



**MARBIDCO**  
growing rural ventures™

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## **Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grants Pilot Program Now Open**

**ANNAPOLIS, MD (Feb. 24, 2021)**—The Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) is accepting applications for its new Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Pilot Program.

This program is designed to support the development of a local food aggregation infrastructure in Maryland to help meet current and future wholesale and institutional market demand for locally produced food products. For Fiscal Year 2021, MARBIDCO has available up to \$435,000 available to fund such projects.

Created by the General Assembly in 2020, MARBIDCO's grant program is designed to support a new procurement goal for State agencies and universities to purchase at least 20% of their food from Maryland Certified Local Farm Enterprises. These will be farms that adhere to Maryland's nutrient management requirements and opt to be included on a list that will be maintained by the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Some institutional and wholesale buyers have found it difficult to engage and contract with farmers to meet their local food sourcing needs. The establishment of the new Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program, coupled with the creation and expansion of distributors of local food in Maryland, is designed to connect small farmers with wholesale and institutional buyers to increase sales for farmers.

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The purpose of MARBIDCO's new Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Pilot Program is to create opportunities for small farmers to sell products to wholesale and institutional markets and demonstrate how the investment of funds can help to grow and strengthen Maryland's local food system. The grants will be used to fund projects that help small farmers aggregate their products to make them attractive to the institutional or wholesale buyer and for projects that will help institutional buyers increase their capacity to purchase locally grown food.

Farm products can include fresh food as well as food that has been preserved for out-of-season consumption. It is anticipated that funds will be used to provide financial support to both small-scale and large-scale aggregation projects.

Grants of between \$25,000 and \$100,000 are available for small-scale (farmer-led) projects that include at least three Certified Local Farm Enterprise farmers. Grants of between \$150,000 and \$350,000 are available for large-scale projects led by a public institution that plans to engage with at least three Certified Local Farm Enterprise farmers to purchase locally grown food. (Public institutions can include counties and municipalities, school systems, rural regional councils, and colleges and universities). All projects will require at least a 10% match.

The application deadline for the Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Pilot Program is April 15. Persons interested in applying to this program are encouraged to go to the MARBIDCO website for more details and applications.

Further information about these programs may be obtained by contacting Stacy Kubofcik, Senior Programs Officer, at [skubofcik@marbidco.org](mailto:skubofcik@marbidco.org), calling (410) 267-6807, or by visiting MARBIDCO's website at: [www.marbidco.org](http://www.marbidco.org).

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*MARBIDCO was established by the Maryland General Assembly nearly fourteen years ago to help enhance the sustainability and profitability of the State's agricultural and resource-based industries in order to help bolster rural economies, support locally produced food and fiber products, and preserve working farm and forest land. MARBIDCO is a nimble, quasi-public financial intermediary organization which has a mission to serve exclusively the commercial farming, forestry, and seafood industries of Maryland. Young and*

*beginning farmers are a special focus for MARBIDCO, as is farm operation diversification. In delivering its financing programs, MARBIDCO works cooperatively with commercial banks and Farm Credit Associations, as well as a host of federal, State, regional and local government agencies and universities. Since 2007, MARBIDCO has approved 754 financings totaling nearly \$67 million for food and fiber business projects located in of all Maryland's counties – and in the process has leveraged more than \$157 million in commercial lender financing. For more information about MARBIDCO's programs, please visit: [www.marbidco.org](http://www.marbidco.org).*