

Recent Accomplishments and Activities On Your Behalf

- In response to growing concerns about the health of pollinators and EPA's request of states to develop a Pollinator Protection Plan, the Council led efforts to establish a Virginia Pollinator Protection Strategy. This Strategy will ensure that stakeholders can discuss all aspects of **pollinator health and how the agricultural and green industries use pesticides responsibly**.
- In partnership with commodity organizations the Council achieved passage of legislative updates to ensure that commodity board law was reflective of **current practices and needs for commodity organizations**. We also used this opportunity to educate legislators as to the importance of commodity check-off programs, and the recent successes of these industry-funded programs.
- To recognize families who are committed to long-term forest management, the Council supported the creation of a **Century Forest program**, the first of its kind in the nation. This program is modeled after the Century Farms program to recognize the viability of our family farm and forest landowners.
- After several years of preparation, the Council worked with industry partners and Virginia Tech leadership to secure capital funding for **new and renovated livestock and poultry facilities at Virginia Tech in the 2016 bond package**. We remain committed to working to advance additional investments in agricultural research facilities and cooperative extension resources at our land-grant institutions.
- Working with the Administration and General Assembly, we're focused on maintaining agriculture and forestry as the number one industry in Virginia. In 2016, the approved budget resulted in over **\$6.0 million in additional funding for agriculture and forestry budget items**.
- Key items include full funding of the **Reforestation of Timberlands program** and resources for fire response equipment at DOF. In support of economic development efforts, the AFID (Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development) fund was doubled; additional funds were secured for **international marketing and domestic marketing programs**; and incremental increases for the **weights and measures** program were gained.
- As water quality funding continues to be a priority issue for the Council, we worked with the Administration and General Assembly to secure **\$54 million in Ag BMP cost-share** and over \$7 million in technical assistance from the state budget surplus, the largest single investment in this fund. With increasing pressure from EPA and conservation groups, the Council continues to advocate for **voluntary approaches to meeting water quality concerns**.
- Throughout the year, the Council worked with industry and Administration partners to negotiate updates to the **state noxious weed laws** that protect both commercial production of plant species and natural and agricultural areas from further spread of noxious weeds.
- The Council continues to lead a coalition of several key stakeholders, including food and agricultural interests and the medical community, to successfully preserve Virginia's ability to **maintain important food safety standards** against attempts to undermine the current system, which is science-based and focused on consumer protection.
- We joined forces with other business representatives to defeat state measures that would have jeopardized **Virginia's business-friendly status**. Among others, proposals to increase the state minimum wage beyond the current federal requirements were defeated again in 2016, and a constitutional amendment to protect the Right to Work was approved.
- **Biosolids and industrial residuals are key sources of nutrients** for Virginia's farmers, and in 2016 we worked to **defeat legislation that would have restricted their uses**, including deed restrictions for certain properties. We proactively worked with legislators to pass a study of the biosolids program to address concerns regarding its safety and management.
- The Council continues to engage in the **legal defense of our agribusiness industry**, joining with other organizations to support state permitting programs that have been challenged in state court by environmental organizations. We anticipate finalization of the Biosolids Permitting Regulations court case in the coming year.