

Helping Farmers Expand Composting in the County

Source: mocofoodcouncil.org

Published: December 9, 2015

by Montgomery County Food Council

Did you know that food scraps account for approximately 23% of the County's overall waste stream? And did you know that there are new state standards that allow farmers to use food scraps to make compost? That's o.k. if you didn't know...most County residents, and many farmers, don't know about this new opportunity to use food waste to produce a valuable soil amendment.



That's why, on December 3rd, 2015, the Food Council Environmental Impact Working Group (EIWG) held a public meeting at the Agricultural History Farm Park in Derwood, MD. The program, entitled *On-Farm Composting in Montgomery County: Opportunities, Resources, and Challenges*, brought together over 30 farmers, County government staff and officials, representatives from non-profit organizations and businesses to learn about the background and details of the new Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) composting facility regulations



Jeremy Criss, Montgomery County Economic Development, Chief, Agricultural Services; Brenda Platt, Co-Director of the Institute for Local Self Reliance; Alan Pultyniewicz, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection; and Kaley Laleker, MDE Land Management Administration Special Assistant, provided informative presentations on the benefits of composting to divert valuable organic resources from our waste stream and how farmers can help the County achieve its waste reduction goals.



Roger Berliner, Montgomery County Councilmember, gave the luncheon address and reflected on his role in in partnering with the Food Council's Environmental Impact Working group to ensure that the Zoning Text Amendment 13-04 Zoning Rewrite included composting of food waste and allowing for materials generated from off the farm to be transported to the farm for composting, as well as his ongoing support of the agricultural community in Montgomery County.

A partner of the Food Council, [Community Food Rescue](#), was highlighted as another opportunity for farmers to contribute to food waste reduction and fight hunger by using the online system to donate any excess produce.



During a working lunch, over 75 attendees discussed the challenges and benefits of implementing the new regulations and they assessed the need for additional support and training to expand on-farm composting. Farmers who attended the meeting were grateful for the briefing and had many suggestions for additional ways the Food Council can support their efforts to compost.

Over the next month, the EIWG will be analyzing the data and feedback collected during the meeting and developing plans for the next phase of this project. For more information on the EIWG, this meeting and to get involved, go to the [EIWG Page](#).
