

Trends

No Data Available

Legend:

▲ Increase, 
 ▼ Decrease, 
 ↔ Steady

Key Performance Areas

No Data Available

Productivity

No Data Available

Legend:

▲ Improving, 
 ▼ Worsening, 
 ↔ Maintaining

For more information on administrative key, and productivity measures, go to [www.vaperforms.virginia.gov/agencylevel/index.cfm](http://www.vaperforms.virginia.gov/agencylevel/index.cfm)

Background & History

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) was established in 1877, and is responsible for approximately 60 state laws and more than 70 regulations related to promotion of Virginia agriculture, consumer protection, and environmental stewardship.

VDACS provides support to the state's varied agricultural communities by enabling producers and processors to find the best markets, both domestic and international, for their products. The department promotes economic development of Virginia's agricultural sector by assisting firms in retaining jobs, expanding their base, and recruiting new agribusinesses to the state. VDACS also works to preserve Virginia's working farmland.

VDACS administers regulatory programs that promote the control, prevention, and eradication of livestock and poultry diseases, and the department promotes the proper care of livestock, poultry, and companion animals and the responsible conduct of animal control activities by local governments. Through the network of five regional laboratories, VDACS provides testing services for livestock and poultry industries, veterinary practitioners, and governments. The department also administers regulatory programs to ensure that safe, wholesome, and truthfully labeled food products are for sale.

VDACS seeks to maintain the integrity of transactions between buyers and sellers, regulate charitable gaming organizations, and prevent unfair competition among regulated entities. The department also protects the environment from misuse of pesticides, plant insect pests, and plant diseases and preserves threatened and endangered plant and industry species.

Title 3.2, Code of Virginia, establishes powers for the Commissioner, Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and programs within the department and other entities to promote agricultural interests and provide consumer protection.

Primary Product & Services

VDACS products and services fall within six categories:

*Promoting Virginia Agriculture* – Agricultural marketing and promotion (domestic and international), agricultural business development and growth, farmland preservation and fostering the next generation of farmers, and assisting commodity boards.

*Assuring food safety and quality* – Inspection of meat, poultry, food and dairy operations to protect public health and consumer confidence.

*Assuring animal health and care* – Protecting the economic viability of livestock and poultry industries, disease control and surveillance, animal health diagnostic laboratories, evaluation of shelters and pounds, training of animal care organizations, animal medication and remedies regulation, and commercial animal feed regulation.

*Assuring crop and plant health and productivity* – Inspection and prevention of the spread of plant pest and diseases in nursery stock and crops, fertilizer and soil products regulation, seed and plant propagation inspection and regulation, and apiary inspection and regulation.

*Protecting public health and Virginia's environment* – Pesticide use and storage, endangered plant and insect protection, agricultural stewardship and food safety.

*Ensuring fair trade practices in commerce* – motor fuels labeling and preventing adulteration, weights and measures regulation, commodity grading and standards, regulation of certain consumer transactions, charitable gaming regulation, and State Milk Commission assessments.

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### Customer Base

The agriculture and agribusiness industries are changing rapidly. These Virginia industries must operate and compete in a global economy. Competition and costs are driving many in the industry out of business. Still others are finding opportunities and niches for new products and new markets. In Virginia, the latest agriculture census shows that the number of small farms and large farms is growing, but we are losing medium size farms.

There is a decreasing public awareness of how agriculture works. This is compounded by the population shift from rural to urban. However, there is an increasing public interest in food safety, food and agriculture issues, and appreciation of farming, as demonstrated by the popularity of farmers' markets and the buy local movement.

We are losing farmland at a rapid pace as development pressures continue to result in the conversion of farmland to housing and commercial activities. The economic recession has slowed the loss, but recruiting the next generation of farmers is important to maintain working lands.

In 2011, exports of Virginia agricultural products were at an all-time high at \$2.35 billion. Developing economies provide opportunities to expand agricultural exports and create jobs. In domestic marketing, there is an exciting diversity in the agriculture base and client groups for product promotion and business development services.

There has been growth in the number and diversity of businesses that are regulated by the department. There are more food establishments, businesses using weights and measures devices, and charitable organizations. The growing diversity of Virginia's population presents challenges, such as language and cultural norms, for regulatory programs.

### Customer Listing

No Data Available

### Key Agency Statistics

The statistical summary reflects just a small portion of the agency's diverse program areas. The department impacts all Virginia citizens and supports critical components of Virginia's economy. Data is from FY 2012, unless otherwise noted.

### Finances

VDACS' diverse programs are supported by a variety of funding sources including general fund support, user fees, commodity grading fees, commodity board self-assessments, and federal grants. Over the past few years, reductions in general fund support have increased the department's reliance on fees and federal grants to operate programs and respond to new demands. In addition, there are several items in the department's general fund appropriation that are mandated pass-through funding to other entities for specific uses.

### Fund Sources

No Data Available

### Revenue Summary Statement

The agency collects revenue from a wide variety of sources. Not only is the agency responsible for a wide variety of programs, many programs are supported by complex fee structures. The Code of Virginia restricts the use of special fund and dedicated special fund revenue to support of the program activities in which the revenue was generated. Properly processing and accounting for revenue is an important responsibility of the department's Finance Office.

## Key Risk Factors

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A key risk for VDACS is the limited resources available, both staff and funding. Changes in Virginia agriculture, homeland security issues and the increase in consumer protection demands severely challenge the department. Staffing and resource limitations are forcing the agency to be selective in setting priorities and objectives. International marketing, farmland preservation, niche and specialty crop marketing and small farmer assistance, animal disease, plant disease and pests, and food safety remain priorities. Other program areas and issues may not be served or services will be limited, if resources are not available to support them.

Another key risk is that of disasters, either natural or man-made. The threats of animal disease, plant diseases and pests, and food safety have been amplified by the global economy. The opportunities for the spread of diseases, pests, and terrorism have increased worldwide because of travel and international movement of people, commodities, food, and animals.

Factors affecting the department's workforce also pose a risk. With retirements there is a loss of institutional knowledge and "transition speed bumps" as new employees assume duties. Not being able to fill vacant positions may lead to low employee morale, lack of needed skill sets, and difficulty producing quality when quantity is demanded.

In addition, the department is threatened by federal budget uncertainty. The pervasive loss of public confidence in government and anti-regulatory sentiments may also create changes in the department's approach to program delivery.

## Performance Highlights

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The department is achieving its mission within the parameters of the resources that are available. The department has been able to achieve this service level by streamlining the organization, reducing levels of supervision, utilizing technology, partnering with industry and consumer groups, pursuing and obtaining federal grant resources, and the outstanding productivity of a highly skilled, dedicated, and experienced workforce.

Recently, VDACS received support for two priority initiatives. Funding was provided for the department to promote Virginia's agriculture internationally, and a presence is established through market representation contracts in India, China, Latin America, and the European Union. This will facilitate interactions between Virginia's producers and international buyers for commodities, specialty foods and wine, and wood products.

In addition, the 2012 General Assembly authorized the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund to attract economic development projects involving agriculture and forestry operations to locate in Virginia. A portion of the fund will be used to improve local economic development efforts related to agribusiness.

## Performance Measures

## Management Discussion & Analysis

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### General Information about the Ongoing Status of the Agency

VDACS is providing increased services with fewer resources than in the past as a result of increased productivity. The agency serves more customers with fewer employees and less funding than were available ten to twenty years ago. For example, the maximum employment level decreased by 28 percent (from 701 positions in 1991 to 506 today). The department has maintained a strong customer service focus, and we benefit from good working relationships with industry, agricultural interest groups, universities, and state and local government agencies.

One of the challenges the agency faces is integrating new technologies in customer interaction. There is a focus on offering service

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delivery through the internet to customers, and providing opportunities for transactions such as registrations and fee payments over the web. However, with limited resources available for this initiative, implementation has been difficult.

Another challenge for the department is the loss of positions for administrative support. The statewide, on-going hiring freeze will be costly for the agency in the long term. There are expenses involved with hiring temporary employees, the loss of knowledge and consistency, errors in administrative work, and missed deadlines.

### Information Technology

A continuing demand for streamlined services from constituents, an increasing requirement for compliance with central agency standards, policies and procedures, and minimal funding and staffing resources hinder the agency's ability to move forward with information technology initiatives. The Commonwealth of Virginia Security Standards, Governmental Accounting Standards Board Pronouncement 51, audit requirements, budget reductions, data standards, and other central agency requirements have stretched information technology resources. The infrastructure partnership requires management of their activities by existing agency staff, again adding to the time constraints.

The department is working on a number of information technology solutions, such as increasing technology capabilities, providing services on-line through the web portal, and updating legacy mainframe applications. The department has almost 100 agency-specific computer applications.

### Workforce Development

The department is facing the challenge of losing many of our long-tenured staff to retirement. Currently, approximately 17.3 percent of employees are eligible to retire and an additional 17.8 percent will be eligible within the next five years, which is approximately 35 percent of the current workforce. Additionally, many of our current wage employees are former retirees who may not choose to continue working. This will result in a great loss of institutional knowledge, skills and experience. The agency's median age as of July 1, 2012 is 49. Approximately 222 employees are age 50 and over, and approximately 98 employees have over 25 years of state service.

With an anticipated increase in turnover due to retirements, the department continues to explore avenues to improve staff retention. Job satisfaction involves many factors; however, VDACS' ability to attract, recruit, and retain a qualified workforce is adversely impacted by agency salaries that are not competitive and changes in fringe benefits. In most cases, salaries are not market competitive when compared to the private sector, federal government, and local governments. The lack of funding for the performance management system and salary increases has an impact on employee morale and our ability to retain younger workers.

Funding to support employee training is limited. In many cases, this is negatively impacting employees' ability to maintain required certifications and improve job skills.

### Physical Plant

The department operates and maintains 310,450 square feet at 15 facilities, ranging from small office buildings to complex laboratories to large wholesale farmers market facilities. The facilities are located statewide, from Warrenton to Wytheville to Onley (on the Eastern Shore of Virginia). The facilities include a network of five regional animal health laboratories, regional office buildings, four farmers markets, and a seafood processing facility. The farmers markets and seafood processing facility are operated through contracts with local grower associations. In addition, the department leases space at 11 other locations for smaller offices and storage.

Like many other aspects of agency operations, funding for facility maintenance has been limited in recent years. Also, as new facilities have come on-line, additional operating support has not been provided. A number of improvements, such as replacing incinerators, stabilizing an office building, and replacing roofs are being undertaken to extend the usefulness of the buildings.