

## New Poultry Farmers Flourish

### With Help From Conservation Partners

**A**s two young students in their late teens, Johnathan and Muoi fled Vietnam in 1980 in order to escape the communist regime in the wake of the war. After two years in transiency as refugees, the couple landed in California, where they started a small sandwich shop that eventually flourished into a successful enterprise. After years of long hours and increasing competition and government regulation, the Trans decided they needed a change.

A friend had recently told them about a growing Vietnamese community on Maryland's Eastern Shore. They impressed Jonathan and Muoi with stories of immigrants raising chickens and prospering with short hours and easy work.

In 2008, the Trans sold their sandwich shop and moved across the country to Somerset County, Maryland in hope of making it in the poultry business. After arriving they soon realized that raising chickens was not as easy as they were led to believe. They faced a slew of Federal, State, and local regulations, many put in place to protect



**Johnathan and Muoi on their poultry farm in Somerset County, Maryland. The Trans' poultry business has been successfully operating since 2008.**

the environment.

After a stressful beginning, Johnathan & Muoi were referred to the Somerset USDA Service Center, where they met with conservation experts from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), and Somerset Soil Conservation District. Each agency was able to provide technical and financial assistance to ensure the Trans environmental goals for their operation were met.

"A visit to the office is always helpful," said Moui. "I come in all the time, and the staff always helps me to understand the opportunities available and pick the best option."

To help address resource concerns on their farm, the Tran's have implemented several conservation practices. The first step was to develop a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP). The plan gives them a detailed outline on how to manage potential environmental concerns on their land.

They have also installed a waste storage structure to hold the manure cleaned out from the chicken houses until it can be land applied by local farmers. Composting areas were installed to help manage the inevitable loss of chickens during a flock cycle. The composting areas allow for a safe

#### CONTACT US:

339 Busch's Frontage Rd, Ste. 301  
Annapolis, MD 21409  
410-757-0861  
[www.md.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.md.nrcs.usda.gov)

and environmentally friendly disposal of dead chickens.

Through NRCS's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI), the Trans are adding amendments to treat their chicken waste. The amendments help to decrease ammonia emissions, a major air quality concern at regional, national, and global levels.

Recently through the program, heavy use area protection pads were installed at the ends of the chicken houses on the operation. NRCS uses CBWI to focus financial and technical assistance on the most critical areas to apply conservation practices for reducing nutrient and sediment runoff.

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The practices on the Tran's operation are a great example of the improvements farmers are making with the help from the program.

After incurring millions of dollars of debt in order to construct the houses, the Tran's (like most chicken farmers) could not afford to install these conservation practices without the assistance of MDA and NRCS. The paperwork and application process can be daunting even for someone who has spoken English their whole life, so for Jonathan and Muoi the process was even more difficult. Employees from the local conservation district helped walk Jonathan and Muoi through the process from application to installation.

The Tran's situation is not all that uncommon. According to the recent census, there are 101 farms (and growing) with Asian operators in Maryland, most of which reside on the eastern shore. To help alleviate some of the confusion due to the language barriers, NRCS has awarded a Conservation Innovation Grant to the MASCD to translate important documents relevant to poultry production into Korean and Vietnamese. So far, these documents have been a big success in the Asian community and have helped clarify several points that were lost in translation.

After seeing the transformation of their farm, the Tran's could not be happier. The new structures have streamlined their daily operations and helped alleviate environmental concerns. Though still adjusting, Johnathan & Muoi have settled into the community and enjoy a network of Vietnamese friends and family in the area.💧

## BENEFITS OF CBWI

- Financial and technical assistance.
- Reduce nutrient and sediment runoff.
- Development of a nutrient management plan.

### PLUS, Installation of:

- Waste management structure
- Heavy use area protection pads
- Composting areas

