



Berks County Farm Bureau Berks Newsletter

Elizabeth Peifer, Editor

Spring Edition ♣ 2016

The newsletter is always available online at www.pfb.com/berks

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BCFB Night at the Fightin' Phils
Monday, June 27, 2016
Gates Open 5:00 p.m., Game Starts 7:05 p.m.
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Questions? Contact Robert Tercha at 610-451-2460

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Save the Dates

BCFB Annual Meeting at the Fleetwood Grange
Friday, September 30, 2016

PA Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Hershey, PA
Monday - Wednesday, November 14 - 16, 2016

Watch for more information in the upcoming newsletter!



See the online Version for:

Budget Battle Over
Have you Taken the BMP Survey?
Senators Fail to Adopt GMO Labeling Bill
... and more



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IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
May 13	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
June 10	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30 pm
June 27	Night at the Fightin' Phils		Gate Opens 5pm
July 8	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
July 16	Summer Picnic	Shartlesville Community Park	11am - 5pm
August 12	BCFB Board Meeting	Location to be determined	7:30pm
Aug 16-17-18	Ag Progress Days		
September 9	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
September 30	BCFB Annual Meeting	Fleetwood Grange	Registration 6:45pm; Dinner 7:00pm
October 14	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
Nov 8	General Election		
November 11	BCFB Board Meeting	Location to be determined	7:30pm
November 14-16	PA Farm Bureau Annual Meeting	Hershey, PA	
December 9	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm

Budget Battle Over

Pennsylvania's protracted, partisan and bitter budget battle is mostly over. Gov. Tom Wolf allowed House Bill 1801 to become law without his signature—meaning Pennsylvania finally has a spending plan in place nearly nine months after it was due. Pennsylvania has been operating since June 30 without an adopted spending plan, locking Harrisburg in an unprecedented stalemate over state spending and taxation.

House Bill 1801, passed in mid-March by the General Assembly, fully restores \$50 million in funding to Penn State Cooperative Extension, along with other priority agriculture items, schools and social service providers. Penn State Extension and other agriculture programs found themselves victims of the partisan divide in Harrisburg. Shortly before Christmas, Gov. Wolf used his line-item veto to eliminate agriculture funding to Penn State Extension and other areas. Penn State officials were prepared to send out layoff notices on May 1 to more than 1,000 Extension educators if funding wasn't quickly restored.

“The influx of state money will save vital agriculture research and extension programs administered by Penn State University, which are so critical to farmers, the public and the state's economy,” said PFB President Rick Ebert. “In addition, it saves more than 1,100 jobs at Penn State and ensures that Pennsylvania does not become the first state in the nation to achieve the dubious honor of losing its Land Grant University.”

While Gov. Wolf said he could not add his signature to House Bill 1801, he did allow it to become law. Under state law, Pennsylvania governors have 10 days to either sign or veto a bill, or it automatically becomes law. That is the method Gov. Wolf followed in this case. However, Gov. Wolf vetoed the fiscal code, a piece of legislation that accompanies the budget and focuses on taxation.

As a result, money for the state's Veterinary Lab System, Pennsylvania Fairs and the Farm Show cannot be transferred from the Racehorse Development Fund. The House approved a bill to fix the fiscal code issue that now heads to the Senate for consideration. The budget does fund Extension, along with \$1.1 million for Agriculture Excellence programs, more than \$1.5 million for Agriculture Research conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, \$250,000 for Agriculture Exports, and \$177,000 each for the Dairy Show and Livestock Show.

While this ends a budget fight that has lasted since last summer, lawmakers and Gov. Wolf are still facing a June 30 deadline to address next year's budget, and issues like pension and property tax reform remain. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau will continue its work to advocate for priority agriculture issues.

Member Benefit Spotlight PFB Member Enjoys Savings With Caterpillar

A Franklin County Farm Bureau member was able to use one of the newest Farm Bureau benefits to save on agriculture equipment. Lynn Eberly, who owns a duck farm near Fayetteville, recently purchased a Caterpillar skid loader, and saved \$500 on the equipment by using his Farm Bureau discount. Farm Bureau members can enjoy savings of between \$250 and \$2,500 on select new Caterpillar equipment.



“My Farm Bureau membership saved me \$500. So it would be worth joining just for that, even without all the support they give to our whole industry,” Eberly said.

Eberly needs the help of durable equipment to complete his tasks on the farm. He also relies on the help of one full-time and two part-time employees to raise 250,000 ducks each year. Eberly raises 12-hour-old hatchlings and feeds them up to a 7-pound weight. He also raises 600 replacement heifers for local dairy farmers and grows 500 acres of crops. As a multigenerational farmer, Eberly was able to gain much of the knowledge and experience he needed growing up on the family farm. And one of the things he learned from his father was the benefit of Farm Bureau membership.

“My dad was always a Farm Bureau member,” he says. “He was never real active, but he knew it was important to support what they were doing. What we like about Farm Bureau is how they advocate for all of us. When they say they're the voice of agriculture, they're not just speaking for dairy or soybeans or beef – they speak for us all.”

Value Added Grants Available from USDA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is making grant money available for farmers who are looking to start value-added activities. The department is making \$44 million available in competitive funding. Farmers can receive up to \$75,000 in planning grants or \$250,000 for capital grants. Grant money cannot exceed 50 percent of project costs. Examples of planning activities include developing business plans or marketing studies. Actual capital expenses include processing costs and marketing and advertising expenses. Applications are due June 24. Contact your local Rural Development Office for information on how to apply for the grants.

PFB Leads the Push to #SavePSUAg

When Penn State Extension faced its most serious funding crisis in its more than 100-year history, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau led efforts to push for legislative action. Both in the state capitol, and the court of public opinion, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau members spoke about the impact Penn State Extension has had on their families. Farmers, from across the state, rely on the expertise of Extension experts—regardless of their commodity.

Throughout the process, PFB explained the harm that would come to the agriculture industry if Extension closed. Extension saw its budget cut to zero as part of an ongoing budget battle in Harrisburg that stretched back to July. At a press conference hosted by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau at Penn State's Fruit Research and Extension Center in Adams County, Bruce Hollabaugh, a local fruit grower, discussed the close relationship that exists between growers and Extension experts. Throughout the growing season, fruit growers are in daily contact with experts at the research center to help them understand the latest in pest detection and biological controls for diseases. The center also played a key role in researching invasive species like stink bugs. The loss of that kind of help would deliver a serious blow to the fruit industry, and one that can't easily be replaced by private industry, or another university, Hollabaugh said.

"If there are no more scientists, no more Extension agents, the impact will be immediate and devastating to our community," he said.

During the same press conference, PFB President Rick Ebert, said he has worked with Extension since he first started farming, and has relied on their expertise for soil testing and nutrient recommendations. Recently, he turned to Extension for help with transition planning as he brings the next generation into the family business.

"It set our family at ease and turned an awkward conversation about roles, responsibilities and finances into a productive discussion," he said.

PFB Vice President Chris Hoffman testified at a joint hearing of the Senate and House Agriculture & Rural Affairs committees about how much farmers count on Extension and veterinary labs as a first line of defense for diseases. Hoffman, who owns a hog and chicken farm in Juniata County, praised the work between Extension and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture on establishing protocols for the monitoring of highly-pathogenic avian influenza.

"These are the things as farmers that we can't do alone," he said. "We need Extension and Research to help us through this."

Senators Fail To Adopt GMO Labeling Bill

The U.S. Senate failed to pass a biotechnology bill that would have established national standards for food derived from genetic modified organisms. In a procedural move, the Senate failed 48-49 to end debate on the bill and move it forward for a final vote. Both sides are continuing negotiations on the measure, but debate on the issue centers on whether it will call for voluntary, or mandatory, labeling. Sen. Pat Toomey voted in support of the bill. Sen. Bob Casey voted against Farm Bureau on the bill.

Senate Agriculture Chairman Pat Roberts, a Kansas Republican, introduced a bill that would have prevented a patchwork of state laws, and as a result save consumers money. Without a federal standard for labeling products containing ingredients derived from

GMOs, state laws like one in Vermont—set to take effect in July—will lead to a patchwork of state laws. A recent study suggests that mandatory labeling would cost the average family an additional \$1,100 a year in increased food costs. AFBF President Zippy Duvall said the vote by Senators to not support the Robert's bill will ultimately harm farmers and consumers alike.

"To say we are angry with those senators who abandoned farmers and ranchers and turned their backs on rural America on this vote is an understatement. Their votes opposing this measure ignored science, threw our nation's food system into disarray and undermined the public's understanding of the many benefits of biotechnology in feeding a growing and hungry population," he said. "We remain hopeful they will have a chance at redemption by correcting this situation that will otherwise lead to increased food costs for consumers and stifle agricultural innovation, which remains a strength of our nation. We must not let anyone forget that rural America and our farmers and ranchers do matter."

Farm Bureau is continuing to work with the Senate on a GMO bill that meets Farm Bureau's grassroots policy and protects a farmer's ability to use biotechnology in the field.

Listing of Bats as Threatened Mostly Positive for Agriculture

The federal Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the Northern Long-Eared Bat as threatened, a move that will mostly allow farmers and timber harvesters to continue as normal with their businesses. Farmers were concerned the listing could have caused them to curtail spraying or other crop treatments along fence rows. But the regulations approved by the Fish and Wildlife Service focus mostly on protecting bats when they hibernate, and in the rearing of their young.



Northern Long-Eared Bats, which range throughout the East Coast and are found throughout Pennsylvania, are suffering from White Nose Syndrome, which has decimated populations. The virus is spread during bat hibernation. As a result, some environmental organizations pushed to have the bat protected under the Endangered Species Act. While the bat will receive protection under the act, the impacts on farmers will be minimal, said Ryan Yates, a director of Congressional relations for the American Farm Bureau Federation. Most of the regulations surrounding the bats focus on avoiding disturbing bats when they hibernate, he said.

"We can continue with farm activities, we can apply crop protections and fertilizers," he said. "The focus for the Fish and Wildlife Service is to look at treatments for the disease. That is the real cause of species decline."

Homeowners can also remove bats from structures without violating the Endangered Species Act, Yates said. Some restrictions will apply for the removal of timber. Landowners would need to apply for a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service to harvest timber within a quarter mile radius of a cave or mine with a confirmed population of Northern Long Eared Bats, Yates said. Landowners could still remove hazardous trees without a permit. In addition, landowners would be prohibited from taking trees within 150-feet of an area bats use as maternity roosting sites from June 1 to July 30. That is to keep the disturbance of bats to a minimum as they are raising their young.

Legislation Introduced to Increase Hunting Licenses

A bipartisan group of Senators introduced legislation to increase the state's hunting license. If approved, it would be the first increase of hunting licenses in Pennsylvania in 17 years. All hunting fee increases must receive legislative approval. Under the bill, a general hunting or furtaker license would increase to \$29 from \$19. Resident junior and senior license fees would stay the same. The bill also calls for increases for special hunting privileges, such as waterfowl, archery and bear. In addition, the bill calls for the creation of a combination license, called the Ultimate Outdoorsman, which would give a wide variety of hunting options for a \$110 fee. The Game Commission does not receive state tax dollars for operations and instead relies on hunting and trapping fees. About 35 percent of Game Commission revenue comes from hunting and furtaker license sales, along with excise tax on guns and ammunition and the sale of natural resources. Farm Bureau policy supports a \$5 increase in general hunting licenses.

Have You Taken the BMP Survey?

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is encouraging farmers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed to take part in a survey aimed at measuring the use of best management practices by the April 30 deadline.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau has partnered with Penn State and other state agencies in developing the survey and the process for handling of the data collected through the survey. Farmers will be asked to provide information on the types of BMPs used on their farm, such as cover crops or no-till planting.

Penn State has sent out letters encouraging farmers to participate in the survey and directing them to the website <http://bit.ly/25218pR>. Each letter has a five-digit code that farmers must use to complete the survey. The survey is intended for farmers operating within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Farmers who have not yet completed the electronic survey should have received a copy in the mail. Farmers can visit the survey website to request a copy. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau believes it is critical for every farmer in the watershed to participate. Our organization contends the federal Environmental Protection Agency has significantly underreported the number of BMPs that farmers are using to reduce the amount of nutrients reaching the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Penn State will share the aggregated data with state and federal officials to give a more accurate accounting of BMPs within the watershed. The model used by the EPA to develop its bay cleanup plan only accounts for BMPs that were paid for using federal cost-share dollars, ignoring the voluntary practices installed on farms.

The project may require that someone from Penn State meet with a small number of randomly selected survey participants to verify that survey data reflects what is happening on the farm. For more information, and to view a video about the survey visit www.pfb.com/pennstatesurvey.

REAP Tax Credits Available

Farmers who want to use new best management practices or purchase conservation equipment can utilize the state's Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program. Tax credits remain for the 2015-2016 program year. REAP provides tax credits to farmers who install best management practices or purchase equipment that reduces the amount of erosion and sediment reaching streams. The program is administered by the State

Conservation Commission. Farmers can receive tax credits of up to \$150,000 per agriculture business, covering between 50 to 75 percent of the project costs. Common projects approved through REAP include no-till equipment, waste storage and heavy animal use areas. REAP can be combined with Environmental Quality Incentive Program or the Chesapeake Bay program. Farmers have until April 22 to submit applications for funds in the 2015-2016 program year. Private investors can act as program sponsors by providing money to farmers for the projects, in return for tax credit. Applications for the program can be found at www.agriculture.pa.gov and by clicking on "protect" and then State Conservation Commission. In addition, farmers can contact Joel Semke at 717.705.4032 or jsemke@pa.gov.

FACE Conference Registration Deadline Approaching!

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau will once again host its popular youth conference this summer—at a new location. The sixth annual FACE Conference is planned for June 20-24 at Lock Haven University. The event is designed for high school students who want to learn more about agriculture, civic engagement and the legislative process. Students can experience how legislatures function and the importance of being involved in the legislative process. At the same time, students will participate in collaborative workshops, listen to dynamic presentations and other fun activities. County Farm Bureaus have agreed to sponsor students in their community so participation for teens is free. However, a \$50 deposit for each participant is required and will be fully refunded after the completion of the FACE Conference. To learn more about the FACE Conference and to download a registration form visit www.pfb.com/youthconference. The deadline for registration is May 2. Contact Laura Brenner, PFB's committee director, at 717.761.2740 for more information.

Local Discounts Can Drive Membership Growth

When Wayne/Pike Farm Bureau decided to start offering local discounts to members, they cast a wide net. And it's yielded dividends—both in terms of partnerships with local businesses, but also in recruiting and retaining members.

"We've had quite a few sign up because of the discount," said Karl Eisenhauer, president of Wayne/Pike Farm Bureau.

The county has 33 businesses in the two-county area that offer discounts to members of Wayne/Pike Farm Bureau. That includes restaurants, three grocery stores and a movie theater.

"You can easily pay for the cost of your membership by using the discounts," Eisenhauer said. "I've tried to get a variety of discounts."

As the program has expanded, other businesses have approached the county Farm Bureau about offering similar discounts, Eisenhauer said. He's also signed up some businesses for memberships.

Currently 11 county Farm Bureaus offer at least one localized discount above and beyond the discounts available statewide or nationally through Farm Bureau. Eisenhauer encourages other county Farm Bureaus to look at similar programs because it can help with membership.

"I was surprised at how it went. There was only a few businesses that said they couldn't offer a discount," he said. "It's been working nice."

Drive For Success at Golf Tournament



Make sure to reserve your spot for the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation's 24th Annual Richard Prether Golf Classic will take place Monday, June 20th at the Hershey Country Club, West Course. The outing is being sponsored by the foundation and

Nationwide Insurance. Money raised will be used by the foundation to support important projects that help increase public awareness about agriculture. This year's Foundation Focus is the Ag on the Go program, which began last year to bring agriculture education to urban schools. Ag on the Go works with students in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and York in grades 3-5 to bring agriculture-themed science lessons into the classrooms. Ag on the Go is built on our popular Mobile Ag Ed Science Lab program which educates close to 100,000 students annually about agriculture. The foundation tournament will be conducted as a four-person scramble and will be held on its scheduled date, rain or shine. The cost of the golfing package is \$150 per person and includes greens fees and cart, driving range privileges, lunch and refreshments on the golf course, golf contests and prizes, gifts, a photo of your foursome, dinner and a chance for door prizes! The deadline for reservations is June 3. To make your reservation or to learn more about sponsorship opportunities please contact the coordinator, Kellan Kernisky at 717.761.2740 or kmkernisky@pfb.com.

Bill Would Exempt High Tunnels from Storm Water Planning

Farmers who want to use high tunnels for their agriculture businesses would be exempt from requirements under the Storm Water Management Act, under a bill approved by state House lawmakers. House Bill 1103, introduced by Rep. David Zimmerman, would exempt high tunnels from planning and regulatory requirements under the act. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection issued regulations that require some Pennsylvania municipalities to require high tunnels be subject to storm water planning and engineering rules. High tunnels are often used as temporary growing structures and, depending on the crop, are moved from field to field. Some municipalities have required berms or filter beds to manage storm water runoff around high tunnels, Zimmerman said. The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration.

The 2016 Spring Orchard Meetings Are Scheduled

Penn State Extension has planned ten educational meetings for commercial tree fruit growers this spring, beginning April 14. These meetings are being held in orchards across the state. Growers have an opportunity to visit other commercial tree fruit operations, learn from Extension specialists who are experts in their program areas, and discuss current tree fruit issues with other growers at a critical time of the growing season.

The program highlights include:

- Gearing Up to Manage Tree Fruit Diseases
- Bio-renovation of Orchard Sites
- Integrated Weed Management
- Monitoring and Management for Insect and Mite Pests
- Apple Thinning and Promoting Return Bloom

Meeting dates, times and locations are listed below. For more information, contact the county Extension office where the meeting is being held.

- April 14, 6:00- 7:30 p.m., *Penn State Fruit Research and Extension Center, 290 University Drive, Biglerville*
 - May 3, 6:30- 8:30 p.m. *Kauffman's Fruit Farm & Market, 3097 Old Philadelphia Pike, Bird in Hand*
 - May 4, 6:00- 8:00 p.m. *Andrews Orchard, 760 Appleway, Saint Thomas*
 - May 5, 6:00- 8:00 p.m. *Twain Springs Fruit Farm, 257 High Street, Orrtanna*
 - May 10, 12:00- 2:00 p.m. *Burch Farms Country Market, 9210 Sidehill Road North East*
 - May 11, 6:30- 9:00 p.m. *Apple Castle, 277 State Route 18, New Wilmington*
 - May 17, 6:15-8:30 p.m. *Hinish Orchards, 217 Apple Tree Lane Roaring Spring*
 - May 18, 6:00- 8:00 p.m. *Grim's Orchard, 9941 Schantz Road, Breinigsville*
 - May 24, 6:00- 9:00 p.m. *O'Hara's Orchard, 73 Orchard Drive, Bloomsburg*
 - June 7, 6:00- 8:00 p.m. *Orr's Orchard and Farm Market, 682 Orr Drive., Martinsburg, WV*
- Source: Penn State

Farmers Across the Country Facing Labor Issues

The Dambach family was expecting workers on March 1. Instead, the Dambachs were left scrambling for workers at Lake Forest Gardens—a wholesale and retail nursery— thanks to paperwork and other delays at the federal level. Like many in agriculture, the Dambachs uses the H-2A system to find foreign workers for their farm. And like many across the country, a series of delays with processing paperwork left farmers scrambling to find workers or leave crucial spring work undone.

Alan Dambach, whose father started the family business and now whose son is in charge, was able to find some local labor at his Beaver Country nursery—but those were employees who help on the farm during the winter season. Repeated attempts to work with local labor companies yielded no workers—even at \$12 an hour. Dambach's crew of eight migrant workers showed up on April 1—a month late due to paperwork delays. They are now scrambling to make up on missed farm work. The American Farm Bureau Federation has heard from farmers in at least 20 states who are facing labor shortages due to paperwork delays.

"Many farmer members have called us, and state Farm Bureaus, asking for help," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "They face serious hurdles in getting visas for workers in time to tend and harvest this year's crops. Paperwork delays have created a backlog of 30 days or more in processing H-2A applications at both the Department of Labor and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services."

The Department of Labor is failing to comply with rules that require it to respond to applications 30 days prior to the day farmers need workers, Duvall said. That is also coupled with problems at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Farm Bureau is calling on Congress to pass immigration reform that gives farmers access to a legal and stable workforce. Duvall also said there is a need to modernize the H-2A system, including the need to accept electronic documentation, instead of sending out documents by regular mail.

Spread the Word: Educator's Ag Institute

The Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation is committed to growing agriculture literacy. And one way the foundation achieves that goal is by helping educators develop lesson plans based on agriculture. The foundation, a charitable organization supported by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, is hosting the Educator's Ag Institute this summer at Penn State. This year's institute, planned for July 10-14, will give teachers an up close and personal look at farming practices, and how they can use agriculture as the basis for lesson plans.

While at the conference, educators will tour a number of Penn State's agriculture facilities, participate in hands-on lessons and leave with a host of materials for use in their classroom. The Educator's Ag Institute is open to new educators, along with those who have previously attended our Ag in the Classroom workshop. We will add new tours and features annually. Participants will also tour several area farms and hear from farmers on how they raise healthy crops and livestock. Educators can receive continuing education credits for attending.

The Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation is again looking for assistance from county Farm Bureaus to promote our workshop to local educators. We also encourage county Farm Bureaus to consider sponsoring educators to attend this worthwhile workshop. The Educator's Ag Institute helps spread positive and factual information about agriculture and expands consumer understanding about our industry.

For more information, contact the foundation at 717.731.3555 or www.pfb.com/aginstitute.

PMMB Extends Over-Order Premium

The Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board is continuing the current Class I over-order premium and fuel adjuster for six months. The over-order premium stands at \$1.60 and will run through September. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau thanked the board for considering the needs of dairy farmers by maintaining the premium.

"The board thoughtfully reviewed all the testimony and evidence presented by stakeholders in making the decision to maintain the existing premium price for milk," said PFB President Rick Ebert. "We will continue to monitor declining milk prices, which are challenging the profit margins of dairy farmers."

USDA Announced Funding for Protects In Three Watersheds

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is making \$700,000 available for water quality improvement projects in three watersheds within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Grants through the National Water Quality Initiative will help farmers in Bedford, Blair and Mifflin counties with conservation projects that will improve water quality. Grants are administered through the National Resource and Conservation Service. Covered projects include nutrient management, cover crops, terraces and buffers.

The three watersheds slated for funding in Pennsylvania are:

- Upper Kishacoquillas in Mifflin County. The watershed drains more than 19,000 acres in the Kishacoquillas Valley, also known as "Big Valley." Agriculture makes up 60 percent of the land mass. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has designated it as impaired.

- Beaver Creek and Upper Yellow Creek are located in Bedford and Blair counties and are both located in the Yellow Creek watershed. Yellow Creek is a tributary of the Juniata River and drains the area known as Morrison's Cove. The region is home to a number of dairy farms. The DEP has said that tributaries in the region are impaired.

Applications can be submitted at any time, but April 15 is the deadline for this current funding cycle. For more information, contact your local USDA office.

Cold Weather Impacts Orchards

Fruit growers across the state are cautiously optimistic for a healthy harvest of apples and peaches after a few nights of cold weather plunged the temperature to dangerous levels. After a warm and early spring pushed blossoms on a number of fruit trees, a mass of cold weather settled over Pennsylvania that threatened to kill developing buds. The scenario was similar to 2012 when a cold snap killed a number of buds on fruit trees throughout the East Coast and upper Midwest.



"This is similar to 2012 where we had April weather in March and March weather in April," said Robert Crassweller, a tree fruit specialist at Penn State Cooperative Extension. "I'd say there were places that were three weeks ahead of normal."

Thankfully for fruit growers, it appears that Pennsylvania's two primary fruit crops—apples and peaches—mostly survived. The same can't be said for apricots and plums, which blossom earlier than other fruits.

"We lost our apricots and about half of our plum varieties. The peaches seem OK," said Jason Coopey, a co-owner of Way Fruit Farm in Centre County. "Our apple crop is still good. It will be lighter than last year, but should still be a solid crop."

Further south near the Mason-Dixon Line, Mike Kurek, owner of Susquehanna Orchards, said most of his crops survived the cold snap. Kurek applied fertilizer protections to give the trees a few extra degrees of protection from freezing. Still, some peach trees are showing signs of losses, along with plums, Kurek said. "We are expecting a full crop on most of our varieties," he said.

Chris Baugher, a co-owner of Adams County Nursery, said most of his apples and peaches escaped widespread damage, but sweet cherries are likely lost to the cold weather. "We dodged a few bullets there," he said. "There were a few cold nights."

Staff at Penn State's Fruit Research and Extension Center in Adams County conducted testing following several nights of cold weather found most apples and peaches survived. Growers are going to have to pay close attention during thinning, said Jim Schupp, who directs the center. There's likely still enough blossoms on the trees that growers will have adjust the crop through thinning.

"One of the main challenges will be that when you go through events like this, the trees are stressed, but so are the growers," Schupp said. "We are going to have adjust this crop to get to the right size. We are not just after yield, we are after marketable yield."

Farmers Care Hits Major Milestone

Congratulations to all our volunteers who, since 1998, have collected donations for the Farmers Care program. This year, the program reached the \$1 million mark in donations which supports charities like the Ronald McDonald Houses. Since 1998, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Committee has spearheaded efforts to collect food, supplies and monetary donations for Ronald McDonald Houses in five Pennsylvania communities. County Farm Bureaus also support local charities such as food banks and pantries.

PFB's relationship with the Ronald McDonald Houses started with Food Check-Out Day and has blossomed into the Farmers Care program. County Farm Bureaus, many of which work on a regional basis, hold collection drives for food and other donations to be delivered to Ronald McDonald Houses. Many counties have worked with FFA chapters on donation drives. Recently, Jim Murray, a former general manager of the Philadelphia Eagles and founder of the Ronald McDonald House, met with PFB's Women's Leadership Committee, to praise their efforts. Murray credited Farm Bureau with establishing a lasting relationship that has helped the Ronald McDonald House continue its mission of supporting families with children combating serious illnesses.

Industrial Hemp Bill Passes General Assembly

The Pennsylvania General Assembly adopted a bill that would allow for a pilot program for the growing of industrial hemp. Senate Bill 50, introduced by Sen. Judy Schwank, would provide for limited growing of hemp, under the supervision of state government and a research university. The bill now heads to Gov. Tom Wolf for consideration. Hemp was once grown as a cash crop in Pennsylvania before production was outlawed by the federal government. A provision in the 2014 Farm Bill allowed for states to establish limited pilot programs supervised by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

"The goal is to research best practices and clear the way for Pennsylvania to become a hemp-farming powerhouse," Schwank said. "I am not expecting hemp to be used commercially for many years, but this pilot program gets Pennsylvania's foot in the door, and opens the possibilities for future generations of farmers."

New Invasive Pest Found in Pennsylvania

A new invasive species was discovered in Lancaster County, and has spread to four other counties, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. The allium leafminer, a pest that feasts on crops like onions, garlic and leeks, are usually transported with commercial cargo or in passenger bags. Previous research suggests the pest can cause more damage in organic systems and home gardens.

Adult bugs are around three millimeters in length and appear as gray or black flies with yellow or orange patches on the tops and fronts. Adults make their appearance in early spring. Females lay eggs on the base of stems, and the larva move downward to feed on bulbs. Damage from that feeding can weaken plants making it prone to bacterial and fungal infections. The leaves of infected plants appear wavy with a row of white dots. Farmers are encouraged to contact the Department of Agriculture at 866.253.7189, or their county Extension office, to report a sighting.

Monarch Conservation Focused on Milkweed

The monarch butterfly is unique in the insect world. The iconic butterfly—with its distinct orange and black colors—migrates across North America. They spend their winter months in Mexico, and fly over the United States on their way to Canada. Come fall, they do the trip in reverse. And on their way, the monarch uses milkweed for laying eggs, and for the caterpillars to feast on. However, with petitions underway to place the monarch butterfly on the federal Endangered Species Act, a coalition is urging farmers to take some easy conservation measures to protect monarch populations.

"If it were listed under the Endangered Species Act, it could pose some significant challenges for the corn and soybean belt," said Ryan Yates director of Congressional relations for the American Farm Bureau Federation.

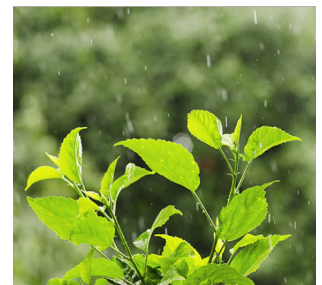
Farm Bureau is among several agriculture organizations and businesses that are part of a coalition aimed at improving monarch populations. Because milkweed is an essential plant for monarch health, farmers are encouraged to keep plants found in fence rows, ditches or on non-production areas on their farms, Yates said. Farmers should still treat milkweed that is interfering with row crop production as part of their normal crop treatment plan, Yates said. But farmers should consider keeping milkweed in place in areas that do not harm crop production, he said. Farm Bureau and other partners are conducting an educational outreach plan to agriculture on the importance of monarch conservation. The hope is that voluntary landowner practices can help monarch populations rebound and prevent the species from being listed on the Endangered Species Act.

Adoption of Cover Crops Varies in the U.S.

Cover crops are grown to provide cover on the soil which benefits soil health, reduces soil erosion and retains nutrients. However, only about 4 percent of agricultural producers in the U.S. plant cover crops on their operations as reported by the USDA in 2010-2011. Agricultural producers operating in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed have increased annual plantings of cover crops from 5 percent in 2006 to 18 percent in 2011. Managing cover crops is considered a best management practice and, to a large extent, is recognized by the Chesapeake Bay Model if government cost-share and technical assistance were involved.

Delaying Vegetable Harvest After a Rain May Improve Food Safety

Delaying the harvest of vegetable crops for 24 hours after a rain or irrigation application has been proven to reduce pathogens such as *Listeria* and *E. coli* on the crop. Moisture creates conditions that favor pathogen development in the soil which could be transferred to the vegetable crop. Cornell University discovered after a rain or irrigation, the presence of the *Listeria* pathogen was 25 times greater but a delay of 24 hours provides time to dry the soil surface and greatly reduces the presence of the pathogen.



Penn State Hires Expert to Help Farmers With Food Safety

Penn State Extension hired an educator who will work with farmers across the state on complying with new federal food safety regulations. Jeff Stoltzfus will work out of Lancaster County, but will have a statewide focus in developing food safety education information for fruit and vegetable growers. The programs will help farmers meet standards set by the federal Food and Drug Administration under the Food Safety Modernization Act. Prior to joining Penn State, Stoltzfus spent 29 years in adult agricultural education, including with the Eastern Lancaster County School District.

"Jeff Stoltzfus is uniquely qualified to help Extension address this high-priority area," said Dennis Calvin, director of Penn State Extension. "Over three decades, his teaching has focused on agronomy and horticulture production and more recently on farm food safety in response to increased buyer and now regulatory farm food-safety challenges."

Farm Bureau Warns of EPA Overreach

Farm Bureau is asking Congress to hold the Environmental Protection Agency accountable for repeatedly violating open government laws in its "waters of the United States" campaign. Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Tom Buchanan testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Superfund, Waste Management and Regulatory on the flawed rulemaking process followed by the EPA. Farm Bureau is troubled by a ruling from the Government Accountability Office that found the EPA used covert propaganda to promote WOTUS.

"From the day it first issued the proposed rule, EPA behaved like an advocate for a decision that was already made—willing to say most anything to get to the desired result," said Buchanan, who testified on behalf of Farm Bureau. "It waged a public relations campaign aimed directly at farmers and ranchers."

Farmers across the country are concerned at the methods the EPA used to promote the WOTUS rule, including social media campaigns, Buchanan said. While the EPA claimed it had public support for the rule, the agency ignored concerns from state and local governments, businesses and organizations that represent nearly every segment of the U.S. economy, Buchanan said. The agency also ignored regulatory safeguards for small businesses—through the Regulatory Flexibility Act—which requires federal agencies to review regulations for their impact on small businesses. Farm Bureau hopes Congress will take a close look at the actions of the EPA throughout the whole rulemaking process.

Penn State Research Creates Gene-Edited Mushroom

A Penn State researcher, who created a gene-edited mushroom, has received federal approval to move forward with potential commercial development of the mushroom. The anti-browning mushroom, created by professor Yinong Yang, was developed using a gene-editing technique called CRISPR-Cas 9. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently ruled the mushroom would not need agency approval, which opens the door for commercial development.

Unlike most genetically modified organisms, this mushroom does not contain DNA from other organisms, Yang said. Instead, the

mushroom was developed by making a small deletion in a specific gene, he said. The technique Yang used is a relatively new way to modify an organisms' genes by delivering a DNA-cutting enzyme to a specific portion of the DNA. That creates a modification that can delete or replace certain DNA portions—and thereby altering traits. This technique was used to stop the production of enzymes that causes mushrooms to turn brown. This will result in a mushroom with a longer shelf life.

"This technology holds promise for precision breeding of crops with many desirable traits, such as low levels of food allergens or toxins, disease resistance, drought tolerance, and efficient nitrogen and phosphorous utilization," Yang said. "These agronomic traits not only help reduce pesticide, fertilizer and water usage, but also improve food quality and safety."

Pennsylvania Expands Hunger Initiatives

Pennsylvania is putting funding behind a program designed to put local produce into the hands of food banks and hunger relief organizations. The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank will implement the Pennsylvania Agriculture Surplus System (PASS). The system was developed six years ago, but only recently received funding through the 2015-2016 budget.

"There is healthy and nutritious food available in the fields that never makes it into the food supply, and we want to see it put onto the plates of people who need it. I've often said that you cannot have a charitable food system without a food system that is charitable," said Agriculture Secretary Russel Redding. "This program makes it easier for more of the state's producers to contribute to the cause."

PASS was established in 2010, following a successful pilot program in southcentral Pennsylvania, where the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank collected more than 128,000 pounds of surplus apples. Those apples were packaged and distributed in the food bank's 27-county service area. Using \$1 million in state funding, the food bank will collect surplus farm products grown in Pennsylvania. The produce will help those in need and also create an alternative market for farmers who have no market for edible, but lower-graded, products. Farmers interested in participating in PASS can contact PDA's Bureau of Food Distribution at 800.468.2433.

Show Your Farm Bureau Pride!

Let's see those springtime selfies! Farm Bureau knows the pride you take in your farm businesses. And we're hoping you'll share that pride. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is holding a promotion throughout 2016 to encourage our members to highlight their farms on social media and tell why they are Farm Bureau Proud! The men and women of agriculture have the most scenic offices—million dollar views of beautiful sunsets, open fields and growing crops. You also have the chance to watch the fruits of your labor, be it healthy animals, or a bountiful harvest.

We're asking our members to share those pictures that showcase the efforts you put into agriculture. Take those great photos and post them to either Facebook, Twitter or Instagram using the hashtag #PFBproud, and tell us a little bit about why you are proud to be a part of agriculture. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau will look to share some of these great photos on its social media accounts. In addition, PFB may use some of the images during our Annual Meeting in November or other events. Social media is a great way for us in agriculture to tell our story and help the public understand the work we do every day.

Farm Bureau Offers Challenge To Rural Entrepreneurs

The American Farm Bureau Federation is holding its third annual Rural Entrepreneurship Challenge, with contestants competing for \$145,000 to fund their projects. The challenge is a competition for business owners and entrepreneurs with agriculture and food business ideas that have a positive impact on rural communities throughout the country. A total of \$145,000 in startup funds will be distributed to 10 agriculture or food businesses. Applicants have until June 30 to apply.

The top 10 teams will be announced in October. Six semi-finalists teams will each receive \$10,000 and four teams will advance and compete for \$85,000. Those final four teams will compete at an event during AFBF's 98th Annual Convention and IDEAg Trade Show in Phoenix, Arizona, January 7-9, 2017. Those final four teams will be competing for the title of Farm Bureau Entrepreneur of the Year and \$30,000. Finalists can also win the People's Choice Award at \$25,000. The runner up teams will receive \$15,000.

Applicants need to be current Farm Bureau members and have a business related to agriculture or food. Eligible types of businesses include agricultural technology, value added process, farm-to-table restaurants and farm markets. Businesses do not need to be located in a rural area but it must have a direct impact on rural residents. To submit your application, or for more information, visit: www.strongruralamerica.com/challenge.

Finding the Next Generation of Agriculture Workers

Agriculture is poised to be a growing career destination for thousands of young adults coming out of school. However, there's a growing concern that there will not be enough workers to fill the expected 75,000 openings in agriculture in the coming years. That's why the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture is researching current industry needs, and what schools can do to help fill that need.

Much of that growth in agriculture will come in food manufacturing, which is a significant component of manufacturing in Pennsylvania, said Scott Sheely, Special Assistant for Workforce Development at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. But there's a growing need for workers to have the expertise to help meet the technological changes happening in agriculture, he said.

Earlier this year, Sheely began working with the Department of Agriculture to examine how to attract quality candidates, and what changes need to occur at the education level so students can tackle careers in agriculture. In looking down the road, Sheely sees three tiers of jobs where a growing number of students and workers will need to fill:

- The first tier, and the fewest in terms of potential job openings, are the agriculture science jobs such as engineers, agronomists and laboratory supervisors. There are already post high-school career paths in place for students to pursue.
- The second tier is the farmers, landscape workers and equipment operators who work in food production plants.
- The third tier, and the one with the largest looming shortfall, is one that requires some type of training past high school. These are the workers that will help meet the changing technology of agriculture.

While PDA and others are pushing agriculture careers to perspective students—and returning military—there is still a gap between current education training, and the needs of employers,

Sheely said. What Sheely and others found is there is not any central organization for helping perspective students fit into a pipeline to fill those technological jobs—like maintenance technicians for agriculture equipment. Those types of jobs require mechanical aptitude, but also further training because of the advanced technology in farm equipment. Sheely said he would like to see partnerships formed between technology schools and employers to begin apprenticeship programs for those types of jobs. Much of the education focus has been on creating clear paths for those post-secondary jobs, ones like agronomy, that require a four-year degree, Sheely said. But the greatest need in the coming decade will be those that require a bit more training than high school or technical programs currently offer, he said. So it will be important for the state to create partnerships, like with veteran service organizations, to recruit quality candidates for agriculture jobs, Sheely said.

“We will need to reach out to some non-traditional sources to help us solve this issue,” he said. “I don't know what we will find, we are trying and we are asking those questions.”

Local Income Tax Bill Clears Committee Hurdle

A bill that would make the filing of local income taxes more consistent with state and federal laws received support from the House Finance Committee. Senate Bill 356, introduced by Sen. Mike Folmer, would establish similar rules for payment and reporting of local income tax, including estimated tax reporting and payment, as established for state and federal income tax. Both the state and federal governments allow farmers to make one report and payment of estimated taxes, which is deferred until after the completion of the tax year. Farmers don't have the same option at the local level. Local tax laws also do not provide a “safe harbor” provision for the payment of estimated taxes. SB 356 would address both issues, along with making reporting and payment deadlines the same as state and federal. The bill would also limit the authority of a taxing district to require its taxpayers to use special tax forms and filing methods. The bill, which has already received Senate approval, now heads to the full House for consideration.

Member Benefit Spotlight Support Your Grad ... With a Gift of Membership!

Looking for something to honor a recent college graduate who is embarking on their new career? Consider a gift of Farm Bureau membership. It's an especially meaningful gift for graduates who are returning to the farm, or who are starting the next chapter of their lives working in agriculture. But regardless of their new path, a Farm Bureau membership brings value to a young adult starting out in life.



Farm Bureau membership brings with it numerous discounts, including insurance, computers, entertainment, automotive purchase through General Motors and travel discounts. It's a great way to pass on the value of members, and the support of agriculture, to newly minted graduates. Whether it's a family member, or close friend, you can provide the gift of membership. Just call Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's Member Relations Division at 717.761.2740 and tell them you'd like to support the next generation with a gift of membership!