

Maryland Growers Might Benefit from Farm Energy Efficiency Loan Fund

A Rural Business Energy Efficiency Improvement Loan Fund has been established by the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) to help farms install equipment or make operational improvements that reduce the consumption of energy.

This new “micro” loan program is being offered thanks to financial support provided by the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA). This program is also designed to complement existing farm energy audit and energy efficiency incentive programs being offered by MEA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service and MARBIDCO, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the Maryland R C & D Councils, and the private technical assistance provider EnSave.

This loan program helps with the purchase and installation of equipment or technology related to lowering energy consumption by providing timely and below-market-rate financial assistance to farmers. The goal of the program is to help rural businesses significantly reduce their energy consumption while at the same time helping to increase profitability over the long term.

Loans through this program should be useful for farmers that are implementing the recommendations contained in an energy audit report. A copy of a report provided by a qualified third-party energy audit consultant is required to be submitted to MARBIDCO with an application, as well as a referral from commercial lender. The minimum loan amount is \$5,000 and the maximum is \$15,000.

The interest rate charged for these micro loans is just 4% (APR), and the loans are being made on an unsecured basis to help keep borrower transaction costs down. A credit score of at least 650 is required of the business owner, with no recent history of bankruptcy. For more information, contact Kristen Robinson, MARBIDCO Financial Programs Officer, at 410-267-6807, or visit MARBIDCO on the web at: www.marbidco.org.