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## **New Website Makes University of Maryland the Place to Go for Info on Rural and Community Development**

The Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center (MREDC) is now the place for the agricultural and natural resources community to go for valuable information thanks to the creation of a new website: **mredc.umd.edu**. The website was formally introduced at the Maryland Ag Commission meeting on Feb 11.

MREDC was established by the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) to serve these communities through programming and support. **The need for such an effort was identified through a series of statewide listening sessions and documented in a Maryland Agriculture Commission report to the Governor.** Specifically, MREDC's mission is to:

1. Serve as a portal for educational and outreach resources in marketing and business development planning;
2. Assist entrepreneurs in agriculture and natural resources enterprises in developing new marketing plans and opportunities;
3. Serve as a launching pad to a wide variety of web-based university, community, and professional resources for developing profitable, sustainable businesses
4. Provide new and next-generation farmers with access to training, mentoring and business development resources; and
5. Provide continuing education and networking opportunities for agricultural support agency personnel, Extension staff and agricultural economic development specialists statewide.

The College and MCE were very responsive in meeting this need and dedicated to helping AGNR enterprises prosper.

“Agricultural and natural resources businesses and the people who run them are facing challenges today involving finances, changing land-use patterns, government regulations, and more,” says Dr. Nick Place, associate AGNR dean and associate director of the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE). **“The college and MCE are dedicated to helping agricultural and natural resources enterprises prosper,** and we anticipate that the MREDC will be a keystone in the college's Economic and Community Development Initiative and will serve as a model for similar efforts elsewhere. The launching of the website is just the first step.”

The website contains podcasts, video presentations, webinars and other resources, including regional contacts and supporting agencies that will enable Extension faculty to expand their programming

resources. “Our hope is that our faculty will contribute their expertise, publicize events, post interactive presentations, and otherwise use this website to assist their clients with such issues as entrepreneurship, business development, alternative enterprises, intergenerational transfer of businesses,” says regional Extension marketing specialist Ginger Myers.