

COURTS AND JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS
TITLE 5. LIMITATIONS, PROHIBITED ACTIONS, AND IMMUNITIES
SUBTITLE 4. IMMUNITIES AND PROHIBITED ACTIONS -- BUSINESSES, ASSOCIATIONS,
AND CHARITIES

Md. COURTS AND JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS Code Ann. § 5-403 (2013)

§ 5-403. Nuisance suits against agricultural operations

(a) "Agricultural operation" and "silvicultural operation" defined. --

(1) In this section, "agricultural operation" means an operation for the processing of agricultural crops or on-farm production, harvesting, or marketing of any agricultural, horticultural, silvicultural, aquacultural, or apicultural product that has been grown, raised, or cultivated by the farmer.

(2) Notwithstanding § 5-101 of the Natural Resources Article, "silvicultural operation" means implementation of forestry practices, including the establishment, composition, growth, and harvesting of trees.

(b) Exceptions. --

(1) This section does not:

(i) Prohibit a federal, State, or local government from enforcing health, environmental, zoning, or any other applicable law;

(ii) Relieve any agricultural or silvicultural operation from the responsibility of complying with the terms of any applicable federal, State, and local permit required for the operation;

(iii) Relieve any agricultural or silvicultural operator from the responsibility to comply with any federal, State, or local health, environmental, and zoning requirement; or

(iv) Relieve any agricultural or silvicultural operation from liability for conducting an agricultural operation in a negligent manner.

(2) This section does not apply to any agricultural operation that is operating without a fully and demonstrably implemented nutrient management plan for nitrogen and phosphorus if otherwise required by law.

(c) Operation continued for 1 year or more. -- If an agricultural operation or silvicultural operation has been under way for a period of 1 year or more and if the operation is in compliance with applicable federal, State, and local health, environmental, zoning, and permit requirements relating to any nuisance claim and is not conducted in a negligent manner:

(1) The operation, including any sight, noise, odors, dust, or insects resulting from the operation, may not be deemed to be a public or private nuisance; and

(2) A private action may not be sustained on the grounds that the operation interferes or has interfered with the use or enjoyment of other property, whether public or private.

(d) Construction of section. --

(1) This section does not create, and may not be construed as creating, a new cause of action or substantive legal right against a person who is engaged in an agricultural or silvicultural operation.

(2) This section does not affect, and may not be construed as affecting, any defenses available at common law to a defendant who is engaged in an agricultural or silvicultural operation and subject to an action for nuisance.

(e) Requirements for nuisance actions. --

(1) This subsection does not apply to an action brought by a government agency.

(2) If a local agency is authorized to hear a nuisance complaint against an agricultural operation, a person may not bring a nuisance action against an agricultural operation in any court until:

(i) The person has filed a complaint with the local agency; and

(ii) The local agency has made a decision or recommendation on the complaint.

(3) If there is no local agency authorized to hear a nuisance complaint against an agricultural operation, a person may not bring a nuisance action against an agricultural operation in any court until:

(i) The person has referred a complaint to the State Agricultural Mediation Program in the Department of Agriculture under Title 1, Subtitle 1A of the Agriculture Article; and

(ii) The Department certifies that mediation has been concluded.

HISTORY: 1981, ch. 763; 1986, ch. 735; 1997, ch. 14, § 9; 1998, ch. 386; 2006, ch. 172; 2009, ch. 175.