

Planning for Agriculture in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan for Sussex County

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Deputy Secretary

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Presentation

1. Review agriculture goals and objectives in 2018 Comprehensive Plan for Sussex County
2. Look at the benefits of a vibrant agricultural economy
3. Look at the components of Sussex County agriculture
4. Look at what can be done to assure viable agriculture in the future



Comprehensive Plan

Agriculture Goals & Objectives

Preserve and encourage the expansion of the agriculture and silviculture industries in the County

- Encourage the adoption of policies that promote agriculture as an important economic industry
- Promote and retain agriculture in areas with valuable agricultural land or agricultural operations
- Develop and implement long term strategies to rebuild the forestry industry in Sussex County



Comprehensive Plan

Agriculture Goals & Objectives

Preserve and encourage the expansion of the agriculture and silviculture industries in the County

- Create opportunities for new investment in agricultural operations and agricultural support industries
- Promote locally-sourced agriculture and forestry products



Comprehensive Plan

Agriculture Goals & Objectives

Maintain the agricultural land base of the County

- Maintain the amount of land used for agricultural or silvicultural pursuits
- Reduce the challenges placed on farmers by new development
- Increase the acreage of permanently preserved farm and forestland in the County



Comprehensive Plan

Agriculture Goals & Objectives

Work with farmers to incorporate conservation practices

- Recognize and promote the conservation benefits of having land in agriculture and forestry
- Explore new funding mechanisms for conservation in the County
- Continue to support State and County Conservation District efforts to manage stormwater runoff



Comprehensive Plan

Agriculture Goals & Objectives

Develop a better understanding of Sussex County's competitive advantages and how it fits into the regional and national marketplace



Benefits of Agriculture

- Proximity to Market - FoodShed for the Eastern United States
- Exporter of products worldwide
 - Port of Wilmington
 - Poultry, cattle, timber, produce
 - Lots of discussion with African countries
- Strong economic multiplier – 5x to 7x
 - 30,000 jobs in Delaware



Benefits of Agriculture

- Preferred land use
 - 40% of Delaware land is in agriculture
 - 25% of Delaware farmland is permanently preserved; 16% in Sussex County
 - Land in agriculture promotes enhanced conservation practices, open space and wildlife habitat while providing food security for the local community / county / state / country / world



Benefits of Agriculture

- 99% of DE farms are family farms; most are multi-generational
- DE has one of the strongest nutrient management programs in the country and is a leader in environmental stewardship



Specialty Trends

- Buy local – farmers markets, beach towns and restaurants - fruits, vegetables, meats
- Delawareans want healthy food and a connection to their farmers
- Visitors eat healthy at home and look for locally grown produce while on vacation



Specialty Trends

- Agritourism - allows diversification, education
 - *Ice cream, bed & breakfast, corn maze, class trips*
- Niche farms & small fruit and vegetable farms
- Vertical Farming, Hydroponics/Aquaponics
- CSAs
- Urban Agriculture



But...Poultry is still King

- An amazing industry - #1 broiler county in the US
 - Economic engine for Sussex – 70% of gross farm income plus poultry supports corn, soybeans
- Makes grain production economically viable
 - All corn and most of our soybeans go to feed chickens
 - Grain farming on Delmarva would not be feasible without the positive impact of chicken



But...Poultry is still King

University of DE – Lasher Lab & UD Research and Education Center

- World class research facility and laboratory protecting the industry from infectious poultry diseases, making new discoveries in animal welfare and best growing practices and keeping the industry competitive



But...Poultry is still King

- Poultry housing is aging and has been going through a replacement cycle, incorporating new technologies
- Annual production 244.3 million birds – 11th nationally
- Annual production 1.759 billion pounds – 8th nationally
- Good neighbor relations, best management practices, larger setbacks, vegetative environmental buffers, enhanced manure and carcass handling, housing location sensitivity are all receiving utmost consideration



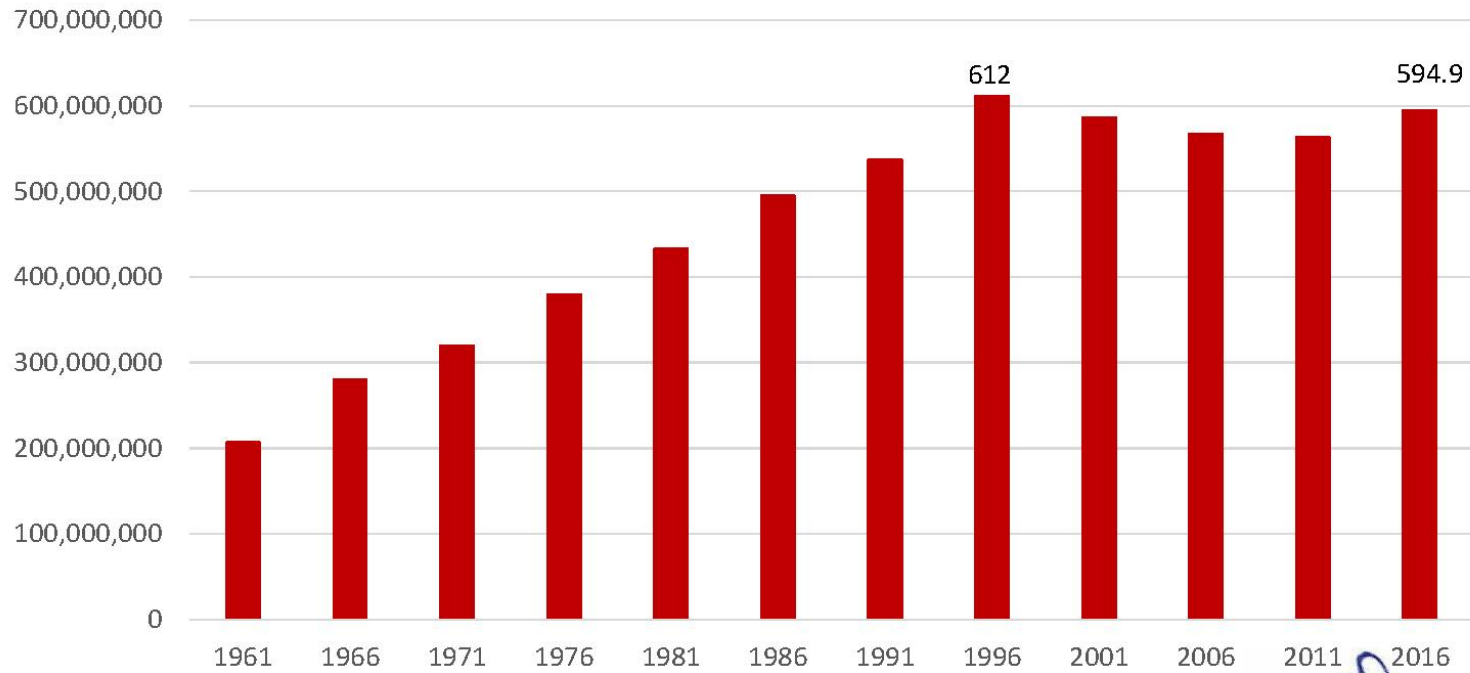
But...Poultry is still King

\$414 million in federal and DE state taxes paid

\$4.649 Billion
Delaware
Total Economic Impact
(2014)



Annual Broiler Production

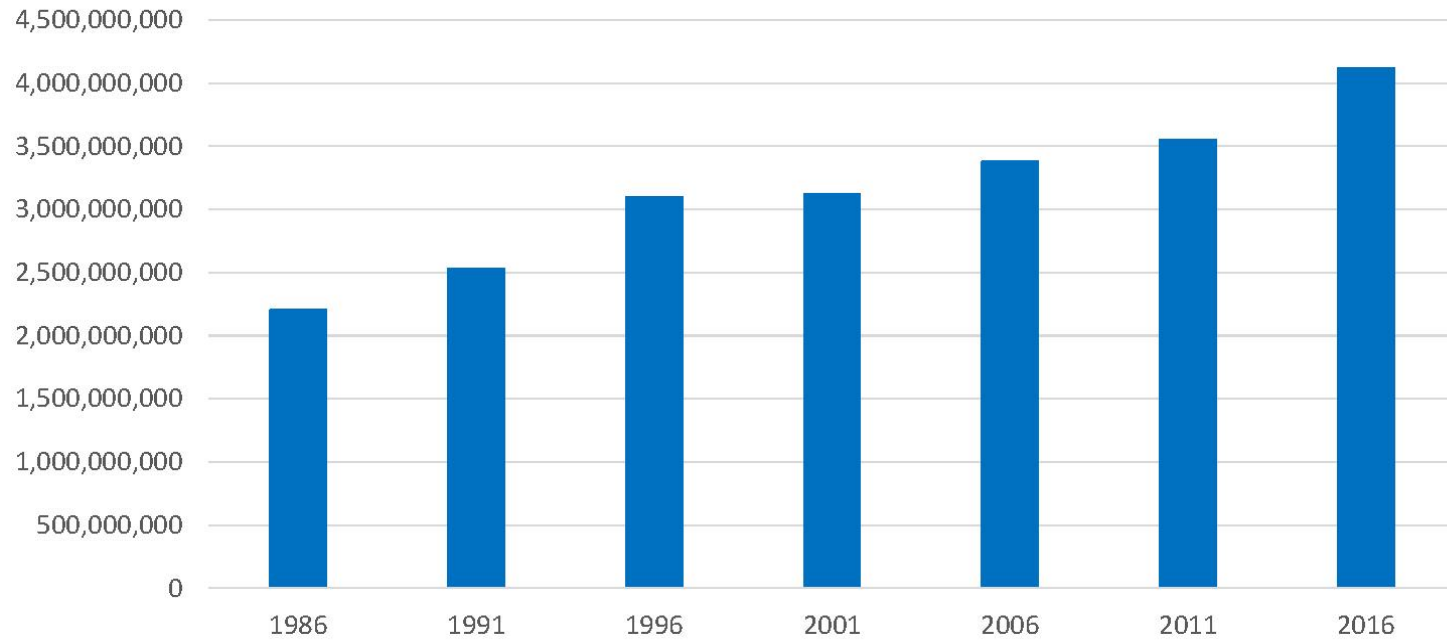


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Data found on website of:
Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.



Total Pounds Produced

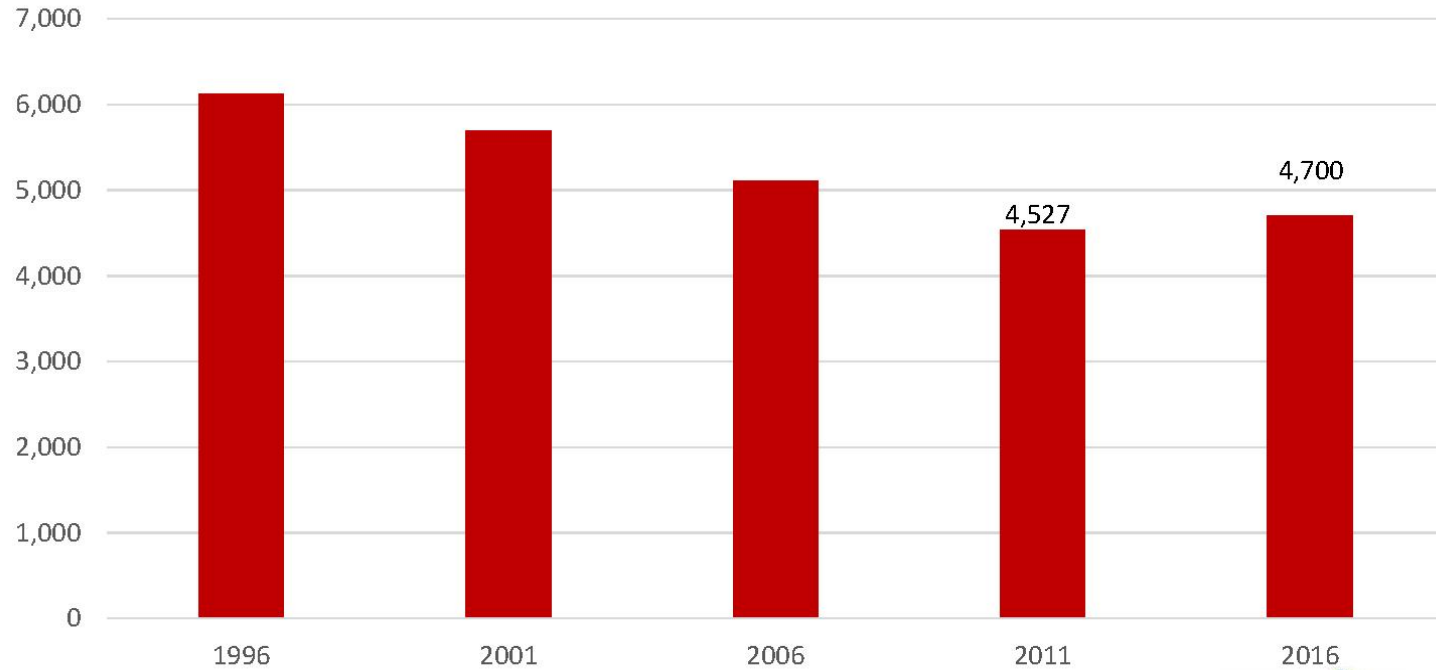


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Data found on website of:
Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.



Number of Houses

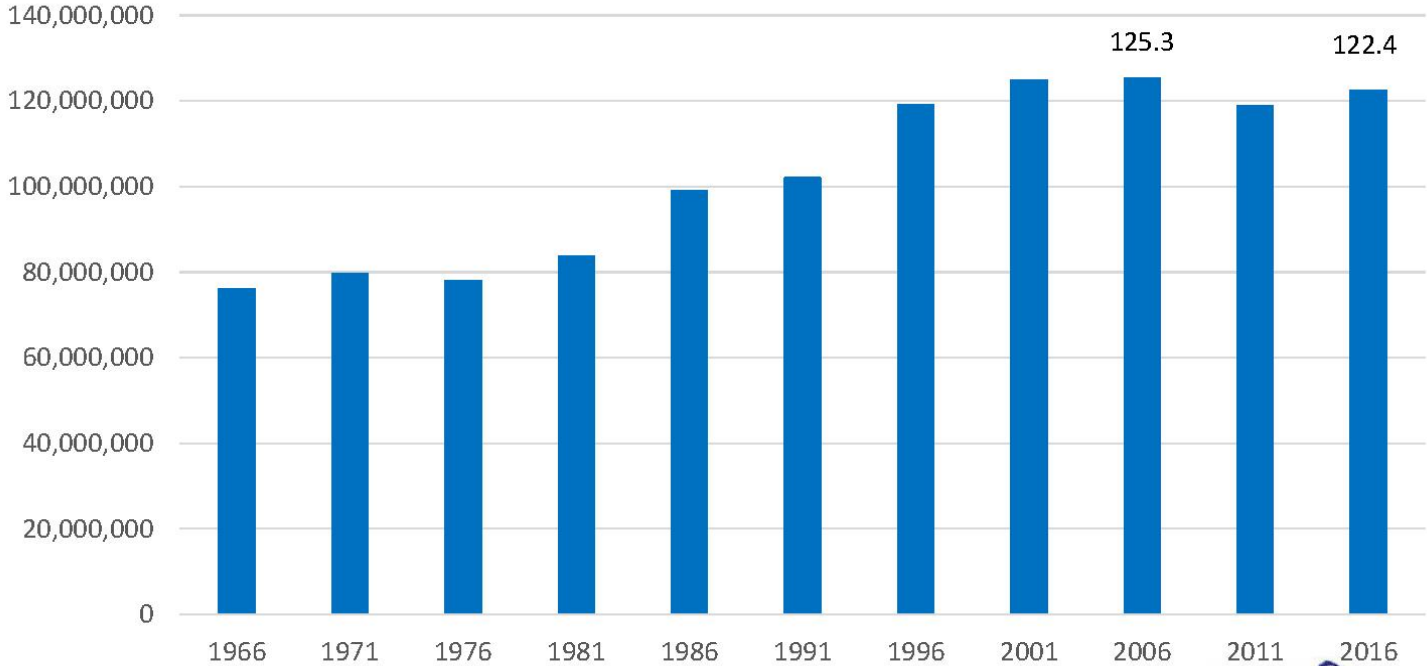


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House Capacity



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***Small and niche farms are increasing in numbers
but...Our larger farms have a huge impact!***

- Larger fruit and vegetable growers and processors provide high quality, fresh, local produce on a large scale, supplying grocery stores in the northeast.
- Delaware is #1 in number of acres of lima beans harvested.
- Larger grain farmer are family farms typically made up of many generations. Their production is needed to feed chickens.



What Can We Do?

- Education of the public
 - Starts with realtors - educate people moving here
 - Sights, sounds, smells, dust, equipment on the road
 - Aerial application, spring field application of manure
 - Animal manure a valuable resource when used appropriately
 - Land application – soil health, water and nutrient retention
 - Transportation – areas low in P and mushroom industry
 - Alternative Uses – composting, anaerobic digestion



What Can We Do?

- Fully fund of agricultural land preservation
- Strong right-to-farm laws
- Protect water rights for farms – vitally important to economic viability - assures yield, nutrient uptake
- Ease the burden of regulation on agriculture while maintaining health, safety and environmental standards



What Can We Do?

- Assure a strong labor force
- Promote robust regional markets & exports
- Support all farms & agribusinesses – large & small
- Cultivate the next generation of farmers
 - Beginning farmer programs, incentives
 - DE Young Farmer Program funding
- Promote new technologies and agricultural research



What Can We Do?

- Agriculture in our schools
 - Every middle school should have an agriscience program
 - Those that choose to go into ag in high school have a strong foundation. Those that don't get an appreciate of where their food comes from.
- Ensure the collegiate curriculum at UD, DSU, and DelTech is meeting the needs of the agriculture workforce



What Can We Do?

An early, draft version of the Economic Development section of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan had this quote:

Larger and more productive farms “has led to NIMBYism and increased conflicts between residents and farmers. The County needs to balance the concerns of residents with needs of one of its most important industries.”



Do We Have the Resolve to Assure Agriculture is Viable in the Future?

You bet we do! But, it will become more and more difficult as more and more people move here and interface with farming practices. We need to step up our game protecting our agricultural heritage and providing for it's promising future.



Thank You!

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