a “reactionary nostalgia for a pre-industrial, non-commercial past ... [with] little intellectual content or practical significance.” She also notes that detractors have been (erroneously) predicting its demise ever since. So what makes new agrarianism so compelling to so many, who have never worked a farm?

New agrarian writers have answers to many of the anxieties raised by industrial, global economics and postmodern, urban culture. They do so in moral language that is chastising, yet empathetic, and potentially empowering. Finally, they refuse to specialize; their critique is as all-encompassing as their solutions are holistic. In their writings, there is something that allows everyone to connect to some bit of their analysis, even if the reader rejects their overall vision.

New agrarianism seeks to re-establish the culture in *agriculture*. Wendell Berry, in his classic of new agrarianism *The Unsettling of America* (originally 1977, 1986), devotes a whole chapter to “the agricultural crisis as a crisis of culture.”

“A culture is not a collection of relics or ornaments, but a practical necessity, and its corruption invites calamity. A healthy culture is a communal order of memory, insight, value, work, conviviality, reverence, aspiration. It reveals the human necessities and human limits. It clarifies

our inescapable bonds to the earth and to each other. It assures that the necessary restraints are observed, that the necessary work is done, and that it is done well. A healthy *farm* culture can be based only upon familiarity and can grow only among a people soundly established upon the land; it nourishes and safeguards a human intelligence of the earth that no amount of technology can satisfactorily replace (1986:42).”

In Berry’s vision, a healthy culture can only develop in a healthy community, which operates an economic system which respects natural limits and is based on cooperation rather than competition. In this respect, much of the writings of Berry and other new agrarians can be situated within communitarian philosophy, which also shares a political position that escapes the constraints of “liberal” and “conservative.” New agrarians see the Amish as a good example of a healthy agrarian culture, not so much in their rejection of many elements of modern American culture, but because of their decision to prioritize community well-being (Berry 1986:212). In the Amish, new agrarians see an economic order they share with their Populist forbearers -- a belief that households should remain units of production as well as consumption, specifically in terms of food and fiber.

New agrarians share the Populists’ “producerist” ideology and bemoan our current lack of competence. According to Wirzba (2002, *xi*), we have made ourselves “frustratingly helpless and ignorant in regard to basic human skills – growing food, maintaining a home, caring for and educating children, promoting friendship and cooperation, facing illness and death.” Of course, many new agrarians realize that in highly urbanized societies, the scale of production will need to move to the community rather than the household. Urban residents will need to adopt an “agrarian mind” (Orr 2001). Orr believes that agriculture can be woven into the urban fabric and that “the

frugality, ecological competence, celebratory spirit, and neighborliness of rural life” can be wed to the “dynamism, wealth, and excitement of the city” (2001:106). Many new agrarians see farmland preservation in urbanizing areas as a foundation of this marriage. New agrarianism is more willing to accept the need for land use regulation than past agrarians who viewed land use regulations as a threat to private property rights and community control (Freyfogle 2001: *xxvii*).

One person’s utopia is another’s dystopia. According to Pepper (2005), all branches of environmental thought are essentially utopian. Attempts to build social and economic systems based on environmental philosophies, therefore, are often reckoned to be irrational and reactionary. In a critique of the bioregionalism and the “small is beautiful” economics espoused by E.F. Schumacher (both being environmental philosophies that call for restraint), Pepper claims these groups “bemoan global modernization” and, instead, desire “an ultimately oppressive” autarky (2005:10). Pepper is concerned with individual liberty, worried that the “imagined sustainable world of radical environmentalists has ultimately to be based on restriction, prohibition, regulation, and sacrifice” (2005:9).

Wendell Berry readily admits to utopian visions in his writings. Without envisioning an ideal world, a world that serves as a critique of the status quo, we become constrained from imagining anything other than the current trajectory of “modernization” as possible (Smith 2003:126). Utopian thinking challenges the “inevitability” of globalization, modernization, growth, and development.

Critics of new agrarianism claim that it is only through scientific progress that humans have been (and will continue to be) able to feed our growing population. To

return to food production practices before the Green Revolution would necessitate either expansion of agricultural into vast areas of forested and marginal lands or a significant reduction in the human population. They argue it would be immoral to create food shortages in order to fulfill the environmental and cultural objectives of the alternative agriculture movements (Avery, 2000; Borlaug 2000; Trewaras 2001). They point to the infatuation of new agrarians with the Amish as indicative of the anti-technology, anti-progressive, labor-intensive agriculture that will doom the world to hunger.*

For new agrarians, the preservation of farmland is also about food security. Americans have been debating the future of food production and availability since the founding of the United States (Belasco 2006). New agrarians lean heavily toward the Malthusian argument, concerned that the best farmland in the United States is being permanently lost along the expanding urban edge. Along with that land, preservationists argue, is lost food security, noting that 86% of the country's fruits and vegetables, and 63% of dairy products are produced in "urban-influenced" areas (AFT 2002).

New agrarianism says that quantity is not the antithesis of quality when it comes to food production. Ultimately they reject the industrialization of food production and the belief that only industrial agriculture can feed the world.

“Food is a cultural product; it cannot be produced by technology alone. Those agriculturalists who think of the problems of food production solely in terms of technological innovation are oversimplifying both the practicalities of production and the network of meanings and values necessary to define, nurture, and preserve the practical motivations (Berry 1986:43)”

* Lancaster County, Pennsylvania is considered to have the most productive non-irrigated farms in the U.S. In 1997, the county ranked 15th in the country in terms of the total market value of agricultural sales (NASS 1997). It is home to one of the country's largest populations of plain sect members (Amish, Old Order Mennonite).

According to new agrarianism, healthy and abundant food is produced by healthy communities working a healthy landscape.

2.3.2 *New Cultural Politics of Food in America*

U.S. agricultural policy for decades has focused on producing cheaper and cheaper food, so that Americans now spend just under 10% of household income on food, including meals eaten outside the home (ERS 2008). In addition to price, convenience became a major driver of consumer food purchases. However, in the past fifteen years, there has been a significant shift in American food culture. The new cultural message is that “food matters.” After decades of being encouraged to spend less and less time thinking about, handling, and even eating our food, a growing number of Americans have rebelled. To them, food matters again for reasons political, environmental, recreational, and gustatory. The new food culture can be seen in the increase in food studies programs in higher education (Carlson 2008), bestsellers by food writers such as Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation*) and Michael Pollan (*The Omnivore’s Dilemma*), television’s Food Network, the more than doubling of U.S. farmers’ markets since 1994 (AMS 2008), and the Slow Food Movement. Popular media has become enamored with the topic. *The United States of Arugula* (Kamp 2006) provides a popular history of how, as a nation, we arrived at this point in our food culture. The Public Broadcasting Service produced a three-part documentary, *The Meaning of Food*, in 2005.

The new culture and politics of food has resulted in a large academic and popular literature in a relatively short period of time. This popularity, in part, is due to the transdisciplinary nature of food itself. The social sciences and humanities, as well as the

agricultural and natural sciences, all have something to say about how and what we eat. Food has always held a special and complex position in our individual and collective identities. This fact can be seen in the expression “You are what you eat,” which is also a play on words in German (*Der Mensch ist was er isst.*). Food “also has the capacity to represent our land [*terroir*] and our history, that is, the primordial self” (Ohnaki-Tierney 1999:245).

If food has the power to represent our land and history (our “primordial selves”), then our choices as consumers can represent our multiple identities – as cosmopolitan citizens of the world (sushi, harissa-spiked chicken tajine, lamb rogan josh) or local “salt of the earth” (pick-your-own strawberries, local silver queen corn, farm-fresh eggs). Murdoch and Miele refer to two different “aesthetics” at play in our choices. There is a *market aesthetic* and a *relational aesthetic*; the former relies on disconnections between producers and consumers while the latter emphasizes the connection between the two as well as with the natural environment (2004:172).

In an economy and culture that is dominated by the market aesthetic, the desire to “eat locally” represents a move toward embracing this relational aesthetic.

“[Consumers] not only ‘reflect’ on the qualities of food goods but express a desire to genuinely immerse themselves in natural and socio-cultural relations. Thus, organic foods promise some reconnection with a nature that is being increasingly lost ... while traditional or typical foods promise a reconnection with social and cultural formations. By consuming such goods, consumers seem to hope that a greater sense of connectedness can be achieved ... (Murdoch & Miele 2004:161)

This new geography is the space of local food systems as well as the motivation for farmland preservation in peri-urban areas. If “you are what you eat,” the postmodern

condition is getting more people to want to become local, embedded, rooted in a place, by saving local landscapes (or becoming a part of them) by eating local foods.*

2.3.3 *Commensal landscapes*

A commensal landscape is an area in which sustainable practices and stewardship of the land, along with community-driven relationships between food producers and consumers, result in the creation and maintenance of a culturally agrarian landscape. This study adapts the term *commensal* from its early appearance in the academic literature on food systems. In their exposition on the concept of “foodsheds,” Kloppenburg et al. (1996:116) describe them as “commensal communities that encompass sustainable relationships both between people (those who eat together) and between people and the land (obtaining food without damage).” This definition of commensal and commensalism refer to both the Latin meaning (“together at the table”) and its ecological meaning. The authors also note that they were inspired by novelist Ursula Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) in which the basic unit of society is the “Commensal Hearth” (1996:116).

Kloppenburg et al. describe the commensal community as a moral economy. This moral economy is firmly situated in the philosophy of new agrarianism. My application of the term commensal as a modifier of the term landscape is to argue that the moral economy of a commensal community or food system will create a distinct cultural landscape. Commensal landscapes would not look identical (that would be in violation of agrarianism!). They, would, however, share some commonalities.

* No source in this section mentions the term, but this urge reminds me of *geophagy*, the literal eating of soil or dirt. Geophagy is a normal practice in many parts of the world, but is considered abnormal or deviant behavior in the U.S. Geophagy has known medical benefits (especially clays) and is associated with the relative lack of auto-immune diseases in the developing world (Callahan 2003). NB: Dirt-free food in supermarkets (market aesthetic) and food with “real dirt” at the farmers’ market (relational aesthetic).

Commensal landscapes embody what Sage (2002) calls a “geography of regard,” a network in which food producers and sellers are not solely “profit maximizers” and food consumers are not just “cost minimizers.” The exchange between producer and consumer is one of reciprocity that extends beyond the material. Commensal landscapes are built on spatial proximity and social participation, with a presumption of knowledge and transparency in agricultural production which will then promote sustainable practices and sound environmental management. The practice of commensal landscapes will involve more people and animals, and fewer machines. Commensal landscapes will be polycultural and will operate at “a durable scale” (Freyfogle 2001).

Some argue that the protection of agricultural landscapes is a nostalgic activity, but commensal landscapes, on the whole, do not seek to create a theme-park version of farming circa 1850. Certainly there are agricultural history parks and “living” agricultural museums that recreate the past, but protecting and strengthening commensal landscapes is about creating a new future based on past and current understandings of human-environment interactions. As Selman (2006:15) puts it, landscape planning is about “recapturing the serendipitous balance between economic need, emotional attachment and ecological dynamics” that existed in the working landscapes of the past. Berry argues further against the charge of nostalgia, claiming that the United States cannot “turn back the clock” to a time that never existed.

We never yet have developed stable, sustainable, locally-adapted land-based economies. The good rural enterprises and communities that we find in our past have been almost constantly under threat from colonialism, first foreign and then domestic, and now ‘global,’ that has so far dominated our history and that has been institutionalized for a long time in the industrial economy. The possibility of an authentically settled country still lies ahead of us (2001:71-72).

Selman (2006:73), echoing many other planners, claims that while “measures to recapture place-ness are to be applauded, there is a clear risk that strategies based on traditional processes and products will rely too heavily on nostalgia.” He further writes that maintaining such nostalgic places often require public subsidies, because they lack economic rationale. Proponents of new agrarianism and students of ecological economics argue that it is current landscapes that lack economic rationality because they were built for an era of cheap energy, the demise of which has been predicted for decades, while our landscapes became more sprawling and attenuated. More importantly, these modern landscapes deter the process of becoming embedded in a particular social and ecological home.

New agrarianism sees the work of building new land-based economies as a new moral geography of place. These new places and landscapes need new stories told about them. Selman (2006:173) sees a need for “landscape fidelity” in planning. Landscapes “should tell a valid and convincing local ‘story’ and they should “promote practices of ‘valorization.’” Commensal landscapes fit neatly into this rubric. In fact, one of the ways Selman says such valorization can be achieved is by “reinforcing and re-embedding food and timber linkages which create direct linkages between people, work, and place” (2006:173). In the United States, this valorization effort is being carried out by many local and state non-governmental organizations. An increasing number of local and state governments have begun to join in “reinforcing and re-embedding food” in particular landscapes (see the Southern Maryland case study in Chapter 6). In Europe, this process enjoys support from national governments. For example, in England, the Countryside

Agency* conducted a multi-year program called “Eat the View” which aimed to raise consumer awareness that purchasing local food (or not) had a direct impact on the rural landscapes they valued (Natural England 2009). The program went well beyond a simple public awareness campaign. It operated a set of sub-programs, including one with the UK Soil Association to strengthen local food networks.

These “valorization” efforts require the use of a new discourse or the introduction of new storylines into the public policy realm. Existing, dominant worldviews, or cultural models, define the parameters of possibility in this bureaucratic realm. For change to happen, counter-narratives must be introduced.

2.4 Cultural models

Cultural models are “presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared ... by members of a society, and that play an enormous role in their understanding of the world and their behavior in it” (Quinn & Holland 1987:4). The literature on cultural models, though they product of social groups and communities, emphasizes how they are employed by an individual in an attempt to engage a complex world that is impossible to know in its entirety (Paolisso 2002: 229).

In the context of environmental protection and resource management, researchers use a cultural models approach to understand individual behaviors that, while derived from group culture, serve to eventually undermine the quality of life of the larger group (e.g. the tragedy of the commons). Many of our current environmental debates underscore the clash of worldviews. If environmental and resource protection is

* Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act of 2006, the Countryside Agency was dissolved with its portfolio being split between two new agencies, Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities.

ultimately dependent on changing individual behaviors based on socially and culturally-constructed worldviews, then it is no surprise that the discourse of persuasion mimics that of religious conversion. Environmental groups aim to move beyond “preaching to the choir” and convince non-believers of the “errors of their ways.”

However, it is difficult to get individuals to abandon the cultural models that determine environmental behavior. In article on “overcoming barriers to ecologically-sensitive land management,” Thompson (2004:143-4) describes three sets of cultural and social barriers that prevent individuals from changing their behaviors.

Barriers to recognizing environmental problems

- Lack of ecological knowledge
- Difficulties in recognizing or perceiving environmental problem

Internal barriers to taking environmental action

- The presence of defense and distancing mechanisms
- The persistence of faulty cultural models
- The lack of appropriate cultural model for living sensitively with nature
- The lack of practical knowledge for implementing pro-environmental behavior
- The perceived difficulty in implementing the practical knowledge

External barriers to taking pro-environmental actions

- Prevailing social norms against pro-environmental behavior
- The absence of social norms that support pro-environmental behavior

Thompson’s assessment can be extended to understand the barriers involved in changing perceptions and actions with respect to farmland preservation and localized food systems.

A cultural model represents not just a worldview, but also a “way of life.” It is both a context from which to understand the world and a system through which to act in it.

Cultural models are reinforced through a dominant discourse that defines what is

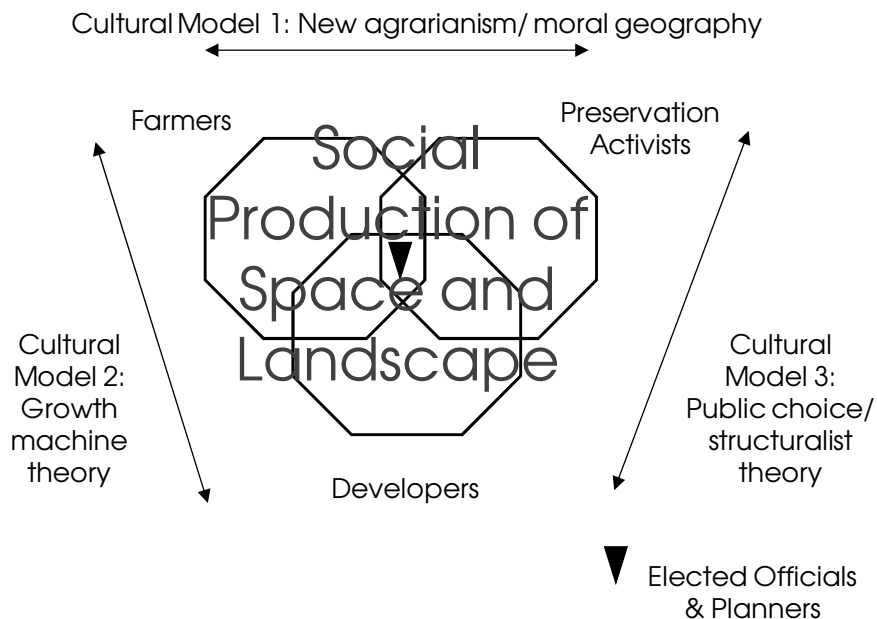
“normal” and what is a “problem.” These discourses establish the social norms which lead to either action or inaction against the status quo (see Chapter 4).

2.4.1 Cultural models of the farmland preservation policy environment

With respect to farmland preservation, in which the financial benefits of agricultural land conversion or preservation accrue to a few individual stakeholders and the costs and amenity benefits are dispersed among the larger public, a cultural models approach can shed light on the group dynamics and cultural assumptions involved in the policymaking process. Of the three main cultural models which I propose are held by stakeholders in the farmland preservation debate, two have been widely used by planners and urban sociologists in understanding the dynamics of metropolitan land-use decision-making. Diaz & Green (2001: 319) refer to them as the “two broad theoretical positions which have dominated the literature on local development” – growth machine theory and public choice/structuralist theory. The third model, which I am introducing to these dominant two, is new agrarianism/ commensalism (Figure 2.1).

The growth machine model, developed from Molotch (1976) and Logan & Molotch (1987), argues that local elites, through civic boosterism and economic development councils, create a discourse of growth as development. Therefore, communities often acquiesce to new developments under the promise of community-wide benefits when in fact such growth benefits very few. The growth machine theory suggests that this dominant discourse of growth and the institutions that support it have made it very difficult for communities to prevent growth or to define it in their own terms.

Figure 2.2 Cultural Models in the Farmland Preservation Policy Environment



The public choice/ structuralist theory cultural model operates with the assumption that agents in the “political marketplace” act largely in their own rational self-interests, as actors do in the economic marketplace. In the case of local government policies, the agents can be individuals, interest groups, businesses, and local governments themselves. According to Diaz & Green (2001:319), public choice/structuralist theory assumes that local economic conditions dominate the character of growth and change. However, these actors are constrained by structures and institutions larger than themselves, such as national and state governments as well as global and national economies.

The third cultural model at work is new agrarianism, which is described in greater detail in the previous section. It has been an underlying cultural model in our nation’s

agricultural and rural policies for some time. In the last decade, it has moved to the forefront of many local attempts to define land-use and economic development and to preserve farmland.

2.4.2 The permeable boundaries of cultural models

Returning to Paolisso's observation that cultural models, despite their social formation, are employed by individuals in an attempt to engage a complex world (2002: 229). The social, political, economic, and psychological complexities of the world mitigate against rigid cultural model boundaries. The individuals within the major farmland preservation stakeholder groups (Figure 2.1), depending on their individual circumstances at various times in their lives, may shift "discursive communities" to support or justify their actions. Farmers, as the central actors in farmland preservation, often shift between the growth machine model of land use which accords them the role of independent businessperson and the new agrarian/ commensal model in which they play the role of community member, steward of the land and cultivator of American values.

In her study of the cultural model of "the good farmer," Silvasti (2003:143) points out that even though "farmers have adopted modern, effective, and industrial ways of farming, they still consider their work as a harmonious and respectful cooperation with nature." Silvasti's work is focused primarily on the tensions between environmental protection and agriculture in Finland, but her findings are helpful in understanding the various storylines in the self-understanding of farmers.

For Finnish farmers, "real work" means physical work with visible results. Working in the fields, caring for farm animals, building and repairing, all serve as good examples of "real work." When asked to describe a "good farmer," informants often emphasized that the way the farm looks (its

shape, condition, and general appearance) is an indication of the kind of farmer that farms there. Thus farmers regard the concrete and visible result of their work to be especially rewarding, and personally, individually satisfying. At the same time, however, the public expression of the farm reveals to the community at large, the behavior and characteristics of each farmer. The public reward for hard work is community recognition through the tangible appearance of the farm – that on this farm there lives an industrious and hard working, that is, decent and moral, farmer. Farmers may have individual autonomy, but there is a strong public expression of their work (Silvasti 2003:145).

The farmland preservation movement in the United States is at times cognizant and at other times seemingly unaware of the importance of the “good farmer cultural script” in the self-narratives of many farmers (e.g. Daniels & Bowers 1997). Farmland preservation policies have resisted tapping into this storyline, even though their primary audiences are farmers and rural landowners (see Chapters 4 and 6). New agrarians, as evidenced by this outreach ad to encourage farmers to go organic (Figure 2.3), have embraced this narrative. The public and self-imposed expectations of a farmer as a publically-recognized “steward of the land” are much different than those of the private “farmer as businessman.” New agrarian writers, especially those who write as farmers, understand the importance of giving voice to this other self-narrative if their goal of building sustainable food systems and communities is to be realized.

Figure 2.3. Example of the “good farmer” script (Source: Rodale Institute, 2009)



A second important finding from Silvasti’s study that has implications for farmland preservation in the U.S. is the importance that farmers place on the appearance of their farms. Cultural differences between Europeans and North Americans may explain part of the reason why the concern for farmland and rural aesthetics in the U.S. is seen primarily the interest of exurban elites who see farmland as a scenic amenity rather than a productive resource. Rarely do North American farmland preservation programs, or farmer-led organizations such as the Farm Bureau or the Grange portray farmers as more than just “operators” on the land. Similar studies conducted in the U.S. corroborate Silvasti’s analysis (Ryan et al. 2003; Wilson et al. 2003).

The idea of community recognition in the cultural model of the good farmer aligns closely with new agrarian philosophy and the concept of commensalism. As stated

before, commensalism is about ending the alienation that exists between producers and consumers in the global, agro-industrial food system. This new reciprocity between farmer and eater will not entirely replace the current food system, nor will it necessarily operate outside a market economy. But it will publicly and explicitly recognize that the bonds between producers and consumers can be cooperative rather than competitive.

2.5. Methodology

This study of farmland preservation policy effectiveness employs a mixed-methodology of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Its research design addresses the missing socio-cultural component in the assessment of farmland preservation programs in the state of Maryland. This study has four major components – 1) establishing a theoretical framework for the cultural and social values underpinning the land use and food system goals of farmland preservation policies in peri-urban areas; 2) making explicit these values contained within the state and county farmland preservation policies in Maryland; 3) constructing an evaluation metric using specific indicators to measure the success of these policies in reaching these goals; and 4) the application of this evaluation metric to county-level case studies in several Maryland metropolitan counties.

Spatially, this study is restricted to Maryland counties that are part of metropolitan areas as defined by the United States' Office and Management and Budget (OMB's definitions are used by the Census Bureau and other federal government agencies). The time-frame of the study extends from 1977 to 2007. Maryland's statewide farmland preservation program (Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation

Foundation or MALPF) was founded in 1977. The quantitative indicators mark the period 1978 to 2007, both years in which a U.S. Census of Agriculture was conducted. Even though the 1978 Census of Agriculture was conducted after the founding of MALPF, the first farm was not enrolled into the program until 1980. Therefore, the 1978 agricultural census provides a snapshot of conditions just before the farmland preservation policies took hold in Maryland. The 2007 Census of Agriculture, just released in February 2009, coincides with the 30th anniversary of MALPF. Thus the qualitative and quantitative data collected establish a thorough evaluation of farmland preservation policies' impact on key agricultural indicators after three decades.

2.5.1 Evaluation metric and quantitative data collection

In constructing an evaluation metric, I have identified data indicators which serve as either direct or proxy measures of the objectives inherent in the first of MALPF's six mission objectives.

MALPF Objective 1 – “*To preserve productive farmland and woodland for the continued production of food and fiber for all of Maryland's citizens.*” [underlined emphasis mine]

From this objective, I have identified four categories of indicators in my evaluation metric -- land, people, production/profitability, and commensalism (Table 2.2).

It is not possible to quantify the yields and value of agricultural products from *only* those farms enrolled in preservation programs. Therefore, the assessment of success is whether the preservation of farmland in general either stems the overall loss of farmland in metropolitan counties and whether these preserved acres serve to maintain a “critical mass” of profitable food and fiber production.

Table 2.2. Evaluation Metric Indicators

Indicator	Land	People	Production & Profitability	Commensalism
1. Total acres preserved as % of total land in farms	X			
2. Ratio of acres preserved to acres lost (1982-2002)	X			
3. Per capita acres preserved	X			
4. % change in farms/ principal farm operators (1982-2002)		X		
5. % of principal farm operators under 35 years of age		X		
6. Average age of principal farm operator		X		
7. Total value of agricultural sales			X	
8. Value of agricultural sales per acre of farmland			X	
9. Diversification (# of farms by production type)			X	
10. Per capita direct sales to consumers				X
11. Buy local campaigns				X
12. # of farmers markets & CSAs per 10,000 pop.				X
13. Agritourism programs				X
14. Agricultural education programs		X		X

This set of indicators provides a useful metric for measuring the success of Maryland’s farmland preservation program in meeting its stated objectives. This metric builds on the indicators used by other organizations to measure local food system infrastructure and resources, as seen in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 -- Indicators used to measure food system sustainability and aspects of community food security.

Indicator	Connecticut Food Policy Council¹	San Francisco Food Alliance²	SustainLane³
Number of community gardens per capita			X
Number of farmers markets per capita	X	X	X
Number of days of operation of farmers markets		X	
Acreage of preserved farmland per capita	X		
Percentage of land in agriculture	X		
Community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms per capita		X	

Land Indicators

Total acres preserved as a percentage of county farmland area is used as an indicator for preserving productive farmland because soil quality and productivity are factored into the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) System, developed by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service to help implement the Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981. In addition to total acres preserved, the evaluation metric uses the ratio of acres preserved to acres lost (1978-2007), the per capita acres preserved (2007 or latest year data is available).

¹ Lopez, R. et al. 2005. *Community Food Security in Connecticut: Evaluation and Ranking of 169 Towns*. <http://www.foodpc.state.ct.us/images/CFS%20in%20CT.pdf>

² San Francisco Food Alliance. 2005. *2005 San Francisco Collaborative Food System Assessment*. <http://www.sffoodsystems.org/pdf/FSA-online.pdf>

³ Karlenzig, W. et al. 2007. *How Green is Your City? The SustainLane U.S. City Rankings*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

People Indicators

The U.S. Census of Agriculture* counts the number of principal farm operators, with each farm having just one principal operator. Therefore, the number of farms equals the number of principal farm operators. The Census of Agriculture collects demographic information on this set of farmers.

The evaluation metric uses the following three indicators to measure the relative strength of the human resources needed for the future health of farming enterprises: 1) the percentage change in the number of farms/ principal farm operators (1978-2007); 2) the percentage of principal farm operators under age 35 (1978 and 2007); and 3) the average age of principal farm operators (1978 and 2007).

Production and Profitability Indicators

Production data compiled by the Census of Agriculture could lead to misleading assumptions in the case of metropolitan counties. Yearly data is supplied only for commodity grains and livestock, both of which provide a limited picture of the agricultural activities in metropolitan counties. Taking more complete production data from the Census of Agriculture, collected once every five years, introduces a significant variability (economic and environmental) in any given year in gauging trends over a nearly thirty-year period (1978-2007). Therefore, agricultural yield data is discussed in narrative form, but is not included as an evaluation indicator. Instead, production is measured by proxy, using the value of agricultural sales data collected by the U.S. Census of Agriculture. The total value of agricultural sales (inflation-adjusted) for a county or state is an effective measure of productivity because it captures the ability of

* Prior to the 1992 the U.S. Census of Agriculture was conducted by the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce. The 1992 was the first Census of Agriculture conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

farmers to adapt to shifts in commodity markets or unexpected environmental or political changes that affect their operations.

Profitability is generally viewed as essential to long-term farmland preservation. The value of agricultural sales per acre of farmland (1978-2007) is the indicator used to measure profitability. This value has been computed by taking the total value of agricultural sales for a county or state and dividing it by the number of “land in farms” acres (U.S. Census of Agriculture). Dollar amounts in the Census of Agriculture data are nominal and not adjusted for inflation. The inflation calculator provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the federal agency responsible for tracking inflation and the consumer price index, is used to convert past nominal dollar values into 2007 dollars.

Diversification in production is considered an important strategy in increasing farm profitability in metropolitan areas (MAC 2006:13). Diversification in a county is measured by the range of farming activity as indicated by the Census of Agriculture’s classification of farms using the North American Industry Classification (NAIC) system. In the agricultural censuses, if a farm earns more than 50% of its sales from one agricultural sector, it is labeled with one of the NAIC codes. If no single activity comprises the majority of a farm’s sales, then the category is “other general farming.” Therefore every farm is accounted for in a county and assigned one NAIC code number.

Commensalism

Commensalism is captured in the MALPF goal to have the production from Maryland’s farms available for “all of Maryland’s citizens.” Commensalism is the strengthening of local food economies and shortening the food supply chain, keeping

more profits in the pockets of Maryland's farmers and processors, while reconnecting Maryland's consumers with local products. The Census of Agriculture tracks the value of direct sales to consumers for human consumption. The indicators used to measure commensalism in a county include 1) per capita direct sales to consumers for human consumption [computed using Census of Agriculture sales data divided by U.S. Census Bureau Intercensal Population Estimates]; 2) the number of farmers markets and community-supported agriculture farms (CSAs) per 10,000 [using data from the USDA Marketing Service, the Robyn Van En Center for Community-Supported Agriculture and the U.S. Census Bureau]; 3) the existence of a buy local campaign; 4) the existence of agritourism programs that allow consumers and producers to interact; and 5) the existence of agricultural education (K-12 and higher-education).

2.5.2. Qualitative data collection

In order to make explicit the values and goals of farmland preservation programs, I have conducted an interpretive discourse content analysis of the policy documents, farmland preservation media from state and county programs (e.g. public documents, websites, brochures, annual reports), and electronically-archived newspaper articles in the *Washington Post*.

I also draw upon preexisting qualitative data that has been collected with greater manpower and resources than this single researcher can muster. At the start of this project, it was clear to me that the only significant data gap in understanding stakeholder values is that of the farmland preservation specialists/planners who administer these

programs at the state and county levels. As Bryant & Johnston (1992:147) explain, the perspectives of planners is often unknown and overlooked.

“Planners play several roles. On the one hand, they provide important technical information to policy formulation. On the other hand, they can be very persuasive in their recommendations to the political decision-making bodies. They also therefore have a political role. In many respects, planners are just like everyone else; they have their own agenda, their own values, their own goals, their own limitations, and their own prejudices ... It is unreasonable to expect planners to be absolutely objective in the execution of their duties. Here we are faced with a dilemma because the other actors in land use policy are forced into a position where their perspectives and goals are revealed. This is less often the case with planners.”

To address this information gap, I conducted interviews to give voice to these values. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended (see Appendix A for interview questions). Interviews were conducted between June and September 2008 with agricultural land specialists and/or agricultural marketing specialists in the following Maryland counties: Calvert, Charles, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George’s, Queen Anne’s, Washington, and with the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission. Interview protocol conformed to University of Maryland regulations on the study of human subjects and was approved by the Institutional Review Board.

With the information gathered from these interviews, I take an approach that bridges the realist-idealist epistemological binary. For the realist, interviews are about *data collection*, assuming that a real social world exists independent of the interviewee and interviewer. For the idealist, interviews are construed as *data generation* where meaning is produced through the interview process and the researcher’s interpretation of the results (Byrne 2004:181). I am interested in how goal and visions of farmland preservation policies add up to reality in terms of action, and I am also interested in the

discursive meaning of these goals and visions for the future of agriculture in Maryland. The farmland preservation and local food movements are steeped in a visionary, *idealistic*, and moralist discourse (new agrarianism) that leads to *real* actions on the ground.

The qualitative methods in this study can be described as a discursive policy approach. “Instead of seeing ideas as one of the many variables influencing politics and policy, the approach sees language and discourse as having a more underlying role in structuring social action” (Fischer 2003, 41). According to Tonkiss (2004:378), discourse analysis “is an interpretive process that relies on close study of specific texts” in which “analytical assertions are to be grounded in evidence and detailed argument.” This technique involves identifying key recurrent themes while also being cognizant of what themes are being “left out” or silenced.

In this study, I have conducted a discourse analysis of farmland preservation policy documents at the state and local level; documents from the Southern Maryland Development Commission related to agriculture, farmland preservation, and local food systems; county comprehensive plans; newsletters from county government planning and economic development offices; and the *Washington Post* newspaper.

With respect to print media from the Southern Maryland agricultural Development Commission and some county planning departments, I have employed a content analysis. Content analysis engages in objective data gathering that can be replicated and generalized to similar studies. Critics of the method claim that it merely results in describing texts rather than interpreting them (Tonkiss 2004:368). Yet textual data analysis need not be an “either-or” proposition. By employing *interpretive content*

analysis (Tonkiss 2004:372), researchers can give meaning to the “how” and “why” in addition to chronicling the descriptive “what.”

Chapter 3: Background: Maryland's Agricultural Sector

Though Maryland ranks fifth in the nation in the percentage of its land considered developed, nearly one-third of the state is farmland at 2.05 million acres. The total value of agricultural sales in Maryland is approximately \$1.8 billion out of a state economy valued at almost \$250 billion (NASS 2007; BEA 2006). Such facts point to the difficulty many states face in developing statewide strategic agricultural plans. Either Maryland has sufficient farmland given agriculture's minimal contribution to the state's economy, or, as a tiny fraction of the state's economy, the agricultural sector cannot afford to lose any of its remaining productive capacity. Other states undergoing rapid farmland loss have experienced similar conflicting perceptions, where the data can support opposing perspectives depending on context and values (Kuminoff et al. 2001). Therefore, understanding the economic context and cultural value of agriculture across the state is a first step in proposing new local and statewide policies.

Despite the fact that the federal government continues to subsidize agricultural commodities at nearly \$20 billion a year (OBPA 2008:4), the popular discourse of agriculture as "a business like any other" operating in a free-market continues to exist among farmers, agricultural economists, government officials, and the general public. The history of agriculture in Maryland, and the U.S. as a whole, has been one of continued governmental intervention and support. As early as 1639, just five years after the first permanent European settlement, the Maryland colonial legislature passed a law requiring that corn be planted alongside tobacco in order to preserve a measure of food security in the early days of the colony (BBER 1954:2)

The state has always played an active role in shaping the agricultural economy and landscape of Maryland. As well, farmer and public interests groups have continually petitioned the state to support their visions of a healthy agricultural sector in the state. Current demands that the state intervene in the agricultural economy by using public monies to preserve farmland or to develop and market new and alternative production are a continuation of the status quo. Government entities have generally not left food production nor productive landscapes to the outcomes dictated by the rational efficiency of the free market.

3.1 Agriculture in Maryland: Diverse and Dynamic

In this first decade of the 21st-century, agriculture in the state of Maryland comprises a diverse set of activities and faces numerous market and environmental challenges. The history of Maryland's agricultural sector shows that such operating conditions have been the norm (Gemmill 1926; BBER 1954; DiLisio 1983; Callcott 1985; Brugger 1988). Maryland's tourism board presents the state as "America in miniature" because of its physical and economic diversity, its border position between North and South, and its tension between urban and rural areas. The diversity of Maryland's agricultural activities mirrors the state's physiographic and economic diversity. There are four main physiographic regions in Maryland – the Atlantic coastal plain, the Piedmont, the Ridge and Valley system, and the Allegheny Plateau. Each region has its own physical, climatic, and economic constraints on agriculture. Therefore, each region has tended to specialize in one of several farming activities (see Figures 3.2 through 3.5), which over time have created distinct agricultural economies

and landscapes. This agricultural diversity, depending one's perspective and moment in history, has been either a boon or a hindrance to Maryland's agricultural economy.

Maryland's agricultural history has saliency in today's statewide farmland preservation policy for two main reasons. First, it suggests that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to preserving farmland across the state is unlikely to be effective. Landscape and farm diversity have worked against a unified, statewide strategy in responding to market and environmental challenges.

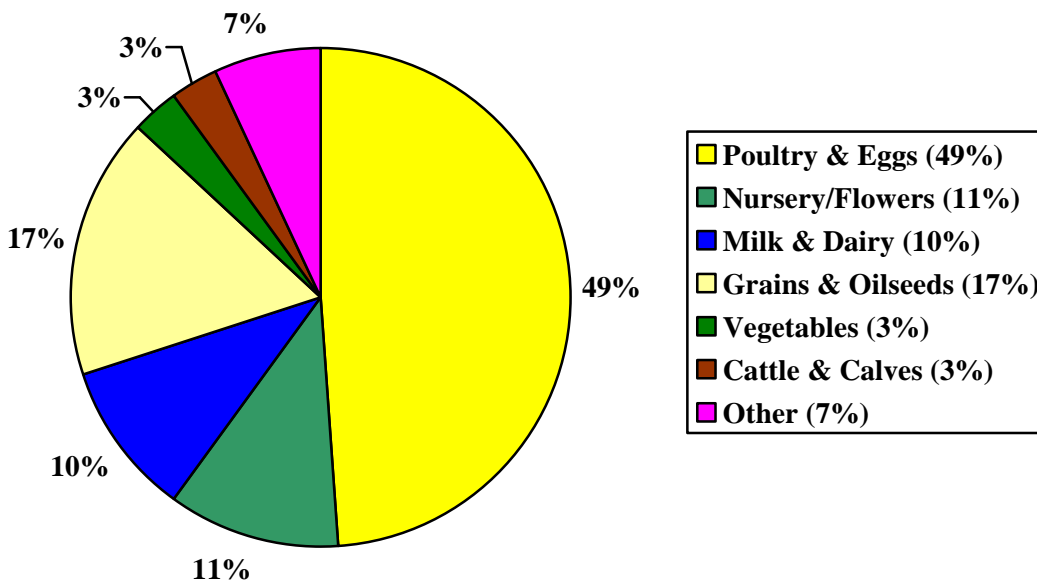
Second, one of the main critiques of farmland preservation is that it is misplaced nostalgia, an attempt to freeze a landscape in time. Yet farming in Maryland has never been static. Since the beginnings of European settlement in the 1630s, the various activities that have made up commercial agriculture in the state have shifted dramatically over time and space. The colonial Maryland agricultural economy was dependent on international markets, specifically the export of wheat and tobacco. This reality would not change for decades to come, as the U.S. domestic market could not yet compete with demand from international buyers.

From those beginnings, much of Maryland's agriculture production has been for both regional and global markets. To claim that the current local food system approach to farmland preservation is an attempt to recapture some nostalgic past is to misunderstand Maryland's agricultural history. Today's farmland preservation programs represent something new in terms of market strategy and public discourse. However, the adoption of new strategies is an age-old response to shifting economic and spatial realities of agriculture in Maryland.

3.2 Developments in Maryland Agriculture since the 1970s

Still diverse in terms of agricultural production in comparison to some Midwestern states, farming in Maryland since the 1970s has become more concentrated in certain sectors. In 1978, eight agricultural sectors comprised at least 3% of the total value of agricultural sales (poultry, grains, dairy, cattle, nursery, tobacco, vegetables, and pigs). By 2007, only six sectors represented 3% or more of the value of agricultural sales [see Fig 3.1] (Census 1978; NASS 2007). Pig farms have lost out to larger processors in the South and Midwest and tobacco production has largely ended as the result of a state buyout program initiated in 2000.

Figure 3.1. Value of Agricultural Sales in Maryland by Sector, 2007



The poultry industry continued to consolidate during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1935 there were approximately 100 poultry processing firms in Maryland. By 1966 that number had

dropped to 20 firms, and by 1980, only 9 firms were processing nearly 100 times as many broilers as was the case in the 1930s (DiLisio 1983:80-81).

Maryland stands at a crossroads in terms of agricultural economic development policy. Should state policy focus on supporting the poultry industry in an increasingly competitive market or should it emphasize diversification? At the state level, poultry dominates the agricultural economy. Poultry and eggs, combined with the corn and soybean production which becomes chicken feed, represents 66% of the value of agricultural sales in Maryland (NASS 2007). Agricultural economists in Maryland propose that state level policy should support Maryland's broiler industry, which would also bolster the state's cash grain market due to the "symbiotic relationship" between the two sectors (Gardner et al. 2002:*xiv-xv*). Though poultry continues to dominate agriculture in Maryland and the number of broilers (poultry for meat) sold remains near an all-time high, the Delmarva peninsula's share of the national poultry market has fallen from 28 % in 1950 to just below 10% in 2002 (PAT 2003).

At the regional scale, the farm economy across the state differs significantly. Below Figures 3.2 through 3.5 show the make-up of Maryland's regional agricultural economies (NASS 2007). What the charts below show is that a statewide policy that emphasizes the poultry industry ignores much of Maryland except the Eastern Shore counties. The other regions still represent nearly one-third of agricultural sales, and more importantly from a farmland preservation perspective, approximately half of the state's farmland and about two-thirds of its remaining farmers (NASS 2007).

Figure 3.2 Western Maryland – Value of Agricultural Sales by Sector, 2007.

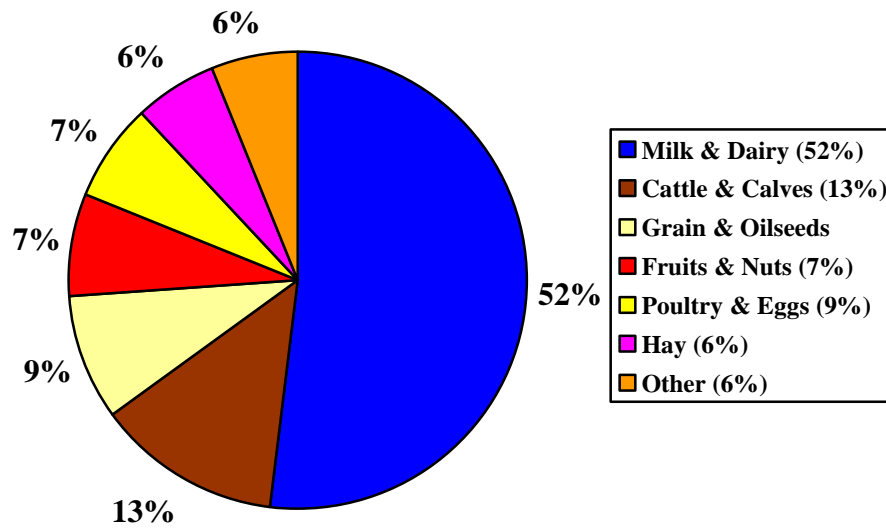


Figure 3.3 Central Maryland – Value of Agricultural Sales by Sector, 2007

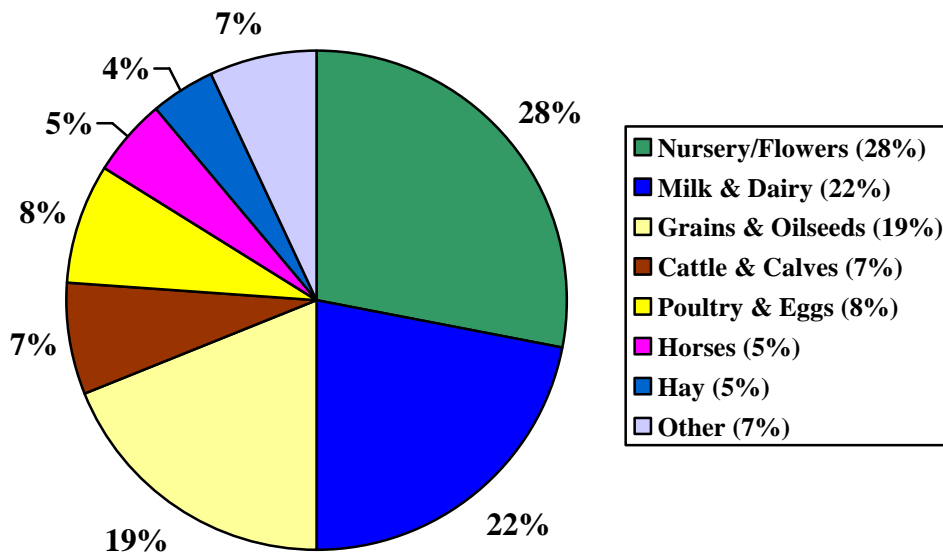


Figure 3.4 Southern Maryland – Value of Agricultural Sales by Sector, 2007

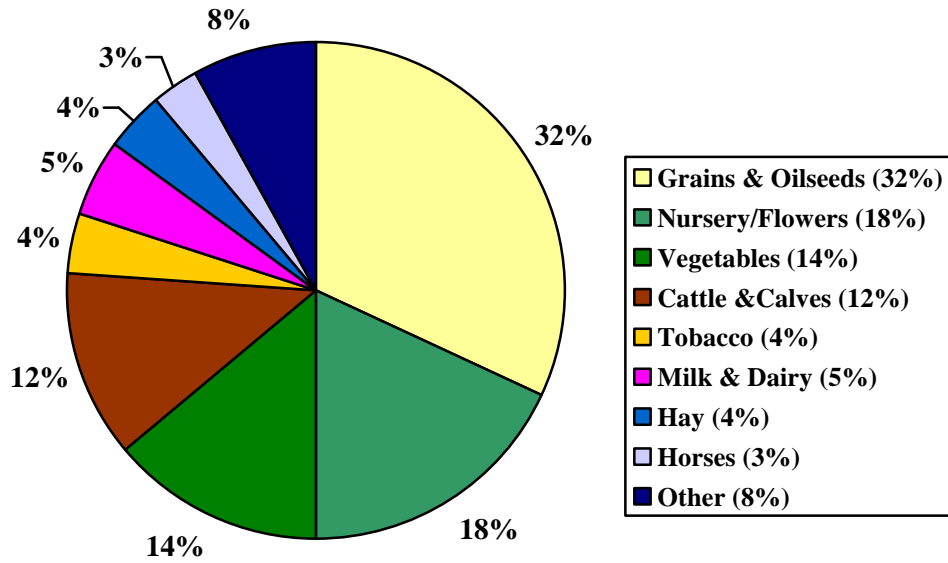
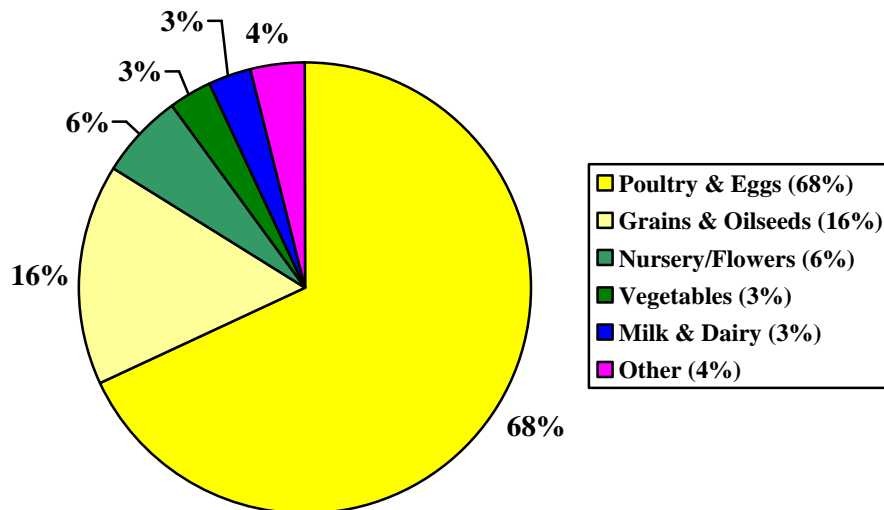


Figure 3.5 Eastern Shore – Value of Agricultural Sales by Sector, 2007



3.3 Future Trends, Challenges and Opportunities

The overall picture of U.S. agriculture is one of abundant production using an incredibly small percentage of the total labor force. Hidden in this image of abundance and productivity, however, are some significant concerns over the health of the country's agricultural economy. The success of American agriculture in terms of productivity actually complicates the effort to effect changes in the system. While all Americans consume the output of the nation's farms, very few Americans feel that they have a direct stake in the national debates on farm policy.

Future projections of the health of the agricultural sector in Maryland generally conform to national projections. In Maryland, although there are concerns in specific sectors about commodity prices, there is not overall concern that the agricultural sector would collapse or that a critical loss of farmland will occur due to non-agricultural development (see Gardner et al., 2002).

The USDA's Economic Research Service's (ERS) national baseline projections for 2006–2015 suggest relative stability in the agricultural sector. Gross cash receipts are expected to increase during this period due to rising domestic and overseas demand coupled with an increase in commodity prices. These gains, however, are offset by rising production costs and fewer government subsidies, resulting in the overall picture of stable net farm income. The ERS also projects an increase in world agricultural trade, both in the volume of US agricultural exports and amount of agricultural imports to satisfy the demand for a large variety of foods that is connected to increases in US consumer income (ERS 2006).

These baseline projections are based on a variety of assumptions with respect to world economic growth, world population growth, the value of the US dollar, oil prices, ethanol and US energy policy, US agricultural policy, international trade policies, and the availability of natural resources. The ERS has concluded that the “nation’s capacity to produce food and fiber is not at risk due to current development patterns” (Hellerstein et al. 2002). It does acknowledge, however, the importance of preserving farmland in order to maintain the availability of “rural amenities” which may or may not involve actual agricultural production.

In the introduction to their policy analysis report on the current status and future prospects for agriculture in Maryland, Bruce L. Gardner and others (2002, *xiii*) at the University of Maryland’s Center for Agricultural and Natural Resources Policy state that there is a “general division of opinion” among analysts in the state. One side of the divide believes that public policy should be focused on farmland preservation and soil conservation programs; the other side believes that through agricultural economic development and farm profitability, farmland preservation programs would not be needed. The divide seems to be in whether or not to trust the market to secure what is a common goal – the preservation of farmland.

In an earlier study of Maryland’s agricultural future, Kempke (1983:67-8) explained this division in another way. He stated that farmers and agricultural planners have two choices. They may either “select policies and priorities that reflect an orientation of farming as a ‘culture’ or way of life worth preserving, or as a ‘business.’” For those who see farming as culture, leaving its preservation to the efficiencies of the market is too risky. For those who see farming as a business, there may come the

realization that, in terms of rational market efficiencies, farmland in many peri-urban areas will not be the “highest and best” use of the land, and therefore, unable to compete with urban land uses.

Although profitability is one set of indicators by which this study evaluates the success of farmland preservation, my working assumption is that the very existence of taxpayer-funded farmland preservation programs speaks to the desire to prevent the disappearance of farmland through the mechanism of the market. Whether such programs exist to protect farming as a way of life, or culture, is still subject to debate. As Kempke (1983:68) pointed out twenty-five years ago, current policies and priorities seek to do both – preserve farmland through market-based solutions. However, three decades after the introduction of farmland preservation policies in Maryland, it is time to take a considered look at how well, or if, this “best of both worlds” approach is working as intended.

Chapter 4: Farmland Preservation Policy: History and Discourse Analysis

4.1 Development of National Farmland Preservation Policy

Agricultural land planning, as it is conceived today, began at the national level during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Similar to 19th-century concerns (see Stoll 2002), farmland policy was mostly seen as soil conservation. Roosevelt's administration sought to *decrease* the amount of agricultural land in the country, much of it marginal and prone to erosion, in hopes of reducing surpluses and raising farm incomes. The Land Utilization Conference of 1931 led to the creation of a National Land Use Planning Committee which set about conducting a national inventory and classification of land (Conkin 1959:80).

Concern among Department of Agriculture officials in the 1930s over soil erosion would lead to the establishment of a National Resources Planning Board (NRPB) and Soil Conservation Districts. In 1934, the NRPB was merged with the National Land Use Planning Committee to become the National Resources Board (NRB). The NRB issued a report with findings which presaged the concerns of environmentalists in the 1970s. The report stated that "private advantage" should yield to the "general welfare," and offered recommendations that resonate with the communitarian strain of agrarianism (Lehman 1995:18). The NRB became the country's first national planning agency, envisioning a new model of land use and agricultural development in the country that attempted to meld competing philosophies of agrarianism and Progressivism.

The years just before and after the beginning of the Great Depression were a period of strong agrarian sentiment in the country. The writings of Ralph Borsodi and the “Twelve Southerners” (agrarian writers based at Vanderbilt University) would filter into the Roosevelt administration’s New Deal programs. In what can only be described as state-sponsored agrarianism, the Department of the Interior established a Division of Subsistence Homesteads in 1933. These homesteads would not be large acreages located in dispersed rural landscapes, but one to five-acre lots in planned communities of 25 to 100 families. These subsistence homestead communities would flourish with agriculture, handicraft and artisanal industries, and co-operatives. They would be “a retreat from extreme materialism and from a highly individualistic, competitive society,” and would permit “a closer association with nature” (Conkin 1959:102-105). By 1935, the desperation of the early years of the Great Depression had begun to fade, and the Subsistence Homestead program would be reorganized into the Resettlement Administration under the Department of Agriculture. This program itself would be absorbed into the Farm Security Administration in 1937 and the whole enterprise of planned agrarianism would be abandoned in 1942.

The New Deal vision of decentralized industry and subsistence homesteads would completely disappear during the post-WWII economic boom. The chemical weapons of WWII were transformed into pesticides and fertilizers. With greater mechanization and petrochemical inputs, agriculture became an increasingly industrial process, operating on a larger and larger scale. From 1940 through the 1970s, the U.S. agricultural sector experienced nearly uninterrupted increases in yield per acre while at the same time experiencing a continual drop in the need for labor. The number of farms in the U.S.

peaked in 1935 at 6.8 million and steadily dropped until 1974 with 2.3 million farms remaining. The number has fluctuated close to that number since and stood at 2.2 million in 2007 (NASS 2007;ERS 2005). Meanwhile, U.S. farm output in 2006 was 152% above its level in 1948, representing an average annual growth rate of 1.6% (ERS 2009). Farmland acreage peaked in 1954 at 1.21 billion acres and dropped to 922 million acres in 2007 (ERS 1997; NASS 2007).

In 1951, Nobel-prizing winning economist Theodore Schultz declared that “the [agricultural] economy has freed itself from the severe restrictions formerly imposed by land” (1951:725). Schultz writes that land retains its overwhelming importance as an agricultural input in “high-food-drain” economies, defined as those countries which are “technically undeveloped,” overpopulated, and in which the majority of the “productive effort” is engaged in food production. Schultz’s reasoning, though it might make ecological economists apoplectic, was (and still is) standard economic discourse.

... the economic developments that have characterised Western communities ... have resulted in improved production possibilities and in a community choice that has relaxed the niggardliness of Nature. As a consequence of these developments, agricultural land has been declining markedly in its economic importance. Will it continue to do so? Existing circumstances in the United States indicate a strong affirmative answer. Nor is the end in sight (1951:740).

Schultz’s view was still going strong a decade later; in 1960, researchers at Resources for the Future claimed that farmland was “only one of the productive factors” in agriculture and technology “greatly reduces the importance of land” (in Lehman 1995:46). Humans now had the ability to overcome the constraints of Nature. The 1950s ushered in another era of cornucopian visions with respect to the future of food production and farming. In his review of popular media at this time, Belasco (2006:193-213) provides many

examples of “adolescent techno-enthusiasm” which breathlessly claimed revolutionary robotic farms, atomic toasters, and algae burgers were just around the corner.

The growth of the environmental movement in the 1960s would create alternative narratives of human relationships with nature, but it did not replace existing ones. While Rachel Carlson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) challenged the script of agro-chemical industries and the USDA, Norman Borlaug was launching the Green Revolution in Mexico and India. His new wheat hybrids, monocultures which were highly dependent on agro-chemical inputs, brought significantly increased yields to several large, developing countries struggling to feed themselves. The increased food production in the world’s most populated countries reduced the need for the U.S. to “feed the world.” Food production no matter the environmental costs (or economic costs of surpluses) was more difficult to support unchallenged.

Eventually, the idea of limits, both ecological and economic, returned to public discourse. The Club of Rome’s 1972 publication, *Limits to Growth*, bolstered the storyline that a planet of finite resources could not support a growing population or a global economy based on resource consumption which had no limits. Taking a systems approach, the organization sought to set out options for sustainable progress while cognizant of environmental constraints (CoR 2008).

The limits to growth storyline would find fertile ground (albeit less and less of it) in America’s rapidly expanding suburbs. As the nation’s central cities increasingly became depopulated, their former middle-class residents settled into low-density developments. Residents on the suburban frontier, both old and new, became concerned that the development of farmland and open space had reduced these resources to a critical

level. Earlier claims by pro-growth forces and economists that the national farmland supply was not under threat, even if peri-urban farms disappeared, no longer persuaded the residents of metropolitan areas. By the early 1970s, concern over farmland loss made it to mainstream public media, with articles appearing in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, chronicling the impact of rapid suburban growth on the conversion of agricultural land (Lehman 1995:67).

Increased public attention to farmland loss exposed tensions within the USDA between scientists of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and agricultural economists in the Economic Research Service (ERS). Much of the disagreement stemmed from different beliefs in the importance of soil fertility as a primary input in agriculture. Agricultural economists in the ERS voiced the same confidence as land economists of the 1950s and 1960s that land itself was becoming increasingly less important. The ERS argued against the classification of “prime” farmland solely on its physical characteristics, noting that changing technology over time had an impact on the spatial distribution of farmland which could be considered “prime” (Lehman 1995:91).

This difference in opinions as to the relative importance of fertile land in agricultural output led the SCS and ERS to come out with divergent statistics on the amount of remaining potential farmland in the country. The ERS, in its 1974 *Major Uses of Land in the United States*, stated that 385 million current acres nationwide were farmland and another 266 million acres were potential agricultural lands, with 730,000 acres being lost to development each year (Lehman 1995:92). In 1977, the SCS published its *Potential Cropland Study*, claiming that out of the potential 266 million acres in reserve cited by the ERS in 1974, only 111 million acres had “high or medium”

potential as farmland. The SCS also estimated that 2.9 million acres were lost annually not only to urbanization but also to water uses such as reservoirs (Lehman 1995:93). With two very different understandings of farmland and food security in the U.S. coming out of the Department of Agriculture, the stage was set for a political battle involving divergent storylines.

In an attempt to resolve this internal dispute and have the USDA speak with one voice with respect to the country's supply of farmland land, the *National Agricultural Land Study* (NALS) final report was issued in January 1981. Though it was a joint product of the ERS and SCS, the latter's more concerned assessment of the threats to America's farmland defined the document. The compromise was mainly the result of coming to some agreement on what exactly it was the USDA was counting, potential cropland or potential agricultural land (the latter could be grazing and woodlands). The NALS stated that the country's cropland base was 540 million acres (413 acres currently in use and 127 million potential acres). The nation's cropland base was defined as land with soils in the SCS's Land Use Capability classes I, II, III, and IV. In its final analysis, the NALS warned that America's future food security was threatened by the rate of farmland conversion. The report called for federal assistance in helping state and local governments to preserve farmland (Lehman 1995:133-41).

The release of NALS was closely linked to the success in passing the 1981 Farmland Protection Policy Act. The act required federal agencies and programs to evaluate whether any construction projects using federal funds could lead to farmland loss. The law did not force Federal agencies to abandon such projects, but gave them the discretion to withhold funds for such projects. Also federal agencies should attempt to

align projects with farmland preservation programs at the state and local levels. Subsequent changes to the law in 1986 and 1994 required federal agencies whose projects would lead to farmland conversion to submit a Farmland Conversion Rating Form (AD-1006) to a local branch of the USDA's National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This reporting to the NRCS becomes part of the required annual USDA report to Congress on the federal government's role in farmland loss (Daniels & Bowers 1997:77).

The 1981 Farmland Protection Policy Act charged the NRCS to develop a system of rating the quality of farmland. This land evaluation and site assessment (LESA) system would generate a standard evaluation land quality to aid all levels of government in gauging the potential loss of prime farmlands. The land evaluation in LESA is determined by factoring the soil class (as determined by the Soil Conservation Service classification system) and yield data. This score is added to the site assessment score which takes into account a set of factors designed to determine farm viability and development pressure (proximity to other farmland, distance from public services and infrastructure, and unique cultural or environmental qualities) (Daniels & Bowers 1997:77-79). Despite what seems to be a standard system of evaluation, each county can determine the relative weighting of factors, so that comparative studies of LESA reports from one county to the next are nearly impossible.

Beyond 1981, federal farmland preservation policy has been rather lean, usually appearing in a conservation section of subsequent Farm Bills. The 1990 Farm Bill included the hopeful sounding Farms for the Future Act, the first federal program to give direct financial assistance to states in support of their farmland preservation efforts.

However, the program ended after being piloted in Vermont, which preserved 9,000 acres (through PDRs) between 1992 and 1995 using money borrowed from the federal government and state matching funds. Apparently the cost of implementing the program for the federal government was significantly greater than the interest Vermont saved (Daniels & Bowers 1997:82).

4.1.1 Policy Mechanisms – How is farmland preserved?

Farmland is usually protected from development through a *conservation easement*. The easement is an agreement between a landowner and either a government entity or a non-profit organization, such as a land trust, that places mutually-agreed to restrictions on land use. The easement works on the principle of “unbundling” of property rights. In other words, there are multiple rights inherent in the transfer and ownership of property. By unbundling them, some rights can be detached from the property and so do not transfer when the property is sold. In the case of farmland preservation, the right to develop the land for non-farm uses is removed. Of course, a landowner expects to be compensated for the lost value of that right.

Thus, the two main mechanisms by which a local government or land trust preserves farmland is by purchasing the development rights to the property from the landowner. When the government or land trust purchases the development rights, it’s called a PDR transaction (“purchase of development rights”). PDRs rely on public funds or private contributions to land trusts. The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund is a state-level agency that preserves farmland through PDRs.

In counties where there is strong development pressure, local governments can harness private funds to secure the purchase of conservation easements. Part of the county where farmland is to be protected is zoned as a “sending area” (development rights are sent away). Areas zoned as “receiving areas” become home to those development rights, usually in the form of increased density allowances in residential development. For example, a builder wants to increase the number of units on a parcel of land approved for development, but there is a density restriction. The developer may gain the rights to develop at a higher density by purchasing the development rights away from a farm. This mechanism is a TDR (“transfer of development rights”) because the right to develop is transferred from the sending area to the receiving area (PECVA 2008). TDRs are popular with local governments because they do not need to raise the capital. Much of the 70,000 acres of preserved farmland in Montgomery County, Maryland was secured through TDRs.

Wichelns & Nakao (2001:199) suggest that much of the public’s support for PDRs stems from their belief that farmland parcels and agricultural activity will be preserved in “perpetuity,” because the development rights are effectively “retired” rather than transferred. In fact, in some states, PDR programs have escape clauses that allow farmers to buy back their development rights. In Maryland’s PDR and TDR programs operated by the state-level Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, enrolled easements could be released from conservation after a 25 year period, subject to MALPF Board of Trustee approval. Since the first, MALPF easement was enrolled in 1980, the reality of losing “preserved” farmland beginning in 2005 prompted the Maryland legislature to amend state law 2004, removing the possibility of “termination requests.”

4.1.2 Dominant Discourses in the Farmland Preservation Policy

In his study of the discourse of sustainable planning policy, Murdoch (2004:50) finds the concept of “policy frames” (borrowed from Griggs & Howarth 2002) to be helpful. They “determine what counts as evidence, how contradictory information is interpreted, and how problems are defined.” Policy frames, writes Murdoch, help create what Hajer (1995) calls “discourse coalitions” within particular policy arenas. These discourse coalitions are “ensembles of storylines, actors and practices which generate particular ways of thinking (2004:50). Therefore, storylines and actors which are not a part of discourse coalitions, and thus are outside the bounds of the policy frame, often do not get heard. In the farmland preservation policy arena, the missing storyline and actors include food consumers, non-capitalist or cooperative land ownership, and the possibility of agriculture and development co-existing in metropolitan areas.

“Policies are neither symbolic nor substantive. They are both at once” (Yanow 1996 in Fischer 2003, 60). The same can be said of cultural landscapes. Just as Cosgrove calls landscapes symbolic and Schein calls landscapes “discourses materialized,” public policy not only put into practice what we want to see, but also symbolize how we wish to be seen. The linkages between discourse and landscape are real. The way we write and talk about farmland preservation determines what gets included in policy and how the policy is both implemented and evaluated. Conflict in local and regional land use planning arises from the clash of competing discourses [or cultural models] of human interaction with the land, the role of economics, and our responsibilities toward community.

Policy discourse “cannot achieve the kind of internal coherence of a discourse such as law, or even political theory” because it combines “a range of discursive components – empirical, institutional, pragmatic, and normative factors” (Fischer 2003:84). It has already been demonstrated that the agricultural economy across Maryland is too diverse for a single empirical “storyline.” The stakeholder diversity with respect to local land use policy also precludes the existence of a single normative policy discourse. Multiple storylines exist in the farmland preservation policy arena. These storylines are “the basic linguistic mechanism for creating and maintaining discursive order” and act as “short-hand constructions” of more complex social theories (such as market capitalism or new agrarianism) and political strategies (Fischer 2003:86).

Though the struggle for farmland preservation is most heated in metropolitan counties in the United States, the preservation discourse is firmly rooted in the meaning of “rural” in our culture. Perhaps more than any other industrialized society, America maintains a cultural understanding of agriculture and food production as activities that take place in distant rural areas and rural landscapes, no matter how industrialized and globalized the process may have become. So in order to understand what is to be preserved with our farmland policies, we need to consider the *metropolitan* discourse of “rural.”

Frouws (1998), in his analysis of rural discourses in The Netherlands (one of the world’s most urbanized and densely-populated countries) identifies three discourses operating in the country which he suggests are applicable elsewhere. What he terms the *agri-ruralist* discourse focuses on the social dimensions what it means to be “rural.” The *utilitarian* discourse focuses on the economic dimension, and the *hedonist* discourse on

the cultural dimension. Each discourse articulates an “ideal countryside,” according to Frouws. In the *agri-ruralist* discourse, the countryside ideal is one in which “farmers have renewed their social contract with society, practicing multi-functional agriculture” which addresses the multiple demands made on agricultural areas – food production, environmental services, and landscape aesthetics (1998, 58).

Using land as a resource to maximize profit is the ideal state of the countryside in the *utilitarian* discourse. The “best-use” of the land should be determined by market forces. In the *hedonist* discourse, the ideal countryside contributes the region’s “quality of life,” as a source of aesthetic pleasure and outdoor recreation. In this discourse, the countryside is the “garden of the city” (Frouws 1998, 60-62).

In Europe, these discourses feed into national, even European Union-wide, debate on landscape planning. Farmland preservation in North America, however, is not part of larger, national discussion of “countryside planning,” as it is termed in Europe (Bunce 1998: 233). Programs in the United States are largely incentive-based and view agricultural land as a “victim of conversion forces” in need of protection. Less emphasis is placed on “the *generators* of conversion and perpetrators of sprawl” (Alterman 1997:223).

Nonetheless, as Bunce points out, as of the late 1990s, there had been three decades in the development and maturity of the farmland preservation movement’s discourse. Though the movement’s emphasis has shifted from early “productionist arguments” to more recent, and broader, cultural and ecological concerns, the one certainty, writes Bunce, “is that mainstream farm voices are barely detectable” in the movement’s discourse (1998:244). Indeed, farmers, if they can be said to be represented

by groups such as state and local farm bureaus, are generally not the organizers, spokespersons, and wordsmiths of local farmland preservation activist groups. However, many of the most eloquent voices in the new agrarian movement are “farmers of letters” (e.g. Wendell Berry, Victor David Hanson, Gene Logsdon, and David Kline).

The agricultural discourse in the U.S. shifted after the 1940s from one situated within agrarianism to one situated within economic utilitarianism (Mariola 2005). Mariola claims that the farmland preservation movement has adopted the economic utilitarian discourse, attempting to convince the general public that laws and public funds preserving farmland represent the “greatest good for the greatest number” (2005:210).

Bunce (1998) points out several shifts in the discourse of the farmland preservation movement from the late 1960s to the late 1990s (see Table 4.1). Without any cataclysmic events in the recent agricultural history of the United States and Canada to define dramatic shifts in discourse, there are transitional periods in the dominant discourse of farmland preservation over the past thirty years. As the movement matured and met resistance from other rural land stakeholders, policy narratives and strategic storylines would begin to change in a largely uncoordinated process at the local level. Not until the founding of the American Farmland Trust in 1980 would a single organization develop a national lobbying voice for farmland preservation activists across the country.

Table 4.1 -- Dominant discourses of the farmland preservation movement in North America, 1950s to present (summary of Bunce 1998).

Time Period	Dominant Discourse
1950s & early 1960s	Abundant farmland & techno-enthusiasm = food surplus No farmland crisis or movement
mid-1960s	Beginning of concern -- soil degradation & urban sprawl; physiocratic agrarianism (“our wealth is in the land”)
1970s	Farmland is threatened – “productionist arguments” (so much farmland was being converted by urban sprawl that it would harm food security)
mid-1970s to mid-1980s	Height of “resource scarcity” discourse
1980s (founding of American Farmland Trust)	Farmland preservation as instrumental part of sustainable agriculture and environmental protection – a “new agricultural land ethic”
1990s	Farmland preservation as rural amenity & heritage protection
2000s	New agrarianism – farmland preservation needed to build new, local food systems (commensalism)

Bunce groups the various public discourses of farmland preservation into two streams – the “environmentalist perspective” and “agrarian ideals.” Under the environmentalist perspective was the early “resourcist” discourse with its neo-Malthusian language, arguing that farmland was a vanishing natural resource threatened by urban encroachment (1998:237). After a decade of increased farmland costs but increased food production, the resourcist discourse gave way to a broader environmental concern over the protection of “prime farmland” – Class I & II soils as defined by the Soil Conservation Service. Bunce notes that the American Farmland Trust has a double goal of protecting farmland from urban sprawl and soil erosion.

The American Farmland Trust (AFT) was founded in 1980, under the leadership of Douglas Wheeler, who previously had been Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and

Wildlife and Parks in the Department of the Interior and executive director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He was joined by Robert Gray, director of the National Agricultural Lands Study, and Norman Berg, director of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Given the tussle within the USDA over the nation's farmland situation, the AFT was founded as home for the conservationist perspective of SCS researchers, who felt their analyses were watered down in compromises with the agricultural economists in the Economic Research Service.

The rhetoric of the AFT and environmental organizations during the 1980s was about creating a "new agricultural land ethic" through farmland preservation (Bunce 1998:238). Bunce includes Wendell Berry as a leading voice of this new agricultural land ethic, claiming Berry's writings "promoted the re-establishment of reverential relationships with farmland" (1998:238). The AFT, however, did not fully adopt the discourse of the nascent new agrarianism. It was, after all, staffed by scientists. It was through the discourse of science that the AFT would make important strides in securing increased federal involvement in the protection of farmland in the 1980s, even as Lehman (1995:156) points out, they were up against the small-government conservatism of the Reagan administration.

In 1987, AFT published its first *Farming on the Edge* report (updates were published in 1994 and 2002). The report chronicled the impact of suburban sprawl on agriculture in America's metropolitan areas. It also countered the claims of farmland preservation critics that preservation programs were elitist attempts at safeguarding rural amenities in areas that did not significantly contribute to U.S. food production. The 2002 *Farming on the Edge* report stated that farmland loss in peri-urban areas represented a

real threat to U.S. food production in many foodstuffs. Using 1997 Census of Agriculture data, the report found that farms in the 1,210 most urban-influenced counties* produced 86% of fruit, 86% of vegetables, 63% of dairy, 39% of meat, and 35% of grain (AFT 2002).

4.1.3 Criticism of farmland preservation policies – national counter-narratives

At the same time that the dominant discourse shifted from one of farmland abundance to that of a threatened resource, voices from the toppled discourse began to construct counter-narratives. Discourse theory describes counter-narratives as an integral part of what are known as metanarratives. A metanarrative is the discourse that allows for two competing worldviews to co-exist and to debate each other using the same universe of facts (Fischer 2003:173). In the case of farmland preservation discourse, public opinion polls indicate that the narrative of preservation groups is more persuasive than that of the counter-narrative, often delivered by economists or critics of government trespass on private property rights.

Alterman (1997:224) identifies two main counter-narratives from critics of farmland preservation policies. The first is that farmland preservation is unnecessary in economic terms since the market most efficiently determines “best use,” and it is not needed to ensure adequate food production. The second storyline is that farmland preservation activists are masking socially-exclusionary aims under the guise of environmental protection. Of course, to be plausible storylines, there must be some

* The Economic Research Service of the USDA uses a nine-category classification system to code the urban-influence in the over 3,000 counties and other local jurisdiction as defined by the Census Bureau. Population growth and socio-economic data is used in the classification. For details see Ghelfi & Parker (1997).

evidence upon which to base these claims. And given the diversity of interests among farmland stakeholders, there are examples that can lend credence to these counter-narratives.

In an early critique of farmland preservation policies, Gardner (1977), an agricultural economist, admits that market economics will not be able to deliver and optimal amount of farmland to satisfy all of the desired outcomes of farmland protection. Specifically, he believes that the market will not provide optimal amounts of open space in growing metropolitan area. Yet he also believes that farmland preservation programs, with their emphasis on agricultural productivity, will not achieve the desired amount of open space, since “there may not be a good match between high productivity agricultural lands and open space for recreators^{*}” (1977:1034).

Resources for the Future, considered a centrist and non-partisan think-tank on natural resource issues, held a conference in 1980 in Washington D.C. entitled “The Adequacy of Agricultural Lands: Future Problems and Policy Alternatives.” The view of the majority of paper presenters was that there is no present cropland crisis in the United States, but that conservation of our agricultural lands still needs to be a concern of policymakers. Crosson (1982:4) pointed out that agitation for farmland preservation is greatest in states that contribute little to the country’s agricultural production capacity. Continuing the 1950s storyline, Crosson minimizes the importance of land and soil fertility as inputs in agricultural production; “[food production] capacity must be defined in economic, not physical terms” (1982:5). In the same volume, another economist

^{*} Though Gardner does not explain, I would interpret his meaning of “recreators” here as people enjoying a country drive or stopping at a farm stand, and not using preserved farmlands as hunting grounds or raceways for all-terrain vehicles.

declares that “there is no fixed relationship between land and output” (Brubaker 1982:197).

Another prominent voice against the need for federal government intervention in the country’s supply of farmland has been William Fischel, currently a professor of economics at Dartmouth College. In a rebuttal to the findings and conclusions of the USDA’s 1981 National Agricultural Lands Study (NALS), Fischel used data from the 1970 U.S. Census (the latest one with data available at the time) to argue that at the “suburban sprawl” density of four persons per acre, the national population would only consume 2.5% of the country’s land area (1982:237). Like others before him, he believes that the market will conserve farmland in “a socially desirable way.” “The private market will normally guide developers to use land less suited for crops when, in fact, it is in society’s interest to do so” (Fischel 1982:248).

Fischel also suggests that the policy recommendations that came out of the “alarmist” NALS would allow “parochial interests” to curtail the building of new housing units in growing metropolitan areas (1982:238). This slow-growth agenda in the name of farmland preservation could lead to a lack of affordable new homes. He believes that farmland preservation activists have interests that are largely local. Therefore, to deflect charges of parochialism or NIMBY-ism (“not in my backyard”), Fischel writes that activists have chosen the storyline of food production and security, making the scale of the problem a national concern. “If one were to argue that farmland should be preserved because it looks nice ... it becomes apparent that this is a largely *local* public good that can be readily handled by individual communities” (Fischel 1982:257).

4.1.4. The Role of Public Opinion

One of the difficulties in using public preferences to drive policy on farmland preservation is similar to many public policy issues – a large segment of the public does not have a well-formulated position on farmland preservation readied for telephone surveys. While this study is not the place for an extended discussion of public opinion surveys, it is important to point out that there is a significant body of literature in sociology and communication sciences (both theoretical and applied) that discusses the role of public opinion in society. One concept from this literature that impacts our understanding of farmland preservation policy is the idea of public opinion as a form of collective behavior. Early sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies saw an expansive role for public opinion in society, calling it the equivalent of religion in pre-industrial communities; it circumscribes the set of right actions to achieve a better world (Tönnies 2000). Public opinion, thus, has the power to shape discourse, which is why public policy advocates expend so much effort on designing surveys which will help create the narratives they seek to build. Public opinion determines political action.

Public support for farmland preservation policies is high, though the rationales for doing so are varied and the mechanisms for doing so are largely unknown. In a study of public support for farmland preservation goals, Denton et al. (2003:280) found that over 80% of survey respondents “agreed or strongly agreed” that farmland served the following functions: created a sense of local heritage, provided open space, supported the local economy, curbed urban sprawl, and acted as a scenic amenity. Farmland serves multiple functions for individual farmers and their families, as well as society and the environment at large. This fact is an inconvenient truth for a particular group hoping to

support their rationale at the expense of others. For a synopsis of thirteen studies on public attitudes toward farmland preservation (1984 through 2002), see Hellersetin et al. (2002:16).

4.1.5 Pragmatic activists: the farmland preservation movement

To call the organizations working toward farmland preservation a “movement” may belie the diverse set of goals and expectations among the organizations seeking to protect farmland. For a window into the discourse of the movement, the activists’ primer *Holding Our Ground: Protecting America’s Farms and Farmland* (Daniels & Bowers 1997) provides a broad view of their goals and rhetorical strategies. From the outset, the book attempts to establish a set of storylines that farmland preservationists can take to the public (via the press, community forums, local planning committee deliberations, etc.). This “how-to-book” is written with the expectation that the majority of its readers are *not* farmers. It starts by noting that although farmers make up less than 3% of the country’s population, they either own or rent the majority of private land in the country. Therefore, “[farmers] hold the key not only to the nation’s food supply, but also to managing community growth, maintaining an attractive landscape, and protecting air, water, and wildlife resources” (Daniels & Bowers 1997:4). This introduction to farmland preservation places a lot of responsibility on farmers. They are characterized as public servants attending to the public good rather than as private individuals seeking to attain private goals and to satisfy private wants and needs.

Holding Our Ground provides its readers with communication strategies that will avoid alienating farmers. “Don’t attempt to protect farmland without farmers behind

you,” warn Daniels & Bowers. “Don’t attempt to create programs that may make farming difficult” (1997:21,23). Despite the central role that this field guide to preservation gives farmers, it also suggests that farmers are potentially the greatest roadblock to farmland preservation efforts. Without directly saying so, *Holding Our Ground* acknowledges that preserving farmland isn’t always in the best interest of many farmers. The authors state that farmers are “very independent people who are generally suspicious of government” (1997:21), and therefore unlikely to readily accept government involvement in private landholdings. Daniels & Bowers advise preservation groups to work with farmers to reach a consensus strategy, presumably to protect the collective landscape that is “ours” but the land that is legally “theirs.” This rhetoric sets up two very different groups of people who are ultimately responsible for the future of farmland and food production. Is it farmers (just 2.5% of the population) that need convincing, or the rest of us? Are there places where the private interests of both farmers and farmland preservation activists converge with the public interests of both groups? Is there a single storyline or discourse that can carry these two groups along? Farmers at times share the new agrarian cultural model and are part of the same discourse coalition with farmland preservation activists. But, in many instances, farmers share the developers’ view that the exchange value of the land is greater than its use value.

Still, *Holding Our Ground* seems to reject the very discourse that defines a potential shared cultural model for farmers and activists. According to Daniels and Bowers, “Farms are a cultural tie to a time when most Americans worked and lived on farms. But we do not advocate protecting farms and farmland primarily for historic or cultural reasons. A farm must be able to pay its way as a business” (1997:71). Of

course, the statement shows that “pragmatic” farmland preservation is firmly rooted in the discourse of business, economics, and the marketplace. Perhaps this *is* the shared cultural model that can unite farmer and activists. In order to protect these farms they must become and remain profitable businesses. This could be accomplished under the philosophical framework of new agrarianism which seeks reciprocity between producers and consumers. But to invoke the marketplace as the ultimate arbiter of land use in metropolitan areas is a peculiar stance for farmland preservationists. Many dispassionate economic analyses have already shown that farmland in peri-urban areas find it difficult to compete with urban uses. That farming is a business (“like any other”) is a powerful cultural statement on how society envisions agriculture. In this narrative, farming must be able to compete, but under which rules and cultural assumptions?

Throughout *Holding Our Ground*, the authors keep to the dominant discourse of farming as business (as its *raison d'être*) and as an industry (in its operations). In a section describing the Right-to-Farm laws passed by states and county governments, Daniels & Bowers (1997:91) write the following:

“Most newcomers to the rural-urban fringe do not understand that farming as practiced today is essentially an industrial process involving heavy machinery, powerful chemicals, and large concentrations of animals. In some cases, it seems that the newcomers want farmland to look at without farmers farming the land!”

The image of farming that Daniels & Bowers have for peri-urban areas is precisely the type of farming that has not proven itself economically competitive in the metropolitan land market. According to Daniels & Bowers, these laws protect “farmers and agribusiness” from nuisance lawsuits lodged by newcomers unaccustomed to “normal farming practices” (1997:91).

Normal, traditional, and conventional agriculture are terms that appear frequently in reference to present-day agricultural practices and food systems. These terms point to two underlying assumptions in dominant American understanding of agriculture. The first assumption is that “traditional” or “normal” agricultural is commercial agriculture on an industrial scale. The second assumption is that agriculture and food production can only take place in large areas of contiguous farmland. This normative view of “traditional” or “normal” agriculture in the farmland preservation literature ignores some very significant and obvious differences in the types of agricultural production.

4.2 Maryland Farmland Preservation Policy Discourse Analysis

The first part of this chapter established the history of farmland preservation policy nationally and the narratives and counter-narratives that mark the policy environment. This section looks specifically at how these narratives are employed in the implementation of policy in Maryland by the Maryland Agricultural Land Development Foundation (MALPF). The narratives of farming, “traditional” agriculture, agro-industry, and agri-business are often at cross-purposes. The discursive conflicts are impacting the attempt by farmers and county agricultural economic development offices to diversify and innovate in protected agricultural areas.

4.2.1 Maryland Statewide Farmland Preservation Policy

Farmland preservation policy in the state of Maryland is managed by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), a government entity established by the state’s General Assembly in 1977. Administratively, MALPF is part

of the Maryland Department of Agriculture. MALPF has a thirteen-member Board of Trustees and a small staff based in Annapolis to administer its programs. The Board of Trustees includes four ex-officio members from the state government (the Comptroller, the Treasurer, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of Planning). There are also reserved spots for a representative from the state Grange, the Maryland Farm Bureau, the Young Farmers' Advisory Board, the Maryland Agriculture Commission, and the state's forestry industry. The remaining eight seats are at-large and five of them must be filled with farmers (MALPF 2008a).

MALPF's mission statement has remained the same over the past three decades (see Chapter 1). Nonetheless, with each subsequent addition and alteration to the program in terms of implementation and reporting, the mission is reaffirmed but also expanded. Legislative reauthorizations and resolutions provide an opportunity to update the discourse of farmland preservation in Maryland. For example, Joint Resolution 16: "Preservation of Agricultural Land" (2002 Maryland General Assembly) represents the most recent legislative comment on the overall importance of farmland preservation in Maryland. The text is as follows:

"For the purpose of establishing a statewide goal to preserve agricultural land in Maryland whereas, agricultural land is an exhaustible resource of the State which, once removed from agriculture, is forever lost for crop and food production, and for open space uses; and whereas, although approximately 35% of Maryland's total land area is farmland, Maryland's agricultural land is still rapidly disappearing, with an estimated 18,000 acres of farmland annually being converted to urban, commercial, or other nonagricultural use; and whereas, global economic trends, continuing development pressures, the encroachment of strip and scattered development in rural areas and nearby cities, and growing urbanization, threaten the destruction of Maryland's rural environment and the disappearance of its valuable agricultural land for agricultural purposes; and whereas, Maryland should not become one large urban development

without any balanced agricultural economy; and, whereas, it is generally essential to Maryland's economic and environmental stability and growth, and particularly to maintain an agricultural economy in the State, to preserve large, contiguous areas of prime and productive agricultural land; now, therefore, be it resolved by the General Assembly of Maryland, that the statewide goal is to triple the existing number of acres of productive agricultural land preserved by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, GreenPrint, Rural Legacy, and local preservation programs by the year 2022...."

4.2.2 Farmland preservation policy implementation in Maryland

For the most part, MALPF programs are carried out at the county level. Each county has an MALPF advisory board which oversees requests and the selection in that county that then get forwarded to the MALPF Board of Trustees. Each county also has a designated program administrator who is the point-person for the local community interested in MALPF programs. These program administrators are usually employees of county departments of planning or economic development. Many counties have their own farmland preservation plans certified with MALPF in order to keep a greater share of the state real estate transfer tax for preservation purposes. This action helps create a more uniform approach to farmland preservation across the state.

It is clear from the content of MALPF's website that it assumes landowners to be its primary audience as well as county planning officials. Other than very basic information on this history and mission, MALPF does not provide the general public with information on the perceived importance or benefits of farmland preservation to the state's residents, economy, or environment.

In 2003, the American Farmland Trust (AFT) published an evaluation of the first twenty-five years of the MALPF program. According to AFT (2003: 5), its goal in the review was

to determine if in fact it has met the goals outlined by the General Assembly, to provide recommendations to help it become more effective in meeting these goals in the future and to see if there are lessons to be learned to help other state and local farmland protection programs.

The AFT study found that, in addition to MALPF maintaining its pivotal role in securing the future of agriculture in Maryland and balancing the demands of urban growth and rural lands, MALPF also needed new policy tools to remain effective.

“We did find that additional policies are needed to meet the original goal of providing sources of agricultural products within the state for Maryland citizens. As indicated in our surveys with county administrators, farmers and the agricultural industry, there is much concern that if those interested in preserving farmland only focus on acquiring easements, the result will be that Maryland has plenty of open space without farmers who are willing to farm that ground. While some communities have begun to address this issue, planning for the future of agriculture and ensuring agricultural viability in Maryland need to be key components of the state’s agricultural and natural resource protection strategies” (AFT 2003: 6)

Progress has been made in taking the AFT recommendation to “plan for agriculture” to heart. In 2005, the Maryland Agricultural Commission completed and has begun implementation of a statewide strategic plan for agriculture. Some of the topic areas of actions include farm business assistance, farmland protection, biofuels, local marketing, promoting agriculture, conflict mediation, and Right to Farm laws (MDA 2008). Despite the five years that have passed since the AFT evaluation, however, the only indicators still used in MALPF public documents to measure overall program

success are the total acres of farmland preserved and the balance between acres preserved and acres converted to non-agricultural use.

In its report, the AFT listed four areas in which actions were needed to “secure a future for agriculture” (2003:22-25) – 1] creating consensus around environmental regulations; 2] increasing profitability; 3] supporting the next generation of farmers; and 4] encouraging agricultural economic development. Surveys and focus groups conducted by the AFT for the evaluation indicated that all stakeholder groups expressed concern that “if those interested in preserving farmland only focus on acquiring easements, the result will be that Maryland has plenty of open space without farmers who are willing to farm that ground” (2003:28). In the five-year FY2003-FY2007 Annual Report issued by MALPF in 2008, there was no attempt to either qualitatively or quantitatively address these goals inherent to MALPFs mission to “perpetuate a viable agricultural industry” (MALPF 2008b).

4.2.3 Agricultural “industries” and “businesses” and “enterprises”

The idea that farmland preservation policies would not be needed if agriculture was profitable has been voiced by many rural stakeholders. If the income generated per acre from agricultural activities could compete with the value of the land to developers, then the land would stay in agricultural use. This assumption, of course, ignores the changes in the labor structure of agriculture in the U.S. as well as the cultural shift away from viewing farming as a noble and rewarding career and meaningful way of life (for oneself rather than for others).

It has only been in the past few years that farming has begun to pull youth away from other careers. A renewed interest in sustainable food systems in the United States on the part of young adults, imbued with the philosophy of new agrarianism and the green movement (sustainability), has gained recent media attention (Damrosch 2009; O'Brien 2008; Salkin 2008). This "greenhorn" movement, however, is too informal and too nascent for it to register in government statistics, or as an untapped resource in the offices of county and state agricultural development agencies.

In its literature, MALPF claims its "central long-term objective" is "to preserve enough prime farmland in perpetuity to guarantee the continuing vitality of Maryland's agricultural industry" (2008b:2). I understand the term "vitality" here to be read as "profitable" and "capable of survival" and not just an industry that is abuzz with money-losing, government-subsidized activity. Even with every Maryland county government operating its own economic development office, the development of the agricultural sector economy often does not feature prominently in the public and promotional media of the counties. Economic growth, as it is defined in metropolitan counties, does not seem to include attracting new *farmers*, though it sometimes includes attracting *agricultural enterprises, industries, and businesses*. If in the economic development literature "farmer = agricultural enterprise," what impact might this have on attracting individuals interested in starting out as farmers? Do they envision themselves as "enterprises" and "industries"? Do "farmers" and "agricultural industries" require the same land use policy and support? These questions might seem to be just semantic speculation, but farmland preservation programs in Maryland are in the middle of ongoing struggles between stakeholder groups over these distinctions.

There is tension between protecting agricultural industries and the often-expressed desire to protect family farms and farming as a way of life. Public perceptions of family farming and agricultural industries often confuse ownership with on-farm process. Agricultural industries are pictured as large, corporate farms. Family farms are seen as small to medium-sized, and while mechanized, not “industrial.” In Maryland, though, the distinction is rather moot. In Maryland, 82.7 % of farms are family or individually-owned with another 6.6% of farms owned by family-held corporations. An additional 8.1% of farms are partnerships. Only 1.0% of Maryland’s farms are non-family held corporate farms. They account for 2.7% of the market value of agricultural products sold (NASS 2007). Nearly half of family or individually-owned farms have harvested cropland acreage less than 50 acres, a statistic that is equally true for non-family held corporate farms. Thus, the rhetoric of saving *family farms* in Maryland is redundant when protecting farms in general.

Unpacking the cultural discourse of the family farm in American culture and its agricultural policies is beyond the scope of this study, but it is important to touch on the concept when looking at farmland preservation and agricultural economic development in Maryland. The sacrosanct family farm has no uniform definition in public policy. The Economic Research Service of the USDA defines family farms solely on the criteria of ownership. The U.S. Congress, in the Food Security Act of 1985, defines family farms as “all farms except large, nonfamily corporations” and “farms using less than 1.5 person-years of hired labor; no hired manager.” Other public policies view family farms as those whose operators have farming as their primary source of income or provide at least half-time employment (ERS 2002). The general public and family farms advocates (e.g. the

National Family Farm Coalition) understand family farms to be farms where management decisions and the majority of the labor are the responsibilities of a single family.

The idea that families can sustain themselves primarily from farm income “may be an historical aberration.” During the colonial era, farmers made money as blacksmiths, carpenters, lumberman, etc. (Looker 1996:11). In many ways, the idea of a family farm being able to survive solely on the production of one or two agricultural commodities is a reflection of the specialization of the industrial age. Farmers historically, and presently in many places, have not been specialists, but generalists. The ideal of the family farm has the possibility of holding back new ways of thinking about agricultural production, especially in the metropolitan areas of the United States where the interest in farming in the future may be greater outside of farming families than within. Local and state government policy has yet to explore the possibilities in community ownership of farmland and cooperative management of farm operations as a means toward preserving farmland in peri-urban areas.

The implementation of Maryland’s farmland preservation program highlights the tension in the movement among the different visions for farmland -- as space for agricultural industries to grow commodities, as a working cultural landscape producing food at a durable scale, and as an idyllic landscape of rural charm. The original MALPF legislation (1977) states that “no commercial or industrial operations” are permitted on MALPF properties (MALPF 2008b:93). Clearly, this restriction is at odds with more recently stated long-term goal of preserving farmland for the “continuing vitality of Maryland’s agricultural industry.”

Up to 2001, MALPF policy was to allow the sale of items raised on the farm and a limited number of items from other local farms. In 2000, the General Assembly charged a MALPF Task Force to review the practices and regulations of the program and to make recommendations for changes. In its first preliminary report in 2001, the MALPF Task Force recommended that MALPF broaden the scope of income-generating activities on MALPF properties to encourage more farmers to place their properties under conservation easements. Generating more income on the farm, whether from agricultural activities or other home-based enterprises, is an important factor in those farmers and their families trying to hold on to their land. In 2007, only 49% of Maryland's principal farm operators claimed farming as their primary occupation, down from 57% just five years earlier. Of the state's 12,834 principal farm operators in 2007, 65% worked off-farm at least one day a year, with 39% working 200 or more days a year off-farm (NASS 2007).

The Task Force recommended that the law be amended "to allow limited, non-agricultural, commercial uses that will supplement farmer income, while ensuring that allowed activities will not compromise production or rural character of MALPF properties" (MALPF 2008b:93). After two years of legislative debate, the law was amended in 2003 to the following: "A landowner whose land is subject to an easement may not use the land for any commercial, industrial, or residential purpose except as determined by the Foundation, for farm and forest related uses and home occupations...." (MALPF 2008b:93-94). This "clarifying" language in the law is meant to codify existing practice – that the MALPF Board of Trustees reviews requests for non-agricultural enterprises on MALPF properties on a case-by-case basis. Administratively, this

arrangement has troubled some county program administrators who would like to see a pre-approved list of activities with which to field calls from interested landowners. At this point, the Board of Trustees has yet to relinquish its control.

The issue of on-farm commercial and industrial operations may seem clear-cut when the proposed activity is “non-agricultural.” However, conflicts have also arisen with on-farm processing of agricultural products. For example, local farmland preservation activists in the Long Green Valley area of Baltimore County, Maryland have filed a lawsuit against Bellevalle Farm (a 260 acre farm owned by the Prigel family for over a century) and MALPF to stop the Prigels from building a 10,000-square-foot creamery and retail shop. In 1997, 180 acres of Bellevalle Farm was enrolled in the MALPF program which purchased the development rights at a cost of nearly \$800,000. Bellevalle Farm is the only certified organic dairy in Baltimore County, a costly process which led to a \$100,000 loss in 2007. Currently, the Prigels’ organic milk goes to a Horizon Organic processing plant in Buffalo, New York. The Prigels wanted to capture extra sales by making value-added butter, cheese, and ice-cream to satisfy the growing urban demand for local organic products. Preservation activists see his creamery as industrial and not agricultural. A member of the community preservation association that filed the lawsuit stated, “I don't blame farmers for wanting to make more, but I'm in an association for preservation. There are other places you can do what he wants to do” (Black 2008).

Currently there are two sectors of Maryland’s agricultural economy which are bringing the tensions between various visions of agricultural landscapes to the forefront – horse farming and wineries. While both can be seen as “traditional” activities which take

place in the countryside, neither is considered “traditional agriculture” in the dominant discourse of agriculture. The difficulty the equine and wine industries have experienced with MALPF is important because both activities are being heavily promoted by county and state economic development agencies.

The Equine Industry

One cannot discuss farmland preservation and farm income in Maryland without examining the role and impact of the state’s equine industry*. Approximately 10% of Maryland’s land area, or 685,000 acres, is in horse farms, though only 206,000 acres are devoted solely to horses (MALFP 2008b:97). This is 185,000 more acres than currently under conservation easements in the state. The total value of Maryland’s equine inventory in 2002 was \$680.2 million (MHIB 2002).

The equine industry has criticized MALPF’s vague language on use restrictions on properties enrolled in its program (MHIB 2004). Horse industry promoters have made recommendations on land preservation in terms of its own interests. Two policy recommendations stake out a claim for horse farms as part of a working landscape.

Ensure that programs that promote productive, viable agriculture (with a definition that includes equine businesses) take precedence over vague “open space” programs or passive use programs

Develop incentives for counties to coordinate their zoning and land planning, with further incentives for developing contiguous productive and viable agriculture and not just low density (MHIB 2004:7)

* Given the emphasis on discourse in this study, this is an acknowledgement that the use of the word “industry” to denote sectors of Maryland’s agricultural economy does not imply that the methods and scale of production of individual farms are necessarily industrial. Instead I am conforming to standard discursive practice in referring to the wine, equine, and dairy sectors as “industries.”

The first recommendation above seeks to include the equine industry within the parameters of “productive, viable agriculture,” terms which are found throughout farmland preservation documents in Maryland. However, horse farms are not always seen as “agriculture” by other farmers and rural residents. This hesitancy is the result of the wide range of activities under the equine industry umbrella. According to MALPF, “the key issue for equine uses has always been at what point a horse farm crosses from being ... essentially a livestock operation – clearly agricultural in nature, to being a commercial and/or recreational operation” (2008b:97).

The Wine Industry

The other Maryland agricultural producers who have run up against accepted views of agricultural landscapes in Maryland’s farmland preservation program are wineries. The wine industry is represented by two statewide organizations – the Maryland Wineries Association (MWA) and the Maryland Grape Growers Association (MGGA). As of 2008, there are 34 wineries in the state producing 270,280 gallons of wine (approximately 1.36 million bottles of wine). Total value of sales in 2008 topped \$15 million. The volume of Maryland wine sold in 2008 is 3.2 times greater than the volume sold in 2000 (MWA 2009). In 2006, there was a total of 432 acres of grapevines planted, with 241 acres at wineries, 121 additional commercial acres and 70 acres of non-commercial wine grapes (MGGA 2007:6). This acreage represents a tiny fraction of Maryland’s farmland, but as a high-value product, vineyards can have a significant impact on the cultural and visual landscapes of agricultural areas. Growing wine grapes has some similar attributes to past tobacco production in Southern Maryland. Tobacco

was a “money crop” which dominated the agricultural economy and rural culture, but not the landscape, as a relative small portion of Southern Maryland’s farmland was actually planted in tobacco. It is precisely because of this similarity that, as part of the post-tobacco transition in Southern Maryland, efforts are being made to plant wine grapes on former tobacco farms. This transition is explained in further detail in Chapter Six.

Figure 4.1 – Former tobacco barn, now winery (Friday’s Creek Winery, Calvert County, Maryland. Photo: R.A. Russo 2008)



Like other types of on-farm processing of farm produce or the equine industry, wineries are at the crossroads of competing visions of rustic landscapes and working landscapes. MALPF regulations require that properties enrolled in its program to grow and process their own grapes, so wineries cannot have more than 25% of total crushed grapes come from off-farm. Restaurant and catering businesses are also not permitted

and winery retail operations cannot sell non-agricultural items. These regulations are being actively contested and are still under review (MALPF 2008b: 98).

4.2.4 Farmland Policy Evaluation Discourse in Maryland

Evaluation of farmland preservation policies, like most policy evaluations, falls into the hands of experts. In the case of farmland preservation, the expert policy evaluators tend to be agricultural economists who test policies in terms of efficiency (cost, technical, or relative). While efficiency has become an implicit goal in public administration and policy sciences, especially when policies incur the expenditure of public funds, cost efficiency is not a stated goal of farmland preservation policies in Maryland. This study has shown that farmland preservation goals in Maryland extend beyond the economic and in part, are calling for new ways of thinking about agricultural land and economics within metropolitan areas. As Fischer (2003:12) points out, what is the use of identifying efficiency when the policy represents “a clash of social values” aimed at answering the question “how should we live together?”

In Maryland, agricultural economists have largely defined the discourse of farmland preservation evaluation and success. There is a reciprocal relationship between policy implementation and evaluation. By choosing the methods of evaluation, experts exert influence not only on future implementation procedures but also on the interpretation of policy mission, even though the goals of MALPF are defined by state law.

Farmland preservation evaluation studies of Maryland’s state and county programs conducted by University of Maryland agricultural economists operate from the

same narrative established by agricultural economist B. Delworth Gardner^{*}, whose 1977 article is one of the most cited in subsequent studies nationwide. Gardner put forward four possible benefits to protecting farmland – food security, employment in the agricultural sector, orderly suburban development, and preserving environmental amenities. In his article, Gardner went on to argue that farmland preservation policies would do little to protect food security and jobs. Instead, he trusted the dominant discourse of the free market – that in rapidly developing peri-urban areas, the market system would best allocate land between agricultural and urban uses.

Evaluation of farmland preservation policies have taken the “how much bang are we getting for the buck?” approach. How efficient is the program’s use of public funds in securing program goals? Almost three decades later, Gardner’s claims are explicitly subsumed into evaluations of farmland preservation programs as general operating assumptions. In their study of the relative efficiency of the MALPF program and county TDR & PDR programs, Lynch & Musser (2001:580) identify four “specific goals” of these programs -- 1] maximizing the number of preserved acres; 2] preserving productive farms; 3] preserving farms most threatened by development; and 4] preserving large blocks of land. These four goals can be (and are) seen as operational goals in implementing the MALPF and county programs even though they are not explicitly stated in the mission goals of MALPF nor in many county program mission statements. This study and others by agricultural economists evaluating Maryland’s programs (Gardner et al. 2002 ; Lynch & Carpenter 2003; Lynch & Lovell 2003) are effectively redefining program goals based on their own adherence to the dominant discourse in

^{*} B. Delworth Gardner, professor emeritus of economics at Brigham Young University and of agricultural economics at the University of California, Davis should not be confused with Bruce L. Gardner, chair of the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Maryland, who died in March 2008.

agricultural economics. This evaluation discourse shifts the narrative of farmland preservation away from the concerns for food production and commensalism expressed in policy mission statements.

Chapter 5: Evaluating Farmland Preservation Program Success: Findings

In the introductory chapter, I established the following statutory Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) objective as the focus of evaluation for this study: *to preserve productive farmland and woodland for the continued production of food and fiber for all of Maryland's citizens.* As detailed in the methodology sub-chapter (Chapter 2.5.1), I am interpreting this objective as requiring evaluative indicators in four areas – 1] protecting an agricultural land base; 2] maintaining an adequate number of farmers; 3] ensuring farm productivity and profitability; and 4] promoting commensalism, meaning deeper relationships of responsibility and reciprocity between local/regional producers and consumers.

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis used to evaluate Maryland's performance in these four areas at the state and individual (metropolitan) county levels. The quantitative and/or qualitative results of each set of indicators are presented, along with a narrative analysis. Larger conclusions drawn from these results are presented and discussed in the final chapter of this study.

5.1 Land Indicators

Farmland preservation programs usually present just one indicator of success to the public – the total number of acres preserved. The choice is a logical one, but without context, it is not a very meaningful indicator of success. At the most basic level, counting the total number of farmland acres preserved without indicating the total

farmland base currently in a jurisdiction is at best opaque and at worst misleading. In terms of using land indicators as evaluators of farmland preservation program success, scale matters. At the county level, total acres preserved can be a meaningful indicator of one primary goal of farmland preservation programs – securing an adequate land base for productive agricultural activity. Since counties are often the government entities with the most control over land use in the United States, understanding the drivers behind farmland loss at this level is important when scaled up. Even so, this indicator, as raw data, ultimately fails as a benchmark of preservation goals. So why is it the only one used? It is an easily attainable number, collected by county and state agencies which administer farmland preservation programs. Secondly, it is a number that is almost certain to show improvement. Given the language in most preservation easement agreements, it is unlikely that within the short-term (20 to 30 years) that a county or state would register a loss of farmland acres preserved.

During the interviews conducted with county farmland preservation specialists, they made it clear that program goals extend beyond amassing acres under preservation easements. Other common criteria include conserving prime agricultural lands with Class 1 and Class 2 soils, and creating a large, contiguous area of preserved farmland. The latter goal is focused on creating what planners and agricultural economists refer to as a “critical mass” of farmland. A critical mass of farmland is considered an area large enough to support a viable agricultural economy, which includes farm operations as well as agricultural support and supply businesses.

Daniels & Bowers (1997:109) determined that a critical mass of farmland in a single county is 75,000 acres and a production threshold valued at \$40 million a year.

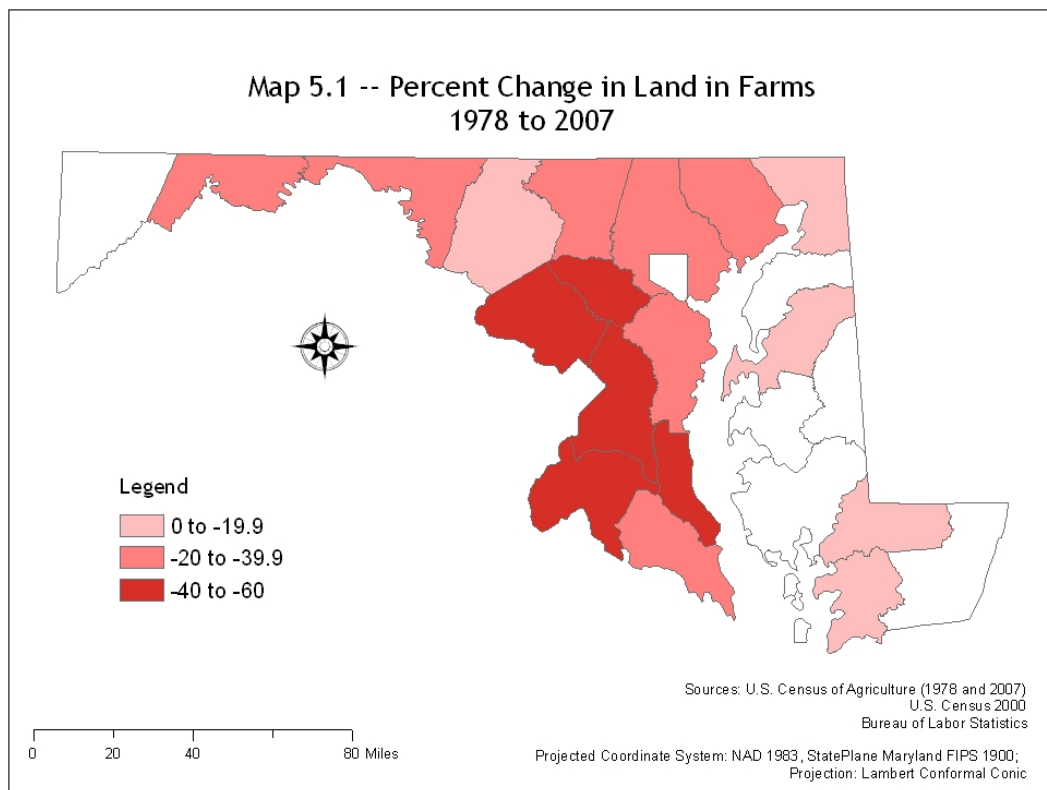
Lynch & Carpenter (2003:123), using a random effects econometric model to determine critical mass at the county-level in six Mid-Atlantic states, find that counties with fewer than the threshold of 189,240 acres of harvested cropland (a subset of “land in farms”) experienced greater rates of farmland loss. Interestingly, they note that only seven of the 269 counties studied ever had more than this number of harvested cropland acres during the study’s time period (1949 to 1997).

Even if there is no set number of acres that represents a critical mass of farmland across counties with differing physical characteristics and development patterns, this data lends credibility to the “impermanence syndrome” concept. The impermanence syndrome is the belief that farmers engage in disinvestment in either new technologies or machine maintenance, or in keeping productive land idle, while waiting to be bought out by developers (Gardner 1994:102). Another aspect of the impermanence syndrome is that, more important than a critical land mass, there is a critical threshold of farmers needed to keep agricultural supply and support businesses in operation. The loss of these businesses drives up farm operating costs. Dipping below a critical mass of farmers also send the signal to remaining farmers that agriculture as a way of life is potentially doomed. Adjacent farmers begin to disinvest; for every acre of farmland converted to urban use, they allow yields to drop on three acres (Daniels & Bowers 1997:73).

Farmland in counties that are part of metropolitan areas are especially prone to conversion to urban land uses. Metropolitan counties are defined as either central or outlying. Central counties, one of which may include the principal city of at least 50,000 residents, must have at least 50% of their populations living in urbanized areas (areas with a population density of at least 1,000 per square mile). Outlying counties are

defined in term of their economic connections with these central counties; at least 25% of a county's employed residents must work in the metropolitan area's central counties or at least 25% of the job in the outlying county must be held by residents commuting from these central counties (OMB 2000).

As can be seen in Map 5.1, all metropolitan counties in Maryland have lost farmland since 1978. The Maryland state tobacco buyout that was negotiated in 1998 and implemented beginning in 2000, helped pushed Southern Maryland into the top region in terms of farmland loss.



Total Farmland Acres Preserved as a Percentage of Total Farmland -- Indicator 1

The total number of farmland acres preserved as a percentage of remaining farmland (Table 5.1) indicates the county's ability to maintain an agricultural land base in the face of encroaching urbanization and to secure a "critical mass" of farmland, however that may be defined. In Maryland, some counties are close to having all their remaining farmland under preservation easements. For example, in 2007, Montgomery County had protected 68,752 acres of farmland, which is actually greater than the total 67,613 acres of farmland reported in the Census of Agriculture that same year. The different figures are a result of different methods of data collection; Montgomery County uses county tax records while the Census of Agriculture relies on returned census forms and statistical coverage adjustments for missing data (AgSD 2007; NASS 2007b:A5-A9).

Ratio of Farmland Acres Preserved to Farmland Acres Lost (1978-2002) – Indicator 2

Even as farmland acres are being preserved, counties can be losing overall farmland acreage. Therefore, this study uses an indicator that will assess total acres of farmland preserved in relation to total acres lost over time (Table 5.1). This ratio is a stronger benchmark of the overall farmland preservation program success in preventing the conversion of farmland to urban uses. The indicator is already being used in internal documents of MALPF (e.g. in some MALPF county certification reports), but is not being clearly and uniformly reported to interested stakeholders.

Table 5.1 – Land Indicators

	Total Land Acres	Land in Farms 1978	Land in Farms 2007	Change 1978-2007	Land Area in Farmland 2007	Total Acres Preserved 2007	Land in Farms Area Preserved 2007	Per Capita Acres Preserved	Ratio Acres Preserved to Acres Lost 1978-2007
Maryland	6,255,360	2,614,439	2,051,736	-21.5%	32.8%	500,000	24.1%	0.09	1:1.1
Western									
Allegany	272,000	48,129	36,643	-23.9%	13.5%	375	1.0%	0.01	1:30.6
Washington	293,120	151,065	114,065	-24.9%	38.9%	21,000	18.4%	0.14	1:1.8
Central									
Anne Arundel	266,240	47,874	29,244	-38.9%	11.0%	11,600	39.7%	0.02	1:1.6
Baltimore	383,360	113,195	78,282	-30.8%	20.4%	51,694	66.0%	0.07	1:0.7
Carroll	287,360	178,381	141,934	-20.4%	49.4%	45,789	32.3%	0.27	1:0.8
Frederick	424,320	248,910	202,087	-18.8%	47.6%	26,460	13.1%	0.12	1:1.8
Hartford	281,600	116,985	75,166	-35.7%	26.7%	40,503	53.9%	0.17	1:1.0
Howard	161,280	58,075	29,371	-49.4%	18.2%	20,452	70.0%	0.07	1:1.4
Montgomery	317,440	115,316	67,613	-41.4%	21.3%	68,752	102.0%	0.07	1:0.7
Prince George's	310,400	77,808	37,005	-52.4%	11.9%	4,600	12.4%	0.01	1:8.9
Southern									
Calvert	137,600	51,591	26,443	-48.7%	19.2%	25,710	97.2%	0.29	1:1.0
Charles	295,040	89,591	52,147	-41.8%	17.7%	19,644	37.7%	0.14	1:1.9
St. Mary's*	231,040	104,395	68,648	-34.2%	29.7%	14,602	21.3%	0.15	1:2.4
Eastern Shore									
Cecil	222,720	90,437	85,026	-6.0%	38.2%	20,867	24.5%	0.21	1:0.3
Queen Anne's	238,080	173,064	146,927	-15.1%	61.7%	61,219	41.7%	1.31	1:0.4
Somerset	209,280	67,924	60,235	-11.3%	28.8%	4,250	7.9%	0.16	1:1.8
Wicomico	241,280	107,102	92,832	-13.3%	38.5%	6,129	6.6%	0.07	1:2.3

* St. Mary's County is not defined a metropolitan by the White House Office of Management and Budget or the U.S. Census Bureau. I have included the county in the quantitative data analysis because the county is an integral part of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission programs which are the focus of this study's qualitative analysis case study.

There are wide variations in the ratios, with Queen Anne’s County preserving nearly 3.5 times as many acres as it lost in the period 1978 to 2007, while Prince George’s County lost seven times the number of farmland acres than it preserved during the same time period.

Per capita acres preserved, 2007 –Indicator 3

The primary MALPF objective states that land is being preserved for “the continued production of food and fiber for all of Maryland’s citizens.” This statement implies, if not a concern for food security, then at least a desire to have local supplies of food sources available to Maryland residents. How much land is needed to provide this access to food produced in-state? As was previously discussed, there is no clearly defined “critical mass” of farmland in a county below which agriculture is doomed to disappear as a viable economic activity. However, is there a minimum per capita acreage needed to provide food security or adequate production to serve local and regional markets?

It has been estimated that 1.2 acres per capita is the minimum needed to maintain Americans’ current diet, in terms of *caloric availability* (Pimentel & Pimentel 1999). However, the meat-heavy diet that North Americans actually prefer is estimated to require 3.7 acres per capita; the world per capita available arable land is estimated at 0.6 acres (Rees 2004). Based on the Pimentel & Pimentel (1999) threshold of 1.2 acres per capita, only Queen Anne’s County had preserved enough farmland per capita to maintain caloric food security (Table 6.4).

5.2 *People Indicators*

States and counties which have been at the forefront of protecting farmland acres have come to the realization that preserving working agricultural landscapes is dependent on “preserving” farmers. The aging of America’s farmers and the graying of rural communities is clearly supported by quantitative data (Gale 2002). This is a nationwide phenomenon, though there are specific areas where the trend is occurring more rapidly than others. The aging of America’s farmers is largely the result of fewer and fewer new, young people becoming farm operators. The problem with attracting new farmers has two components. Young people who grow up on farms are choosing not to stay in farming. For young people who did not grow up on farms, there is little in our educational system or popular culture which would encourage or prepare them to take up farming.

A few of the land-grant universities have programs which aim to support these two groups of potential young farmers. The Iowa legislature, for example, established the Beginning Farmer Center in 1994 through the Iowa State University Extension (BFC 2008). The law passed was called a “Magna Carta” for a new generation of farmers (Looker 1996:55). The Center runs a program called “Farm-On,” which links young farmers seeking land with older farmers seeking to retire and who have no heirs willing to take over the farming business. Other states have created similar programs and a consortium of state programs in the Northeast (the six New England states and New York) have established the New England Land Link, administered by the non-profit New England Small Farm Institute in western Massachusetts (NESFI 2009). Iowa State

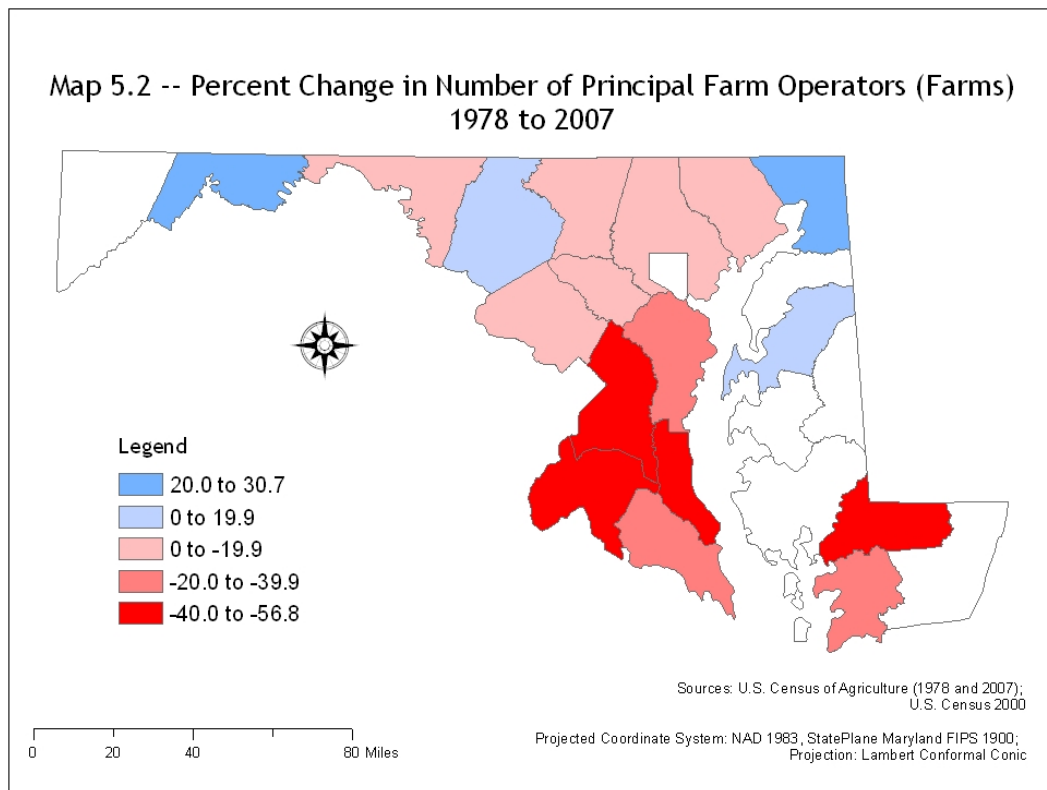
University is also home to the National Farm Transition Network, a coalition of the twenty states with farmer linkage programs (NFTN 2009).

Though the state of Maryland is a national leader in farmland preservation, it has only just begun linking preservation policy with “growing” new farmers. The 2006 Statewide Agricultural Plan sets out six recommendations under “farm transition,” including establishing a “Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Fund” and creating a Center for Beginning Farmers and Enterprise Development at the University of Maryland (MAC 2007). The source of new farmers can be either “home-grown” or recruited from elsewhere. However, there is very limited agricultural education in the state’s public schools systems, very few agricultural programs at Maryland’s community colleges, and limited state or county-supported apprenticeship opportunities.

Percentage Change in the Number of Principal Farm Operators (Farms), [1978-2007]—Indicator 4

Nationally, the number of farms (which in the U.S. Census of Agriculture, corresponds to the number of principal farm operators) has been decreasing since the mid-1930s. The largest drop was in the two decades between 1940 and 1960, during which farm numbers fell by approximately 50%, from over six million in 1940 to 3 million in 1964 (Gale 2002:28). The downward trend in the number of farms moderated in the 1980s and held stable in the 1990s (Hoppe et al. 2007:5).

In Maryland, however, the loss in the number of farmers continued apace during the 1980s and 1990s. Maryland lost 34.9% of its farmers from 1978 to 2007 (Table 5.2). Of Maryland’s 16 metropolitan counties, only four counties (Allegany, Cecil, Frederick, and Queen Anne’s) posted an increase in the number of farmers (Map 5.2).



The five counties that posted losses greater than the state average were Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George’s, and Wicomico. In Calvert and Charles counties, the phase-out of tobacco agriculture coupled with rapid population growth and attendant development pressures explain the losses of 56% and 43%, respectively, of their farmers between 1978 and 2007. Prince George’s County experienced a similar fate, though as a central county in the Washington metro area, urban development was a greater factor than the collapse of tobacco farming. On the Eastern Shore, Wicomico County experienced a 44.8% loss in the number of its farmers even though its loss in farmland was well below the state average. Here, the consolidation of poultry industry put more farmers out of business than encroaching sprawl, though Wicomico County has

seen significant population growth from 1978 to 2007 at 47.4%, from 63,500 to 93,600 (U.S. Census Intercensal Population Estimates). The reasons for these dramatic losses in the number of farmers underscore the need for diverse strategies in supporting the viability of agriculture across the state.

Change in the percentage of principal farm operators under age 35 [1982-2002] — Indicator 5

The inter-generational transfer of farm ownership within a family had decreased significantly. According to Gale (2002:30), the number of new farmers nationwide under the age of 35 decreased by more than half, from 39,300 per annum during the years 1978-1982 to 15,500 per annum during 1992-1997. Gale also reports that the absence of adult children interested in taking over farm operation has led to older farmers delaying retirement, pushing the average age of farm operators even higher.

From 1959 through 1978, the share of principal farm operators who were age 65 or older averaged about 16%. Since 1978, the total share of older farmers increased at a steady rate to 26% by 1997 (Gale 2002: 28). In 2007, farmers 65 years and older represented 29.9 % of principal farm operators in Maryland and 29.7 % in the U.S. as a whole (NASS 2007).

This study includes the young farmer indicator as a way of measuring the survival of farming as a “way of life” in metropolitan counties, a stated goal of some counties’ land preservation programs. However, protecting farmland and maintaining the

Table 5.2 – People Indicators

	Number of Principal Farm Operators 1978	Number of Principal Farm Operators 2007	Change 1978-2007	Under Age 35 1978	Under Age 35 2002	Under Age 35 2007	Average Age 2007	Change in Avg Age (years) 1978-2007
Maryland	18,727	12,834	-31.3%	13.8%	4.8%	4.8%	57.3	+6.3
Western								
Allegany	231	302	+30.7%	7.4%	7.2%	3.3%	56.7	+2.1
Washington	878	844	-3.9%	17.4%	9.2%	9.8%	54.3	+5.0
Central								
Anne Arundel	577	377	-34.7%	12.0%	3.5%	3.3%	59.4	+5.2
Baltimore	898	751	-16.4%	8.9%	2.8%	1.6%	58.8	+6.2
Carroll	1,222	1,148	-6.1%	11.7%	4.7%	3.6%	57.2	+6.1
Frederick	1,402	1,442	+2.9%	12.1%	3.7%	3.1%	57.4	+6.5
Hartford	729	704	-3.4%	10.0%	3.4%	5.0%	57.1	+4.2
Howard	414	335	-19.1%	10.1%	3.2%	2.4%	58.3	+7.5
Montgomery	667	561	-15.9%	13.2%	1.9%	1.8%	60.0	+7.3
Prince George's	752	375	-50.1%	10.9%	2.7%	3.2%	59.6	+6.0
Southern								
Calvert	634	274	-56.8%	13.1%	1.6%	0.7%	58.3	+6.5
Charles	742	418	-43.7%	14.2%	2.4%	6.2%	59.4	+7.7
St. Mary's*	871	621	-28.7%	14.5%	7.3%	11.3%	54.2	+4.1
Eastern Shore								
Cecil	456	583	+27.9%	11.4%	4.7%	9.1%	56.6	+4.5
Queen Anne's	492	521	+5.9%	14.2%	3.4%	4.2%	57.9	+9.0
Somerset	420	329	-21.7%	16.7%	5.6%	1.8%	58.3	+8.7
Wicomico	920	508	-44.8%	14.5%	7.4%	6.7%	55.9	+5.7

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economic viability of peri-urban agriculture need not be dependent on young farmers. In one of the interviews, an agricultural development specialist took issue with the young farmer indicator as a measure of the future health of farming in the region. This individual argued that the most innovative farmers in the area tended to be in their 40s and 50s – far enough from retirement to be interested in trying new crops and techniques and old enough to have the capital to invest in such initiatives. “Change-of-career” farmers, who often enter farming after making significant money in other professions, play a significant role in energizing agriculture in peri-urban areas. This informant noted that these new farmers bring with them a willingness to take risks, attempting innovations, that if successful, become more widely adopted by long-time farmers in an area.

Nonetheless, the challenge of attracting young people in Maryland to either continue in their families’ tradition of farming or to enter farming without this background is difficult, as the data in Table 5.2 suggests. Since 1978, the percentage of principal farm operators under the age of 35 has dropped significantly in many Maryland metropolitan counties, though in seven counties there has been an increase. In four of the seven counties (Cecil, Charles, St. Mary’s, Washington), there are growing Amish and Mennonite communities, in which farming is seen as the preferred occupation for young people.

There are structural issues which make it difficult for young farmers to start out in peri-urban areas. The greatest issue is the cost of land. With limited capital, young farmers who are not intending to inherit the family farm are unable to purchase farmland or compete with developers. To help farmers overcome this financial disadvantage, The

Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) has developed the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program which will help extend credit to young and beginning farmers with the purchase of farmland that, at the same time, will become a preservation easement (MARBIDCO 2008:14). Implementation of the program is currently delayed because of Maryland's state budget crisis.

Average Age of Principal Farm Operator (1978-2007) – Indicator 6

The increasing age of principal farm operators has been a concern of agricultural and rural stakeholders since the 1960s (Gale 2002). With respect to farmland preservation, it is feared that an increasingly aging set of farm operators represents a period in the near future during which there will be a significant turn over in land ownership. In metropolitan counties, this future transfer of land could easily be for urban development. With few new farmers in the pipeline county and state governments will have a difficult time keeping development pressures at bay in these peri-urban areas. For example, more than 70% of Virginia farmland is expected to change hands over the next decade, and a dearth of young farmers increases the chance that these lands will transition out of agriculture (VDACS 2008).

5.3 Production and Profitability Indicators

“Efforts to preserve agricultural land on the urban fringe put little emphasis on making farms more profitable.” -- *Roger Blobaum, former director of Family Farm Defense Fund (1984:55)*

Even before the recent focus on the need to “grow” new farmers and develop the future human resources needed by the agricultural sector, stakeholders knew that maintaining profitability was a key part of the farmland preservation equation. Daniels & Bowers (1997:248) note that the “greatest shortcoming” in farmland preservation efforts is that county and state programs do not “guarantee the financial success” of their agricultural sectors. This profitability depends on creating regulatory and market environments which support working, productive landscapes. Part of the problem is that agricultural policies are not well coordinated between the federal government and state and local levels. The policies of the federal government have focused on increasing agricultural income (because the loss of farmland at the national scale is not viewed as alarming) while state and local governments have focused on land policies (Daniels & Bowers 1997:249). “Traditional” grain and livestock farming requires substantial land to realize a profit, therefore are generally non-competitive in many metropolitan counties where average farm sizes are smaller. However, farms in most metropolitan areas do have one advantage – a growing local market (Blobsaum 1984:55).

Agricultural stakeholders in Maryland list profitability as a major factor in keeping farmers from selling out to developers and in attracting new farmers. Recommendations include research and development on new markets, direct marketing, entrepreneurial approaches toward new products; improved immigration laws to ensure a reliable supply of farm workers who can be afforded a decent standard of living; a campaign to educate citizens on the importance of supporting local agriculture and preserving farmland, as well as better public relations on behalf of farmers; and lowering

the tax burden on Maryland farmers to make them more competitive nationally (MAC 2006:54).

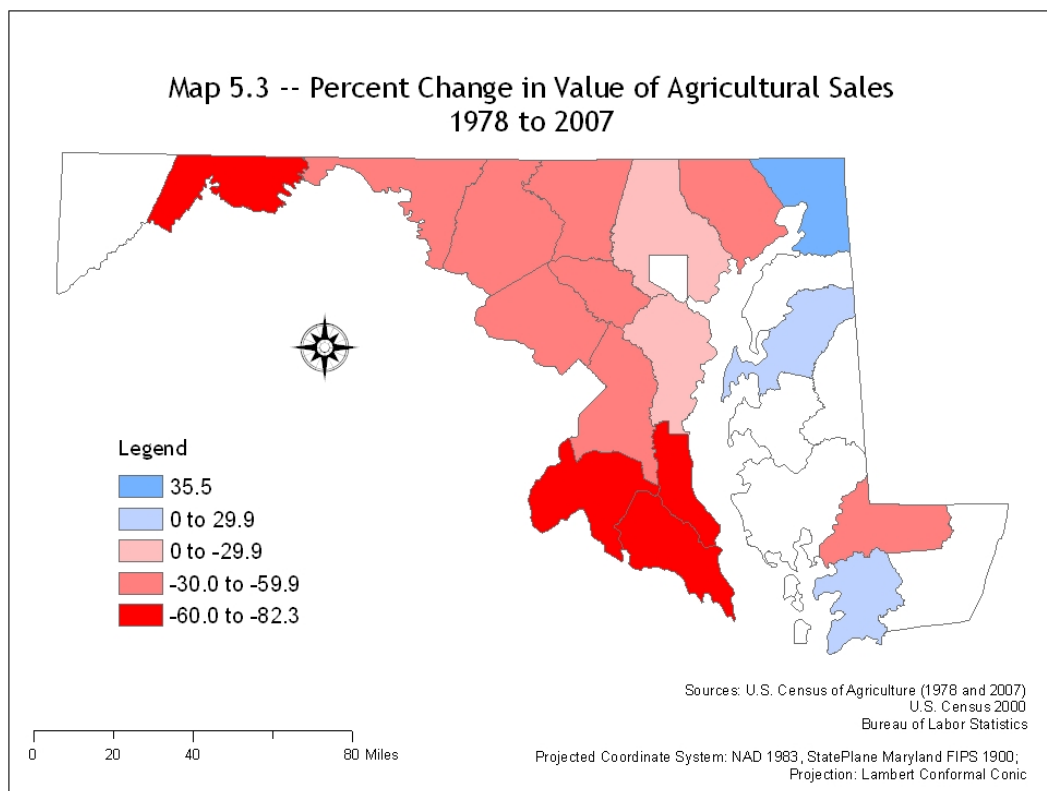
Also, every county in Maryland has a Right-to-Farm law (MDA 2005). Right-to-Farm laws protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits that could restrict production and sales. Such cases are often filed by newcomers to agricultural areas on the urban-rural fringe. Some Maryland counties provide informational brochures to residential newcomers to agricultural districts on the specifics of Right-to-Farm legislation and the potential “side-effects” of working agricultural landscapes, such as noise, odor, dust, and chemical-spray drift. Adelaja and Friedman (1999) provide evidence showing that the general public does not see Right-to-Farm laws as a component of farmland preservation. Indeed, Right-to-Farm laws do not specifically protect the land base, but instead the agricultural activities that maintain the economic viability of the farms. The discovery of this disconnection in the public’s mind points to the difficulty in enacting policies that preserved working agricultural landscapes.

Change in total value of agricultural sales (1978-2007) – Indicator 7

State and county governments in Maryland frequently use the total value of agricultural sales as an indicator by which to measure the health of their agricultural sectors. While the sales figures collected by the Census of Agriculture are in nominal dollars, local governments usually present time series data without adjusting for inflation. This inexplicable reporting standard makes it difficult to understand trends in agricultural activity over time. All of the agricultural sales figures in this study have been adjusted

for inflation using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' consumer price index inflation calculator.

The data on agricultural sales in Maryland since 1978 shows a significant decline, with the state's total dropping 28.4% by 2007 (see Table 5.3). Of the 17 counties included in this study, three counties on the Eastern Shore (Cecil, Queen Anne's, and Somerset) saw their sales figures increase over the same time period.



Cecil County can attribute much of its 35.5% increase to the growth of the poultry and equine industry in the county. In 1978, grains, dairy, and pigs generated the most sales in Cecil. By 2007, the sales profile had shifted to poultry, nursery, and grains, with horses making up between 7 to 10% of total agricultural sales (Census 1978; NASS 2007). As a

Table 5.3 – Production and Profitability Indicators

	Value of Agricultural Sales 1978 (in 2007 dollars)	Value of Agricultural Sales 2007	Change in Value 1978 -2007	Ag Sales per Acre of Farmedland 2007	Change in Value 1978 -2007	Diversification # of NAIC sectors > 5% of ag. sales 2007	Change NAIC sectors > 5% of ag. sales 1978 -2007
Maryland	\$2,56 bln	\$1,84 bln	-28.4%	\$894	-8.8%	6	-1
Western							
Allegany	\$8.9 mln	\$3.2 mln	-64.6%	\$86	-53.6%	3	-4
Washington	\$130.8 mln	\$83.7 mln	-36.0%	\$734	-15.3%	7	+3
Central							
Anne Arundel	\$26.6 mln	\$19.1 mln	-28.3%	\$653	+17.4%	7	+1
Baltimore	\$94.4 mln	\$68.4 mln	-27.5%	\$874	+4.8%	8	0
Carroll	\$136.8 mln	\$87.4 mln	-36.1%	\$616	-19.7%	6	+2
Frederick	\$229.9 mln	\$127.0 mln	-44.7%	\$629	-31.9%	6	+1
Harford	\$80.4 mln	\$42.9 mln	-46.7%	\$570	-17.0%	5	-1
Howard	\$54.7 mln	\$22.7 mln	-58.6%	\$772	-18.0%	7	0
Montgomery	\$70.7 mln	\$33.2 mln	-53.0%	\$491	-19.9%	7	+1
Prince George's	\$42.4 mln	\$18.6 mln	-56.1%	\$503	-7.7%	6	+1
Southern							
Calvert	\$22.9 mln	\$4.1 mln	-82.3%	\$153	-65.5%	6	+4
Charles	\$35.1 mln	\$8.9 mln	-74.7%	\$171	-56.5%	5	+1
St. Mary's*	\$55.0 mln	\$15.9 mln	-71.0%	\$232	-55.9%	6	+3
Eastern Shore							
Cecil	\$70.7 mln	\$95.8 mln	+35.5%	\$1,127	+44.1%	6	0
Queen Anne's	\$106.2 mln	\$113.3 mln	+6.7%	\$771	+25.7%	5	+2
Somerset	\$169.9 mln	\$192.6 mln	+13.3%	\$3,196	+27.8%	4	+1
Wicomico	\$343.8 mln	\$197.8 mln	-42.5%	\$2,131	-33.6%	5	+3

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region, Southern Maryland saw the greatest drop in the value of agricultural sales. Each of the three counties had 2007 sales figures which were over 70% less than 1978 sales. This precipitous drop was the result of the state's tobacco buyout program which began in 2000. Since the 2002 Census of Agriculture, however, 13 of the 17 counties saw increases in their agricultural sales. In many cases, this was a result of the near record high prices for corn in 2007 (Leibtag 2008).

The data in Table 5.3 indicates that counties successful in preserving farmland acres have not necessarily protected agricultural sales. The four counties that have preserved more than half of their remaining farmland (Baltimore, Calvert, Howard, and Montgomery) have not been able to stem the loss of agricultural sales since the beginning of their preservation programs. Baltimore and Montgomery counties have seen the value of agricultural sales fall less than the state figure largely because of the growth of the equine industry in both counties. While the equine industry has also come to dominate the agricultural sales in Howard County since 1978, its growth did not offset the loss of beef cattle, pig, and dairy farms. Calvert, despite preserving 85% of its remaining farmland (the second highest percentage in the state), experienced the worst drop in the value of agricultural sales. The county's cash crop of tobacco has been nearly eliminated due to the state's buyout program, which also explains the dramatic drop in sales in the other four counties participating in the buyout program (Anne Arundel, Charles, Prince George's, St. Mary's).

Value of agricultural sales per acre of farmland (1978-2007) – Indicator 8

As increased development pressure is exerted on peri-urban farms, they will need to see increased sales per acre in order to compete with the rising non-agricultural value of the land. If farm profitability is assumed to be a bulwark against farmland conversion, then an indicator which links sales per acre of farmland is valuable in gauging the ability of the agricultural sector to compete in metropolitan counties.

The counties which show the greatest sales per acre are Somerset and Wicomico on the Eastern Shore, where the broiler (poultry for meat) industry dominates. The industry is consolidating under the control of four large processors (Allen, Mountaire, Perdue, and Tyson), which run confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Somerset and Wicomico counties rank 18th and 24th nationally in broiler production and neighboring Sussex County in Delaware is the country's top-producing county (DPI 2008). The intensive production methods used in CAFOs allow for significant output in a limited area.

Despite their ability to generate profits, it is unlikely that poultry CAFOs will be widely adopted by farmers in metropolitan counties as a solution to falling agricultural sales. CAFOs are controversial because of public concerns over environmental degradation and the ethical treatment of animals. The poultry industry has been identified as a key contributor to water pollution in the Chesapeake Bay and its eastern tributaries. Also, in the November 2008 election, California voters overwhelmingly backed Proposition 2 (the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act), which requires that “calves raised for veal, egg-laying hens and pregnant pigs be confined only in ways that allow these animals to lie down, stand up, fully extend their limbs and turn around freely”

(CA-SOS 2008). This vote in America's top agricultural state is seen as significant cultural shift in the treatment of farm animals. The future expansion of CAFOs into more densely populated peri-urban areas in Maryland is unlikely.

However, the conflict between suburban residents and farms with animal operations poses a serious challenge to agricultural diversification and increased farm sales. Even with Right-to-Farm laws, it will be difficult for farmers not already running animal operations to start up a dairy, poultry, or pig farm. The scale of operation will be hotly contested and even small-scale, organic operations have been met with resistance by non-farming residents (Black 2008).

Diversification (1978-2007) – Indicator 9

In this study, diversification is discussed in two ways – as a strategy for a single farm enterprise and as a policy objective for state and county agricultural economic development authorities. At the individual farm level, diversification can provide a variety of benefits. Crop rotation as a form of farm diversification has long been known to maintain soil fertility and to help break disease and pest cycles. According to the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education organization (SARE), crop diversification can also reduce negative environmental impacts, limit exposure to economic risk, and "exploit profitable niche markets" (SARE 2004, 2).

As noted in Chapter Three, Maryland's colonial agricultural economy was directed toward mono-crop tobacco production for overseas markets. Diversification was by decree, handed down by the colonial government in order to ensure food security. In today's commodity-driven agricultural economy, farmers are often exposed to dramatic

shifts in market prices. These shifts create the boom-bust cycle that has become an all-too-familiar story in national and regional farm economies. States and counties which are too dependent on one or two commodities run the risk of losing out to weather-related catastrophes, shifts in market-demand, or to cheaper competitors in the global food supply chain.

This study measures diversification in agriculture at the county level by using the North American Industry Classification (NAIC) data from the U.S. Census of Agriculture. NAIC ascribes a single code to a farm which earns at least 50% of the value of its sales from a single product or activity (see Chapter 2.5.1 for further explanation). As a measure of diversification, this study determined the number of NAIC sectors making up at least 5% of the value of agricultural sales in 2007 in a given county or state and compares it to the number of SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) sectors with the same minimum level of sales in 1978.*

Despite the fact that the Maryland Department of Agriculture and many of county agricultural economic development agencies promote diversification at the individual farm level as a way to ensure long-term profitability, the data does not show a correlation between increased diversification and an increase in the value of agricultural sales at the county-level. For example, see the results for the four metropolitan counties on the Eastern Shore (Table 5.3). One limitation of the findings is that the classifications are rather broad, making it difficult to gauge the impact of diversifying into specific high-value crops. Also, this indicator only measures diversification in production and ignores

* The ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994 prompted the creation of the NAIC, used by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, replacing the very similar SIC system used by the U.S. prior to NAFTA.

the potentially important role of market diversification in maintaining long-term profitability.

5.4. Commensalism Indicators

The following set of indicators lies at the center of this study's analysis of farmland preservation programs. The discourse of farmland preservation policy in Maryland at the state level, and especially at the county level, has begun to adopt elements of a new vision of agriculture that has developed in American culture over the past thirty years, expressed as new agrarianism. Many of the agricultural economic development programs in Maryland aim to improve the relationships between food producers and food consumers in order to build a profitable agricultural sector that can compete with non-agricultural land uses in the marketplace and in the hearts and minds of taxpayer and elected officials. During the interviews with county agricultural land and agricultural economic development specialists, the latter commented on the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of their programs with regard to strengthening producer-consumer connections.

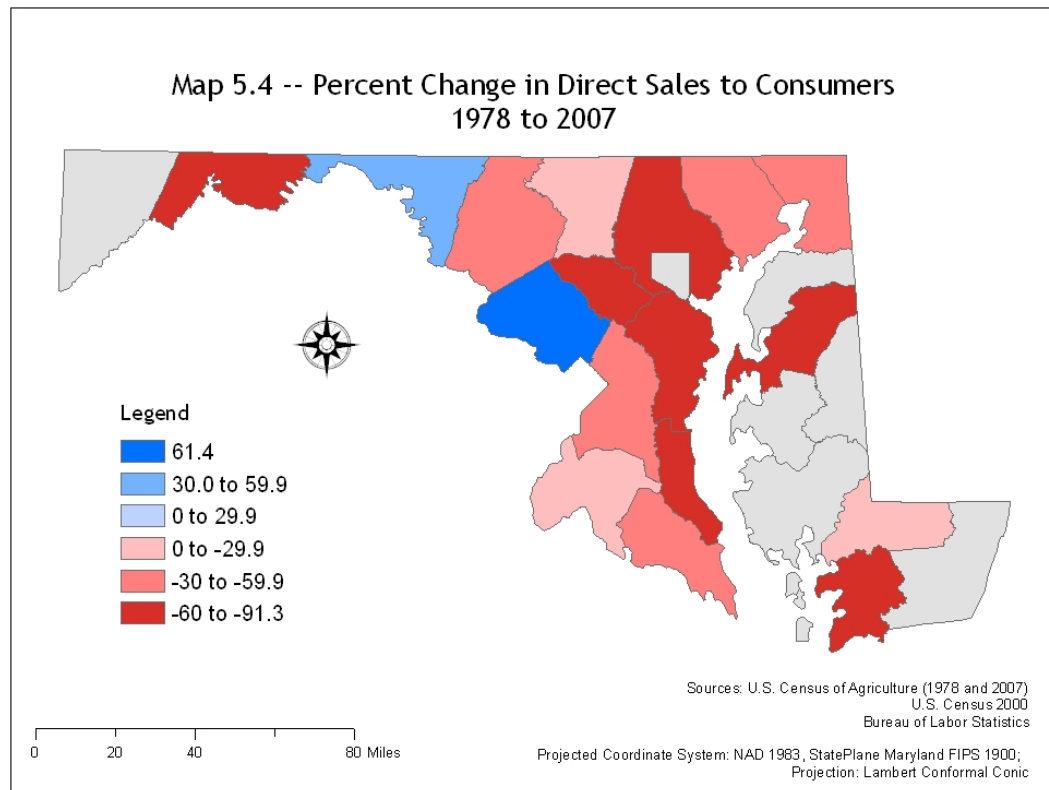
Per capita direct sales to consumers (1978-2007) – Indicator 10

‘Maryland has seven million consumers yet agriculture only gets 5% of the food dollars. How do farmers get closer to 100%?’ – *Participant, Washington County listening session, 3 August 2005 (MAC 2006:72)*

The concern expressed above lies at the heart of commensalism's potential in supporting a vibrant agricultural economy. So how to answer the Washington County

farmer's desire to capture a greater share of the food dollars spent by relatively affluent Marylanders? An agricultural development organization on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Chesapeake Fields Institute, has provided this answer to its stakeholders – “sell food, not feed” (CFI 2003:7) This is a strategy based on commensalism. Instead of growing commodities for the abstract market, grow and produce food for consumers. The likely consequence of producing food for consumers in metropolitan counties is higher food prices. However food expenditures in the United States in 2007, as a percentage of household income are at all-time lows at 9.8% of national disposable income (ERS 2008), a figure lower than that of any other industrialized nation. This figure includes meals eaten away from the home.

In 2007 there were 5,618,344 Marylanders according to U.S. Census Population Estimates. In 2007, the per capita yearly food expenditure was \$3,778, which includes meals at home and meals out (ERS 2008). In that same year, the value of direct sales to consumers for human consumption per capita in Maryland was \$3.78, up from \$2.31 in 2002 (NASS 2007). This amount represents 0.1% of the per capita U.S. food expenditure in 2007. If direct sales from farmers to consumers *actually* represented 5% of per capita food expenditures, total direct sales in Maryland in 2007 would have been \$1.06 billion rather than the actual \$21.22 million (NASS 2007). This extra \$1.04 billion would have increased the entire value of agricultural sales in the state of Maryland by 57%. A small shift in consumer food spending toward local producers could have significant impact on Maryland's agricultural revenues.



Unfortunately, the trend over the past three decades has been a decrease in the value of direct sales per capita in Maryland (Table 5.4). Only Washington and Montgomery counties have recorded an increase in per capita direct sales between 1978 and 2007 (Census 1978; NASS 2007). In 2007, Washington County showed the highest per capita direct sales at \$18.45, but even this figure represented less than 0.5% of per capita food expenditures in that year.

Table 5.4 – Commensalism Indicators

	Per Capita Direct Sales to Consumers 1978 (in 2007 dollars)	Per Capita Direct Sales to Consumers 2007	Change 1978-2007	Farmers Markets 2008	CSAs 2008	Markets & CSAs per 10,000 pop 2008
Maryland	\$5.87	\$3.78	-35.79%	90	20	0.20
Western						
Allegany	\$5.90	\$0.61	-89.79%	3	3	0.83
Washington	\$12.75	\$18.45	+44.79%	2	0	0.14
Central						
Anne Arundel	\$5.02	\$1.36	-72.89%	7	1	0.16
Baltimore	\$6.97	\$1.76	-74.79%	7	3	0.13
Carroll	\$11.11	\$9.22	-16.99%	4	3	0.41
Fredrick	\$26.63	\$11.40	-57.29%	9	3	0.53
Harford	\$6.98	\$4.88	-30.19%	4	1	0.21
Howard	\$10.48	\$0.91	-91.39%	3	2	0.18
Montgomery	\$2.11	\$3.40	+61.49%	12	6	0.19
Prince George's	\$1.81	\$0.98	-46.59%	10	5	0.18
Southern						
Calvert	\$8.42	\$2.71	-67.89%	2	0	0.23
Charles	\$3.39	\$2.48	-26.79%	2	2	0.28
St. Mary's*	\$13.25	\$7.08	-46.59%	2	2	0.40
Eastern Shore						
Cecil	\$22.66	\$12.68	-44.19%	2	4	0.60
Queen Anne's	\$33.13	\$7.75	-76.69%	1	1	0.43
Somerset	\$8.87	\$1.04	-88.39%	1	0	0.38
Wicomico	\$6.41	\$6.35	-1.09%	2	2	0.43

* St. Mary's County is not defined as metropolitan by the White House Office of Management and Budget or the U.S. Census Bureau. I have included the county in the quantitative data analysis because the county is an integral part of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission programs which are the focus of this study's qualitative analysis case study.

Buy Local Campaigns (2007) -- Indicator 11

One way that state and county governments have sought to increase direct sales to consumers is by establishing “buy local” campaigns supported by a local labeling program. Local product labels provide information to consumers, a key step in reducing marketplace alienation between producers and consumers. Buying local can be viewed as part of a larger phenomenon of “green” or ethical consumption, where the burden of making the “right choices” in the market economy falls on the individual consumer rather than the producers. Making the right choices requires information in a marketplace that often does its best to obscure the history of a product.

Barnett et al. (2005:24) explain how *place* and *space* are understood differently in the practice of ethical consumption. Place is “the location of clear-cut ethical commitments, while space serves as shorthand for abstract, alienated relations.” The local food movement is focused on rescaling our food systems to operate in a place rather than across space. The movement subscribes to the belief that “space hides consequences.” Buying local “reconnect[s] the separated moments of production, distribution, and consumption is meant to restore to view a previously hidden chain of commitments and responsibilities” (Barnett et al. 2005:24).

Green/ethical food consumers, in addition to price, are interested in information on process and provenance. Local product labeling satisfies the provenance question, though in Maryland there is no mandated definition of local. In Vermont, by contrast, state law requires that food labeled as local must come from within a 30-mile radius of the point-of-sale (9 V.S.A. § 245).

Consumers might expect that upon visiting their local farmers' market that they are being sold locally-produced food by local farmers. Only in farmers' markets that advertise as "producers-only" are consumers certain they are buying food from a local farm and not produce purchased from regional wholesalers where the origin is obscured. At Washington D.C.'s Dupont Circle producers-only farmers' market (one of several in the area operated by the non-profit FRESHFARM Markets), some vendors are located more than a 100-mile drive away. In relation to the average food miles traveled by most food in the U.S. today, this distance can be seen as local, but is more than three times the distance allowed by Vermont labeling laws. The Whole Foods Market grocery chain, which specializes in all-natural and organic products, states that products that are trucked in from over seven hours away cannot be labeled "local" (Whole Foods 2008). This criterion still means "local" products could come from over 350 miles away from the point-of-sale.

With local provenance commanding a greater premium in the food market place, local labeling allows farmers to accentuate their proximity. As a frequent shopper in Washington D.C. areas farmers market, I have seen a limited use of such labels. Some vendors from Southern Maryland use the regional SMADC-designed



"SoMD, So Good" label. Maryland's Department of Agriculture has a similar labeling program for in-state products known as "Maryland's Best" (seen here). Some vendors use the Virginia Grown label which was created by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer services. Some individual Maryland counties also have

labeling programs such as Carroll (“Homegrown”), Frederick (“Homegrown Here”), Garrett (“Buy Fresh, Buy Local, Live Well”), Howard (“Local Farms, Healthy Communities”), and Montgomery (“The Pride of Montgomery County”).

In Southern Maryland, SMADC established its own version of the “Eat Local Challenge,” a program that started by “locavores” in the San Francisco Bay area and which blossomed through the internet. SMADC’s “Buy Local Challenge” asks participants to eat one item every day during the last week in July which comes from a local farm. Since its first Buy Local Challenge in Southern Maryland in 2007, the program was taken up by other county economic development agencies in Maryland in 2008.

Density of Farmers Markets & CSAs (2008) – Indicator 12

If the goal of commensalism is to reduce alienation between farmers and food consumers, then measuring the density of contact points between the two groups can indicate how strong the commensal network is in a given county. In this study, I use farmers’ markets and CSAs (community supported agriculture operations) as the sites where farmers and their consumers might meet face-to-face, where questions can be asked and answers given. As crucial nodes in building a “geography of regard” (Sage 2003), farmers’ markets and CSAs also (re-)acquaint consumers to the seasonality of produce, and encourage individual households to rethink their menu-planning to accommodate what were traditional rhythms in our diets. Learning to eat seasonally and to preserve the excess bounty of a given crop at its peak harvest, new agrarians argue, reduces the ecological footprints of our diets. CSA members often complain of

monotony with their weekly shares during the height of summer (i.e too much squash and too many tomatoes for too many weeks) (Sedgwick 2008). Yet, ironically, the diet of the global supermarket, with its lack of seasonality, allows people to eat the same, often narrow range of foods year-round.

In this study, I combine the number of farmers' markets and CSAs in a given county and per 10,000 people to arrive at a density of commensal nodes in the local food system (see Table 6.4). Community food security organizations, which emphasize access to local food and food self-sufficiency factor in community gardens in their evaluations. They are also concerned with a temporal question -- how many days a year are farmers' markets in operation? In my analysis, community gardens are not enhancing the commensal relationship between producer and consumer because the consumer *is* the producer. I leave out the temporal factor mostly for computational ease.

One more caveat in using this indicator is that the vendors of a farmers' market in a particular county do not necessarily farm in that county. In fact, in city centers and inner metropolitan counties, the majority of vendors are from other jurisdictions. For example, in Montgomery County, Maryland, in-county producers represented less than 10% of the vendors at six of the thirteen farmers markets for which vendors lists were available (AgSD 2009). Likewise, CSA members often do not reside in the county where the farm is located and are more likely to live in central cities and inner metropolitan counties where space for home gardens is non-existent and there are waiting lists for community garden plots. Nonetheless, these commensal sites are open to both in-county producers and consumers and are a measure of how likely it is for an intra-region (if not local) commensal connection to be made.

The data shows that there is a link between county population size and the intensity of commensal sites. The five most populous counties all have fewer than 0.20 sites per 10,000 persons. The five least populous counties average 0.46 sites per 10,000 persons (and the middle seven counties in terms of population average 0.37 sites per 10,000). Perceived inconvenience is a common consumer reason for not shopping at farmers' markets and other direct marketing sites (CFI 2004; Wolf et al. 2005). The populous inner metropolitan counties have fewer per capita commensal sites, making direct links between producers and consumers more difficult and less convenient.

Agritourism Programs (2008) – Indicator 13

Agritourism is a strategy to boost farm incomes and thereby preserve working farms. There are many different conceptions of agritourism in the field. The Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development* (2004:3) office defines three major types of farm-based experiences which are often grouped together under the single term *agritourism*.

- Agritourism - Inviting the public onto a farm or ranch to participate in various activities and enjoy an agricultural experience. Agritourism enterprises include bed and breakfasts, for-fee fishing or hunting, pick-your-own fruits/ vegetables, corn mazes, farm markets, and much more.
- Agritainment - Providing the public with fun on-farm or on-ranch activities. Such activities include haunted houses, mazes, miniature golf, horseback riding, hayrides, and the like.
- Agrieducation - Formal and informal education about agriculture through signage, tours, hands-on classes, seminars, and other methods.

* Resource Conservation and Development offices are non-profit organizations operating under the auspices of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

One USDA study showed that income from agritourism were greater in counties that were more densely populated and where the recreational economy was already strong (Brown & Reeder 2007). The same study found that the only statistically significant factor in individual farm income from agritourism was net worth (wealthier farms earned more agritourism dollars). Agritourism is not without its detractors in the agricultural community, who do not wish to see farms become theme-parks.

This study uses county websites, specifically tourism (in some counties Convention & Tourism Bureau) and economic development websites in order to assess the level of agritourism development in a county (see Table 6.5). Many counties have their agritourism information posted on local economic development department websites, unlikely the first web destination for someone planning a farm day-trip or weekend get-away “in the country.”

Maryland’s most developed agritourism program is called “Southern Maryland Trails: Earth, Art, Imagination” (www.somdtrails.com) and is a project of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC). There are four trails in the program, each focusing on an individual county in SMADC’s service area -- “The Heron’s Flight” (Charles), “Barnwood and Beach Glass Loop” (St. Mary’s), “Fossils and Farmscapes Ramble” (Calvert), and “Turnbuckle Hop” (southern Prince George’s and southern Anne Arundel). Despite the unique coverage that each county in the region receives in this program, individual county tourism websites do not advertise their Southern Maryland trail. This failure to highlight these trails is certainly a missed opportunity. The Southern Maryland Trails program is by far the most sophisticated of Maryland’s agritourism programs. Its glossy, full-color and engaging guidebook is 136

pages long, providing maps, historical and cultural background, and detailed information about 164 separate sites in the region. The guidebook is fully-accessible on the internet, with separate files for each trail.

Table 5.5 – Agritourism Programs in Maryland

	Agritourism Program	Description
Maryland	Weak	Agritourism opportunities are highlighted not on the state tourism website, but the Dept. of Agriculture website, under “Maryland products”
Western		
Allegany	None	
Washington	None	
Central		
Anne Arundel	Weak	Farmers’ market brochure on Economic Development website; no section on Convention & Visitors Bureau website
Baltimore	None	
Carroll	Weak	County tourism website lists some farm & winery destinations, but through site search, not dedicated section
Frederick	Some	Virtual Farmers’ Market website is a guide to local products; County homepage has link to “Family Festival at the Farm”; County tourism website has farms and wineries listed under “attractions” and “shopping”; no dedicated agritourism section
Harford	Yes	Tourism website lists “farms, wineries and gardens” under “Attractions.” Link to “Harford County Electronic Farm,” a guide to local farm products.
Howard	Yes	Tourism website list farms under “What to See & Do.” Has agritourism “virtual tour” video. However, site descriptions are found at the Howard Economic Development Authority website
Montgomery	Some	“Farm Tour & Harvest Sale” found on the Ag Services page of Economic Development website
Prince George’s	Some	Participates in SMADC agritourism however no link from county websites to this regional program
Southern		All 3 Southern Maryland counties participate in the SMADC agritourism program (“Southern Maryland Trails”)

Calvert	Yes	No link on County tourism or economic development site to SMADC; farmers' market and winery listings; link to county Farm Tour
Charles	Yes	No link to SMADC program
St. Mary's	Yes	County tourism brochures (farmers' markets, Amish crafts & products); economic development website linked to SMADC marketing site
Eastern Shore		
Cecil	Yes	Two brochures available by request, not online (Upper Shore Harvest Directory and Down on the Farm: A Tourism Guide to Agricultural Attractions and Events)
Queen Anne's	Some	Upper Shore Harvest Directory available online; Economic development website has link to Delmarva Chicken Festival and QA Farms & Services Directory
Somerset	None	
Wicomico	Weak	Convention & Tourism Bureau website mentions Wine Festival featuring local wineries; no other agriculture-specific sections

Agricultural Education Programs – Indicator 14

In interviews with county agricultural land and agricultural economic development specialists, all were asked about the availability of educational opportunities in agriculture in the county. The responses showed that interviewees interpreted the question to be asking about opportunities for current farmers to learn new business or marketing skills or to adopt new crops. Overall, the responses were that while opportunities did exist, there were not enough and that extension staff were stretched too thin and under-resourced. Opinions about extension local offices were mixed in terms of their effectiveness, but the overall mission and support of the University of Maryland's College of Agriculture was almost unanimously seen as out of touch with the current needs of the states farmers, especially those facing pressure from development. The perception was even more apparent in the listening sessions that informed the 2006

Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management. As one participant in the Wicomico County session put it, “Educators at the University of Maryland need to be educated” (MAC 2006:88).

Follow-up questions about agricultural education focused on the public school curriculum. Some county officials were not certain as to the status of training or education in high schools for students who might be interested in agriculture as a career. The status or health of groups such as Future Farmers of America or the 4-H Club were hazy. All respondents were aware of Maryland’s “ag tag,” the vehicle license plate program, “Our Farms, Our Future” which was introduced in 2001. Revenues generated from this program supports the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation. A few of the respondents were knowledgeable about MAEF’s “Ag in the Classroom” curriculum or its mobile science labs.

Another follow-up question was asked – “If a student in high school were interested in farming and agriculture as a career, what resources are available to support and prepare such a student?” Other than referring to the existence of Future Farmers of America or the 4-H Club, respondents were at a loss. A few respondents expressed disappointment that community colleges in Maryland do not provide agricultural programs and that the University of Maryland’s agricultural programs were designed to create agricultural scientists and economists, not farmers. Two respondents said they knew of students interested in sustainable or small-scale farming leaving the state for agricultural training and education.

From these interviews, it is clear that agricultural education is not a priority in the farmland preservation and agricultural economic development programs in Maryland’s

counties. As an indicator of commensalism, the minimal amount of agricultural education taking place in Maryland's K-12 classrooms does not provide the foundation for a greater understanding of the relationship between food consumers and producers. This lack of agricultural education with respect to the economics, environmental impacts, ethics, and cultural meaning of our food systems continues into the higher education curriculum. Participants in the state's agricultural plan listening sessions expressed concerns about the lack of public education as to nature and importance of agricultural activity in the state. They suggested a better public relations campaign to be spearheaded by the Maryland Department of Agriculture. Participants also called for more non-farm children to be introduced to agriculture through farm visits, for more vocational agricultural programs in high schools, and for a return to agricultural education at the University of Maryland (MAC 2006:54-107).

5.5 Findings from the Interviews (June through September 2008)

The evaluation metric raises questions about the efficacy of farmland preservation and agricultural economic development programs in protecting current farms and supporting new ventures. This study itself raised some questions during semi-structured, open-ended interviews conducted with county agricultural land specialists and agricultural economic development specialists (for questions asked, see Appendix A). The format and small sample (eight interviews) do not lend themselves to quantitative analysis. Instead, common themes will be presented in this section.

Most informants stated that a primary goal of their programs was to protect as much farmland as possible, with some emphasizing the preference for large contiguous

blocks of Class I and Class II soils. Two of the counties recognized that since the beginning of their county programs, there had been a shift in emphasis from preserving working landscapes to preserving open space. One informant was candid and said that preserving open space was the goal of the county program, whether or not the land was kept in active production. One informant expressed the goal of preserving landscapes. Supporting “the agricultural industry” in the state was mentioned as a key goal among the interviewees as well.

When asked how important food production goals were in the county farmland preservation program, three counties explained that land planners worked closely with the agricultural economic development offices. The close coordination was apparent in their literature (often jointly-produced) and by the fact that agricultural economic development staff joined the interview even though the initial request was made to planning departments. Respondents in two counties made it clear that food production and increased farm sales were important, but that such matters were handled by the economic development offices. It came across that there was little coordination between the two. One informant noted that while food production was important, “If all the farmland in the county were to disappear tomorrow, local people wouldn’t starve. They would get their *commodities* [emphasis mine] from elsewhere.”

There was a split among informants as to who they saw as the primary stakeholders in terms of their county’s farmland preservation program. While all mentioned that landowners were the primary stakeholders in these programs, only half of the informants clearly stated that everyone in the county was a stakeholder when it came

to farmland preservation. Needless to say, they were also the counties in which the discourse of commensalism and new agrarianism was strongest in print media.

Local conditions and development pressures dictated whether counties saw particular preservation mechanisms as effective. Some felt PDRs and TDRs were the most successful parts of their programs; others felt they were unsuccessful. Similar differences appeared in the evaluation of down-zoning effectiveness.

What was most telling in the interviews were the differences in style and passion for the issues. All respondents were professional, but two approached farmland preservation primarily as a “planning problem,” something that could be addressed by zoning and smarter land-use planning and state funds for PDRs. Two other respondents were very passionate about their work and understood both the land-use and the economic development aspects of farmland preservation. One respondent was a farmer, who approached the problem in his/her county with a personal interest, but lacked a new vision of peri-urban agriculture. Respondents from the remaining three counties had holistic visions of the future of agriculture in their counties – dependent on land, economic viability, and a cultural shift in the community’s understanding of agriculture, food, and economy. What is unclear is how these differences in the personalities and perspectives of planning department staff impacts policy implementation in a particular county. What happens when someone picks up the phone with an idea to try something new and calls the county government? Depending on the county and who answers the phone, one imagines the conversation and the realm of the possible could differ significantly from one place to another.

5.6 Discussion

This chapter has presented fourteen indicators divided into four categories as a more comprehensive way to evaluate the success of farmland preservation programs in Maryland's metropolitan counties. It is not the design of this study to develop a ranking system; quantitative data alone cannot establish that one county is better off than another or that another county's program is overall less effective than another. While there are many similarities in program goals across the counties, the challenges facing individual counties are often unique. The counties themselves also vary greatly in population, relative location, economic history, and agricultural activity.

It is best to interpret this evaluation metric as a tool to uncover new relationships between land use, economic behavior, and agricultural sector policies. The metric presents trends over time. It allows for agricultural stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of three decades of farmland preservation programs in their county by showing the changes in indicators which act as proxies for program goals – more preserved farmland, the continuation of farming as a way of life, greater farm profitability, and greater connections between local producers and consumers. Broad comparisons are limited. Montgomery County may compare its indicators with Prince George's and Baltimore counties, and Frederick and Washington counties have enough similarities, as do the counties of Southern Maryland, to permit comparisons between them.

Mostly, county stakeholders, when viewing the quantitative results of the evaluation metric, will be comparing outcomes to desired goals within their county.

After three decades of preservation programs that have served as national models for protecting farmland acres, how will Montgomery County address the fact that during the same time period its number of farmers under age 35 dropped from 13% to just under 2%? Or that despite diversifying its agricultural sector since 1978, Carroll County's per acre value of agricultural sales has dropped 20%? How will Calvert County address the fact that despite having preserved over 85% of its remaining farmland, it has also lost 57% of its farmers since 1978? And how does Howard County reconcile its robust programs in farmland preservation and agricultural economic development with the fact that, adjusted for inflation, the value of agricultural sales in the county has dropped 59% over the last three decades?

Numbers are rarely the answer in public policy, but they often encourage stakeholders to ask new questions and to reconsider the status quo. The data in this evaluation metric is designed to provoke such questions. How does the data help gauge the progress toward MALPF's statutory objective "to preserve productive farmland and woodland for the continued production of food and fiber for all of Maryland's citizens?" The data in these indicators show that the three counties of Southern Maryland (Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's) have experienced some of the greatest downward trends in the terms of human resources and farm profitability. These trends are in large part a response to the state's tobacco buy-out program. As a strategy to maintain its working agricultural landscapes, the region has adopted the discourse of commensalism to a greater extent than any other part of Maryland's agricultural community. The next chapter presents a case study of this effort in Southern Maryland.

Chapter 6: Case Study – Planting a Commensal Landscape in Post-Tobacco Southern Maryland

Nowhere in Maryland has government adopted the discourse of new agrarianism and a vision of commensalism more enthusiastically than in Southern Maryland. This development is an unlikely occurrence since the region's political culture has generally been conservative and the area has lacked a history of countercultural social groups and institutions that have served as incubators to local food systems in regions such as the Pioneer Valley in Massachusetts, Vermont, or the San Francisco Bay Area. The region is going through a profound transition in its agricultural sector as a result of the state's implementation of a tobacco buyout program. The sweeping effect of the buyout has opened up the opportunity for new approaches to take root.

Today, few countries hold on to policies of food self-sufficiency or even self-reliance. National agricultural policies operate in an environment of global trade and interdependence. In today's commodity-driven, agribusiness model, rapid shifts in government policy or consumer command can quickly alter the commercial farm landscape. For example, the U.S. Congress passed the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, which supported the development of biofuels with public funds and by mandating an increase in biofuels production to 36 billion gallons by 2022. The mandated production increase from 2007 to 2008 was from 4.7 billion gallons to 9.0 billion gallons, a 91% increase (GPO 2007). This policy resulted in a record amount of acreage planted in corn in 2007, up 20% or over 15 million more acres from 2006. Just as quickly, when market conditions and weather changed, the landscape can change. The

2007 corn boom in the U.S. became a partial bust in 2008, when corn supply for biofuels overreached the country's refining capacity (Birger 2008).

In some instances, government interventions into agricultural markets can have profound and lasting effects on an agricultural landscape. A series of U.S. federal and state government tobacco policies have uprooted a large portion of the country's historic tobacco-producing landscapes. Federal and state governments went from subsidizing tobacco production to paying farmers to transition out of tobacco agriculture. The catalyst for this reversal was the multi-state suit against the tobacco companies, the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (also known as the MSA) worth \$206 billion. The suit was filed by states seeking to recoup health costs from tobacco companies who were found guilty of false advertising and hiding medical studies showing the highly addictive nature of their products (Geyelin 1998).

For historic tobacco growing regions, the MSA had a sudden and profound effect. Hundreds of years of commodity production and agricultural heritage not only lost government subsidies, but was actively being uprooted. Entire sections of the Southeastern U.S. were being paid by their state governments to stop producing tobacco. Money was set aside to help tobacco farmers transition to new agricultural activities. Kentucky set aside half of its MSA payment to help develop agricultural alternatives (Plath 2004). Similar efforts are underway in North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland.

As a case study, Southern Maryland offers an opportunity to understand the cultural and economic role that new agrarian policies have in post-tobacco areas. Some other post-tobacco transition programs have also adopted a new agrarian and commensal policy approach. However, nowhere are the stakes higher in terms of saving the future of

the local agricultural landscape and economy than in Southern Maryland. Not only has the region's agricultural cash crop nearly vanished, but this major gamble in the agricultural economy is taking place at a time when farmers demographics and the pressures of rapid suburban expansion undermine efforts to preserve farmland and develop alternatives to tobacco.

On the surface, Southern Maryland may seem an unusual region for the development of a commensal landscape. Its agricultural economy, stretching back nearly 400 years, has always been directed toward non-local markets. The military is the largest employer in the region and post-WWII economic development has focused on the bringing national commercial chains and corporations into the region. The region shares a food culture with the rest of the Chesapeake area, but until very recently, has not been home to the hallmarks of the "food counterculture." There are no food cooperatives and just one natural foods store. The growth of organic farming, farmers markets, and CSAs are following the national trend, but they are also tentative and dependent on a concerted public effort to bring "non-traditional" agriculture into the region.

6.1 Tobacco-Buyout & SMADC

For a region that has been commercially farmed since the mid-1600s, there are few histories of agriculture in Southern Maryland. Perhaps it would make a dull story. Tobacco dominated the region's agricultural sales until the year 2000. Since the beginning of European settlement, the region's agriculture has been commercial and export-oriented. The plantation system was central to Southern Maryland's early economy. Cheap labor, first indentured whites, then black slaves, was a key factor in

maintaining profitability. So, too, was continued demand for the region's high-quality Maryland Type 32 tobacco, especially preferred by Swiss and other European cigarette companies.

Government intervention in Southern Maryland's tobacco economy also goes back to the 17th-century. In 1639, the Maryland legislature required tobacco planters to devote two acres to corn production for every member of their household (BBER 1954:2). In 1666, overproduction of tobacco in the Chesapeake region caused prices to plummet, prompting Virginia's governor to call for a ban on production the following year. Maryland's governor did not go along with the call. Nature took care of the oversupply problem, however. A hurricane in 1667 wiped out most of the region's tobacco crop, causing prices to rise (Brugger 1988).

The ups and downs of the tobacco market were to continue over the centuries. Tobacco agriculture exacts a heavy toll of soil fertility and results in high rates of topsoil erosion. By the late 1700s, many tobacco regions of Maryland were unable to support tobacco production and shifted to grains, especially wheat. Yet the well-drained soils of Southern Maryland were suited to tobacco agriculture and few farmers in the region shifted to grains (King 1997).

Tobacco continued to be Southern Maryland's "money crop" up until the state-initiated buyout began in 2000. Nonetheless, the crop had been in decline for a half-century. Maryland did not rank in the top ten tobacco producing states in 1997, and only one Maryland county, St. Mary's, was in the top 100 tobacco-producing counties in the U.S. (in 100th place) on the eve of the buyout. In 1997, tobacco represented 44%, 34%,

and 44% of the total value of agricultural sales in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties respectively (NASS 1997).

The collapse of tobacco farming in the region was initiated by the Maryland state government. Using funds from the multi-state suit against the tobacco companies (the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement worth \$206 billion), the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland, which represents the interests of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties, established the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) in 2000 to administer the tobacco buyout program in the state's historic tobacco growing region. In addition to the three aforementioned counties, SMADC works in adjacent Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties to the north. In 1997, these five counties represented over 95% of Maryland's tobacco production in terms of market sales (NASS 1997).

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission's stated mission is as follows:

to promote diverse, market-driven agricultural enterprises, which coupled with agricultural land preservation, will preserve Southern Maryland's environmental resources and rural character while keeping the region's farmland productive and the agricultural economy vibrant (SMADC 2007).

SMADC's implementation of its mission concentrates on three areas – administering the state's tobacco buyout program, agricultural economic development and marketing, and agricultural land preservation (SMADC 2007). In the case of agricultural land preservation, SMADC itself does not have any land use or zoning authority. That power rests in county and municipal governments. However, SMADC can offer financial

incentives to encourage tobacco farmers to enroll their land into conservation easement programs.

It is SMADC's programs to build post-tobacco agricultural infrastructure and marketing which are the most ambitious and visible to the public. SMADC has developed several programs and publications reaching out to both consumers and producers in an attempt to maintain working agricultural landscapes in the region. The discourse in these publications introduces a cultural model of agricultural production that has never existed in Southern Maryland. This cultural model seeks to build a reciprocal local food economy in order to maintain a culturally agrarian landscape; it works to implement key elements of new agrarianism and commensalism.

SMADC's efforts in creating a regional commensal landscape is the focus of the next section. The genesis of a commensal landscape in Southern Maryland departs from the usual mold in that it has been led by government initiative rather than through grassroots organizations. Nonetheless, the discourse used by this government-led initiative shares many of the same new agrarian themes and vocabulary used by grassroots organizations in the alternative agriculture movement. Still, the government-led transition of Southern Maryland's agricultural landscape from commodity to commensalism is conflicted. Even as the state and local counties adopt a new agrarian discourse, they are reticent to completely challenge or abandon the discourse of agriculture as a business/industry that has prevailed in the region for decades.

6.2 SMADC Discourse analysis

SMADC is an agricultural development commission, so it might be expected that its literature for public consumption would be skewed toward economic concerns. While post-tobacco agricultural business development is a key focus, a discourse content analysis of SMADC's website and print material reveals a diverse set of themes targeted to both producers and consumers. SMADC's primary public outreach program is "So. Maryland, So Good," a branding and marketing campaign to increase the links between Southern Maryland's farmers and consumers. The program seeks to educate consumers on the benefits of buying locally; the same four points appear across their print and web materials.

- You get fresher and healthier products
- You get better tasting food
- You support an economy near your home, rather than one thousands of miles away
- You support Southern Maryland's rich agricultural heritage and natural beauty

The *So. Maryland, So Good* program includes a labeling program (below left), a farm products and services directory, and a tourism guide (*Southern Maryland Trails: Earth,*



Art, Imagination) which links agriculture, the arts, and

outdoor recreation. A key tag line in SMADC's

literature is "Your Choice Matters." This tag line is

used on the SMADC website home page as well as in

print material such as the *So. Maryland, So Good 14-*

month 2008 Calendar. In the opening pages of the

calendar, consumers are told that their purchasing behavior is crucial to the health of the regional agricultural economy and landscape (SMADC 2007):

- When you choose to buy eggs, meat and seafood from a local farm, you're helping to preserve the rural beauty of Southern Maryland.
- When you choose produce from a local farmers' market, your family is getting food that's fresh and delicious.
- When you visit a pick-your-own patch or petting zoo, you're helping local farm families earn a living.
- When you shop and dine at establishments featuring the *So. Maryland, So Good* logo, you know you'll be getting the freshest and finest, and you're supporting your local community.

With each month, the calendar goes on to introduce consumers to the range of local products available and the positive impacts that are made when they buy local. Most of the highlighted products represent the post-tobacco diversification that is a SMADC goal. For example, December 2007 encourages consumers to cut their Christmas tree at a local farm. March 2008 explains how wine grapes are replacing tobacco fields. June 2008 informs consumers that local farms sell floral arrangements (cut flowers are a promising alternative to tobacco). July 2008 introduces the "Buy Local Challenge" (SMADC 2007).

The introduction to SMADC's *So. Maryland, So Good Farm Guide* (2007b: v) also emphasizes the commensal relationship between food producers and consumers and ties that to the production and maintenance of an agrarian landscape.

"When you buy direct from the farmer, you are re-establishing a time-honored connection between the consumer and the grower. Knowing the farmers gives you insight into the seasons, the weather, and the miracle of raising food. And when you visit an agritourism farm, or patronize stores and restaurants that buy local produce, your dollars stay in your community. ... 'Buying local' also supports our local agricultural economy, preserving the rich heritage and beauty of Southern Maryland as selling farmland to development becomes less likely. Picturesque barns, lush fields of crops, and meadows full of wildflowers will survive only as long as farms are financially viable."

This language succinctly underscores the four goals that are embedded in the first MALPF mission objective – preserving land, preserving farmers, profitability, and commensalism. The language also weds the moral reciprocity of new agrarianism with the hard facts of the “rational” market economy. In fact, throughout its literature, SMADC maintains this balance between non-market and market expectations.

In the *Farm Guide* introduction and in other SMADC printed material, residents of Southern Maryland are informed that “if every household in Southern Maryland [the five-county region] spent just \$8.00 on locally grown farm products for 12 weeks, \$54 million could be invested back into our neighboring farms and economy.” This data only tells half the story however. By spending this amount (a total of just \$96 dollars) on local farm products over the course of three months during the growing season, Southern Maryland’s households would contribute another 81% of the current total value (\$66.6 million) of all agricultural sales in the five-county region (NASS 2007). In terms of direct sales, the \$54 million figure is over nineteen times the current total amount of direct sales, \$2.8 million, in the five counties (NASS 2007).

SMADC’s agritourism guide, *Southern Maryland Trails: Earth, Art, Imagination* continues constructing a post-tobacco narrative that connects past and present working landscapes, calling on consumers (tourists) to become agents in the production of a new cultural landscape.

“The book you are holding is an invitation. ... As you talk to people you will meet along the way, we think you’ll discover a common thread: a strong love of the land, a delight in the agricultural heritage that gives this place its flavor. ... You’ll find that people here, while honoring their past, are forging new lives as well, finding creative ways to blend the best parts of this rural culture with growth and change. ... So go slowly. Ask questions. Get to know the folks along the way. If you have the time, they’ll invite you in, give you a recipe, make sure you sample the wine

and enjoy the sunset. They will tell you stories and show you this area's hidden places" (SMADC 2008b: 4-5).

In case visitors do not have enough time to get invited in, *Southern Maryland Trails* is filled with many vignettes, acting as local storyteller. Interspersed among descriptions of farm stores, artist studios, parks, restaurants, and bed & breakfast lodgings are stories of working landscapes. The tobacco landscape is handled in a single page, "When Tobacco was King," a story that gives little detail as to the ways that tobacco was removed from the regional landscape.

"The sweet smell that put a smile on your face as you rode across Southern Maryland's countryside, passing barns with boards propped out, the breeze delivering the scent of the leaves as they matured ... Tobacco was more than a commodity. It was 300 years of tradition, a landscape shaped by men's hands and an entire culture driven by the auctioneer's cry. It was a connection to our community, our life's work and our pride.

There was no doubt: tobacco was king, and the wooden barns that cured it were castles. But today, its reign has ended. Scenes of rich green leaves waving in the sun and the weathered barns propped open to the breeze are quietly disappearing as the region diversifies away from its tobacco-based economy, and Maryland seeks to become the first tobacco-free state in the U.S.

But the end of tobacco does not mean the end of farming. In less than a decade, farmers have moved to other ventures in agriculture. Today, they are painting our landscape with new scenes. Flowing grains and hay, fields of flowers and cattle and horse farms flourish where tobacco once grew. For now, the barns remain, and their rustic presence serves as a continuing reminder of our past" (SMADC 2008b:65).

Clearly, the post-tobacco transition is seen as producing a new landscape, both visual and olfactory. Farmers are agents of landscape transition, as is SMADC, the quasi-governmental organization which is underwriting much of the effort. As this vignette appears in an agritourism guide, local residents and outside visitors are drawn in as co-producers of this new, working cultural landscape.

Figure 6.1 – Tobacco Harvest, Calvert County, Maryland (Photo R.A. Russo 2008)



There is an element of mythmaking in the narrative of “When Tobacco was King,” and SMADC is not the only raconteur of this storyline (see McGrath 1992, Kline & Kline 2004). True, tobacco has been “king” in terms of agricultural sales, but never as an overwhelming presence in the landscape as corn is, for example, in parts of Iowa. In 1997, just a few years before the start of the tobacco buyout program, only 6,374 acres of tobacco were planted in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary’s counties. This amount represented just 4% of the counties’ combined farmland acres (NASS 1997). Even in 1950, when tobacco was planted on 25,105 acres in the three counties, this area only represented 5.9% of the total farmland (Census 1950). In terms of the agricultural economy, however, tobacco did rule. As late as 1997, tobacco still made up 41.3% of the total value of agricultural sales in Calvert, Charles and St. Mary’s counties (NASS 1997). Ten years later, and seven years into the tobacco buyout, tobacco only contributed 4.1% to the three counties’ total value of agricultural sales (NASS 2007).

The two other SMADC programs that have had the greatest reach in terms of planting a new landscape of commensalism in Southern Maryland are its two programs for children, “Cornelia and the Farm Band” and “Kids Cook” and its “Buy Local Challenge.” “Cornelia and the Farm Band” is the educational program that includes a website (www.letsgotoafarm.com) and an assortment of materials that includes a coloring/ activity book. In a note to parents on the aforementioned website, SMADC (2006) explains that

“Cornelia and the Farm Band characters have been created to teach kids about the benefits farms can provide to our environment, our economy and our own health and well-being. You can help by visiting local farms that are open to the public, patronizing your local farm markets, shopping and dining where fresh farm products are sold and used, and telling your kids about the value of farms.”



Figure 6.2 -- CORNELIA SILK

Cornelia is the lead singer and the band's leader.

Everyone tells Cornelia she is outstanding in her field.

Hobby: Telling corny jokes!

Message to her fans: “Life’s a-mazing! Keep exploring all the time. Eat right and take good care of yourself.”

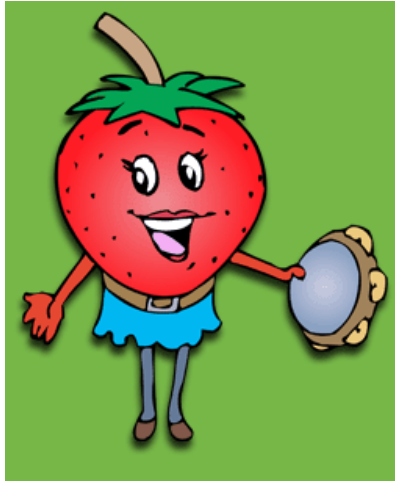


Figure 6.3 -- STRAWBERRY FIELDS

Strawberry plays tambourine and sings back up.

Strawberry is the sweetest band member!

Hobby: Jammin' with friends

Message to her fans: "Do something new whenever you can. Why not spend the day at a pick-your-own farm?"

Cornelia and her crew seek to introduce farms and farm products to children, whether it's Cornelia telling kids to check out a corn maze, or Strawberry Fields encouraging kids to go to a pick-your-own berry farm, to Mrs. Peabody Pod, who asks kids to "give peas a chance" and to visit their local farmers' market to buy local produce "straight from a farm." The "Let's Go to a Farm" activity book also introduces the concept of a CSA (community-supported agriculture) farm.

The "Southern Maryland Kids Cook!" is a program designed for fourth-grade teachers, the one year in which the state mandates agricultural education in the classroom. The program "is designed to excite and motivate children about the connection between tasty foods, nutrition, long-term health benefits and the support of local agriculture." An additional stated goal of the program is "to introduce and/or enhance the awareness of the environmental and natural resource conservation benefits of local farms and the importance of supporting this social sector of our communities before they are [*sic*] lost forever" (SMADC 2003:3).

SMADC's educational campaign for children primarily envisions them as consumers. It does not introduce the idea that agriculture might be a future career for any

of their young readers who are not already living on a farm. For children who do live on a farm, SMADC operates the Southern Maryland Invitational Livestock Expo (SMILE), as a way to support farm children and “encourage educational networking opportunities” (SMADC 2008a:10). SMILE is a very successful program, which has spun off from SMADC and become its own non-profit organization.

SMADC’s “Buy Local Challenge” is the other major public outreach initiative. It includes a strong web presence (www.buy-local-challenge.com) as well as print material. The challenge asks residents to “pledge to eat at least one thing from a local farm everyday during Buy Local Week [19-27 July 2009].” The theme for the 2008 challenge was “Healthy Plate, Healthy Planet.” By supporting local farms, participants would be helping to promote “fresher air, cleaner water, healthier families, stronger economies, safer food supplies and a greener planet ... one bite at a time!” (SMADC 2007c). The “Healthy Plate, Healthy Planet” theme capitalizes on the discourse of green consumption that has recently increased its prominence in the local food movement. Concerns over the carbon footprint of the global, agro-industrial food system as a contributor to the anthropogenic enhanced greenhouse effect has prompted “locavores” to count food miles and consider caloric energy budgets when selecting food (Pirog et al. 2001)

The other reasons that SMADC gives for eating locally can be found on the “Buy Local Challenge” website. They include the following claims (SMADC 2007c):

1. Locally grown food tastes better.
2. Local produce is better for you
3. Local food preserves genetic diversity
4. Local food supports local farm families
5. Local food builds community
6. Local food preserves the rural character and open space

These reasons represent common themes in the writings of the alternative agriculture and new agrarian movements – health, biodiversity, preserving farming as a way of life, aesthetics, and community-building (Allen 2007; Freyfogle 2001; Vitek & Jackson 1996).

A quantitative look at the SMADC discourse reveals both the constraints and possibilities inherent in its mandated mission. As the agency charged with implementing Maryland's tobacco-buyout program, it is not surprising to see the words *tobacco*, *farmer(s)*, and *support(ing)* as the top three results in a content analysis of the SMADC website. The only unexpected term to appear among the top ten on the SMADC website is *fun*. There are many references to how getting children involved in learning about local farms and local food can be fun for them and the entire family. Agritourism, shopping at local farmers markets, the challenge to buy local for an entire week, and cooking meals with local ingredients are all opportunities for *fun*. SMADC executive director Dr. Christine Bergmark, upon learning about the prominence of the term on the SMADC website, expressed a bit of surprise but quickly went on to say that SMADCs goal was to change the way Southern Maryland residents currently perceive agriculture and food shopping (as all hard work and onerous chores).

Table 6.1 -- Discourse content analysis of Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission website (www.somarylandsogood.com). Approximately 4,200 words. Retrieved on 25 July 2008.

Word(s)	Frequency
Tobacco	40
Farmer(s)	38
Support(ing)	31
Fun	27
Land preservation	18
Local farms	16
Farmers' markets	12
Agriculture	11
Economy	11
Education	11
School(s)	11
Business(es)	10
Enterprises	10
Local (farm) products	9
Diverse/diversify/diversification	8
Marketing	8
Growers	8
Incentives	8
Local community	7
(Agri-) tourism	7
Transition	7
Tradition(s)/traditional	7
Viability	7
Fresh/fresher	7
Consumers	6
Easement(s)	6
Farming	6
Wine	6
Buy(ing) local	5
Heritage	5
Landowner(s)	5
Infrastructure	5
Harvest directory	5
Cooks/cooking	5
Economic development	5

In a discourse content analysis, frequency does not tell the entire story, of course. Occurrence and omission do as well. In the case of the SMADC website, the occurrence of terms, even once, help define its wide-ranging goals. The terms in Table 6.2 appear

fewer than five times in the SMADC website, but are still words that are imbued with a positive sense of what can be achieved in Southern Maryland’s agricultural transition.

Table 6.2 – Positive words in SMADC website appearing fewer than five times

Word/Term	Frequency
Income	4
Profitable	4
Health/healthy/healthier	3
Taste/tastier/better tasting	3
Value-added	3
Vibrant	3
Rural beauty	2
Rural character	2
Rural charm	2
Alternative	2
Productive	1
Quality of life	1
Values	1

The linkage between land preservation, local farms, and farmers’ markets indicate SMADCs vision of creating a commensal landscape and economy, even if the word *commensal* is never used. This discourse can “create new consenses that open the way to alternative identities and courses of action. Moving beyond the domination or the mobilization of resources, discursive power is productive power” (Fischer 2003:81). SMADC’s discourse asks both producers and consumers to re-invent themselves in reciprocal, food-centered relationships. These new relationships potentially have to power to produce new and different local economies and landscapes.

6.3 County Government Discourse

This section looks at the farmland preservation and agricultural development discourse of the three core Southern Maryland counties (Calvert, Charles, and St.

Mary's). The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission is a quasi-governmental organization with no land use authority. County planning departments and agricultural economic development offices are central to the implementation of the post-tobacco commensal vision set out by SMADC.

6.3.1 Calvert County discourse analysis

Calvert County is Maryland's smallest county in Maryland in terms of land area at 215 square miles (137,600 acres). A peninsular county, with the tidal Patuxent River on the west and the Chesapeake Bay on the east, water covers 38% of the county's total surface area of 345 square miles. There is a strong record of land preservation in Calvert County reaching back three decades. The county has been a national leader in the use of a transfer-of-development-rights program to protect farmland and forestland. The county remains among the top counties in Maryland in terms of the percentage of its remaining farmland acres in preservation (see Table 5.1).

Of the five counties that made up Maryland's historic tobacco growing region, Calvert County has adopted a discourse most directly engaged in creating a commensal landscape. While participating with SMADC in the development of a post-tobacco agricultural landscape and economy, recently several county agencies have joined forces to draft a holistic vision of sustainable agriculture. Calvert County is appreciative of the programming and marketing work being done by SMADC, but the county feels it is ready to move beyond the scope of SMADC's mandate, according to an interviewee in the county's planning and zoning department.

Interviews conducted in Calvert and neighboring counties showed that Calvert County was clearly on the leading edge of using a discourse rooted in new agrarianism in order to forge its vision of a commensal landscape. In the county's information packet given to landowners interested in its agricultural preservation program, there is abundant indication that farm and forestland preservation and agricultural economic development are viewed as central to maintaining Calvert's identity. Each of the several program brochures (TDR, PAR, Leveraging, and Forest TDR) mention that the opening vision statement in county's Comprehensive Plan is to maintain "a landscape dominated by fields and forests."

Preservation News, is the county's yearly newsletter published by the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board and written by staff in the Planning Department and the Economic Development Department. In the February 2008 issue, more than half of the newsletter is devoted to presenting a new agrarian vision for Calvert County. One article is entitled "How Do We Start a 'Buy Local' Movement?" and another is entitled "Rebuilding Farming from the Ground Up." The first article introduces readers to the Slow Food movement, the term "locavore," and Barbara Kingsolver's book *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral*. The article closes with the following paragraph (Bowen 2008a):

Thirty years ago, Calvert County residents had just secured enabling legislation for the first land preservation program in the state. At that time, many residents questioned if this land preservation effort was really needed. The last three decades have proven both the need and the success of Calvert's early efforts. Now is the time to start connecting farmers with consumers.

In the second newsletter article, readers are asked to consider the effects of the “get big or get out” discourse of agricultural economics in the U.S. since World War II. It highlights the externalities of our cheap food policy and quotes new agrarian writer Wendell Berry in the process. In the form of questions, it presents four challenges to rebuilding agriculture in Calvert County (Bowen 2008b) – “1] How do we convince consumers to buy farm products at a living wage price?; 2] How do we re-teach our new farmers to farm?; 3] Where will we find our new farm labor?; and 4] Do we actively encourage farmers to raise produce organically?” The exchange between producer and consumer is one of reciprocity that extends beyond the monetary transaction.

On 4 March 2008, the county’s Planning and Zoning Department presented an interim report on a proposed Calvert Sustainable Agriculture Plan to the Board of County Commissioners. The commissioners are elected representatives. The presentation noted that despite the county’s national prominence in land preservation, the state of agriculture in Calvert is very much under stress. The tilled acreage dropped from over 50,000 in 1978, when the county’s preservation program began to 30,000 acres in 2002 (CCPDZ 2008:2). A plan for sustainable agriculture would focus on the concept of “preservation through profitability.” Such a strategy reemphasizes a goal of preserving working agricultural landscapes rather than protecting it as open space.

In early 2009, the Calvert Department of Planning and Zoning ended its *Preservation News* newsletter, replacing it with a quarterly newsletter entitled *Thrive – Sustainable Agriculture in Calvert County*. *Thrive* is a product of the county’s Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SAWG). In its second issue, the working group explains the newsletters’ purpose (SAWG 2009):

The Board of County Commissioners of Calvert County formed The Sustainable Agriculture Workgroup with members from the Soil Conservation District, the Department of Economic Development, the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Office, the County Health Department and the Department of Planning and Zoning look for way to promote agriculture.

In 2008 the County permanently preserved over 600 new acres of farm and forest land through the County's Transfer of Development Rights Program. Calvert has preserved 26,322 acres out of our goal of 40,000 acres. However, land is only part of the equation. A thriving agricultural community needs economically successful farmers too! We hope you will be one of them.

Articles in the first two issues of *Thrive* focus on topics such as agritourism, training for new farmers, a vision for a county farmers' co-operative, on-farm processing, a value-added food summit, and an upcoming talk by Joel Salatin, a full-time Virginia farmer and author who is a leading voice in new agrarianism (see Purdum 2005).

Calvert County government has ventured farther than its neighbors in adopting the discourse of new agrarianism that informs the SMADC approach. Much depends on the success of this approach. As can be seen in the indicator tables in Chapter Five, Calvert County's agricultural land base and economy over the past three decades has been among the most battered in the state. While it is too early to tell what the future of agriculture will look like as a result of Calvert's sustainable agriculture and commensalist strategy, it is safe to say it will be much different than in the past.

6.3.2 Charles and St. Mary's Counties – Discourse Analysis

In great contrast to Calvert County, the other two counties that constitute Southern Maryland produce a minimal amount of written materials on farmland preservation and agricultural economic development for public consumption. Both counties rely heavily on the work of SMADC to market agricultural products and agritourism.

Charles County's Department of Planning and Growth Management provides very limited information on the state's agricultural land preservation program. There is no separate section of the department's website dedicated to farmland preservation (as is the case in Calvert County) and there is no newsletter addressing the issue to the public. The only printed material made available via the department's website is its Agricultural Land Preservation Program Recertification Report (Rice & Grant 2008), a requirement in remaining eligible to receive MALPF funding and to retain a greater portion of the real estate transfer tax for land preservation purposes. The report does not use a preface or conclusion to set out a broad vision for the farmland preservation and agricultural development in the county. There is no hint of new agrarianism discourse within the report. The county's Department of Economic Development and Tourism website presents no information on the agricultural sector or agritourism. This lack of attention to the county's agricultural economy and heritage is likely the result of the department's decision to terminate its agricultural marketing position in 1992 (Rice & Grant 2008:25).

The Charles County Comprehensive Plan includes a chapter dedicated to agriculture and forestry. A county planning commission's comprehensive plan, however, cannot be considered an easily accessible public venue. In the case of Charles County, it

remains the only public document where the local government has expressed any vision for the future of farmland and agricultural economic development. The plan states that “because Charles County wishes to preserve its agricultural economy a major goal of the County is to protect the land resources necessary to support the County's agricultural industry and enhance its rural character” (CCPC 2006:9-1). The plan also notes that the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland (the parent organization of SMADC) has called the tobacco buyout an “unprecedented and significant cultural and economic shift” which the region has not “experienced since the advent of European settlers” (CCPC 2006:9-4). In the face of this unprecedented and rapid shift in the region’s agricultural economy and culture, the county’s response appears relatively tepid, with the agricultural marketing activities, in particular, being left in the hands of SMADC.

St. Mary’s County, thanks to the existence of an agriculture and seafood specialist position in its Department of Economic and Community Development, does more to promote agriculture. However, the printed material is scarce (one Agriculture & Seafood newsletter from 2005; a brochure on Amish and Mennonite services and products). The county’s Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board website provides a three-page 2008 annual report of the board’s activities. The report does not present any context in terms of the county’s farmland preservation and agricultural development goals. The Planning Commission’s Comprehensive Plan wording on farming in the county implies that there is no clear vision for agriculture.

If [emphasis mine] farming is to be retained as an important county industry and way of life over the coming decades, it will be necessary to enhance and enforce controls to protect existing farms and areas with highly productive soils from suburban sprawl, and actively promote incentives for continued use of these lands for farming purposes. Of particular importance will be maintaining levels of farming activities that

will support the kinds of farm supply centers necessary to day-to-day operations (SMPC 2003:9).

One of St. Mary's County's objectives in its comprehensive plan is to "promote the vigor and diversity of agriculture, aquaculture, fishery, and forestry industries" (SMCP 2003:86).

6.3.3 Official Discourse on the Amish and Mennonite in Southern Maryland

Given the presence of an Amish and Mennonite community in Southern Maryland (mostly in northern St. Mary's County, but also eastern Charles County) and the visibility they have in the writings of new agrarianism, the official discourse surrounding them provides a window on the meaning of agriculture in the region. The Amish and Mennonite community of Southern Maryland began in the 1940s with the relocation of families from Lancaster County in Pennsylvania in search of more affordable farmland. Approximately 2,000 Amish and Mennonites (Plain Sect members) currently live in the area; Amish are concentrated in the Charlotte Hall area straddling the St. Mary's and Charles border and Mennonites are concentrated in the Loveville area of St. Mary's. The community currently operates a farmers market in Charlotte Hall during the growing season, Monday through Saturday. A brochure produced by the St. Mary's tourism department describes the other services and products available from the Amish.

While new agrarian writers extol the Amish as an example of living well on the land, both in terms of environmental stewardship and economic profitability, the county governments in St. Mary's and Charles counties do not view Amish and Mennonite farming strategies as something that can be adapted to other farmers in the region. In the

St. Mary's County comprehensive plan, the county describes how its "farmstead zoning" (maintaining lots of 15 acres or more) are "not affordable or viable for the farming population." However, the next sentence explains how the Amish and Mennonite community have made such lots viable. "Farmstead lots are often not viable as farms, however, in the past year, a number of adjacent farmsteads have been purchased by Amish or Mennonite families, who can jointly farm these using traditional methods for a profit" (SMPC 2003:25).

Likewise, the Charles County comprehensive plan sees Amish and Mennonite farming as a world apart.

A number of Amish-owned farms exist in eastern Charles County, part of a larger community that extends into St. Mary's County. The Amish community is an important part of the local agricultural economy, and particularly valuable in that it is less affected by regional and national trends in agriculture compared to the broader agricultural community. (CCPC 2006:9-2)

In the same chapter, the comprehensive plan notes that the small farms of Charles County cannot compete with the larger grain and soybean farms on the Eastern Shore or the larger beef and dairy operations in Western Maryland. Meanwhile the Amish and Mennonites are operating profitable, small farms in the region.

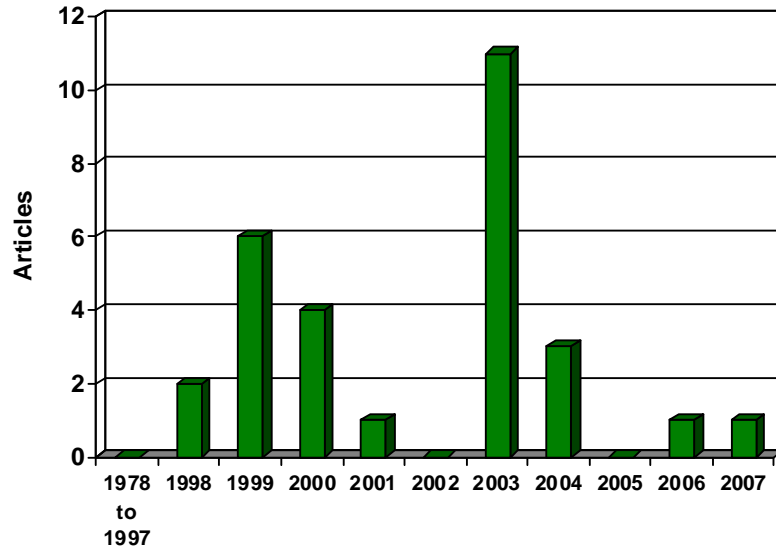
6.4 News Discourse

In addition to the new narratives and storylines being woven by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission and the county governments, the media plays a role in shaping the discourse of farmland preservation and agricultural change in the region. In this section, findings from a discourse analysis of *Washington Post* articles

are presented. Using Lexis-Nexis as the search engine, “land preservation” (to capture both *farmland* and *agricultural* land) and a county name (e.g. “Charles County”) were used to set the parameters of each of the three searches (one for each county). The time period covered the three decades since the founding of MALF in 1977. The *Washington Post* is the newspaper of record for the region, especially for policymakers and government officials.

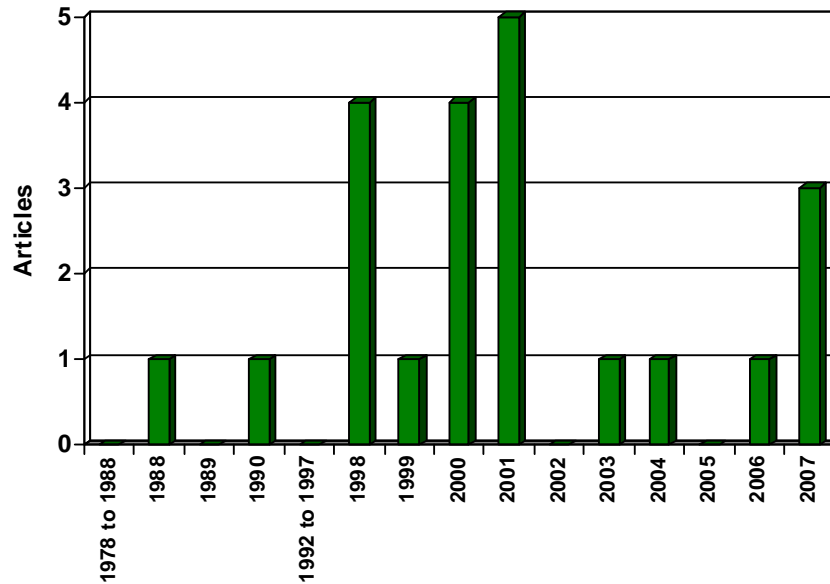
Calvert County experienced the greatest amount of coverage, with 29 articles following the struggle to preserve land in the county (see Fig. 6.4). Prominent terms across these stories include *tobacco, farmers, development, growth, rural, zoning, planning, population, and development rights*. There was a spike in coverage in 1999 and 2000, with the topics converging around three main issues – 1] Calvert County government tries new ways of raising funds for farmland preservation; 2] tobacco growers see an end to their way of life with the Maryland tobacco buyout plan; and 3] conflicts between new suburban residents and farmers. The other surge in coverage was in 2003 and 2004 when the primary themes were – 1] Census 2000 figures confirm Calvert County still leads the state in rate of population growth; 2] Calvert County Commissioners seek to curb growth through stricter zoning and a moratorium on current transfer-of-development rights program; 3] concerns over traffic, school crowding and construction; and 4] preserved farmland area in the southern part of the county becomes preferred route for new natural gas pipeline.

Figure 6.4 Articles concerning land preservation in Calvert County appearing in the *Washington Post* (1978-2007)



The coverage of land preservation issues in Charles County by the *Washington Post* is less than that in Calvert County over the same time period (1978 through 2007). In total, there were 22 articles (see Figure 6.5), yet much of the land preservation news in Charles County did not involve farmland. Just ten of the articles mention farmland or agricultural land preservation. There was no year in which there was a spike in coverage of *farmland* preservation. Coverage of land preservation spiked when there was a challenges to the loss of woodlands or forests in the county. In particular, *Washington Post* coverage during the period 1998 to 2001 focused on the land use debates in western Charles County along the Potomac.

Figure 6.5 -- Articles concerning land preservation in Charles County appearing in the *Washington Post* (1978-2007)



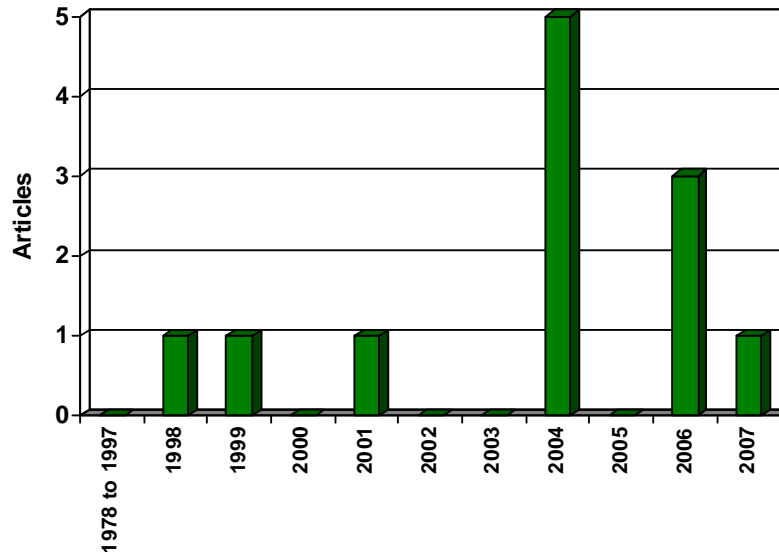
The land preservation news in Charles County centered around non-agricultural, forested, waterfront lands ripe for development along the Indian Head Highway corridor (Mayland Route 210) and the major employment center at its terminus, the Naval Surface Warfare Center. The *Washington Post* coverage (Kasubick 2001; Reel 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001a, 2001c; Shields 1998, 1999; Trejos 2001) pitted the state's Smart Growth agenda, county planners, and environmentalists against local landowners, business-owners, and town government. The latter group argued that in the Indian Head area, Smart Growth meant No Growth.

Curiously, the *Washington Post* coverage in Charles County did not focus on the loss of agricultural land, especially in the wake of Maryland's tobacco buyout program for Southern Maryland. The tobacco-buyout and its affects on farming and rural landscapes were a central component of the spike of articles (ten) the *Post* ran about

Calvert in 1999 and 2000. The year 2007 was the only year in which the *Post* ran more than one article (but just two) highlighting the loss of farmland in Charles County. One article (Rucker 2007c) reports on the donation of farmland to conservation easements by Paul Facchina Sr., a construction company owner who has benefitted from the county's rapid growth. Facchina is also a publically-regarded conservationist who has placed more acreage under permanent conservation easements than any other in Maryland. The other article (Rucker 2007a) covered Charles County's 10th annual economic development summit. At the summit, Governor Martin O'Malley noted the importance of "land sustainability" in the county's future economic development. An unscientific poll of attendees about key issues facing the county showed that many of the nearly 300 county leaders at the summit were evenly split as to the importance of retaining agricultural lands in the county – 32% said it was "highly important," with another 32% saying it was "minimally important," and the remaining 36% claimed it was "moderately important."

The main finding from the newspaper coverage of land preservation in Charles County is how disconnected the articles were from the agricultural landscape and economy. What is unclear is whether this lack of connecting land preservation to agricultural change and economic development in the county was a bias of the *Washington Post* reporters or of the newsmakers themselves.

Figure 6.6 -- Articles concerning land preservation in St. Mary's County appearing in the *Washington Post* (1978-2007)



St. Mary's County logged the fewest stories in the *Washington Post* with respect to land preservation, just twelve over the study period (Figure 6.5). St. Mary's distance from Washington, D.C. (it is not formally a part of the Washington Metropolitan Area) may explain the reduced coverage the county receives. However, the *Washington Post* does run a weekly "Southern Maryland Extra" section to subscribers in the three counties. The two years that saw the most coverage were 2004 and 2006. In 2004, all five articles dealt with a proposed sale of state-owned forestland to the president of a Baltimore-based developer. Then Governor Ehrlich was criticized for the proposed deal, which was eventually dropped, as "a sweetheart deal" for a political supporter. The 839 acre tract of land had been purchased by the state the year before to protect the tract as open space. The proposed deal would have allowed approximately 50 acres to be developed, in exchange for some of the land to be donated to the county as a site for a new school and for the remainder to be placed in a conservation easement (Mosk 2004).

In 2006, three articles looked at the increased interest and funding to preserve rural land in the county. As in the Charles County coverage, the state of agriculture in the county was largely ignored in these stories, despite the fact that they focused on the preservation of farmland. The articles reported on the county's purchase and preservation of a 169-acre parcel to act as a buffer against development moving south from the Patuxent Naval Air Base and "securing the parcel's rural character" (Zak 2006); growing interest by county land owners in the MALPF program and new county residents who do not want to see further developments (such as their own) (Zak 2006a); and the preservation of two rural legacy areas, by which county commissioners can show that "being pro-Navy and pro-business and preserving farmland are not mutually exclusive" (Zak 2006b).

On the whole, the discourse of farmland preservation presented in the *Washington Post* has largely been out of touch with the new narratives and storylines being adopted by the region's land preservation and agricultural development specialists. During the past decade, the *Post* has carried articles chronicling some of the post-tobacco transition in Southern Maryland. These stories appear when "land preservation" as a keyword search is replaced with "agriculture" in combination with "Southern Maryland." In the pages of the *Washington Post*, farmland preservation and agriculture rarely share the same story, despite the many efforts of SMADC and county governments in Southern Maryland to make this connection.

6.5 Evaluating the Success of the SMADC Approach

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission has an unenviable task. Its mandate is to transition the region's agricultural economy into one which will find profitable alternatives to tobacco as a cash crop as well as preserve farmland and rural landscapes in the face of intense development pressure. In order to achieve these goals, SMADC's strategy has been to work on changing the cultural understanding of agriculture and food among regional farmers, consumers, and government officials. This is no easy task. Southern Maryland is not a region with a cultural history that predisposes it to SMADC's cultural message. Due to its relative geographic isolation until WWII, there existed a strain of self-reliance, but one lacking the cooperative organizing and social capital that can be found in regions where alternative and local food systems have taken hold from the grassroots. To overcome these economic and cultural challenges, SMADC was given just \$78 million of Maryland's \$4 billion award from the multi-state lawsuit against the tobacco companies. Approximately 70% of SMADC's yearly operation budget goes directly to farmers as buyout payments (buyout recipients receive payments for 10 years). Approximately 15% goes to agricultural land preservation, with the remaining 15% supporting all of the remaining SMADC programs and its four full-time staff (MLIS 2004).

Figure 6.7 – Cover of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission 2009 Report. Photography throughout the report supports the narrative of a future full of new opportunities in preserving the long-standing rural character of the region.



As shown earlier in this chapter, SMADC has developed a substantial amount of print media designed to present a new narrative of agriculture in Southern Maryland. As a marketing and public relations effort, SMADC has been successful, even if the long-term outcomes of its campaign are still unknown. From 2001 through 2008, SMADC accomplished, in addition to the materials outlined earlier in this chapter, the following (SMADC 2009):

- Participated in 4 research grants and 8 feasibility studies
- Awarded 14 innovative small grants and 18 Southern Maryland Farm Viability Enhancement Business Plan Grants
- Conducted workshops at 16 conferences
- Led 10 field trips for farmers to neighboring states to see best practices
- Gave over 90 presentations in the region

SMADC's 2009 report, *Farms of the Future* (see Figure 6.4), presents the accomplishments of the commission in the face of recent budget cuts due to a state fiscal crisis and also in preparation for the post-buyout era. In this report, the SMADC staff is clearly establishing the need for the commission to continue its work well after the administration of the buyout program begins to wind down in 2010, with all buyout payments completed by 2015. Changing the culture of farming and food in the region, as a way to promote agricultural economic development and preserve working landscapes, is a goal with a long time horizon.

Analyzing a few of the indicators used in this study over the period from 1997 to 2007 provides a baseline from which to measure agricultural trends linked to SMADC's mission. Using the three sets of Census of Agriculture (1997, 2002, 2007) data provides a useful short-term glimpse of the effects of the buyout on agriculture in Southern Maryland. The 1997 Census of Agriculture provides a snapshot of Southern Maryland before the tobacco buyout begins in 2000. The 2002 census takes place in the middle of the buyout application period (2000 to 2005). The 2007 census is the first conducted in a post-tobacco Southern Maryland and a first glimpse at whether SMADC programs are helping to plant a new, commensal landscape and economy in the region by keeping farmland in profitable production. The following tables present data over this ten-year period for the three "core" counties of Southern Maryland.

Table 6.3 – Land in Farms (acres)

	1997	2002	2007
Calvert	33,450	30,032	26,443
Charles	55,928	52,056	52,147
St. Mary's	71,890	68,153	68,648

All three counties lost farmland between 1997 and 2002, but surprisingly, Charles and St. Mary's counties added a small amount of farmland to their landscapes between 2002 and 2007. Calvert County saw continuing erosion of its farmland, even as it was beginning to develop a sustainable agricultural working group and plan for the county. By 2008, Calvert County had gone well beyond its neighbors in adopting a discourse of sustainability and commensalism.

In terms of the number of farms (principal farm operators), Calvert County has experienced a 21.5% drop in the past decade while Charles and St. Mary's have basically held steady (Table 6.4). In the latter two counties this is temporarily good news. The 2012 agricultural census will be telling, as the ten-year buyout payments will begin their phase out in 2010, ending in 2015. How many farmers will give up their farms once the payments cease?

Table 6.4 – Number of farms (principal farm operators)

	1997	2002	2007
Calvert	349	321	274
Charles	410	418	418
St. Mary's	621	577	621

As older farmers exit the stage, are there younger farmers in the pipeline to take their place? The percentage of principal farm operators under age 35 is a proxy for several challenges to farming as a way of life in peri-urban areas (see Table 6.5). Even though, as a SMADC staff member pointed out during the interview I conducted there, young farmers are not always the one bring new capital and innovations to the region's agricultural economy, I would argue that the number of young farmers is a gauge of the health of farming as a "way of life." If the majority of would-be farmers have to wait until their 40s or 50s to realize their dreams, many will be lost along the way. Middle-aged, change-of-career farmers might bring money and new ideas into the local agricultural sector in peri-urban areas, but it seems precarious to build a plan for the survival and revival of agriculture on this demographic.

Table 6.5 – Percentage of Principal Farm Operators Under Age 35

	1997	2002	2007
Calvert	6.3%	1.6%	0.7%
Charles	9.3%	2.4%	6.2%
St. Mary's	9.8%	7.3%	11.3%

In Table 6.5, we see that from 1997 to 2002, the number of young farmers dropped rather significantly in Calvert and Charles counties, but less so in St. Mary's counties. The drop in all three counties could signal that fewer young people saw a future in continuing with the family tradition of farming with the demise of the region's cash crop. Also, the demographics of the Amish and Mennonite (Plain Sects) community of northern St. Mary's County and bordering areas of Charles County must be factored into the increase in young farmers in these two counties from 2002 to 2007. The Plain Sects community did not participate in the tobacco buyout, and some have expanded production by switching to burley tobacco (Rucker 2007d).

To be expected, the value of agricultural sales in each county dropped off significantly from 1997 to 2002 with the removal of tobacco as a cash crop (see Table 6.6). In 2007, all three counties had higher sales than five years earlier, with near peak grain and oilseed prices the main factor. Charles County, also saw an increase in livestock sales and St. Mary's growth in sales can also be attributed to an increase in livestock, vegetable, and floriculture sales (NASS 2002 and 2007).

Table 6.6 – Value of Agricultural Sales (in 2007 dollars)

	1997	2002	2007
Calvert	\$10.0 mln	\$3.7 mln	\$4.1 mln
Charles	\$14.0 mln	\$7.4 mln	\$8.9 mln
St. Mary's	\$27.3 mln	\$14.1 mln	\$15.9 mln

In terms of increasing the value of agricultural sales per acre of farmland, the data closely follows the trend in sales (see Table 6.7). But it is important to notice that even in the years leading up to the tobacco buyout, Southern Maryland’s cash crop was bringing in less than half of the per acre average across the state. Lancaster County, Pennsylvania has been added to this table for comparison; Lancaster County has the second highest agricultural sales of any county east of the Mississippi River, at just over \$1 billion in 2007, though it does not have the highest per acre value (NASS 2007). Lancaster County is a metropolitan county with a long agricultural history as “the Garden Spot of America” (Walbert 2002), with an agricultural landscape and economy that typifies commensalism. In large part, this reputation is attributed to the fact that the county is considered the cultural hearth of North America’s Amish and Mennonite communities.

Table 6.7 – Value of Agricultural Sales Per Acre of Farmland (in 2007 dollars)

	1997	2002	2007
Calvert	\$297	\$124	\$153
Charles	\$249	\$142	\$171
St. Mary’s	\$379	\$206	\$232
Maryland	\$787		\$894
Lancaster (PA)	\$2,525		\$2,520

In comparison to Lancaster County, or the state average, Southern Maryland’s existing agricultural landscape can be considered underdeveloped. There is great potential in increasing the value of sales per acre. In Lancaster County, in addition to its large dairy

sector (32% of sales in 2007), the relatively high value is achieved by significant direct sales to consumers, creating value-added products from on-farm processing, and maintaining relatively robust meat production in the face of urban encroachment (NASS 1997 and 2007).

Finally, as a measure of commensalism, the ability of SMADC to increase direct sales to consumers across the decade is unclear from the data (e.g. Calvert County). The lesson to be learned here is that there is significant room for growth in this effort (as indicated by Lancaster County, PA). St. Mary’s County is strong in this category and perhaps its strategies could help its neighbors. For example, Charles County might bring back its agricultural economic development position. St. Mary’s also has a greater density of farmers’ markets and CSAs per 10,000 population than its neighbors, but the statewide data and the example of Lancaster County shows that greater density does not perfectly correlate with increased per capita direct sales.

Table 6.8 -- Per Capita Direct Sales to Consumers

	1997	2002	2007
Calvert	\$4.21	\$8.24	\$2.71
Charles	\$1.76	\$1.81	\$2.48
St. Mary’s	\$6.31	\$9.20	\$7.08
Maryland	\$2.20	\$2.66	\$3.78
Lancaster (PA)	\$15.91	\$17.03	\$18.50

Summary

Taking a snapshot of Southern Maryland over the past decade (with data from three agricultural censuses) suggests that a post-tobacco collapse of the agricultural sector has not taken place, though the future is uncertain after 2015 and the end of buyout payments. There are some glimmers of hope, empirically in Charles and St. Mary's counties, and at least rhetorically in Calvert County. The commensalist approach in the region could be responsible for improved indicators since 2002. Future funding for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission beyond the buyout is uncertain. With no clear commitment to a multi-faceted agricultural economic development and farmland preservation program, the future directions of farming in the region are unclear.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Discussion

This study set out to establish a new way of evaluating the success of Maryland's farmland preservation program. It has done so by showing that farmland preservation policies (in their drafting, implementation, and evaluation) are a cultural process, the outcomes of which create and sustain a particular social space and cultural landscape. Often the results are not those which were originally intended, prompting local communities and governments to revise and rework policy implementation. The intent of Maryland's farmland preservation policy has remained constant over the past three decades, regardless of changed policy mechanisms and procedures. Therefore, thirty years after a statutory goal was made, how effective have Maryland's farmland preservation programs been in reaching this goal? To ask this question is simple; to answer it has proven to be more difficult. This concluding chapter summarizes the findings of this study and discusses possible ways forward for farmland preservation programs in Maryland. It also suggests future research directions raised by this study.

7.1 Empirical Findings and Discussion

To reiterate, the first statutory goal given to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation by the state General Assembly is

To preserve productive farmland and woodland for the continued production of food and fiber for all of Maryland's citizens.

Throughout this study, I have interpreted this goal to have four inherent components – 1] preserving acres of farmland; 2] maintaining the number of farmers working the land; 3] maintaining the profitability of food production; and 4] promoting commensalism by

reorienting the agricultural economy and landscape to support new, reciprocal relationships between producers and consumers and the land.

This study has shown by an analysis of quantitative indicators, that Maryland's state farmland preservation program

- *has achieved moderate success in securing a productive agricultural land base.*

At the same time, the indicators show that the program, over its first three decades,

- *has not been successful in preserving farming as a viable "way of life"*
- *has not stopped the erosion in the value of agricultural sales*
- *has not reversed the marketplace alienation between producers and consumers in the state.*

In terms of preserving farmland, Maryland can be considered successful with some qualification. Certainly, in terms of total acres preserved, at approximately 500,000 from 1977 to 2007 (Conrad 2008), Maryland has protected more farmland than any other state except Pennsylvania. Nearly 25% of Maryland's farmland acres as of 2007 are preserved. Despite this record of preservation, Maryland still lost almost 563,000 acres over the same time period, losing 1.1 acres for every acre preserved (see Table 5.1). According to the MALPF goal, farmland preservation is for a distinct purpose – continued food and fiber production.

Protecting the state's capacity for production, measured by the total value of agricultural sales in inflation adjusted dollars, has not been successful. From 1978 to 2007, the overall value of agricultural sales in Maryland dropped 28.4%. Only three of the seventeen counties included in this study saw agricultural sales rise over this period;

among the fourteen counties that saw sales drop, they did so by an average 51.6% (see Table 5.3). Profitability, as measured by agricultural sales per acre of farmland, fared better in Maryland, dropping 8.8% from 1978 to 2007, with five counties out of the seventeen experiencing increases. Only three counties recorded sales per acre of farmland over \$1,000 – Cecil, Somerset, and Wicomico, all on the Eastern Shore. Even at this rate of profitability, agricultural uses have a hard time competing with the price developers might be willing to pay per acre; the statewide average acquisition cost per acre of farmland for MALPF in 2008 was \$6,759 (MALPF 2009).

Securing the productive capacity for food and fiber on behalf of “Maryland’s citizens” has been unsuccessful. The state’s diminished farm sales have been directed to large in-state processors for national markets and have been failing to maintain their market share of the consumers’ food dollars through declining per capita direct sales. Direct sales of farm products (per capita) to consumers for human consumption in Maryland decreased 35.7% from 1978 to 2007, with only two counties seeing increases (see Table 5.4). The state’s producers and consumers have become more alienated from each other in the marketplace, as measured by per capita direct sales, over the past three decades, despite the proliferation of farmers’ markets across the state. Maryland and most of its counties can be seen as unsuccessful in getting producers and consumers to support each other in mutually beneficial ways. For producers, this would mean a “sell food, not feed” approach and to develop cooperative approaches to marketing and processing in order to compete locally with national producers. For consumers, this approach requires that they forfeit real or perceived conveniences at the one-stop

supermarket and also abandon the lowest price as main driver of food purchases, no matter what the external costs.

The MALPF objective as stated does not explicitly focus on the human resources needed to operate a productive agricultural landscape. The 2006 *Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management* addresses the concern, but presents vague recommendations in tackling the problem. The report recommends the state “provide a coordinated program of technical assistance and funding for the next generation of farmers,” specifically in land acquisition. Also, as an action item under the recommendation to “increase awareness of agriculture by the public,” the plan calls for the promotion of agriculture as “a viable career opportunity and lifestyle” (MAC 2006:37).

Will these recommendations be able to “preserve” current farmers and “grow” future ones? While Maryland lost 21.5% of its farmland between 1978 and 2007, it lost 31.5% of its principal farm operators (farms) over the same time period (see Table 5.2). The number of farmers under age 35 dropped from 13.8% to 4.8%, with the average age now standing at 57.3 years. Until recently, agricultural economists and planners assumed that if farming could stay profitable, it would retain farmers and attract new ones. This assumption ignores the factors in America’s popular culture and educational system that work against young people seeing agriculture as a “viable career opportunity and lifestyle.”

7.2 *Theoretical Findings and Discussion*

Social theory, as written and argued by academics, will not energize a stakeholder focus group to reconsider local agricultural land use planning and economic development. However, the understanding of social processes, space, and place that result from academic scholarship can and should be applied to problem-solving and policy-making. This study has shown that theories on the social production of space and landscape are relevant to the task of farmland preservation and agricultural economic development in metropolitan areas. ***The failure of farmland preservation policy in Maryland is the failure to take culture seriously.***

7.2.1 *The Role of Theory: Farmland Preservation as Cultural Landscape Planning*

In the suburban and peri-urban spaces that are the loci of farmland preservation efforts, there is minimal articulation between the three types of social spaces as described by Lefebvre. The *conceived* agricultural/rural spaces of county and state bureaucracies and the *culturally-perceived* or *everyday lived* spaces of individuals intersect in terms of experience, but fail to connect in terms of planning. In the United States, land use policy rarely attempts to harmonize the different narratives associated with each type of space into a coherent attempt at cultural landscape planning. In Europe, national planning agencies have been working on harmonizing these spaces for at least a decade. National programs have informed the Council of Europe's 2000 European Landscape Convention. The Convention acknowledges, among other beliefs, that "the landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity and whose protection, management

and planning can contribute to job creation” and that “the landscape is a key element of individual and social well-being and that its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone” (CoE 2000a). Perhaps the advanced state of European landscape planning is the result of operating in societies in which academic discussions of landscape theory and social spaces continue to be robust.

Land use planning in the U.S. still regards landscape as a *product* and not as a *process*. Enumerated policy goals seek products, end results that can be seen and measured. But preserving *working* landscapes, by their very nature, is a process. Therefore, if current cultural and economic processes are resulting in farmland loss and a decline in the agricultural economy, one cannot expect to preserve the same processes and achieve a successful outcome. If the spatial and cultural interactions in metropolitan areas are determined largely by market economics (“business as usual”), the desired agricultural landscapes as conceived and perceived by multiple stakeholders will continue to disappear in peri-urban areas. A communally-desired and appreciated landscape will not issue forth from actions grounded in short-term, rational economic self-interest. Landscape as process is what Rose (2002:462-3) alludes to when he describes landscapes as being the result of how they are “put to task,” that “the only thing that the landscape ever *is* is the practices that make it relevant.”

The failure of policy in the U.S. to acknowledge the culture in agriculture and in the economy has created peri-urban landscapes that may look agrarian, even if they are not in practice. Some communities have been taken to task as being elitist for wanting to preserve landscapes for mostly aesthetic reasons (see Duncan & Duncan 2001), even if the community has come to an agreement on the cultural value of doing so. For example,

the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture in the 1990s began paying farmers to maintain certain environmental and cultural features on their farms. Instead of landscape being “an aesthetic by-product of agriculture [it] becomes the product itself” (Setten 2004:404).

Most farmland preservation programs in the U.S., however, call for the preservation of *working* or *productive* agricultural lands. This is a cultural decision that requires real discussions about economic relationships between producers and consumers, the role and responsibility of the state, and human stewardship of the land and responsibilities toward the natural environment.

Peri-urban areas in the U.S. often do not have the social capital nor the institutions needed to serve as the foundation for difficult conversations about values and shared goals. Nonetheless, a promising example in Calvert County began last year with the founding of a forum called a “Civil Discourse for a Sustainable Calvert.” The monthly speaker and discussion series explores “the intersection of economic, social, and environmental topics pertaining to sustainability. The goal is to foster understanding and to discover common values in order to nurture a sustainable community in Calvert County” (CIC 2009). Its meeting place (and co-sponsor) is the Calvert Central Library and its other lead co-sponsor is All Saints Episcopal Church, a community fixture since 1692. These two institutions have the social capital and reach to bring together diverse groups to engage in meaningful conversations. Recent topics have included sustainable agriculture and food systems.

7.2.2 Possible ways forward

One way that local cultural landscapes could be better connected to land use and food systems planning in the U.S. and Canada is through food policy councils. Today, there are nearly fifty local and state food policy councils in the United States (CFSC 2008). Food policy councils bring together various groups involved in the production, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food. Examples of food policy council initiatives include conducting local food resources audits, producing maps and other publicity for local food sources, connecting underserved residents in “food deserts” to areas with full-service grocery stores, getting government agencies and local institutions such as schools and hospitals to purchase from local farmers, and setting up community gardens and farmers' markets (CFSC 2008).

While they represent the potential institutionalization of commensalism at the local and regional scale, it is still too early to gauge their impact on agricultural economies and landscapes. Only three U.S. food policy councils have been in existence greater than ten years – Knoxville (1988), Hartford (1991), and Connecticut (1995). Few of the food policy council mission statements explicitly include farmland preservation within their “foodshed” among their goals for promoting community food security. An exception is the Connecticut Food Policy Council, which links farmland preservation goals to their food policy initiatives.

The State’s Farmland Preservation Program has the goal of saving 130,000 acres of farmland, including 85,000 acres of land classified as having prime and important soils. This amount of acreage would enable our local farm industry to meet 59% of the demand for fresh milk and 70% of the demand for fresh fruits and vegetables in the state (CFPC 2002:3).

In the MALPF program, there is no such explicit linkage between land and production in the implementation and evaluation policy stages, even though the wording of its first statutory objective suggests otherwise.

In linking food production and consumption with farmland preservation, food policy councils require a wider set of individuals, groups, and institutions to be involved as stakeholders in the process. Farmland preservation policy in Maryland largely ignores consumers (“eaters”). The drafting, implementation, and evaluation of policy focus on landowners, farmers, agribusinesses, departments of planning and economic development, conservation non-profits, and residents who feel they have a personal stake in the loss of a particular parcel of farmland to development. Local consumers, in the daily quest to answer the question “What’s for dinner (or breakfast or lunch)?” are overlooked as the possible solution to the precarious status of agriculture in peri-urban areas.

“Consumers have little direct input into the farmland preservation discussion. [Much of the literature] is written from the point of view of the outside expert, often an agricultural economist or planner, who is interested in managing urban growth. Little is written from the point of view of urban consumers who usually end up paying the bill for land preservation and wondering what they are getting in return” (Blobaum 1984: 56)

If food were central to farmland preservation policies it could alter the dominant discourse in agricultural economics which describes “traditional farming” as growing and raising agricultural commodities for markets. With a “farm-to-fork” understanding of food chains, economic opportunities might appear in the new producer-consumer relationships.

The cause and effect between strong producer-consumer relationships and public support for farmland preservation is also unmeasured. Though only one county in the Northeast U.S. breaks into the top twenty in the country in terms of the market value of agricultural sales (Lancaster County, Pennsylvania), the picture is very different when considering the value of direct sales to consumers. Out of the top twenty counties in the country in terms of direct sales, nine of them are in the New England and the Mid-Atlantic (NASS 1997).^{*} Strong farmland preservation exist in all of these areas, suggesting that support for farmland preservation is greater where consumers are more likely to buy directly from farmers.

Food policy councils historically have been urban in their origin and interests. In order to effectively develop a commensal landscape and food system, they will need to better acknowledge the new agrarianism that underlies much of the alternative food system discourse in peri-urban areas. New agrarianism places great emphasis on reciprocal responsibility through everyday actions. “Eating is a political act.” By breaking down the producer/consumer divide, new agrarianism calls on consumers to also become co-producers of an agrarian landscape and economy.

Another clear way forward in preserving farmland and agricultural economies is for U.S. local and state governments to adopt the European approach to landscape planning (see Vos & Meekes 1999; von Haaren 2002; Palang & Fry 2003; Selman 2006). To get a sense of the level of European landscape planning, below are the suggested 12 actions devised by the Landscape Character Network, a group of scholars and planners in

^{*} Lancaster, PA (#3); Worcester, MA (#4); Burlington, NJ (#5); Chester, PA (#13); Suffolk, NY (#15); Middlesex, MA (#17); Hartford, CT (#18); Berks, PA (#19); Ulster, NY (#20)

the UK interested in the assessment and implementation process resulting from the European Landscape Convention (LCN 2008:11).

Actions by governments individually
1. recognize landscape in law 2. integrate landscape in policy
Action by all, for all landscapes
3. identify landscapes 4. assess landscapes 5. set landscape objectives 6. protect 7. manage 8. plan 9. monitor change
The essential supportive context
10. promote education and training 11. raise awareness, understanding and involvement
Action by governments collectively
12. co-operate in Europe

The actions outlined above by the LCN would need to be adapted to the U.S. context, in which the concept of an economically productive, *working* landscape is often assumed in farmland preservation policies (as evidenced by “right-to-farm” laws). In its work, the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission has focused significantly on creating a supportive context for its vision of a commensal landscape.

Changing culture

Farmland preservation policies in Maryland, despite their mission to protect farmland and the agricultural economy, do not seek to fundamentally alter the culture which has led to this current crisis. Cultural changes require new discourses, new narratives, new storylines, new imaginaries. Only within the past decade, as the new

cultural politics of food as reached into county planning and agricultural economic development offices, has a new discourse of peri-urban agriculture emerged. It is imbued with the discourse of new agrarianism, which challenges the current narratives and storylines used to explain why more of the same (the dominant discourse) will achieve stated goals, when three decades have shown it to fail.

What do Maryland farmers lose in deciding not to work cooperatively in value-added processing, distribution, marketing, and retail? What do they lose by accepting the current expert discourse and policy storylines that come from land-grant universities, departments of agriculture, and market capitalism? How might farmers fare if they regarded themselves first as members of a political and economic community based on food (commensalism) rather than as “independent businessmen?” SMADC has asked consumers in Southern Maryland to rethink their economic identity (in terms of rights and responsibilities) in the context of protecting the agricultural economy and landscape of the region. Are farmers being asked to do the same?

As new agrarian essayist Wendell Berry has asked in several of his essays, “what is the economy for?” In advanced market capitalism, we have become passive objects in a global economy over which we have no control. We have become “victims” of the economy. Instead, new agrarianism argues for a new cultural understanding of the economy. The economy is a cultural construct, which we created and support and which should ultimately serve us, the “commonwealth.” Geographer Gibson-Graham (2003:126) argues that our “economic imaginaries” are diminished by having internalized the belief that we can no longer make or manage the economy to our personal and collective benefit. “A reluctance to engage in economic experimentation because of

perceived futility, or for fear of repression by the all powerful economy, has become a form of unfreedom, a discursive enslavement.” The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission’s commensalist, post-tobacco strategy has taken tentative steps toward changing the cultural assumption that “the economy is no longer ... a sphere of decision” for the average person (Gibson-Graham 2003:125). After all, “*Your choice matters.*”

The Next Generation

Cultural shifts such as those envisioned by new agrarians are dependent on changes in our educational system. Specifically in terms of agriculture, educational opportunities in Maryland do not serve the goals of farmland preservation and agricultural economic development programs. Currently, K-12 agricultural education in much of the state is limited to a brief exposure to farm activities in the fourth grade. High schools in Maryland’s metropolitan counties, through their meager or non-existent educational or vocational opportunities in agriculture are not preparing or encouraging another generation of Marylanders to consider the possibilities of a profitable and meaningful life in farming. Community colleges, with their reach into every corner of the state, also largely ignore the educational and training needs of potential farmers and employees in the agricultural sector. Three of Maryland’s sixteen community colleges offer two-year horticulture programs, while just one offers an agricultural business degree and another an equine studies degree (MDACC 2009).

Finally the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the land-grant University of Maryland mostly educates its students to become agricultural scientists,

economists, and policymakers, but not farmers. The Institute of Applied Agriculture at the University of Maryland offers a two-year program with six majors that provide a rather limited view of agriculture (Golf Course Management, Landscape Management, Equine Business Management, Turfgrass Management, Agribusiness Management, Ornamental Horticulture).

The Maryland General Assembly's ad hoc, and now defunct, Agricultural Stewardship Commission issued a final report in January 2006 which contained several findings that highlight the future challenges to the farm sector in the state. One of the commission's key findings is the need to attract and support young farmers. Encouraging young people to take up farming is seen as a way to support the state's farmland preservation goals. The commission found a lack of educational opportunities at tertiary institutions and through the University of Maryland's Cooperative Extension, forcing students interested in such programs to leave the state (ASC 2006, 14-16).

In light of the commission's findings, the Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 established an Agricultural Internship Program at the University of Maryland. Also, the University of Maryland (UMD) has created a dual secondary education and agricultural education degree similar to the one offered by Virginia Tech, which was singled out in the Agricultural Stewardship Commission's report. The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) at UMD is also offering a 4+1 program leading to a Masters in Education for students and certification to teach agricultural education for those students who are graduating with a bachelor's degree in agricultural sciences (AGNR 2008, 3).

Maryland recently joined the Growing New Farmers (GNF) project, which started in 2000 with a four-year grant to the New England Small Farm Institute in Massachusetts, along with collaborating organizations in other Northeastern states. Maryland's Department of Agriculture, three county economic development authorities, two units of the University of Maryland, the Maryland Organic Food & Farming Organization, one foundation, and one regional USDA Resource Conservation & Development office have joined as GNF consortium members (NEFSI 2009).

The implementation strategy of Maryland's Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management (MAC 2007) assumes that the greatest barriers to attracting new individuals to enter farming as a career are financial. However, during the agricultural stakeholder listening sessions that informed the statewide plan, there was evidence that significant cultural, educational, and experience barriers also exist. Farmers voiced a desire for more resources and smarter policies be put into making farming an attractive career for young people. Chief among their suggestions were to make farming more profitable through reduced taxes and paperwork, to equip young people with the knowledge and skills for a new era of farming through improved agricultural education in high schools and colleges, and to engage in public relations – and that the farmers themselves need to take responsibility for their image and self-promotion (MAC 2006, 58-107).

This recent acknowledgement by the state that its educational curriculum and business development programs are neither attracting nor training the next generation of the state's farmers is hopefully not too little, too late. The new cultural politics of food have encouraged many colleges, often among the country's elite institutions, to develop

programs in sustainable agriculture and food studies, with experiential education part of the mix (Carlson 2008). Unfortunately, the institutions with the strongest local ties, such as community colleges and high schools, have been slow to innovate. With fewer and fewer Marylanders or other Americans being born and raised on working farms, the future of agriculture will be dependent on developing the desire, skills, and disposition needed to become farmers in the unique and challenging environments of peri-urban and urban agriculture.

New agrarians are critical of our educational systems, especially higher education, for offering “one major” – “upward mobility”(Jackson 1996:3). The fact that understanding agricultural systems is no longer considered an integral part a liberal arts, general, or even a geographic education, rankles the new agrarians. Education also does not end at age twenty-three. Like so many efforts to effect cultural change, adults are often seen as an after-thought, “too set in their ways.” Ignoring adult or continuing education opportunities creates a situation in which change must wait an entire generation or more for new ideas to filter in, when urgent change is often needed sooner.

What is it about the Amish?

One of the unexpected, but intriguing outcomes in both the qualitative and quantitative analysis of this study, is the apparent link between some positive indicators and the presence of Amish and Mennonite communities in a particular county. Four of the counties in this study have established or growing Amish and/or Mennonite communities – Washington (mostly Mennonite), Charles and St. Mary’s (Amish & Mennonite), and Cecil (new, mostly Amish). The one set of indicators where the

presence of the Plain Sects shows up clearly is in the people indicators. For example, all four counties saw increases in the farmers under age 35 indicator from 2002 to 2007. Cecil County in 2007 had 28% more farmers than it did in 1978 and Washington County experienced a decrease of less than 4% (compared to the 32% decrease statewide). And while Southern Maryland counties experienced some of the biggest drops in farmers because of development pressures and the tobacco buyout over the 30-year period, St. Mary's with the largest Amish and Mennonite settlement had a 29% drop compared to Calvert County's drop of 57% (with no Plain Sect community).

More importantly is the fact that Amish and Mennonite offer an alternative, yet conservative and reassuringly familiar, cultural road map for re-imagining our agricultural landscapes and economy. As previously noted, in the Charles County comprehensive plan, it states, "The Amish community is an important part of the local agricultural economy, and particularly valuable in that it is less affected by regional and national trends in agriculture compared to the broader agricultural community" (CCPC 2006:9-2). Nowhere does it go on to explore why the Plain Sects are less affected by the regional and national economic trends and what that may mean for other farmers in the region.

The Amish hold a respected, but not uncritical, position in new agrarian writings. In answering Berry's question, "who is the economy for?" the Amish answer is "for our community." Berry (1986:212) writes:

Whereas our society tends to conceive of community as a loose political-economic mechanism of mutually competing producers, suppliers, and consumers, the Amish think of 'the community as a whole' – that is, as all of the people, or perhaps, considering the excellence of both their neighborliness and their husbandry, as all the people and land together. If the community is whole, then it is healthy, at once earthly and holy. The wholeness or health of the community is their standard. And by this standard they have been required to limit their technology.

Noted for their refusal to adopt modern technologies which will disrupt their family and communal values, new agrarian writer Bill McKibben (2003:166-8) ironically argues that the Amish are masters of technology.

The Amish are the most technologically sophisticated people on this continent, the best at picking and choosing among innovations, deciding which ones make sense and which ones don't.... The larger society at the moment has a primitive and superstitious belief that we must accept new technologies, that they are somehow more powerful than we are. Which makes the Amish in some ways the most modern American subculture—far more modern than some fellow with a cell phone who doesn't really like how it changes his life, but has one just because it seems “normal.”

In choosing these two observations about the Amish, I wish to emphasize Gibson-Graham's idea that the dominant narrative in our society is that the economy (and the technology that comes with it) is not within our sphere of decision-making. What the Amish and Mennonite communities show us (and what county planners observe but fail to recognize) is that it is possible for communities to claim agency in determining the rules of the economy. The reason why Charles County's Amish population is “less affected by regional and national trends in agriculture compared to the broader agricultural community” might be that they participate in those trends when it benefits them and develop alternative arrangements when they do not. They are active participants in shaping their shared economy and landscapes.

No, Marylanders do not all need to live like the Amish and Old Order Mennonites in material terms in order to have vibrant, local agricultural landscapes and economies.

However, the way forward in peri-urban agriculture and farmland preservation may be to adopt their “new order” thinking about economic agency and decision-making.

7.3 Future Research

This study has introduced a new term – *commensal landscape* – into the landscape literature. I expect to conduct further theoretical and empirical work on the concept. Other future research plans are likely to result when I send a précis of my findings to the county planning and agricultural economic development offices which participated in this study. I hope to receive useful feedback and constructive criticism which will help me refine my evaluation metric.

7.3.1 Theoretical

As an extension of the new agrarianism push to “put the culture back into agriculture,” further work on emerging new narratives of agriculture, especially in peri-urban areas, will create opportunities to expand on current theories of landscape and the social production of space. Commensal landscapes and economies require new ways of thinking about farms, farmers, and farming that take into account 21st-century realities. For commensalism to exist in a metropolitan environment, farming must be conceived in ways that go beyond the isolated family farm and the farm as an isolated business (sink or swim). Agriculture and food systems have rarely, in the course of human history, been allowed by the state to be completely abandoned to vagaries of the market. In the form of subsidies, market interventions, health and environmental regulations, the state’s presence in agriculture is quite pronounced. Therefore, the dominant discourse of

agriculture that idealizes the self-reliant, family farm is not effective in the highly competitive land markets of metropolitan areas.

In some New England towns, where land use decisions are made at a very local level, farmland has been set aside for “community farms.” Weston, Massachusetts in metro Boston is a well-known example. In Weston, the community farm uses local labor (much of it volunteer) to produce apples, cider, and maple syrup for local consumption. It also runs a vegetable CSA (community-supported agriculture) operation and a farmers’ market. It includes a large educational component (Donahue 1999). In Maryland, the state and county governments have invested significant sums of money to purchase development rights (not the actual land) from farmers. Since 1977, MALPF has spent \$490 million to protect 268,100 acres (MALPF 2008c). Can a model of community farms be adapted to states with land use regulated at the county and state levels? Can the narrative of agriculture as “a way of life” change so that community farms and markets are farmed and staffed by teenagers working after-school, post-retirement seniors, stay-at-home parents, all under the management of a full-time farmer? Will communities be willing to cooperatively take on the risks and benefits of food production? How do current community farms operate and can they serve as new models for local commensalism and landscape preservation?

Finally, planning theory must also be opened up in order to understand where peri-urban agriculture might head in the near future. Zoning laws in the U.S. have continued their attempt to simplify complex places – this area is only residential, this industrial, this agricultural, and this parcel is commercial. For the past decade, landscape planning in Europe has been using the term “multifunctionality” to describe the

countryside – as a site of production, consumption, cultural identity, aesthetics, and ecological services (OECD 2001). In the U.S., there has been a call for scholars, planners and communities to embrace “place complexity,” specifically in suburban areas (Kolb 2008). Kolb launches a defense of suburbia, noting that it is already more complex than its developers envisioned, and that the solution to the problems of suburbia is by making it even more complex.

Some critics seem to be claiming that the only solution to sprawl is to ban it completely: stop all development on farmland, stop building highways, revoke all tax policies that favor sprawl, and implement other all-or-nothing measures. Such critics have little use for attempts to ameliorate sprawl, and nothing to say about already existing suburbs. They resemble those who opposed all attempts to lessen the misery of nineteenth century industrial workers in the hope that increased suffering would push the workers toward total revolution (Kolb 2008:144).

Planning theory currently sees urban development and agriculture in peri-urban areas as a zero-sum game. With urban farms sprouting up across cities in the U.S. by taking over abandoned lots created by human and capital flight (to the suburbs), planning theory needs to move on. Cluster (conservation) developments have been used for some time in smart growth developments – residential units are placed on smaller lots on a given parcel of land in order to allow a certain percentage to remain open space. Will future cluster developments incorporate farms? Perhaps, but only if the discourse of agriculture changes to provide new avenues of research and practice.

7.3.2 Empirical

Several empirical research questions are raised by this study. Do food policy councils (i.e. regional food systems planning) have a positive impact on farmland preservation and agricultural economic development? A comparison between those that

use a commensalist discourse and those that use a more tradition food security discourse would be especially interesting. Alternately, would the commensalist approach by the quasi-governmental Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission be more effective if it also took on the community-based decision making-structure that defines the food policy council approach?

Finally, a study comparing the Southern Maryland experience with the impacts of commensalist approaches to agricultural economic development and landscape preservation in other post-tobacco regions would be informative. Does metropolitan or non-metropolitan location make a difference -- economically and culturally in the success of the approach? Does the structure of the approach matter as much as the discourse (i.e. does a top-down, centralized commensalism undercut the approach)? For example, Kentucky set aside a much greater percentage of its tobacco-award money toward agricultural economic development. Its program set up 118 County Agricultural Development Councils, many of which are working toward “getting a LIFE” -- Local Integrated Food Economy (Plath 2004). Using the experiences in Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina in adopting various levels of commensalism but in different geographic and socio-economic contexts would help shed light on policy effectiveness.

This study’s analysis of peri-urban farmland preservation has joined cultural geography’s ongoing discussion with respect to landscape as symbol, process, discourse, and practice. Working the land for economic advantage, telling stories about it to grandchildren, drafting comprehensive plans in county planning offices, preserving

farmland for aesthetic purposes, or buying from a local vendor at the farmers' market – all of these actions shape the landscape. The tension between the placelessness and cosmopolitanism of urban and suburban food consumers and the groundedness of agrarianism is fertile soil for cultural analysis. Yet, out of this tension, new ties between urban consumers and peri-urban farmers are being created, recreated, and strengthened. The agricultural landscape and economy that results from this interaction will largely depend on the choices made by communities – to envision the economy as a realm of decision-making, to understand landscape as a community process that comes about from common purpose, and to see food-centered reciprocal relationships as a reason to come together at the table.

Appendix A

Open-ended interview questions with county agricultural land preservation and agricultural economic development staff in Maryland. (June – September 2008)

1. In your view, what are the primary objectives of _____ County's agricultural land preservation policies?

2. Which groups does this office view as the primary stakeholders in the farmland preservation?

3. How important are food production goals to the county's farmland preservation efforts?

4. What do you consider to be the most successful aspects of the county's agricultural land preservation programs? Greatest room for improvement?

5. What programs exist to attract new farmers? What about agricultural education opportunities?

Appendix B

***Washington Post* articles used in Chapter Six discourse analysis**

Calvert County

- Allan, Hannah. 1999. Calvert Asks to Borrow 20 Million; Land Preservation Tops Bond Proposal to State. 18 Nov 1999, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M03
- Bombardieri, Marcella. 1999. Tobacco Funds to Help Farmers Grow With Times; Plan Calls for Land Preservation, Transition to New Crops. 18 July 1999, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M01
- Larsen, C. 2006. Letter: Please Don't Pave Paradise. 30 Apr 2006, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T02
- Layton, Lyndsey. 1999a. Calvert Backs Off Tax Plan; Legislators Oppose New Real Estate Levy. 24 Jan 1999, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M03
- _____. 1999b. Calvert Board Considers Tax to Save Land; New Levy on All Properties Would Help Preserve Rural Space. 10 Jan 1999, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M01
- McCaffrey, Raymond. 2003a. Calvert Board Acts to Curtail Growth; Zoning Rules Changes Help Limit Housing. 20 Nov 2003, Southern Maryland Extra p.T01
- _____. 2003b. Moratorium Lawsuit Dropped by Landowner; Commissioners Move on Policy Restrictions. 13 Nov 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T03
- _____. 2003c. Calvert to Process Rural Land Cases; Plaintiff's Preservation Bid on Agenda. 2 Nov 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T03
- _____. 2003d. Litigant Allowed to Preserve Farmland. 26 Oct 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p. T01
- _____. 2003e. Judge Extends the Ruling on Preservation of Farmland. 19 Oct 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T01
- _____. 2003f. Court May Curb Changes to Farm Preservation Law. 16 Oct 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T03
- _____. 2003g. Zoning Revisions Fine-Tuned; Calvert Looks to Slow Rate of Development. 11 Sept 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T03

- _____. 2003h. Preservation Incentive May Hurt Planning Efforts; Calvert Program on Hold for Now. 21 Aug 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T03
- _____. 2003i. Calvert Eyes New Curbs on Growth; Commissioners Seek Stricter Zoning Rules. 10 July 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T03
- _____. 2003j. In Calvert, More Limits on Growth?; Tighter Controls Needed, Commissioners Told. 26 June 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T01
- _____. 2003k. Calvert to Update Growth Plan; Board Expects to Hold Hearing in December. 20 Mar 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, T01
- _____. 2001. Calvert Leads MD with 45% Increase in Population. 22 Mar 2001, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T01
- _____. 2000a. Growers Face Fork in Tobacco Road; Buyout Forces Hard Choices on Farmers. 28 Dec 2000, p.B01
- _____. 2000b. Clash Emerges in Calvert as Rural, Suburban Meet; New Residents Move In, Butt Against Old Ways. 6 Sept 2000, p.B01
- _____. 2000c. Calvert Considers Plan to Preserve Rural Land. 3 Feb 2000, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M03
- McCaffrey, Raymond and Susan Kinzie. 2004. Butcher Coming to Calvert Market. 19 Feb 2004, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T02
- Paley, Amit R. 2004a. Expanding Area Fought to Resist Pace of Change. 20 Dec 2004, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T01
- _____. 2004b. Pipeline Plan Severs Farmers' Faith; Preservation Status Makes Calvert Land More Attractive to Developers. 9 Nov 2004, p.B04
- Prouty, John C. 2000. Local Comment: Preserving Calvert; Land has Value Other than Money. 13 Aug 2000, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M06
- Rucker, Philip. 2007d. End of Era for Maryland Tobacco; Hughesville Auction is Silent for First March Since 1939. 1 Mar 2007, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T01
- Shields, Todd. 1999a. Growers Grim on Crop's Future; MD Farmers Hope for Compensation from Tobacco Settlement. 25 Mar 1999, p.B04
- _____. 1999b. Land May Be Saved as By Product of Town House Rules. 28 Feb 1999, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M03
- _____. 1998. The Open Space Race; Rural Legacy Grants Would Give Counties the Edge in Preserving the Past. 8 Mar 1998, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M03

Trejos, Nancy. 1998. Keeping the Farm in Calvert; Tour Showcases Land Untouched by Builders. 23 July 1998, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M01

Charles County

Editorial. 1998. Preservation Prescience. 24 Aug 1998, p.A18

Kasubick, Sal. 2001. Land Preservation Suffocates Indian Head's Growth. 20 May 2001, p.T20

McCaffrey, Raymond. 2004. New Season for Growth Debates; Charles, Calvert Proposals to Limit Development Resisted. 22 Feb 2004, Southern Maryland Extra p.T01

Partlow, Joshua. 2003. Commissioners Join Rural Zoning Critics. 9 Nov 2003, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T01

Reel, Monte. 2001a. Md. Buys Land on Potomac; Residents Rallied To Preserve Parcel.. 25 Sept 2001, p. B07

_____. 2001b. History Pitted Against Houses; Deal Deemed Threat To Site Where Doctor Tended Lincoln's Killer. 22 May 2001, Metro p.B04

_____. 2001c. Land Trust Negotiates To Buy River Site; Mining Firm May Sell 1,224 Acres. 17 June 2001, p.T01

_____. 2000a. In Quest for Pristine Shore, Md. Must Surmount Mining Venture—and Some Lawmakers' Resistance. 28 Aug 2000, p.B01

_____. 2000b. Indian Head Debate Draws Packed House; Economic, Environmental Concerns Aired at Hearing. 13 July 2000, p.M01

_____. 2000c. Indian Head Sees Doom In Land Preservation Bid; Downzoning Called Threat to Economy. 9 July 2000, p.M01

_____. 2000d. Charles Funds Farm Preservation; \$100,000 Should Double County Inventory in 1 Year. 19 Oct 2000, Southern Maryland Extra p.M01

Rucker, Philip. 2007a. Summit Affirms Charles As Force in Area Economy; Diversity, Defense Industry Called Growth Assets. 25 Oct 2007, Extra p.01

_____. 2007b. Zekiah Easement To Improve Watershed; State Board Approves 19-Acre Deal in Charles. 24 June 2007, Extra p.01

- _____. 2007c. Conservation Boosted by Donations In Charles. 11 Jan 2007, Southern Maryland Extra p. T01
- _____. 2006. Proposal For Mine On Farm Resisted; S. Md. Town Seeks To Save Rural Feel. 5 July 2006, Metro p.B01
- Schneider, Howard. 1990. Md. Plans to Buy, Preserve Parkland; Development Pace in State Prompts Move. 13 Feb 1990, Metro p.F01
- _____. 1988. Increasing Development of Md. Farmland Sparks Concerns. 6 Nov 1988, Metro p.B01
- Shields, Todd. 1999. Land May Be Saved as Byproduct of Town House Rules. 28 Feb 1999, p.M03
- _____. 1998a. Md. Triples Funds for Chapman's Site; \$15 Million Set Aside to Buy Tract From Developers, Glendening Says. 29 Mar 1998, p.M04.
- _____. 1998b. The Open Space Race; Rural Legacy Grants Would Give Counties an Edge in Preserving the Past. 8 Mar 1998, Southern Maryland Extra p.M03
- Trejos, Nancy. 2001. Mining Company Drops Court Challenge. 8 July 2001, p.T01

St. Mary's County

- Editorial. 2004. Protecting Maryland's Land. 29 Nov 2004, p.A18.
- Mangaliman, Jessie. 1999. Delay in Land Use Revision Could Cost St. Mary's Millions. 19 Mar 1999, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M03
- Mosk, Matthew. 2004. Md Contractor Defends Deal as 'Good Deed'; Environment Would Have Benefitted from St. Mary's Plan; Executive Says. 8 Dec 2004, p.B08
- _____. 2004a. Ehrlich Defends Land Sale Initiatives; Parks, Forests Safe, Md Governor Says. 24 Nov 2004, p.B04
- _____. 2004b. Ex-Officials Protested St. Mary's Land Deal; Advisor Warned Ehrlich of Ethical Concerns. 30 Oct 2004, p.B01
- Shields, Todd. 1998. The Open Space Race; Rural Legacy Grants Gives Counties an Edge in Preserving the Past. 8 Mar 1998, Southern Maryland Extra, p.M03
- Trejos, Nancy. 2001. Smarth growth Urged at St, Mary's Summit; Glendening Battles Suburban Sprawl. 8 Mar 2001, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T01

- Wagner, John and Kinzie, Susan. 2004. Possible Land Sale by Md. at Issue; Fiscal Analyst Fears Bad Deal for State. 1 Oct 2004, p.B05
- Zak, Dan. 2006. St. Mary's Buys 169 Acres for Preservation; \$2.5 Million Deal is 1st Step in Bid to Shield Land in Rural South. 13 Aug 2006, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T09
- _____. 2006a. Interest Surges in Saving Land; St. Mary's Seeing Record Requests for Agricultural Use. 18 May 2006, Southern Maryland Extra, p.T03
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