

CHAPTER 641

(House Bill 334)

AN ACT to add new Section 60A to Article 66C of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1957 Edition), title "Natural Resources," subtitle "Agriculture," subheading "In General," to follow immediately after Section 60 thereof, to prohibit purchasers of ~~milk, fruits, vegetables, sweet corn and other canning crops~~ FIELD AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS PRODUCED ON THE FARM from coercing or discriminating against the producers of such agricultural products in joining or refusing to join cooperative agricultural marketing associations, to authorize the filing and disposition of complaints of coercion or discrimination, to specify the rights of producers and purchasers of agricultural products, and to provide penalties for violations.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland,* That new Section 60A be and it is hereby added to Article 66C of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1957 Edition), title "Natural Resources," subtitle "Agriculture," subheading "In General," to follow immediately after Section 60 thereof, and to read as follows:

60A.

(a) ~~No processor~~ BUYER, handler, distributor, dealer, or agent thereof who purchases or contracts to purchase ~~milk, fruits, vegetables, sweet corn, or other canning crops~~ FIELD AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS PRODUCED ON THE FARM from producers of ~~such raw agricultural products~~ shall:

(1) Use duress against, coerce, or boycott producers of raw agricultural products in the exercise of their rights to join and belong to co-operative agricultural marketing associations;

(2) Discriminate against producers of raw agricultural products with respect to price, quantity, or quality, or other terms of purchase of raw agricultural products, solely by reason of the producer's membership in or marketing contract with co-operative agricultural marketing associations.

(b) For the purpose of enforcing this section, the Attorney General ~~may~~ SHALL receive sworn complaints from affected producers of raw agricultural products or the co-operative agricultural marketing association of which such producers are members, or with whom they have a marketing contract, with respect to violations or threatened violations of such section. The Attorney General ~~may~~ SHALL IMMEDIATELY make all necessary investigations, examinations, or inspections of any violation or threatened violation specified in the sworn complaint filed with him under this division.

(c) The Attorney General ~~may~~ SHALL IMMEDIATELY, after receiving a sworn complaint and the holding of an informal hearing on the charges made in such complaint, bring an action to enjoin the violation of any of the provisions of this section as set forth in such complaint in the circuit court of the county in which such violation occurred. A summons in such action against any defendant shall be issued to the sheriff of any county within this state in which such