

# FARMERS' GUIDE

## TO THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### LEARN ABOUT:

- ✓ Funding Opportunities
- ✓ Information about Permits, Licensing, Reports
- ✓ How to Grow Your Business



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



717-787-4737



2301 N. Cameron St.,  
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[www.agriculture.pa.gov](http://www.agriculture.pa.gov)

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# PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## ABOUT US

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture encourages, protects and promotes agriculture and related industries throughout the commonwealth while providing consumer protection through inspection services that impact the health and financial security of Pennsylvania's citizens.

Pennsylvania's 52,700 farm families are stewards of more than 7.3 million acres of farmland. With \$7.8 billion in cash receipts annually from production agriculture alone, Pennsylvania farms and agribusinesses are a leading economic driver in our state.

Pennsylvania agriculture contributes \$132.5 billion to our state economy annually and supports more than 593,600 jobs, paying wages of \$32.8 billion. Agriculture contributes \$1 out of every \$16 in gross state product. Agriculture supports 1 in 10 jobs in Pennsylvania.

## MISSION

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture exists to ensure a vibrant economy, a successful future for Pennsylvania agriculture, and to safeguard the public through:

Targeted investments to grow opportunities and remove barriers;

Protecting human, animal, environmental, and plant health through regulatory oversight;

Promotion of and education about Pennsylvania's agriculture products and sectors;

Conserving farmland and natural resources for the prosperity of Pennsylvania.





# AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Agricultural Business Development Center (ABDC) is a new initiative designed to enhance the long-term vitality of PA farms. ABDC is focused on providing support for sound business planning, efficient transitions of farm ownership, strategic farm expansion, diversification of agricultural production, and in building a team of financial and technical expertise as a resource for farmers across the commonwealth.

## BEGINNING FARMERS

### **Beginning Farmer Tax Credit:**

This program allows the seller/lessor of agricultural land, equipment, buildings and livestock to a qualified “beginning farmer” to apply for and receive tax credits against the seller/lessor’s PA income tax obligations in the year of the sale or lease.

### **Beginning Farmer Realty Transfer Tax Exemption:**

This tax shall not be imposed upon a transfer of real estate that is subject to an agricultural conservation easement for qualified beginner farmers.

### **Next Generation Farmer Loan Program:**

This loan program uses federal tax-exempt financing to reduce a farmer’s interest rate for capital purchases, such as the purchase of farm land or agricultural machinery and equipment.

## FARM TRANSITIONS

Changing a farming operation presents many possibilities and boundless opportunities for farmers.

The ABDC can help you plan for your future in farming. We offer these services:

- Enter the farming vocation
- Planning a farm expansion
- Financing for farm growth
- Assisting with multi-generational farming families
- Management strategies for farm owners

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk is an important consideration of the farming business.

Insurance/Coverage Available:

- Yield/Revenue Protection
- Pasture, Rangeland & Forage
- Livestock Gross Margin
- Hail/Fire Policies
- Whole Farm Revenue Protection
- Protection for Organics, Orchards, Market Vegetables, and more!



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# PA PREFERRED PROGRAM

PA Preferred® aims to provide farmers and agribusinesses with a brand identity for the products they grow and produce, creating opportunities for Pennsylvanians to easily identify and purchase PA grown and processed items.

## BECOME A MEMBER FOR FREE

Benefits Include:

- Use of PA Preferred logo on qualified products and marketing materials
- Statewide network of PA farmers, producers, and agribusinesses
- Free point of purchase materials
- Free inclusion in large, statewide paid marketing campaigns for members



## PA FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK

Farm to school provides all kids access to nutritious, high-quality, local food so they are ready to learn and grow. Farm to school activities enhance classroom education through hands-on learning related to food, health, agriculture and nutrition.



## HOMEGROWN BY HEROES

Homegrown By Heroes is a program for PA Preferred® members who are veterans. The program allows veteran members to add the Homegrown By Heroes logo to their products so that consumers can easily identify it and support veteran-owned businesses.

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# STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION



The Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission (SCC) is a 14-member commission that has a primary mission to ensure the wise use of Pennsylvania's natural resources and to protect and restore the natural environment through the conservation of its soil water and related resources. The commission provides support and oversight to the state's 66 county conservation districts for the implementation of conservation programs in an efficient and responsible manner.



## SCC PROGRAMS:

- Nutrient Management
- Odor Management Program
- The Dirt and Gravel Program (pollution prevention)
- Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP Tax Credit) Program
- Conservation Excellence Grants (CEG)
- Agril-Link
- Leadership Development Program
- Professional certification for nutrient management specialists, odor management specialist and manure hauler and brokers.

[CLICK HERE TO FIND YOUR CONSERVATION DISTRICT](#)

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**Pennsylvania comprises 35 percent of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The Susquehanna River is the largest tributary to the bay, providing 90 percent of the freshwater flow to the upper bay and half of the total freshwater flow to the bay.**

**The SCC plays a central role in Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay Reboot Strategy alongside the PA Department of Environmental Protection, developing methods for encouraging agriculture industry compliance with current regulations and coordinating efforts of county conservation districts and nonprofit organizations that aid in the Bay cleanup effort.**



# FOOD SECURITY

The Bureau of Food Assistance is a vital part of the process that helps move food from the farm to the dinner table so more Pennsylvanians can share in the harvest. Using state and federal resources, the bureau works with Pennsylvania's regional food banks, more than 800 school food authorities, and nearly 3,000 local food pantries, lead agencies, soup kitchens, shelters, and other local non-profit organizations to distribute food products and funding.



## PA AGRICULTURAL SURPLUS SYSTEM (PASS)

Have you ever had surplus product that you don't know what to do with? Food gone unharvested, produce left in the field, meat with no market? Or, have you ever just wanted to be a part of something bigger and make a difference for those in need? Join the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System!

PASS is a program that reimburses farmers for their costs to harvest, package, and process surplus agricultural products, and redirects those products to the charitable food system and those who need it most. In addition to surplus products, the Department of Agriculture encourages farmers to consider how they can more intentionally plan for contributions through PASS with intentional planting.

Looking to become a PASS member?  
Please email: [RA-fooddist@pa.gov](mailto:RA-fooddist@pa.gov)

## BECOME A PASS MEMBER:

- **Contract Planting:** You can work with [Feeding Pennsylvania](#) and your regional food bank to plan a portion of your production to be donated to the charitable food system. This would include the product to be donated, the amount harvested, and any associated costs to be covered by PASS.
- **Surplus Items at Harvest:** Any excess product at the end of the season can also be covered through the PASS program.
- **Value-Added Products:** Items such as dairy products, meat, eggs, and shelf-stable items using Pennsylvania-sourced ingredients are much-needed items at food banks and their agencies.

Looking to become a PASS member?  
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[ABOUT FOOD](#)  
[SECURITY IN PA](#)



# PLANT INDUSTRY

The Bureau of Plant Industry in Pennsylvania safeguards plant resources, certifies products and services, and provides consumer protection and safety through various programs such as inspection and monitoring.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

The Health and Safety division handles pesticide product registration and applicator certification. It also manages on-farm safety and worker protection and collaborates with Penn State University's Office of Pesticide Education for outreach education.

## AGRONOMIC SERVICES

Agronomic Services includes the Animal Food Program which works to protect both animal and human health through the regulation of animal feed and pet food, to help ensure a safe and nutritious animal food supply. Agronomic Services also includes the fertilizer, lime and seed programs. The Seed Program provides excellent customer service by testing over 3,000 commercial seed samples a year for distribution into the marketplace. They also review and test regulatory seed samples to help ensure quality seed is available for every kind of consumer, from farm to lawn & garden.



## PLANT PROTECTION

The Plant Protection division in Pennsylvania identifies and regulates plant pests, inspects nurseries and greenhouses, and runs specialized certification programs. A plant insect and disease diagnostic laboratory supports these efforts, participating in survey and outreach programs for detecting invasive plant pests.

## THE GOVERNOR'S INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

The Governor's Invasive Species Council works to identify invasive plant, insect, and animal species that currently threaten Pennsylvania's natural and agricultural resources and the industries they support. The Council includes seven state agencies and 14 organizations and develops and works to implement the Commonwealth's invasive species management plan.

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ONLINE SERVICES](#)

# FOOD SAFETY



Food Safety is an important area for every single person in Pennsylvania. Every year, one in six Americans suffers from a food-related illness. Preventing food-borne illnesses will improve public health and avoid the costly disruptions of the food supply system caused by illness outbreaks.

The mission of the Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services is to protect and keep food safe, from the farm to the fork, by educating, regulating and ensuring compliance with food safety laws and regulations.

The Bureau has several divisions where each provides important oversight to the production and service of safe food. Renew your license and/or registration with the Department.



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## CONSUMER PROTECTION

The Bureau of Food Safety works with other regulatory agencies to provide the safest, best quality food products possible. We respond to food related emergencies throughout the state including fires in food facilities, food truck wrecks, floods and power loss in food facilities. We are involved in any food-borne illness investigation and recalls to remove potentially hazardous food from the consumer's access. We strive to both regulate and educate those we come in contact with, by providing the most up-to-date information on food safety.





# ANIMAL HEALTH & DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

The Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services (BAHDS) is responsible for controlling and eradicating diseases in livestock and poultry. This mission is critical since these diseases have the potential to impact human health and cause significant economic loss to farmers and the commonwealth. In addition, BAHDS administers regulatory programs for animal health certification, containment of diseased animals and elimination of disease agents.

## AVIAN INFLUENZA

### Prevention:

Biosecurity is vital for anyone who owns or works with poultry – whether on a commercial farm, in the wild, or at a hobby/backyard farm. You should take proper steps to keep HPAI and other animal diseases from infecting your flock or spreading to other flocks. The best way to protect your birds is to follow good biosecurity. Having a biosecurity plan in place, and following that plan daily, is vital to protect Pennsylvania's poultry.

### Reporting Requirements

If you suspect your poultry is infected with avian influenza, please report your concerns 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to the Pennsylvania Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services at 717-772-2852, option 1. Sick or dead wild birds should be reported to the Pennsylvania Game Commission at 610-926-3136 or [pgc-wildlifehealth@pa.gov](mailto:pgc-wildlifehealth@pa.gov).

## TRI-PARTIE ANIMAL HEALTH LAB SYSTEM

Pennsylvania is also home to a tri-partite animal health laboratory system called the Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System, or PADLS. PADLS connects the Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory (PVL) in Harrisburg, Penn State University's Animal Diagnostic Laboratory (ADL) and the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine's New Bolton Center to provide laboratory testing, field-based monitoring and producer outreach, all with a focus on protecting our citizens, our food supply and our animal agriculture industry.

## COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

Maintaining a healthy animal agriculture industry is also a key step to ensuring Pennsylvania's trade status with other states and nations is not negatively impacted by an outbreak within our borders.

Please contact us at [RA-ahds@pa.gov](mailto:RA-ahds@pa.gov) or (717) 772-2852 with general inquiries



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# FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Pennsylvania is at the forefront of preserving farmland for agricultural production, boasting the highest number of farms and acres preserved in the nation. The program, a partnership between all levels of government and non-profit organizations, guarantees a future food supply, strengthens the economy, and ensures a cherished way of life for future generations.



## FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

**CLEAN & GREEN PROGRAM:** Clean and Green is a preferential tax assessment program, that bases property taxes on use values rather than fair market values. This ordinarily results in a tax savings for landowners.

**CENTURY & BICENTENNIAL FARM PROGRAM:** The PA Department of Agriculture recognizes Pennsylvania families who have been farming the same land for 100 and 200 years through the Century and Bicentennial farm programs. Farms that are approved are presented with a certificate of recognition and are often presented with other awards from organizations at the county and/or local level. The information on the applications and other information supplied by the applicants will be filed in the Archives of the State Historical and Museum Commission.

## AGRICULTURE SECURITY AREAS

Agricultural Security Areas (ASAs) safeguard farmland from non-agricultural use via petitions submitted to the township supervisors by farmers. ASAs are re-evaluated every seven years, and new farmland parcels may be added any time. To establish an ASA, a minimum of 250 acres, including non-adjacent parcels of at least 10 acres or able to produce \$2,000 annually from agricultural sales, is needed. The purpose of ASAs is to preserve farmland and ensure that it continues to be used for agricultural purposes.

## BEGINNING FARMER REALTY TRANSFER TAX EXEMPTION

Act 13 of 2019 states that realty transfer tax shall not be imposed upon a transfer of real estate that is subject to an agricultural conservation easement established under authority of the Act of June 30, 1981 (P.L. 128, No. 43), known as the "Agricultural Area Security Law," to a qualified beginner farmer.

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