



Promoting the stewardship and wise use of the Commonwealth's forest resources for the economic and environmental benefits of all Virginians.

Special Announcement - Governor McAuliffe Announces
Agriculture and Forestry Industries Have \$91 Billion
Economic Impact in Virginia

July 19, 2017

Good morning VFA members and friends,

Yesterday evening, Governor Terry McAuliffe announced that a new comprehensive study shows **Virginia's agriculture and forestry industries contribute \$91 billion annually to the Commonwealth's economy**. This represents a 30 percent increase from the most recent study, released in 2013, which showed an annual economic impact of \$70 billion.

"I am excited to see the agriculture and forestry industries have significantly increased their economic impact in just four years," Governor McAuliffe said. "As the Commonwealth's first- and third-largest private industries, agriculture and forestry play a vital role in the new Virginia economy. This is the kind of growth we are looking for in Virginia to keep us as the top state to do business in, a leader in export and trade, and a top destination for visitors who seeking out our agritourism venues and our state's natural beauty."

The total employment impact of these industries also increased by approximately seven percent, from 414,700 to 442,200 jobs, representing approximately nine percent of total employment in the Commonwealth.

The study was led by Dr. Terry Rephann of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia. It found that agriculture accounts for \$70 billion of the \$91 billion total, and **forestry contributes \$21 billion**. Other related activities such as recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, ecosystems services, agritourism, wine tourism, equestrian events, and agricultural festivals were not included in this study, but would add significantly to the total economic impact figure. For example, a Virginia Tech study released in April found that agritourism alone contributes \$2.2 billion annually to the state's economy and a study released in January 2017 noted that the wine industry contributes \$1.37 billion each year.

"This new study shows significant growth for our industry, and we will do everything we can to assure that this upward trend continues," added Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Basil I. Gooden. "A key part of that endeavor will include helping Virginia farmers and forest managers find new markets for their products and move more of their products into the global marketplace. The agriculture sector is benefitting from increased international exports, rapid growth of traditional poultry and beef product markets, and the expansion of specialty industries that range from craft beverage producers to shellfish aquaculture. A recovery in the housing market, increasing international exports of lumber and other wood products, and new markets for wood-based fuels such as biomass and wood pellets are contributing to a revival in the forestry sector."

In addition to tangible benefits such as cash receipts and jobs, agriculture and forestry landscapes provide substantial environmental and other societal benefits. Rural landscapes provide scenic

amenities that contribute to the quality of life. Forests improve air and water quality, mitigate flood vulnerability, provide wildlife habitat and aid biodiversity. A full copy of the study is available [here](#).

VFA Executive Director Paul Howe attended yesterday's announcement. "VFA has supported the efforts of Dr. Rephann and the Weldon Cooper Center in conducting this study as it is important to keep track of the impacts and growth of our industry," said Howe. "I am encouraged by the overall growth as well as forestry's impact specifically, from \$17 billion to \$21 billion in four years. VFA is grateful for the work of our members contributing to this great success and is proud to represent our industry."

Thank you,

Your friends at VFA

For more information on forestry news or other legislative items, and if you have any questions about VFA's representation of forestry interests at the General Assembly, please contact [Executive Director Paul Howe](#).



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