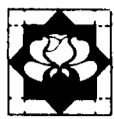


Agriculture Insights

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THE CHAMBER'S AGRICULTURE SERVICES PROGRAM OF ACTION

As a member of our local agriculture community, you are most likely aware of some of the various ag-related activities initiated by The Lancaster Chamber throughout the year. The activities of the Agriculture Services Program are directed by The Chamber's Agriculture Committee. The foundation for these efforts are The Chamber's three goals - member services, advocacy, and community leadership. How do these goals shape the initiatives you hear about throughout the year? Read on to learn more.

As a member of The Chamber, what member services are available to enhance your agri-business? The agricultural program provides many member benefits from educational opportunities to enhance your business skills to various networking events. The Chamber offers a discounted membership rate for farmers, which may be an additional incentive.

The Lancaster Chamber is one of the only chambers in the country to employ a full-time agriculture services staff person. There is an annual farm business symposium focused for the more progressive farmers, which offers a reduced rate for members. There is also an annual agriculture industry banquet which draws more than 700 people from the ag industry. This event offers a reduced rate for members and provides a celebration for the ag industry, a featured keynote speaker, and many networking opportunities. Another membership benefit is a speaker's bureau which is available on various topics in agriculture.

When looking at The Chamber's second goal, advocacy, we have several initiatives and projects to meet this goal. To provide a better understanding of the farming community, we have planned a new legislative farm tour for Lancaster County officials. The ag program is also looking to hold an educational event for township officials and develop correspondence with townships on agricultural issues in an effort to bridge the understanding of farming. The Chamber will lobby and take positions on key issues of interest to agri-

culture as recommended by the Ag Committee. Communication is essential in The Chamber's efforts to advocate for a healthy business and agriculture environment. It is important that our members bring to our attention challenges they are facing so we can assist to what ever degree possible.

The Chamber's third goal, community leadership, relates to many of the overall goals of the agriculture program. In its awareness building activities, our agriculture program demonstrates its leadership role in the community. One particular event that speaks greatly to community leadership is Family Farm Days. This annual three-day event, planned this year on June 17-19, provides a free educational and fun family event on a modern dairy farm. The typical attendance is more than 10,000 people, all of whom receive a personal tour of the farm operation and enjoy many of the aspects of the farm. Another aspect of community leadership is the voice The Chamber provides to the public about the importance of agriculture and more specifically the benefits that agriculture plays to our community. To build community understanding of our industry's significance, The Chamber developed a Lancaster County Farming Facts brochure which provides a clear illustration and is available free at The Chamber.

To develop our future leaders in our community, The Chamber hosts an annual FFA and 4-H agricultural program focused on career development in agriculture. And lastly, the overall role the Agriculture Committee plays in helping to unify the agriculture community and focus on long-term issues of importance to the economic climate of agriculture in Lancaster County speaks to community leadership.

If you're not a member of The Chamber and you value the services and voice we are providing to the farming industry, you may want to consider becoming involved in The Chamber and joining as a member. For more information on The Chamber's Agriculture Services Program or on membership, contact Brent Landis, agriculture services coordinator at (717) 397-3531, ext. 134, or blandis@lcci.com.

Rendell Administration Announces \$40 Million Commitment to Pennsylvania's Nation-Leading Preservation Program 36 Farms Preserved at February Meeting

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Pennsylvania will continue to be the farmland preservation leader among states. Agriculture Secretary Designee Dennis C Wolff announced recently that the State Agricultural Land Preservation Board voted to commit \$40 million to Pennsylvania's nationleading farmland preservation program.

"We must take every step to preserve Pennsylvania's rich agricultural heritage," said Secretary Wolff. "Today, our State Agricultural Land Preservation Board committed \$40 million to preserving agriculture's foundation, our farmland. To further our preservation effort across Pennsylvania, county farmland preservation boards have committed a record-breaking \$25.6 million."

"Pennsylvania can be proud of the leadership role we have in farmland preservation. Our program continues to provide an example for other states to follow," noted Secretary Wolff.

The State Agricultural Land Preservation Board continued its farmland preservation success story with the preservation of 36 farms totaling 3,683 acres at the February meeting. This brings the total number of farms preserved since the inception of the farmland preservation program in 1989 to 2,109 farms and 249,840 acres.

The State Agricultural Land Preservation Board purchases the development rights, referred to as easements, to preserve Pennsylvania's prime farmland. Currently, there are 53 counties partici-

pating in the farmland preservation program.

The Department of Agriculture administers the Installment Purchase Agreement Program (IPA) to assist farmers in planning easement purchases. This program allows landowners to defer capital gains taxes, thereby allowing county preservation programs to use funding for preservation of other farms. Clair Neal of West Sadsbury Township, Chester County was accepted into the IPA program at the February meeting.

To further assist in preserving productive agricultural land, the Department of Agriculture operates the Land Trust Reimbursement Program. This program has helped preserve 3,063 acres approved in eight trusts.

Farm Bureau Urges More Action On Farm Damage By Elk

NORTH BEND (Clinton Co.) — Using a portion of elk hunting license proceeds for an indemnity fund for farms where elk cause crop damage were among the recommendations offered by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau during a public hearing here by the state House Majority Policy Committee.

Jerry Barnett, a Potter County farmer and a member of Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's State Wildlife Advisory Committee, testified before the committee.

"In the past decade, and more notably in the last four years, many farmers and landowners have experienced property and crop damage due to the quickly expanding Pennsylvania elk population," Barnett said. "Farmers

know they will experience some crop loss from wildlife such as deer, raccoons, and geese. Farmers should not be expected, however, to accept losses free of charge resulting from an animal that was transplanted into his agricultural range without his knowledge or input."

Barnett also said farmers report as much crop and property damage caused by tourists and trespassers as by the elk.

Solutions recommended by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau include:

- A study to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of using some proceeds from the state lottery and the sale of elk licenses to compensate farmers for elk damage.

- Continued use and expansion

of an elk hunting season as a wildlife management tool.

- Prohibition of the Game Commission from further relocation of elk unless the relocation is on to fenced state game lands.

- Study and action by the General Assembly to address the increasing occurrence of trespass and private property rights infringements caused by elk tourists.

While Farm Bureau praised efforts by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources through a six-point plan to address nuisance elk complaints and educate tourists, Barnett said such programs do not address the long-term problems associated with elk and property damage.

Wolff Joins Gov. Rendell, State Lawmakers In Recognizing National FFA Week

PHILADELPHIA — Agriculture Secretary Dennis C Wolff joined Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell at W.B. Saul High School in Philadelphia last week to recognize National FFA Week and Pennsylvania's pride in its FFA program.

"Pennsylvania agriculture has a very bright future," said Gov. Rendell. "The young men and women in blue and gold continue to lead the way in agriculture. For 75 years they have stood for progress, vision, and change always prepared to take on the

challenge and embrace the opportunities of agriculture."

"Agriculture education programs have played a vital role in shaping agriculture and our commonwealth," said Agriculture Secretary Dennis C Wolff. "The students that participate in this curriculum gain valuable lifelong skills that prepare them to be productive citizens of our society by building leadership, fellowship, scholarship, and teamwork skills."

During the visit at W.B. Saul, Rendell and Wolff met with the FFA state officer team and members of the Philadelphia FFA Chapter at W.B. Saul.

With more than 8,000 members across Pennsylvania, FFA is one of the largest intra-curricular youth organizations in the state, providing high school students with the opportunity to build enduring skills through the FFA motto, "Learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, living to serve."

Wolff noted that FFA and agricultural education provide a strong foundation for the youth of America and the future of the food, fiber, and natural resource systems.

The third largest FFA chapter in the nation is W.B. Saul High School in Philadelphia.

Chartered in 1929, Pennsylvania FFA has over 142 chapters statewide.

Nationally, FFA is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

The Department of Agriculture invited the Pennsylvania FFA to locate its administrative office at the department last year. In addition, the Pennsylvania legislature has provided \$104,000 to support the FFA Foundation, allowing FFA members to participate in state and national educational events.

To learn more about Pennsylvania FFA visit their homepage at www.paffa.state.pa.us or contact Mike Brammer, Pennsylvania FFA Executive Manager, at (717) 705-9551.

Passing On The Farm Workshop March 20

YORK (York Co.) — Planning for your successor, or someone to take over your farm, is the most important task you need to complete if you want your farm to survive into the next generation. Yet, according to some recent statistics, many farm families have not identified a successor for their family business or even talked to family members about what will happen to the farm when they die.

To assist you in this process, Pennsylvania Farm Link and Penn State Extension will hold a

Passing On the Farm Workshop at the York County Extension Office at 112 Pleasant Acres Road, York, March 20 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Farmers seeking ideas for successfully passing their farm to family members, or those interested in locating interested, unrelated farmers to take over an operation, should attend. Beginning farmers are also urged to participate to glean ideas for building their businesses.

Topics covered will include:

- Bringing the next generation into the farm business.

- Business planning for a farm transfer.

- Financing for new farmers.

- Crop insurance.

- Estate planning and legal implications.

- Farmland preservation.

The workshop will conclude with a panel of local farmers discussing how they transferred their own farms.

Lunch is on your own. Reservations are required by March 18. Please contact Pennsylvania Farm Link at (717) 664-7077 to register and for additional information.

Lancaster Farming

Check out our Website!

www.lancasterfarming.com