

What Our Region Grows

*A Look at Agricultural Production and Demand
in the
Washington Area Foodshed*

**Prepared for the Region Forward Coalition Meeting
October 26, 2012**



Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Promoting and Protecting Working Lands in the Washington Metropolitan Area

Formed: 2005

The Regional Agricultural Workgroup's key focus is to investigate potential approaches for sustaining an economically viable regional agricultural system through better support of farms, farmers, farm programs and marketing of local agricultural products in the Washington Metropolitan Area.

Members of the Washington Regional Agricultural Workgroup include:

- *Frederick County, MD*
- *Montgomery County, MD*
- *Prince George's County, MD*
- *Loudoun County, VA*
- *Fauquier County, VA*
- *Jefferson County, WV*
- *Fresh Farm Markets*
- *Potomac Vegetable Farms*
- *Piedmont Environmental Council*
- *Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments*



Priorities & Initiatives

- Promote Local Government Ag. Programs & Initiatives
- Cross-Jurisdictional Coordination
- Farm / Farm Market Support
- 2005 & 2010 Agricultural Working Lands Forums
- Regional Agriculture Web Site
www.nationalcapitalfarms.org
- Regional Agricultural Data
- *“What Our Region Grows”* Report (Fall 2012)



-Final Draft-

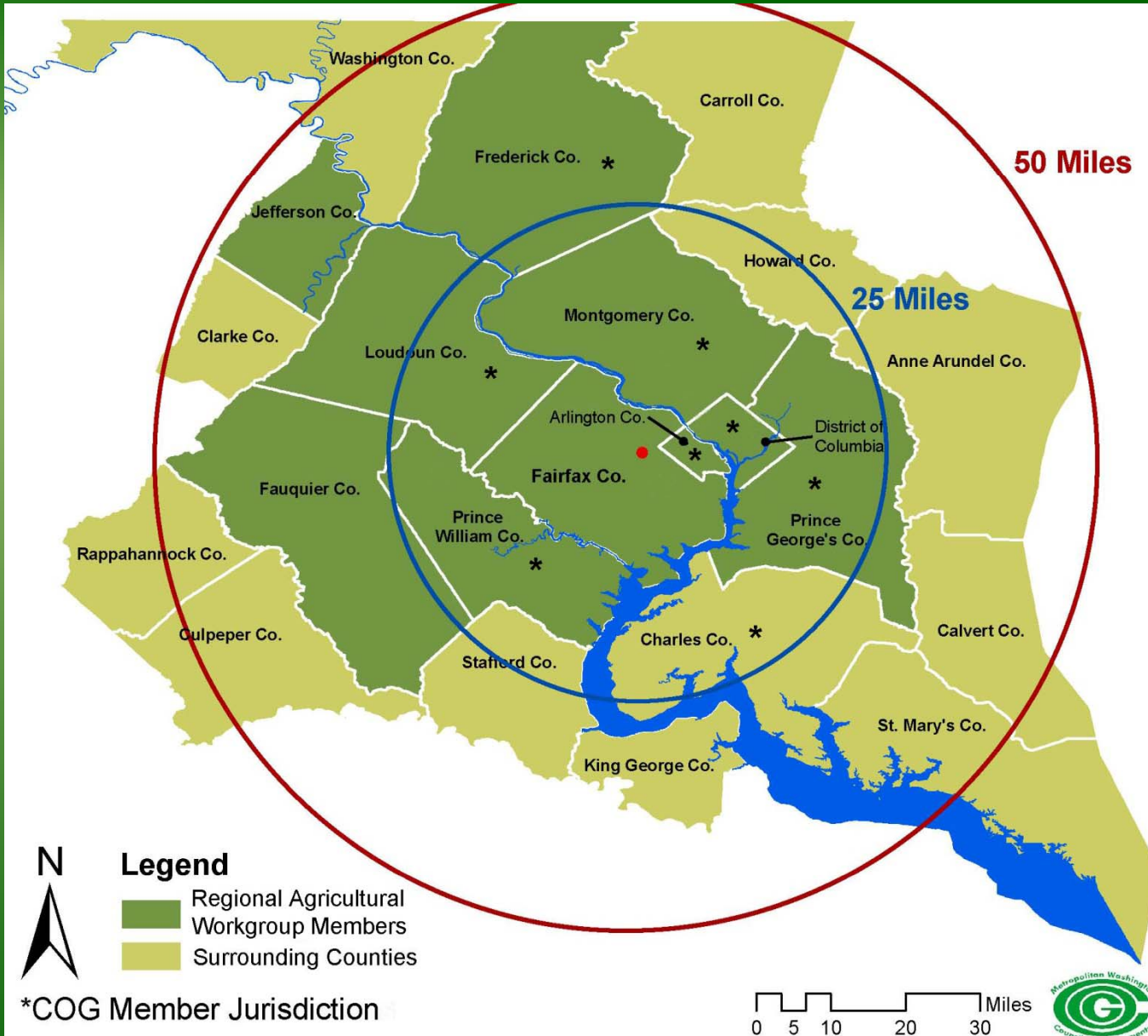
What Our Region Grows:



A look at Agricultural Production and Demand in the Washington Area Foodshed¹

¹Based on the U.S. Food Market Estimator





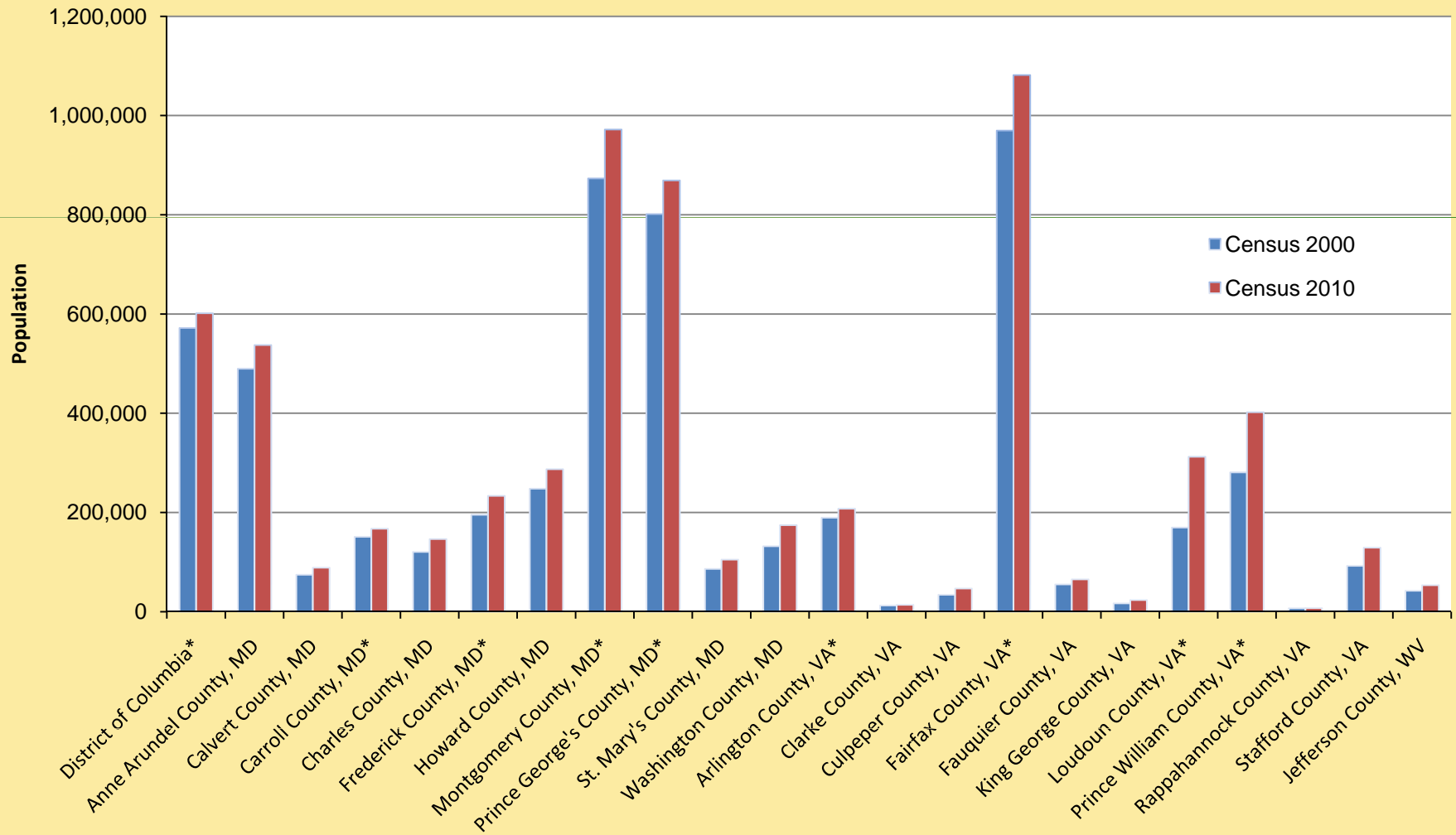
Products delivered to local farmers markets travel an average of 50-75 miles one-way; much of which originates in the twelve counties that surround the 3,600 sq. mi. Metro-region.

Economic Contribution of Agriculture Region - 2007

Crop and Livestock* + Vegetables +
Horticultural + Orchard + Vineyard +
Wineries + Equine
= (one billion dollars) !!!

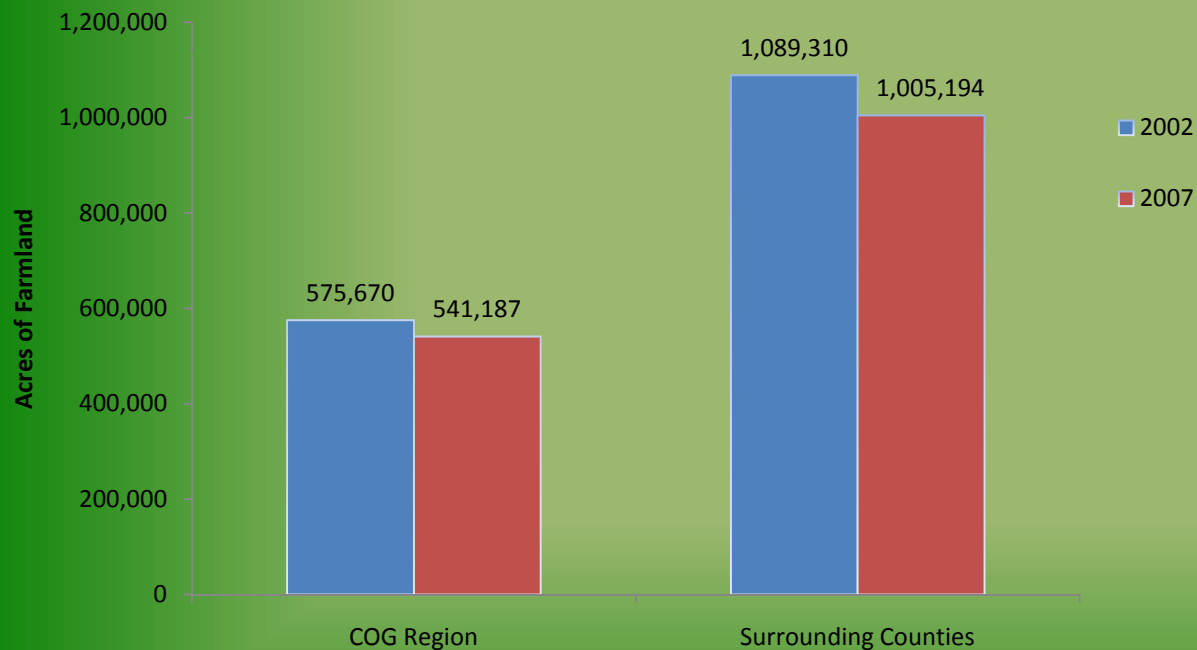
* Livestock production does not include horse boarding facilities.

Regional Population Trends



Land In Farms

Figure 3. Acres of Farmland, 2002-2007



In 2007 1,549,381 acres (28%) of the 5,600,544 acres in the Washington Region were being used for Agriculture

Conclusion

- 2007 – Total of 12,093 Farms in the Washington Region
- Regionally grown products made up less than 1% of the total food sold
- Top five beef-producing states – TX, MO, OK, TN, KY
- Increasing amounts of imported fruits and vegetables (principally from Mexico, Latin American, Canada & China)

Poultry

- 1.5 million acres in the Washington agricultural region is used for growing corn and soybeans
- The Delmarva poultry industry is the largest consumer of these grains, and in 2009 consumed over 98 million bushels
- The Eastern Shore poultry industry supports Western Shore farming

Issues

- High price of land
- Loss of support services (*equipment dealers, meat processing, feed stores*)



Impacts

- Aging farmer population
- Not enough new farmers
- Farmland fragmentation
- Labor (cost, housing & benefits)
- Regulations (environment & health)
- Restrictive zoning
- Water

- ‘Niche’ farming (specialty meats, fruits, vegetables, etc.)
- Local food and wines
- Community supported agriculture (CSA)
- Agritourism

Four counties featured: Montgomery, Frederick, Prince George's & Loudoun

- Challenges, Top Three Lessons Learned and Snapshots

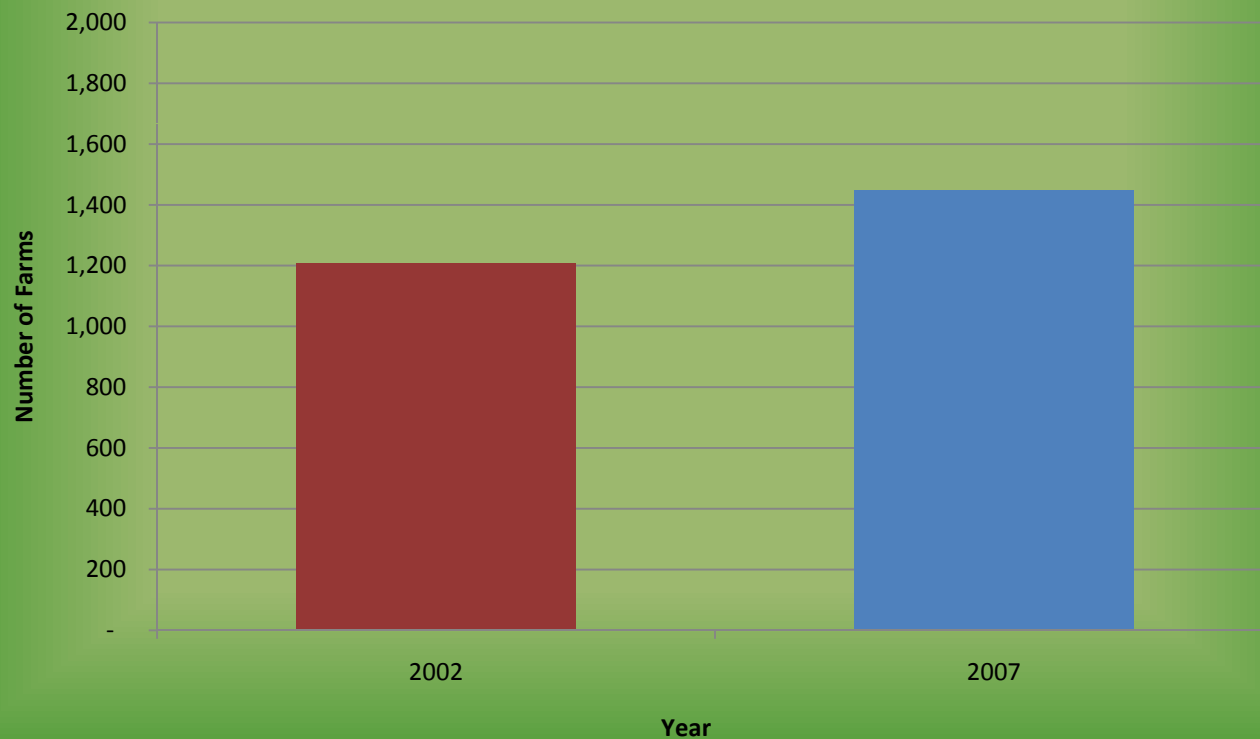
A Snapshot of Montgomery's Rural Economy:

- 561 farms, 27 percent female principal operator
- 71,622 acres of farmland protected
- Expanding hay industry feeding a growing horse population of nearly 10,000 animals
- Over 1.0 million bushels of corn for grain harvested on 12,675 acres
- 279,039 bushels of soybeans harvested on 11,688 acres
- 244,446 bushels of winter wheat grown on 4,161 acres
- 80 beef cattle farms (ranked 8th among all MD counties in 2007)
- 49 fruit, vegetable, and/or nut farms
- Seven sod farms, 150 landscape, arborist, and lawn care businesses
- **Economic contribution to County's economy - \$243,378,896/year**

‘Growing Local’

- Over 150 CSA's in the region, and growing
- Over 100 restaurants serving locally grown food
- From 2002 to 2007, 17% increase in direct to consumer sales

Number of Farms in the Region Reporting Direct to Consumer Sales in 2002 and 2007



Source: USDA NASS Census of Agriculture 2002 & 2007.

Report Recommendations

- Develop a regional strategic agricultural support plan
- Remove / modify regulatory obstacles
- Create farm incubator training and local processing facilities
- Promote farmer-friendly tax incentives
- Maintain adequate funding for agricultural-related support services

Report Recommendations – *Continued*

- Develop new food hub / aggregator opportunities
- Support agriculture in the school curriculum
- Aggressively market local agriculture
- Expand farmer-mentoring and land leasing opportunities
- Make farming-related loans easier to obtain

- Integrate Report with both Region & Economy Forward Initiatives & Committees
- Bring Back Report for CBPC Approval (November 16, 2012)
- Present to the COG Board (January 9, 2013)

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