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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 during special December 15 episode

Episode is first of two-part series exploring the pandemic’s impact on Maryland agriculture

OWINGS MILLS, MD – Maryland Public Television’s (MPT) popular original series Maryland Farm & Harvest, now in its eighth season, takes a look at impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on farmers and agriculture-related businesses in Maryland during a special episode airing on MPT-HD at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, December 15.

The series takes viewers to sites in Anne Arundel, Carroll, Dorchester, Frederick, and Queen’s counties, as well as Baltimore City, where they’ll see how the pandemic is affecting Maryland farms, learn about strategies farmers are employing to keep crops safe and plentiful, and find out how some farms are adapting and even thriving during the challenging conditions of recent months. A follow-up episode in this two-part series airs on January 26, 2021.

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. During this segment, Maryland Farm & Harvest connects with Graul's Market in Anne Arundel County to see how local farms are suppling 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 see how markets are adapting to social distancing rules so they can still provide healthy, farm-fresh food. Al talks to David and Emily Hochheimer at 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, moving 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 Tuesdays at 7 p.m. on MPT-HD and via livestream at mpt.org/anywhere/live-stream-mpt/. Encore broadcasts are available on MPT-HD at 11 p.m. on Thursdays and 6 a.m. on Sundays. Episodes also air on MPT2/Create® at 7:30 p.m. on Fridays.

Series host Joanne Clendining, who recently earned her second Emmy® award from the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for her work on Maryland Farm & Harvest, returns for season eight.

Nearly 10 million viewers have tuned in to Maryland Farm & Harvest since its 2013 debut. The series, has taken MPT viewers to more than 360 farms, fisheries, and other agriculture-related locations during its first seven seasons, covering every Maryland county, as well as Baltimore City and Washington, D.C. Past episodes can be viewed at video.mpt.tv/show/maryland-farm-harvest/ while episode segments are available on the series YouTube channel at youtube.com/c/MarylandFarmHarvest/featured.

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, Maryland Agricultural Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (Marbidco), MidAtlantic Farm Credit, Rural Maryland Council, Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), Maryland Soybean Board, Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts, Wegmans Food Markets, Maryland Nursery, Landscape & Greenhouse Association, Seafood Marketing Advisory Commission, Maryland Farm Bureau, and The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment.

Other support comes from Mar-Del Watermelon Association, Eddie Mercer Agri-Services, Inc., and Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation.

About Maryland Public Television
Maryland Public Television (MPT) is a statewide, public-supported TV network and Public Broadcasting Service member offering entertaining, educational, and inspiring content delivered by traditional broadcasting and streaming on TVs, computers, and mobile devices. A state agency, it operates under the auspices of the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission. MPT creates local, regional, and national content and is a frequent winner of regional Emmy® awards. MPT’s commitment to educators, parents, caregivers, and learners of all ages is delivered through instructional events and Thinkport.org. MPT’s year-round community engagement activities connect viewers with resources on a wide range of topics. For more information visit mpt.org.