**Agribusiness Natural Resources & Water Supply Concerns**

Farmers, foresters and agribusinesses rely on Virginia’s natural resources for their livelihood and are fully committed to ensuring these resources are available for future generations.

***Water Use, Management Policy and Water Rights***

* The Council supports sound water use policy planning that fairly and equitably addresses water uses, water rights of landowners, and water restrictions during times of drought.
* The Council supports the protection of water rights for agriculture and turf operations and opposes withdrawal regulations or laws that result in adverse financial or operational impacts.
* The Council supports policies that encourage the appropriate use and management of water resources, including the reclamation of water for irrigation and industrial purposes.

*Over the past two years, water supply/quantity issues have become an increasing concern for regulators, especially in eastern Virginia. Access to water sources, ground and surface, are critical for the entire agribusiness industry, from production to processing to turf and nurseries. Current water policy places the first priority for water use on human consumption, but the balance with the consumption of water for the production of food and fiber products also needs to be a high priority. The Eastern Virginia Ground Water Advisory Council report is due at the end of 2017, and further action may be anticipated in 2018 to address this issue.*

***Land Application (Biosolids and Industrial Residuals)***

* The Council supports land application, such as of biosolids and industrial residuals, and its regulation only at the state level. Current land application regulations are balanced, efficient and effective, based on sound science, and protective of both the environment and property rights of landowners utilizing these nutrients.
* The Council supports adoption of county ordinances for testing and monitoring and appropriate training of local monitors to facilitate local participation in the testing and monitoring provisions of land application programs.

*The land application of biosolids and agriculture and forestry residues (otherwise known as industrial residuals) has been accepted practice in Virginia agriculture for decades. These products provide a valuable source of organic nutrients to producers, and are heavily regulated by DEQ to protect both the environment and human health. The regulations in place now thoroughly address the agronomic, environmental, public health, and nuisance concerns that have evolved over time.*

***Pollinator Health***

* The Council supports VDACS working with agribusiness stakeholders to determine Virginia Pollinator Protection Strategy in order to ensure healthy pollinator populations without overly burdensome regulation.

*Pollinators play a critical role in our agribusiness economy and natural environment. Over the past several years, there has been a greater concern about the health and population of pollinators, particularly “managed pollinators” or bees. The agribusiness industry supports the* ***Virginia******Pollinator Protection Strategy*** *passed in 2016**to address best management practices between beekeepers and farmers, landowners, and pesticide applicators, identify further research needs to advance pollinator health, and address the need for diverse pollinator habitats.*

January, 2017

*“We Represent Virginia Agribusiness with a Unified Voice”*

*For more information, please contact us at vac@va-agribusiness.org*