

State Agriculture Secretary Unveils Action Plan

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HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — State Secretary of Agriculture Samuel Hayes Jr. last week announced a first draft plan of action for the state Department of Agriculture — a first formal draft.

The draft action plan is, in effect, a department "to-do" list.

Last week it was reported in *Lancaster Farming* why there was a need for such an action plan, and what it is expected to do — provide a catalyst for the coordination and accomplishment of bureau activities within the department, in conjunction with the needs of the individuals and businesses it serves, to achieve more complete and effective support and service to the agricultural community and the residents of the state to improve business opportunities and profitability.

In brief review of what was reported last week, Secretary Hayes revealed an 80-point list of "actions" or goals the department is to achieve. The list was created through meetings between Hayes and the department's bureau leaders and deputy secretaries.

In a cover letter to the action plan, Hayes calls upon others to join in making suggestions for additions to the action plan.

•Create an International Users Guide to Pennsylvania Agriculture.

•Prepare regional (regions of the world) marketing plans to target international customers by geographic regions.

•Develop marketing plans for agri-services. (Hayes said he considered agricultural services to be an agricultural product with existing international marketing accomplishments, as well as great potential.)

•Conduct a pilot project for promotion of Pennsylvania-grown fruits and vegetables in over 100 food stores.

•Develop a promotion project for Pennsylvania wines. (Pennsylvania is a leading national wine producer with strong exports and about 40 percent of product available to market.)

•Conduct a feasibility study to consider formation of a marketing cooperative for Pennsylvania's agricultural products.

•Sponsor a seminar on "How to Export Wood Products" with the Pennsylvania Rural Development Council. (Pennsylvania is one of the nation's strongest holdings of hardwoods. The Northeast, Northwest and Mid-Western states, as well as southern states are strong

timber production, but much is in conifers converted into paper and pulpwood, or used in the construction of composite building materials. Hardwoods are used in the higher-valued furniture and cabinetry building business.)

•Activate the regional hardwood utilization groups in the promotion of the Pennsylvania Sustainable Forestry Initiative (PA-SFI) by training loggers, educating private landowners and conducting public outreach. (Much of Pennsylvania's forests are privately owned and there are some lumbering companies or businesses that seek to profit through somewhat deceptive practices. Some outfits may promise an initial marginally higher profit on the sale of timber, though in the process destroy future profits. Some have used forestry harvest practices that can strip a forested property of its valuable lumber, while leaving it either unfit, or improperly prepared for the regeneration of valuable species. Educated landowners and loggers can make better decisions for maintaining forested properties for its highest and most rewarding values.)

•Create an "Agribond" program for first-time farmers. Though this was not part of the published

action plan, Hayes said he considered it a likely addition to the action plan. The agribond would allow the government to provide guarantees to allow banks to make low-interest loans to first-time farmers (it doesn't mean those without any farming experience).

•Recruit hardwoods companies for *Interbuild* — the world's largest construction and building show.

•Participate in the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service "American Style Wood Frame Housing Seminar Series," to develop trade relationships and promote Pennsylvania wood products.

•Participate in the governor's trade mission to Asia.

•Initiate a contract for agricultural trade assistance in Mexico.

•Establish a food processing relationship with the Republic of Poland.

•Identify the agricultural trade barriers to be considered by our negotiators at the World Trade Organization.

•Convene an aquaculture summit and compile an economic analysis concerning the potential of aquaculture in Pennsylvania.

•Develop a plan to promote agri-tourism.

•Conduct an annual "Ag

Research Symposium" to present results of research projects sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

•In addition to tradition agricultural research projects, there will be emphasis placed upon future PDA-funded research in areas of critical importance to agriculture and the general public, to include:

a. International market analysis and export opportunities for Pennsylvania products and services.

b. Application of technology in the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture from a marketing perspective.

c. Identify new nutrient management systems that are environmentally and economically feasible.

d. Feasible methods for the suppression of agricultural odors.

e. Application of technology in the PDA from a client-service perspective.

•Good learners need food food. Initiate a food safety education program as part of the PDA's new responsibilities for school cafeteria inspection, including a food safety manual for schools — "Pennsylvania Food Products: Serve them hot, serve them cold,

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Farm Safety



Prior to the establishment of Farm Safety 4 Just Kids, a study by the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center estimated that 300 children and adolescents were dying each year from farm injuries, and that another 23,500 were suffering nonfatal trauma. An update of that study now indicates that the farm fatality rate for children and adolescents has declined by 39 percent.



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Hayes also prefaced a review of the 80 separate goals with the caveat that it be understood that priority has not been assigned to the goals. They are all to be achieved, if they haven't been achieved already.

It was also to be understood that there are more goals and ideas for providing valuable services, but the list was kept at 80 in order to establish a first draft.

"We have more inventive ideas; but now, it is time to receive the thoughts of our partners," Hayes stated in the cover letter. "I invite the General Assembly, professional agriculture, and the citizens of Pennsylvania to join in, suggesting additional ideas for our Action Plan for Pennsylvania Agriculture. For sure, we should nurture our agriculture together."

During the meeting with farm media, the plan was reviewed through an inhouse created, computer-generated video that provided more details and breakdowns of the action plan.

The printed version provides an "executive summary" of the plan. It follows, with some claritive information included in parenthesis:

Action Plan For Pennsylvania Agriculture Executive Summary

•Convene an annual Secretary's Summit on Agriculture which will serve as an ongoing symposium to address all aspects of agriculture, to include profitability.