



Virginia Poultry Federation

January 2010

Dear General Assembly Members:

As the 2010 session gets underway, I write on behalf of Virginia Poultry Federation (VPF) to wish you a productive legislative session and to share information about the poultry industry in Virginia and our views on several important issues.

Poultry and eggs are Virginia's leading agricultural sector, creating thousands of jobs in rural areas and supporting the livelihoods of farm families that raise chickens, turkeys, and eggs. Farm income generated by poultry industry investment in Virginia helps conserve open spaces by keeping farmland in production. Without this industry, Virginia's rural landscape and character would give way to accelerated development and its associated environmental challenges.

Please continue to partner with us to ensure that poultry continues to be a farmland-preserving, job-creating industry for Virginia. We respectfully ask for your support on the issues described below. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like additional information about these issues or our industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hobey".

Hobey Bauhan, President

Animal Care

- VPF supports responsible use of animals for human purposes, such as food and fiber, and believes animal care decisions must be based on scientific knowledge and professional judgment.
- VPF opposes state and local actions which are burdensome, unreasonable, and not based on scientific research and that adversely impact animal agriculture producers.
- VPF opposes further expansion of animal care investigations by untrained, unsupervised citizen volunteers.

Environmental Issues

- VPF supports the application of scientific research, innovative technology, and cost-effective best management practices to restore the Chesapeake Bay and protect the health of Virginia's rivers and streams. Strict caps, inflexible deadlines, unrealistic assumptions, and burdensome regulations are counterproductive to better water quality and damaging to Virginia's economic health.

- The Bay Model must account for all agricultural BMPs, not just those mandated or supported by government cost-share programs. Rather than computer modeling, peer reviewed scientific research must be the basis for Bay cleanup efforts.
- VPF supports sufficient funding for the Agricultural BMP Cost-share Program and adequate resources for soil and water conservation districts to administer cost-share and technical assistance.
- VPF supports streamlining and simplifying DCRs' nutrient management program to make it more user-friendly and realistic in order to meet the Commonwealth's expanding needs in this area. DCR should focus budget cuts in the central office and maintain adequate regional nutrient management plan writing staff.
- VPF supports policies that maintain poultry manure (litter) as a valuable organic source of essential plant nutrients for Virginia's crop, hay, and pasture land. VPF opposes policies that unnecessarily restrict traditional uses of poultry litter without a sound scientific basis and consideration of economic impacts.
- VPF supports maintaining state primacy over permitting of poultry and livestock farms, and opposes efforts to subject Virginia farms to federal point source discharge permits in the absence of such a discharge.
- VPF supports increasing Virginia's and the nation's energy independence through environmentally sound extraction of domestic coal, oil, and natural gas; renewable energy that does not threaten availability of an affordable supply of crops for food production; and energy conservation.
- VPF supports research and development to commercialize technology to utilize poultry litter for energy production and other alternative beneficial uses.
- VPF opposes climate change policies that drive up the cost of energy and place the Commonwealth and the nation at a competitive disadvantage.

Funding for Land Grant Mission and VDACS

VPF supports adequate funding for programs that advance research, education, and extension at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University as well as for Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to support programs in animal health, including testing for avian influenza, and other agency operations.

Freedom of Information

VPF supports amendments to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act that prevent disclosure of proprietary information, including: the content of nutrient management plans, premise and animal identification, investigative reports, testing results, and records related to catastrophic events and losses impacting the agribusiness industry.

Immigration Reform

VPF supports policies that create an affordable and accessible workforce, including legal foreign workers, for the agribusiness industry. VPF opposes state and local employment requirements, procedures, or penalties that create additional burdens or duplicative processes for employers, exceed federal requirements or are pre-empted by federal law, or would adversely impact businesses acting in good faith to comply with federal immigration laws.

National Animal Identification System (NAIS)

VPF supports participation by the Commonwealth in USDA's NAIS provided that producer data and information are adequately protected.

Rail

VPF supports a viable, responsive rail transportation system that provides competitive rates for transportation of agricultural commodities, supplies, and finished products. VPF also supports state programs and investments that support Virginia's rail infrastructure.

Regulatory Reform

VPF supports a state program to ensure thorough analysis and consideration of the full economic costs of new regulatory legislation and agency regulations.

Truck Restrictions

VPF opposes unreasonable bans, restrictions, and selective tolls on commercial truck traffic. VPF strongly opposes tolls on Interstate 81, which could add substantially to the poultry industry's cost of operating in the Shenandoah Valley and threaten the Valley's viability as a poultry-producing region.

Tax Policy

VPF supports preservation of agricultural tax exemptions and credits, elimination of machinery and tools taxes, maintaining local land use taxation, and reducing localities' dependence upon real estate taxes.

User Fees - VPF opposes the imposition of taxes disguised as user fees to fund mandatory regulatory programs designed to benefit society as a whole

Workers' Compensation

VPF supports the existing framework of Virginia's workers' compensation law and opposes any changes that will undermine the basic concept and sound balance of this law, such as broadening conditions not clearly arising out of and in the course of employment.

Youth Education

VPF supports Ag in the Classroom, 4-H, FFA, and the Governor's School for Agriculture.

Virginia Poultry Industry Facts and Figures

Virginia's poultry and egg industries have a major economic impact.

6 poultry processing companies employ about 9,000 people

- Cargill
- George's Foods
- Pilgrim's Pride Corporation
- Perdue Farms
- Tyson Foods
- Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative, Inc.
- Every processing job creates 7.2 jobs outside of the poultry industry.

Supports livelihood of more than 1,000 farm families

- More than 275 turkey farms
- More than 780 chicken farms

Contributed \$911,430,000 to Virginia's economy in 2008

- Broiler chickens - \$563,175,000
- Turkeys - \$271,152,000
- Eggs - \$77,103,000

In 2008, Virginia farmers produced:

- 250,300,000 broiler chickens (ranks 9th nationally)
- 1,251,500,000 pounds produced
- 18,000,000 turkeys (ranks 5th nationally)
- 484,200,000 pounds produced
- 726,000,000 eggs (ranks 29th nationally)

Virginia's poultry industry is helping to meet growing nutritional needs in the U.S. and around the world.

- Per capita U.S. poultry meat consumption has risen from 34 pounds in 1960 to 98.6 pounds today.
- The United States exports about 16 percent of chicken and about 7 percent of turkey produced in the nation.
- Significant chicken export markets include Russia, China/Hong Kong, Mexico, Japan and Korea.
- Significant turkey export markets include Mexico, Russia, South Korea, China/Hong Kong, and the Caribbean.