



# Berks County Farm Bureau Berks Newsletter

Elizabeth Peifer, Editor

Spring Edition ♣ 2015

The newsletter is always available online at [www.pfb.com/berks](http://www.pfb.com/berks)

*Thank you for your patience while we try to implement e-mail delivery of the newsletter. We have had to change delivery systems several times.*

Please e-mail [BerksCoFBnews@aol.com](mailto:BerksCoFBnews@aol.com) if you would like to stop receiving your paper newsletter in favor of the online version.

## Spring Banquet & Services Update Thursday, March 26, 2015 Registration - 6:45pm • Dinner - 7:00pm

Berks Co Ag Center  
1238 County Welfare Rd, Leesport, PA

**Make Reservations by March 20th**  
Tickets \$10, Children 10 and under FREE

Fruit, Salad, Ribs and Chicken, Potato Filling, Veggies  
Ice Cream Sundae Bar sponsored by YF&R

*Entertainment, Speakers and Food  
What more could you ask for?!?*



## Berks County Department of Agriculture

Our most recent County Board meeting was attended by County Commissioner Christian Leinbach as well as Tami Hildebrand, the head of Berks County's new Dept of Ag. This new department is supported by Extension, Conservation, GREP (Greater Reading Economic Partnership) and Ag Land Preservation. Among other duties, Tami will help to operate a program similar to JEAP (Joint Express Approval Process) which will expedite Ag projects and expansions by bringing all the players together for decision making.

All are welcome to attend the ribbon cutting for the new Department on March 18, 2015 at 10 a.m., Berks Co Ag Center, 1238 County Welfare Road, Leesport, PA. Russell Redding, PA Secretary of Ag, will be speaking. Tours will be offered and refreshments will be served.

## Legislative Conferences

By the time you read this, the 2015 National Legislative Conference will have taken place. Members from across the state visited our Washington Legislators in the first week of March. We are able to meet one on one and share our issues while also hearing their points of view on matters of Ag importance.

At the end of February we will be sending another group to Harrisburg on a similar mission – sharing and listening.

These Conferences are always a valuable experience for our members as well as the legislators. If you want to participate in this process in the future, please don't hesitate to contact any member of our board, or Craig Lutz our Govt Relations Director. Our phone numbers are on the left.

### Berks County Farm Bureau Board of Directors

#### President

Larry Gelsinger \_\_\_\_\_ 610-678-0912

#### Vice President

1st Paul Hartman \_\_\_\_\_ 610-689-0870

2nd George Moyer \_\_\_\_\_ 717-933-8748

#### Secretary/Treasurer

Robin Lincoln \_\_\_\_\_ 610-582-7443

#### Directors

Steve Burkholder \_\_\_\_\_ 610-682-2871

Dorothy Wagner \_\_\_\_\_ 610-689-5496

Joe Rosenbaum \_\_\_\_\_ 610-323-4448

Dennis Essig \_\_\_\_\_ 610-488-7126

Bobby Tercha \_\_\_\_\_ 610-682-4526

Charles Seidel \_\_\_\_\_ 610-562-4137

Brennan Johns \_\_\_\_\_ 484-955-1997

Harry Shaak \_\_\_\_\_ 610-562-7298

#### Governmental Relations Director

Craig Lutz \_\_\_\_\_ 610-678-0609

#### Women's Leadership Committee Director

Elizabeth Peifer \_\_\_\_\_ 610-689-4934

#### Young Farmer & Rancher

Rachael Kirkhoff \_\_\_\_\_ 610-750-1531

#### County Information

##### Director/Newsletter Editor

Elizabeth Peifer \_\_\_\_\_ 610-689-4934

#### State Director District 3

Joe Fecondo \_\_\_\_\_ 484-239-2772

## Farmers Required to Keep Copies of Workers Compensation Certificates for All Contractors and their Employees

MSC Business Services encourages all farmers to keep copies of Workers Compensation Insurance Certificates for all custom work providers, contractors and their employees hired by the farm, to meet Workers Compensation requirements.

Farmers who utilize custom work in their businesses, including professionals like carpenters or electricians, should keep copies of the vendors' Workers Compensation Insurance Certificates. This is because during an insurance audit, the auditor has the right to request copies. Further, if copies of certificates are not provided, the total custom hire expense can be added to the farm's Labor Expense, greatly increasing the required Workers Compensation Insurance Premium due. The increase could cost thousands of dollars. MSC Business Services works with Farm Bureau members to help with accounting, payroll processing and other needs including Workers Compensation questions. For more information call: 717.731.3517

## REDISTRICTING...

The following website will lead you to maps displaying the current districts for PA House and Senate and US Congress. I am not sure the names attached to each district are current, but the map lines seem to be. <http://bit.ly/1CVRjK2>

## 2015 Safety Contests 'Seeds to Farm Safety'



County Deadline June 1, 2015  
Coloring – Drawing - Photography  
See our website for full details:  
[www.pfb.com/berks](http://www.pfb.com/berks)

## Legislator Breakfast

Eugene Richards organized a breakfast meeting with State and Federal Legislators representing Berks County. BCFB members met and visited with our representatives at Wegman's Restaurant in December. We had a great turnout and lots of information was shared.



### MSC Business Services Account Supervisors

Carl Ganster - 610-678-1816  
Vance Getz - 717-945-6645

David Mory - 610-419-0250  
Jason Seibert - 717-274-0217



### Berks County Nationwide Agents

**Kathy Barry \***  
Robesonia, PA  
610-693-5000

**Richard McFeely**  
Reading, PA  
610-777-2224

**Daniel Williams**  
Kutztown, PA  
610-683-6823

**Michael Davidheiser**  
Boyertown, PA  
610-367-6095

**Hugh McGinley**  
Birdsboro, PA  
610-582-2862

**David Wilson**  
Birdsboro, PA  
610-582-9233

**Brian Hunsinger**  
Douglassville, PA  
610-582-5204

**James McIntyre**  
Morgantown, PA  
610-286-6170

**William Young**  
Reading, PA  
610-779-8064

**David Koeffler**  
Reading, PA  
610-929-9951

**Christine Ramsey**  
Shillington, PA  
610-777-3258

*\* Farm Certified*

**Timothy Long**  
Mertzown, PA  
610-682-6304

**Jeffrey Spotts \***  
Wyomissing, PA  
610-374-2911



# PUT Firestone Farm Tires

to Work for You!



Call for your nearest Safemark Dealer  
**717.944.1466 or 800.732.8473**

---

Visit us on the web at [www.pafbsafemark.net/](http://www.pafbsafemark.net/)

## Rosetree Consulting

*Agricultural • Environmental*

Rosetree Consulting continues to offer a 5% discount to Berks Co Farm Bureau members on regulatory services such as manure management plans, nutrient management plans, conservation plans, odor management plans. Members should notify RTC of current farm bureau membership when contacting RTC regarding regulatory services. In addition to regulatory services, Rosetree Consulting offers soil testing, crop scouting & precision ag services. Eric Rosenbaum 484-788-7263

### Fueling Agriculture & Cultivating Excellence

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) will host the Fueling Agriculture & Cultivating Excellence (FACE) Conference from June 15-19 at Bucknell University in Lewisburg. FACE is a week-long youth conference that teaches students about the importance of Farm Bureau's grassroots legislative process by allowing them to experience it firsthand. Students attending the conference will participate in collaborative workshops and plenty of fun activities. They will also hear from professionals in the agriculture industry about diverse opportunities within agriculture. The conference is open to all high school students interested in agriculture or public policy.

Berks County Farm Bureau will sponsor members' children who wish to attend the 2015 conference.

Some highlights of the conference include team building activities, Agriculture Olympics, career and networking opportunities and the chance to qualify for an academic scholarship.

The keynote speaker for the conference is Rhett Laubach, the founder of YourNextSpeaker, who will talk to students about youth leadership, focusing on motivating, inspiring and developing leadership skills.

Interested students must submit their applications by May 1. County Farm Bureaus are encouraged to surface and sponsor candidates to participate in FACE.

To learn more about the conference and to access an application, go to [www.pfb.com/youthconference](http://www.pfb.com/youthconference). For additional information contact Laura Brenner at 717.731.3514 or [memrel@pfb.com](mailto:memrel@pfb.com).

### Bus Trip 2015

Plans are in progress for a members bus trip this summer. Look for information in our next newsletter or on our website.

### SAFEMARK DEALERS

**Kantner Tire**  
230 So Franklin Street  
Shoemakersville, PA  
610-562-2567

**Pikeville Equipment**  
521 Oysterdale Road  
Oley, PA  
610-987-6277

**Zimmerman Farm Service**  
180 School House Road  
Bethel, PA  
717-933-4114



## Protecting Everyone

- Individual & Family
- Group Business
- Senior, Medicare
- Dental & Vision

Call PFB Health Services

**1-800-522-2375**

[www.pfb.com/healthinsurance](http://www.pfb.com/healthinsurance)

## MSC BUSINESS SERVICES

PFB Members' Service Corporation

### Farm Management Service

Farm Management Service (FMS) offers personalized business analysis, management advice, tax/business planning and professional income tax preparation.

The trained FMS Account Supervisor personally visits your place of business throughout the year, an especially convenient feature for your busy schedule. The Account Supervisor is your single point of contact, backed up by a team of experts with more than 600 collective years of experience.

Call 717.731.3517

Email: [FMS@pfb.com](mailto:FMS@pfb.com)

[www.msCBS.net](http://www.msCBS.net)

---

# IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

---

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
March 13	Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
March 26	Spring Banquet & Service Update	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	Registration 6:45pm; Dinner 7:00pm
March 31	State Legislative Conference	Harrisburg, PA	
April 10	Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
April 14 to 18	Rural Road Safety Week		
May 8	Board Meeting	Hoss's Restaurant Leesport, PA	7pm
May 7	Penn State Univ Trustee Election		
May 19	PA Primary Election		
June 1	County Deadline for Safety Contest Entries		
June 12	Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
July 10	Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm

## Interested in receiving your Newsletter by email?

*Would you like to cancel your paper newsletter in favor of the email/online version? Please send an email to [BerksCoFBnews@aol.com](mailto:BerksCoFBnews@aol.com). Let us know your name and proper email address.*

## Immigration enforcement-only approach a threat to farming and ranching

March 3, 2015—The House Judiciary Committee is poised to pass a series of immigration bills that focus exclusively on enforcement, which would be devastating to agriculture and the rural economies it supports, the American Farm Bureau Federation warns. A Farm Bureau-commissioned study released in February 2014 showed that labor shortages resulting from enforcement-only reform would cause production to fall by \$30 billion-\$60 billion, while food prices would climb by 5-6 percent.

Passed today by the committee, the Legal Workforce Act (H.R. 1147) requires employers to check the work eligibility of all future hires through the E-Verify system, an Internet-based program that lets employers check a job applicant's identification against Social Security Administration and Homeland Security Department records to confirm employment eligibility.

Unless mandatory E-Verify is coupled with provisions that provide farmers and ranchers the assurance that they will in fact have a supply of legal workers available, it's not going to work for agriculture, said Kristi Boswell, AFBF labor specialist.

"As employers, farmers and ranchers understand the important role they play in the system, but they cannot support an approach that threatens to wipe out billions of dollars a year that is helping to sustain rural communities," Boswell said.

Farm Bureau believes any federal mandates on employers to implement E-Verify must be based on an employment eligibility verification system that is simple, conclusive and timely; provide an affirmative defense for employers acting in good faith; allow for status adjustment of workers not authorized prior to implementation; and be preceded by full implementation of a usable agricultural worker program.

Other bills the committee is expected to ready for a House floor vote include those related to the enforcement of immigration laws in the interior of the United States and asylum law reform (to eliminate fraud and abuse). These bills will likely be put on the House floor with the Secure Our Borders First Act of 2015 (H.R. 399).

Farmers and ranchers have long been calling on Congress to approve legislation that addresses agriculture's current workforce and creates a new flexible temporary visa program."

## **Farmers, ranchers call on Capitol Hill to address agriculture's needs**

Feb. 25, 2015—Nearly 500 Farm Bureau members from across America are visiting policymakers on Capitol Hill today to discuss the most pressing issues facing agriculture.

Today's meetings are part of the American Farm Bureau Federation's Advocacy Conference. Farmers and ranchers representing nearly all commodities from 43 states gathered in Washington, D.C., this week to discuss top policy priorities and hone their grassroots advocacy efforts.

Fox News' Dana Perino, White House press secretary for George W. Bush, and Donna Brazile, vice chair of the Democratic National Committee, kicked off the conference, emphasizing how important it is to build bridges and make connections across party lines.

Additional sessions covered Farm Bureau's top issues, social media advocacy trends and being a successful Farm Bureau advocate.

Reps. Glenn Thompson (R-Penn.) and Marcia Fudge (D-Ohio) emphasized that regardless of what side of the aisle you sit on or whether you represent an urban or a rural district, agriculture is important to everyone.

Talking to Farm Bureau members about how to create stories to move the hearts, minds and votes of lawmakers, Brad Fitch of the Congressional Management Foundation shared the best practices of advocacy story-telling. Among them are opening with "the want," setting the stage and establishing the stakes.

Just before heading to Capitol Hill today, Advocacy Conference attendees heard from Dr. Ben Carson. The well-known pediatric neurosurgeon and New York Times best-selling author stressed that the founders of this country expected citizens who were informed and involved.

Farm Bureau members are meeting with their elected representatives to discuss a wide range of issues including: immigration, tax reform, international trade, the Endangered Species Act, water regulation and biotechnology.

"Congress needs to hear straight from farmers and ranchers about the issues and regulations that affect their ability to do their jobs each day," Dale Moore, executive director of public policy for AFBF, said. "Farmers and ranchers are on the frontlines working to feed a booming global population. They are the best representatives to tell agriculture's story and explain to policymakers how legislation can make or break the future for more than a million family farms and ranches."

## **Dietary guidelines go beyond committee's expertise and mission**

Feb. 20, 2015 —While farmers and ranchers appreciate the breadth and depth of knowledge the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee brings to the important process of refining and reviewing nutrition guidelines, they are not without concerns about the committee's recently released scientific report.

"[T]he report's lengthy foray into sustainability issues goes well beyond both the group's expertise and its clearly defined mission," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman in a statement. "Its conclusions would have benefitted from the contributions of agronomists, animal scientists, ecologists and others with deeper expertise in agriculture and sustainability."

The report makes many good observations about the need for a balanced diet, but Farm Bureau is troubled that it also repeats alarmist and unsubstantiated assertions about land use first promulgated by a UN agency with scant agricultural understanding. "These assertions contradict the views of the UN's own agricultural experts and fly in the face of decades of scientific consensus. The overall guidelines also ignore easier and more effective ways ordinary Americans can reduce their carbon footprints," said Stallman.

Farm Bureau suspects the report's unrealistically pessimistic view of sustainability colors its views regarding meat in the American diet. Instead of supporting the health benefits of lean meat consumption—as previous advisory committees have consistently done—the authors focus only on a diet "higher in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low- or non-fat dairy, seafood, legumes, and nuts; moderate in alcohol (among adults); lower in red and processed meat."

"American farmers and ranchers pay close attention to their actions because that's good for the environment and their own welfare, too. We stand ready to help the administration make sure the world's most qualified experts are present when decisions affecting the food supply are made," Stallman said.

## **Federal Tax Bills Moving**

Two federal tax bills that could provide a benefit to farm families have passed the U.S. House of Representatives. H.R. 636 would permanently extend Section 179—which allows farmers to even out their expenses from year to year—with a maximum deduction of \$500,000, reduced dollar for dollar when expenditures exceed \$2 million. The current maximum deduction is \$25,000 reduced dollar for dollar when purchases exceed \$200,000. Bob Stallman, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, said farmers need tax policy that gives farmers long-term certainty, instead of year-to-year changes.

"Setting the maximum deduction at \$500,000, rather than the current rate of \$25,000, would give small businesses the certainty they need to invest in the future," he said.

In addition, the House passed H.R. 644, which would establish a permanent expanded deduction for food donations. Under current law, only farmers who use the accrual method of accounting can take advantage of the deduction for donated food. This bill would enhance the deduction to include cash-method accounting. The bill would also make permanent a tax incentive where farmers who donate conservation easements can deduct 100 percent of their income for the year they donate and carry over donations in excess of that for an additional 15 years. Farm Bureau wrote letters in support of the bills.

## Bipartisan Bill Introduced for Industrial Hemp

A bipartisan group of senators have introduced legislation that would allow for limited use and growing of industrial hemp in Pennsylvania. The bill, introduced by Sens. Judy Schwank and Mike Folmer would give the green light to the creation of a pilot program for the growing and manufacturing of industrial hemp. The 2014 Farm Bill allowed for states to develop limited programs for growing and using hemp.

Current federal law classifies hemp as a controlled substance. The plant is related to marijuana but contains trace amounts of the chemicals that cause psychoactive reactions.

"Misconceptions are withholding Pennsylvania from an opportunity for our agricultural and business industries to thrive," said Folmer, a Lebanon County Republican. "We are long overdue on utilizing the prospects that the Farm Bill of 2014 has offered to us as a state."

The 2014 Farm Bill limits states to develop "pilot" programs for research, either with the assistance of a college or within the Department of Agriculture.

"People should understand that the bill will only provide Pennsylvania a limited opportunity for hemp development and marketing today," said John Bell, PFB's Government Affairs Counsel. "Federal law still treats hemp as a controlled substance and puts extensive restrictions on its use. Further changes in federal law must still happen to provide the legal assurances needed by farmers and investors to seriously commit future resources in hemp production and marketing."

Senate Bill 50 would facilitate and regulate the growing and use of industrial hemp in the Commonwealth, under the administration of a five-member Industrial Hemp Licensing Board established within the Department of Agriculture. Members of the board would be nominated by the governor and approved by the Senate. One member of the board would represent a statewide agriculture organization. The bill would classify hemp as an oilseed.

"From paper to fuel, clothing to biodegradable plastics, the return of industrial hemp would give Pennsylvania's farmers the opportunity to grow an in-demand crop that benefits tens of millions of people all over the world," said Schwank, a Berks County Democrat who is minority chair of the Senate Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee. Farm Bureau supports the industrial use of hemp.

## Federal Budget Would Cut Crop Insurance, Fund "Waters of US" Rule

In his federal budget proposal, President Obama has suggested an 18 percent cut to the crop insurance budget, which would translate into additional costs for farmers. In the Fiscal Year 2016 budget proposal, the president suggested a 10 percent premium reduction for revenue policies with a harvest price option, said Mary Kay Thatcher, a policy specialist with the American Farm Bureau Federation.

These cuts would raise costs for farmers who take advantage of revenue coverage with the harvest price option. Thatcher said she expects that if the premium costs are increased, most farmers would purchase lower coverages.

The budget also calls for a \$5 million increase of funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for staffing and permit reviews for the "Waters of the United States" rule, which would expand the agency's authority under the Clean Water Act.

## Farmers Show They Care by Helping Community



Pennsylvania Farm Bureau members continued a long standing tradition of helping Ronald McDonald Houses across Pennsylvania and showing that, Farmers Care! Our new Farmers Care program is building on our existing relationships with Ronald McDonald Houses by collecting donations for houses in five cities. At the same time, farmers are showcasing their civic spirit by collecting donations for other local charities

such as food banks and pantries.

PFB's Women's Leadership Committee has led the charge to collect donations for Ronald McDonald Houses. In February, our farmer volunteers held celebrations for Ronald McDonald Houses in Danville, Hershey and Philadelphia. Other ceremonies are planned for houses in Pittsburgh and Scranton this spring.

As of late February, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau members have raised \$44,182.77 for three Ronald McDonald Houses. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is closing in on \$1 million in donations for the Ronald McDonald House over the past 17 years. Farm Bureau members also engaged the next generation of agriculturists in the project. Members of the Danville FFA led the charge to collect and deliver donations for their local Ronald McDonald House while FFA members in York County prepared a meal for parents staying at the Hershey house.

## **Wolf Proposes Severance Tax For Natural Gas**

Gov. Tom Wolf has proposed a severance tax on natural gas, with proceeds supporting the state's public education system. The tax plan, modeled after West Virginia's severance tax, would call for a 5 percent tax, plus 4.7 cents per thousand feet of volume on extraction. The Wolf administration predicts the tax will generate more than \$1 billion by 2017. Wolf said the severance tax will help Pennsylvania make up for prior losses in education funding.

Pennsylvania currently does not have a severance tax on natural gas production; however it assesses an impact fee with the majority of that funding going to municipalities impacted by gas drilling. Under Wolf's proposal, the severance tax would continue to make payments to communities where drilling is occurring, along with protections for property owners with gas leases. In addition, the severance tax would make exemptions for gas that is given away for free, comes from low-producing wells and from wells brought back into production after not having produced marketable quantities of gas. Natural gas companies would be prohibited from deducting severance taxes from royalty payments, Wolf said.

## **Farm Bureau, Tech Companies, Reach Agreement on Big Data**

A group of farm organizations, led by Farm Bureau, and agriculture technology providers have come to an agreement on data privacy and security. The agreement will encourage the development of new technology-driven tools that can help the nation's farmers become more productive, but also gives them peace of mind in terms of security. The coalition supporting the principals include, AFBF, Beck's Hybrids, Dow AgroSciences LLC, DuPont Pioneer, John Deere, The Climate Corporation – a division of Monsanto, and several crop commodity organizations.

"The principles provide a measure of needed certainty to farmers regarding the protection of their data," said American Farm Bureau President Bob Stallman. "Farmers using these technology-driven tools will help feed a growing world while also providing quantifiable environmental benefits. These principles are meant to be inclusive and we hope other farm organizations and companies join this collaborative effort in protecting farm-level data as well as educating farmers about this revolutionary technology."

The changing role of technology in agriculture have given farmers greater access to data collected on their farm. That data, such as harvest reports and nutrient usage, gives farmers a greater set of information for them to make informed management decisions. But at the same time, the collection of data by combines and other machinery has opened up the question of who owns the data and what can be done with the information. Farm Bureau played a lead role in working with

major equipment and seed companies to establish clear guidelines on data collected at the farm level.

The agreement reached by Farm Bureau and technology companies will help move the development of agriculture technology, including displays in tractors, mobile devices and wireless precision agriculture. An important component of the agreement is farmer education outreach, including a transparency evaluation tool for farmers. That tool will help farmers compare issues within contracts from agriculture technology providers (or ATP), to see how they align with these agreed-upon principals.

The agreement includes:

- **Ownership:** The group believes that farmers own information generated on their farming operations. However, farming is complex and dynamic and it is the responsibility of the farmer to agree upon data use and sharing with the other stakeholders with an economic interest such as the tenant, landowner, cooperative, owner of the precision agriculture system hardware, and/or ATP etc. The farmer contracting with the ATP is responsible for ensuring that only the data they own or have permission to use is included in the account with the ATP.
- **Collection, Access and Control:** An ATP's collection, access and use of farm data should be granted only with the affirmative and explicit consent of the farmer. This will be by contract agreements, whether signed or digital.
- **Notice:** Farmers must be notified that their data is being collected and about how the farm data will be disclosed and used. This notice must be provided in an easily located and readily accessible format.
- **Third-party access and use:** Farmers and ranchers also need to know who, if anyone, will have access to their data beyond the primary ATP and how they will use it.
- **Portability:** Within the context of the agreement and retention policy, farmers should be able to retrieve their data for storage or use in other systems, with the exception of the data that has been made anonymous or aggregated and is no longer specifically identifiable. Non-anonymized or non-aggregated data should be easy for farmers to receive their data back at their discretion.
- **Data Availability:** ATPs agree they should provide for the removal, secure destruction and return of original farm data from the ATP, and any third party with whom the ATP has shared the data, upon request by the account holder or after a pre-agreed period of time.