



### Source Notes

Sources of information for this report in most cases are noted within the text or below the charts. For Principle 1, however, with its more detailed analysis, sources are described below in greater detail. Unless noted otherwise, figures are not adjusted for inflation (Agricultural Census or forestry data).

#### Agriculture:

Agricultural Census: 1987, 1992, 1997.

The Economic Position of Virginia Agriculture: Mid-1990s, Special Report by Virginia's Rural Economic Analysis Program, March 1996, by Wayne Purcell. (Sector forecasts were summarized from this report.).

The Economic Impact of Agriculture and Ag-Related Industries on the Commonwealth of Virginia, April 1998, by R. David Lamie (draft).

Agriculture in the Sixth Congressional District: Profiles, Trends, and Issues, REAP, May 1996, by Kurt Stephenson and Karen Mundy.

Virginia Agricultural Statistics Bulletin & Resource Directory (annual 1990 through 2000). Figures are from the 2000 bulletin unless otherwise noted.

Virginia Fruit Futures Conference, Final Statement and Background Papers, Virginia State Horticultural Society, Inc. and Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, May 1992.

#### Forestry:

County Harvest Volume and Value reports, 1986 through 2000, provided by Virginia Department of Forestry (based on forest product tax receipts and average county stumpage costs.

“Forestry at the Fringe” by John Scrivani, Research Forester for the Virginia Department of Forestry, presented at the 2002 conference of the Virginia Chapter of the Society of American Foresters, June 5-7, 2002, in Staunton, VA and phone interviews.

Forest Statistics for Virginia, U.S.D.A., Forest Service, Southeastern Forest Experiment Station, Resource Bulletin SE-131 (Forest Inventory series: 1977, 1986, 1992).

Output Value Added and Employment, 1996 reports, IMPLAN, run June 5, 2002 by Charles Becker, Virginia Department of Forestry.

U.S. Forest Service, George Washington-Thomas Jefferson National Forest, Roanoke (timber harvest data supplied March 2003).

Virginia's Forest: Our Common Wealth (series 1985, 1988, 1994, 2001), Virginia Department of Forestry.

Virginia Forest Land Assessment, 1997, Virginia Department of Forestry.

#### Riparian and Natural Heritage:

Resource spending figures and poll statistics were quoted from “An Analysis of Natural Resource Spending in Virginia,” prepared for the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund by Fiscal Analytics, LLC, in October 2000.



### *Understanding the Agricultural Census*

Methodology - The primary source for agricultural statistics is the Agricultural Census, which is undertaken every 5 years and thus yields information on long-term trends. The latest census, 1997, differs from earlier censuses, however, in being conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rather than the U.S. Department of Commerce. Steve Manheimer of the Richmond USDA office explains that the USDA used more field work and as a result picked up many more farms. While this may be more accurate in some ways, it does confound comparisons to previous years.

Number of Farms - This change in methodology raises a challenge for interpreting trends. Most likely to be newly included are small operations (there is no minimum acreage) not much above the minimum of \$1,000 annual in sales or value of agricultural products. A net number including these newly counted, minimally qualified farms may mask a loss in highly productive farms. At the very least, any net loss in number of farms represents a very real loss. On the other hand, small increases may not necessarily mean a real increase on the ground.

Land in Farms - Likewise, a seeming “no change” in land in farms might actually reflect “new” acreage balancing out a decrease in traditionally counted farm acreage. A look at the Valley’s agricultural powerhouses supports this possibility. Three of the four

top agricultural counties suffered significant acreage loss. Augusta and Rockingham lost both farms and acreage. Shenandoah gained a few farms but lost more acres than any other county in the region. Page, however, gained 51 farms after losing sizeable acreage between the 1987 and 1992 censuses. This probably reflects increased poultry operations, which do not require much acreage.

By contrast, it is some of the smaller, less productive counties that had increases. The USDA found many more small farms, especially horse operations, in Alleghany and Warren counties.

Type of Farms - Manheimer estimates that two-thirds of farms in Virginia have less than \$50,000 in sales and have part-time operators. This includes many people who might not consider themselves “farmers” but qualify by having hay and cows or horses on a small, personal scale. For example, a person renting hay land, running a few cows for private consumption, and accepting conservation reserve payments can meet the \$1,000 minimum.

Only one-third of farmers are selling agricultural commodities and Manheimer feels that Virginia is probably losing commercial farms, those in the range of \$100,000 to \$250,000 in sales that could potentially support a farm family. Another part of agriculture that is not well measured in the census is niche or nontraditional farming, and there is a belief that there has been growth in this sector.

## *About the Valley Conservation Council*

Established in 1990, the Valley Conservation Council (VCC), a nonprofit citizens organization and land trust, promotes land use that sustains the farms, forests, open spaces, and cultural heritage of the Shenandoah Valley region of Virginia. Serving 11 counties, VCC promotes strategies and sound public policy for managing growth. A primary goal is to assist landowners in the application of voluntary land protection tools, such as conservation easements and agricultural and forestal districts. For more information about VCC, contact:

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