

# Thornburgh signs prime agricultural land policy

HARRISBURG — Last Friday Gov. Dick Thornburgh signed an executive order establishing a prime agricultural land policy under which all state agencies are expected to take every step possible to preserve prime agricultural land in Pennsylvania.

Thornburgh also announced the creation of the Bureau of Agricultural Development within the state Department of Agriculture, and charged it with the responsibility of promoting the agribusiness interests of the state's rural community and serving as an advocate for Pennsylvania farmers.

"The executive order complements our previous and ongoing efforts to keep prime farmlands in agricultural production," the governor said.

In the executive order, Thornburgh directed that no state funds or federal grants administered by the state be used to remove prime agricultural lands from farming. He also authorized the secretary of agriculture to identify prime agricultural lands in the state.

"This Commonwealth's abundant supply of agricultural lands has for generations sustained farm families, family farm operations, rural communities and, ultimately, the people of Pennsylvania and this nation," the governor said. "It is in our best interest that this policy be established to preserve these farmlands."

Thornburgh said that the reorganization of the Agriculture Department, under which the new bureau was established, also locates the State Horse Racing Commission within the department (as mandated by Act 135 of

1981) and realigns several administrative offices and divisions.

Formerly the Bureau of Rural Affairs, the new Bureau of Agricultural Development will be organized into the divisions of:

\* Economic-Development. This division will serve as liaison between the agribusiness community and government agencies. It also will assist the development and expansion of businesses in the state.

\* Agricultural Exports. Working with farm and food industries—this division will encourage the development of products for overseas markets. It will also

provide specialized services to improve prospects for foreign marketing of Pennsylvania food products.

\* Farmland Preservation. This

division will work to preserve farmland resources, privately owned, as well as state-owned farmlands under the Agriculture Department's jurisdiction.



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