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For immediate release

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Note: Interviews are available with Maryland Farm & Harvest Series Producer/Director Joe Ligo. In addition, episode photos and the series logo can be found at this link.

MPT’s Maryland Farm & Harvest tackles COVID-19’s impacts on Maryland agriculture and farmers during special June 16 episode

OWINGS MILLS, MD – Maryland Public Television’s (MPT) popular original series Maryland Farm & Harvest takes a look at impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on farmers and agriculture-related businesses in Maryland during an episode airing on MPT-HD at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 16.

During this special episode, the first in the series’ history, viewers will see how the global pandemic is affecting Maryland farms, how farmers are working hard to keep crops safe and plentiful, and how some farms are adapting and even thriving in the challenging conditions of recent months.

Maryland Farm & Harvest takes viewers on journeys across the state, telling stories about the farms, people, and technology required to sustain and grow Maryland’s number one commercial industry: agriculture. Series producers, who have traveled to more than 300 farms over the course of seven seasons, are well equipped to tell stories about the impacts of the pandemic on the region’s farmers.

Much of the episode was produced using social distancing procedures. Producers conducted interviews via video chat, farmers supplied photos and video, and a limited amount of field production was done while applying health and safety precautions.

The Maryland Farm & Harvest: Agriculture and COVID-19 special episode features these segments:

- **How COVID-19 is affecting large grain, poultry, and dairy farms.** During this segment, the series checks in with grain farmer Jason Scott of Walnut Hill Farms in Dorchester County, who is keeping an eye on volatile commodity markets and world trade as he forges ahead with planting. Next, viewers hear from poultry farmer Jenny Rhodes of Deerfield Farm in Queen Anne’s County and Katie Dotterer-Pyle of Cow Comfort Inn Dairy in Carroll County about supply chain problems that are causing costly bottlenecks for both milk and meat production.
COVID-19 and food safety. In this segment, Maryland Farm & Harvest connects with Graul’s Market in Anne Arundel County to see how local farms are supplying fresh produce to keep grocery store shelves full, even as consumer buying habits rapidly change. From there, Ashley Genova of Godfrey’s Farm in Queen Anne’s County explains how sanitation regulations that farmers have been following for years are helping keep food safe.

COVID-19 and direct farm sales. “The Local Buy” segment host Al Spoler visits Waverly Farmers Market in Baltimore City to learn how markets are adapting to social distancing rules so they can still provide residents healthy, farm-fresh food. Al then talks to David and Emily Hochheimer from Black Rock Orchard in Carroll County to find out how the pandemic has affected their fruit sales. Next, Tony Brusco of South Mountain Creamery in Frederick County explains how the number of customers using his dairy and meat delivery service has doubled, causing him to expand his business to meet demand.

The episode ends with a special tribute video to farmers, acknowledging and thanking them for their hard work as they carry out the essential job of feeding the people of Maryland.

Maryland Farm & Harvest airs on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. on MPT-HD and is rebroadcast on Thursdays at 11:30 p.m. and Sundays at 6 a.m. Each show also airs on MPT2/Create® on Fridays at 7:30 p.m. Episode segments are made available for streaming on the series’ YouTube channel, and full episodes can be viewed online for free on the MPT app and at https://video.mpt.tv/show/maryland-farm-harvest/.

Viewers can join the conversation on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and by using the hashtag #MDFarmHarvest.

Agriculture is Maryland’s largest commercial industry, contributing more than $17 billion in revenue to the state each year. More than two million acres of land is used for farming, making up 40% of total land in Maryland. As of 2017 the Free State had more than 12,400 farms, and agricultural businesses employ 350,000 Marylanders. Additional farming data is available on the Maryland Department of Agriculture website at https://bit.ly/2MIWkSK.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture is MPT’s co-production partner for Maryland Farm & Harvest. Major funding is provided by the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board.

Additional funding is provided by Maryland’s Best; the Maryland Agricultural Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation; MidAtlantic Farm Credit; the Maryland Department of Agriculture; the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation; Rural Maryland Council; and the Maryland Soybean Board.

Other support comes from the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts; Wegmans Food Markets; the Maryland Nursery, Landscape & Greenhouse Association; the Maryland Seafood Marketing Fund; the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service; the Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.; the Maryland Farm Bureau; The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment; Mar-Del Watermelon Association; Eddie Mercer Agri-Services, Inc.; and Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (a division of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland).

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About MPT
Launched in 1969 and headquartered in Owings Mills, MD, Maryland Public Television is a nonprofit, state-licensed public television network and member of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). MPT’s six transmitters cover Maryland plus portions of contiguous states and the District of Columbia. Frequent winner of regional Emmy® awards, MPT creates
local, regional, and national television shows. Beyond broadcast, MPT’s commitment to professional educators, parents, caregivers, and learners of all ages is delivered through year-round instructional events and the super-website Thinkport, which garners in excess of five million page views annually. MPT’s community engagement connects viewers with local resources on significant health, arts, education, and public interest topics through year-round outreach events, viewer forums, program screenings, and phone bank call-in opportunities. For more information visit mpt.org.