

# Agriculture and Forestry

The approved amendments for the Agriculture and Forestry secretariat include \$747,559 in additional general fund dollars. When compared to current legislative appropriations, these additional amounts result in a total general fund appropriation of \$97.2 million.

The largest single spending item is \$377,251 GF for the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Forestry to upgrade communication links and database systems. Other amendments totaling \$390,040 GF provide general fund support for new positions in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Funding of \$250,000 GF is provided for plant pest control affecting Asian soybean rust and Hydrilla. The largest savings item is a reduction of \$372,732 in general fund support for the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, a technical adjustment to the Department's base budget.

- **Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**
  - ***Regional Animal Health Laboratories.*** Provides \$73,986 GF in the first year and \$58,265 GF in the second year to upgrade the communication links between the labs and central office. Failure to complete the upgrade jeopardizes the laboratory information management system (LIMS) which collects \$900,000 in revenue annually.
  - ***Grain Marketing Services.*** Provides \$111,040 GF in the second year to increase inspection and certification services of Virginia grains and soybeans. The dollar value of grain exported out of Virginia in the past year is \$200 million.
  - ***Wine Distribution Services.*** Includes \$280,000 GF and \$23,125 NGF in the second year and two full-time positions for the department to establish and operate a nonprofit, nonstock corporation. The corporation would provide wholesale wine distribution services for Virginia wineries and farm wineries in accordance with Senate Bill 1413 of the 2007 Session.
  - ***Asian Soybean Rust Monitoring.*** Includes \$50,000 GF in the second year for additional early detection and monitoring programs for Asian soybean rust. The fungus was identified in Virginia last October, and can reduce soybean yields by as much as 80.0 percent if left uncontrolled. Soybeans are the Commonwealth's largest export crop.
  - ***Hydrilla Control.*** Provides \$200,000 GF in the second year to support the control of Hydrilla and other aquatic weeds on Lake Gaston, the Potomac River and other bodies of water.
  - ***Rent Support.*** Provides \$77,000 GF in the second year to support the department's rent. The base budget amounts for the department's state-owned and leased space were not adequately funded in the introduced budget.

- *Land Conservation.* Budget language included in the appropriations for the Department of Conservation and Recreation directs that agency to transfer \$3.6 million GF in FY 2007 and \$700,000 GF in FY 2008 to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The money would establish a state fund to match local government purchases of development rights for the preservation of working farms and forests.

- **Department of Forestry**

- *Integrated Forest Information Resources System.* Provides \$245,000 GF in FY 2008 to complete Phase 2 and begin Phase 3 of the development of a new information technology system. The new system will increase the department's productivity in efforts to predict, fight and control wildfires as well as inspect tree harvest operations and better manage its databases.