



# Berks County Farm Bureau Berks Newsletter

Elizabeth Peifer, Editor

Summer Edition ♣ 2017

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

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## BCFB at the Reading Fightin' Phils



Tuesday, June 20, 2017

Free Tickets – up to 6 per membership

Send stamped, addressed return envelope to Robert Tercha, 25 Mertz Road, Mertztown, PA 19539  
*Include a note specifying how many tickets you want.*  
Questions? Contact Robert Tercha 610-451-2460

*There will be a raffle for members who attend the game, so drop by our table near the entrance and put your ticket in for the drawing.*

## Policy Development Program

Policy development is the most important activity of the county Farm Bureau. It is an organized and ongoing program of gathering ideas and opinions from the members. The county Policy Development Committee is responsible for editing, compiling, clarifying and submitting these ideas for discussion and action at the county annual meeting.

Resolutions on state and national issues that are suggested by the majority of voting members at the county annual meeting are submitted to the state Policy Development Committee, and resolutions passed concerning local issues become county policy. The State Policy Development Committee then decides, by majority vote, which ideas are to be submitted as resolutions to the voting delegates at the PFB annual meeting. The voting delegates then decide, by majority vote, which resolutions are to be adopted as PFB policy.

These resolutions are published in an official policy book for the year and policies that are of national interest are then submitted to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Resolution Committee and voted on by voting delegates at the AFBF annual meeting. Adopted resolutions are then published after the annual meeting in the AFBF policy book.

E-mail us at [govcom@pfb.com](mailto:govcom@pfb.com).

## Farm Bureau Supports Funding For Surplus Food Distribution

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is calling on lawmakers to increase funding for a food distribution system that will put more fresh foods in the hands of families in need. The Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System, or PASS, currently receives \$1 million in funding to help distribute food to food banks. However, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and other organizations are encouraging state lawmakers to fund the PASS system at \$5 million, allowing food banks to reach even more families. PASS was created six years ago, but did not have funding to actually deliver services until last year, when lawmakers allocated \$1 million in the budget. It allowed food banks to deliver milk, eggs, fruits, vegetables and other nutritious surplus food to the estimated 1.8 million Pennsylvanians who are struggling with food insecurity.

“In a state with an agricultural industry as robust as we have here in Pennsylvania, that is simply unacceptable,” said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. “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.”

Money allocated for the PASS system is distributed to all 67 counties in Pennsylvania through the State Food Purchase Program. Those dollars help cover the cost of harvesting and processing surplus products in order for those food items to be sent to food banks and other charitable organizations. The food collected through the PASS system is edible but is surplus and might have otherwise become waste. According to a letter co-signed by Farm Bureau,

many farmers view the PASS system as a win-win because it helps needy families and also use edible food that otherwise would have gone to waste.

## Help Us 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 9-13, 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. Participants will also tour several area farms and hear from farmers about how they grow food, care for and feed their animals, and overall how the farm is run. Educators will receive Act 48 credits and/or can register for continuing education credits through Penn State. In addition, many of our county Farm Bureaus have previously sponsored educators to attend; and we are encouraging that same outreach this year. For more information, contact the foundation at 717.731.3556 or [www.pfb.com/aginstitute](http://www.pfb.com/aginstitute).

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## Member Contest

Farm Bureau offers many money saving benefits for members. Send me a paragraph explaining what benefit you have used and how much money it has saved you. If I use your story in the next newsletter you will win a gift \$25 gift card.

Elizabeth Peifer 610-689-4934 farmbiz@dejazzd.com  
149 Blacksmith Rd, Oley, PA 19547

## IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUESTED

Please urge your State Senator and PA House Representative to restore funding to the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine (Penn Vet) and to keep the budget for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's General Government Operations at \$31.6 million as proposed in the Governor's budget.

### BACKGROUND

In his budget proposal, Gov. Tom Wolf slashed \$30 million in funding to Penn Vet. Money for Penn Vet is used in part to help students offset the cost of tuition. He also proposed \$31.6 million in funding for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's General Government Operations.

The House has passed a budget-House Bill 218-which keeps cuts for Penn Vet in place and also trims \$2.1 million from PDA's General Government Operations. Recently, the Department of Agriculture communicated the potential ramifications to staffing and programs if adequate funding is not realized. The department has identified the potential for eliminating 21 staff positions in food safety, market research and farmland preservation.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau believes the \$31.6 million investment in the General Government Operations will help the department meet its staffing needs without having programs suffer. In addition, we are calling on lawmakers to restore funding to Penn Vet.

State funding for Penn Vet is a way to recruit the next generation of large animal veterinarians. Furthermore, state funding is used to support the disease surveillance and on-farm research performed by Penn Vet teachers and researchers. Penn Vet's Center for Animal Health and Productivity helps farmers make best management decisions on animal health. That work also helps farmers improve their productivity and bottom line.

Penn Vet is also part of a three-tiered system that monitors for animal diseases, working in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and Penn State University. Specifically, Penn Vet has helped monitor for high pathogenic avian influenza. Their surveillance is a crucial link in preventing a disease outbreak in Pennsylvania agriculture.

The budget process now rests in the Senate, but it is likely that House lawmakers will have to take further action before a bill is sent to the Governor.

We are encouraging you to reach out to your House and Senate lawmakers to urge their support for critical agriculture funding, including Penn Vet and the Department of Agriculture.

Use the PFB website to take action now: [www.pfb.com](http://www.pfb.com)  
Select "Take Action/Resources" under the Policy tab.

## Rosetree Consulting

*Agricultural · Environmental*

Rosetree Consulting provides soil sampling, crop consulting, and government regulatory documents for agricultural operations of all sizes. Our goal is to provide clients with the information and understanding needed to make better decisions and have a more profitable operation.

Rosetree Consulting offers a 5% discount on regulatory services (manure management plans, nutrient management plans, conservation plans, odor management plans) to Berks County Farm Bureau members.

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# IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

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DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
June 9	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks County Ag Center	7:30 p.m.
June 20	BCFB at the Fightin' Phils	First Energy Stadium, Reading	7:05 p.m.
July 14	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks County Ag Center	7:30 p.m.
August 11	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks County Ag Center	7:30 p.m.
September 8	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks County Ag Center	7:30 p.m.
September 29	BCFB Fall Banquet	Virginville Grange	
October 5	Measure the Candidate	Berks County Ag Center	
October 13	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks County Ag Center	7:30 p.m.
October 14	BARN Farm Tour		
October 27	Bountiful Berks Banquet (formerly Farm City Banquet)		

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## Building the Next Farm Bill

Congress isn't due to vote on the next farm bill until 2018. But the American Farm Bureau Federation is already working to ensure farmers have a voice in the process.

The organization has been monitoring the political climate surrounding the bill and seeking out allies, said Dale Moore, AFBF's Executive Director of Public Policy. And a working group made up of 16 state Farm Bureau staff, economists and commodity experts is working to determine what issues farmers want to see addressed.

The panel has identified key issues and come up with a menu of options that could be considered by county and state Farm Bureaus through the policy development process. That effort began with the 2016 policy development process, which resulted in a new section in the policy book related to the farm bill.

If Pennsylvania farmers have items they want to see addressed in the next farm bill, the best place to start that discussion is at the county Farm Bureau level, said Kristina Watson, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's Director of Federal Government Affairs and a member of that group. "That's really the most important thing," she said. "If members have something that's important to them, they need to be talking about it with their county and bring it up through the policy process."

Moore said it's also important for farmers to share their priorities with their federal lawmakers. And legislators are more likely to be receptive if they can see how an issue affects a constituent directly. "The most important thing for grassroots members to share is the personal story," he said.

For more information, visit: [bit.ly/2oQAM7R](http://bit.ly/2oQAM7R).

## Promoting Rural Road Safety

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and several state agencies joined forces in Erie County to promote safe driving on rural roads.

Mark Troyer, a farmer who grows potatoes and several other crops, hosted the statewide event on behalf of PFB, which has held in recognition of Rural Roads Safety Week.

The event was covered by several news outlets.

"The purpose of Rural Roads Safety Week is to alert drivers that large, slow-moving farm vehicles and equipment are once again traveling on rural roads across the state," Troyer said. "We're urging motorists to use caution when approaching farm vehicles and be patient if they are delayed."

Safety on rural roads is important year-round but is especially relevant as spring planting season begins. "Drivers need to keep their guard up throughout the planting, growing and harvesting seasons by reducing speed and being more aware of other motorists," said Erie County Farm Bureau President Nick Mobilia. "We believe accidents can be prevented if farmers and motorists look out for one another on country roads."

For more information about rural road safety, see Farm Bureau's brochure at: [bit.ly/2oQgQ4G](http://bit.ly/2oQgQ4G).



## Wind Power Bill Advances

A Farm Bureau-supported bill that would allow construction of wind turbines on preserved farmland has cleared its first hurdle in the state Legislature.

The measure, House Bill 187, unanimously passed the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. It now heads to the full House for consideration. The proposal would allow owners of preserved farmland with 50 or more acres to grant rights-of-way for installation of wind power generating systems. Now, such landowners may grant rights-of-way for utilities such as water, sewage, electric, telephone, underground mining and gas- or oil-product lines. The bill would add wind power to the list.

Some farmers have seen benefits from leasing space to wind farms and those who operate on preserved farmland should not be denied that opportunity.

## Farmers Need Comprehensive Tax Reform

Farm Bureau is calling on lawmakers in Washington to enact comprehensive tax reform that gives them the freedom to grow and recognizes the uncertain world they operate in.

“Running a farm or ranch business is challenging under the best of circumstances,” said Patricia Wolff, Senior Director of Congressional Relations for the American Farm Bureau Federation. “Farmers and ranchers need a tax code that recognizes the unique financial challenges that impact them.”

Both leaders in Congress and President Donald Trump have signaled that tax reform is among their priorities. Lawmakers have been refining their plan for months and the Trump administration recently outlined its proposal. Wolff said the administration’s proposal gives a broad outline but more details will need to be filled in. And as that happens, AFBF will be working to make sure farmers’ needs are taken into consideration.

The plan calls for reducing taxes on all businesses to a flat rate of 15 percent. Lower tax rates would be a positive for farmers, Wolff said. But she said, the bill must spell out that the business rate applies to farms, 94 percent of which now pay individual tax rates. And Wolff said, even more important are the effective rates farms pay after deductions and credits are figured in. The benefits of a lower tax rate could be easily undone if farms can no longer take advantage of deductions that are designed to smooth out the cyclical highs and lows and capital costs that are a major part of agriculture.

Farm Bureau also wants to see the following reforms that would benefit farmers: Elimination of the estate tax, continuation of the stepped-up basis for capital gains on inherited assets (which prevents farmers from having to pay extra taxes on inherited property), and reduction in the capital gains tax as well as an exemption for land that remains in production.

## Attorney General Launches ACRE Website

The Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General has launched a new website that can be used to lodge and track complaints made through the Agriculture, Communities and Rural Environment (ACRE) law.

The 2005 law directs the attorney general to review local ordinances at the request of farmers and step in when the local rules prohibit or restrict agriculture operations that would otherwise be allowed by state law.

The website includes a chart with the status of current ACRE cases and related documents. It can be accessed at: [www.attorneygeneral.gov/ACRE](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov/ACRE). The office can accept ordinance-review requests by mail, phone or a new email address: [ACRE@attorneygeneral.gov](mailto:ACRE@attorneygeneral.gov).

## Tax Reform Bills Pass State House Committee



The state House Finance Committee has adopted three Farm Bureau-supported bills that bring state laws governing small business taxation more in line with federal standards.

The bills are part of a tax reform package introduced by House lawmakers that will also help level the playing field between small businesses and corporations. They now head to the full House for consideration.

House Bill 331 would bring Pennsylvania tax laws in line with federal standards of “like-kind” exchanges. Federal law allows for a tax deferral when property is exchanged for similar property, but Pennsylvania does not have any provisions. House Bill 332 would allow small businesses to use the Net Operating Loss deduction.

House Bill 333 would bring state tax laws for Section 179 depreciation in line with federal standards. At the federal level, Section 179 allows small business owners to deduct the purchase of qualifying equipment up to \$500,000 during the tax year. Currently, Pennsylvania limits deductions for small businesses under Section 179 to \$25,000, while allowing businesses registered as C-corporations to use the full \$500,000 deduction as allowed by IRS law.

## PFB Helps Change Animal Weights Proposal

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau successfully influenced changes to the state’s Nutrient Management Program that could have caused some livestock farmers to fall under increased regulations.

The State Conservation Commission is changing provisions to the state’s Nutrient Management Program governing Standard Animal Weights. Standard Animal Weights are used to determine if farmers fall under Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) or Concentrated Animal Operation (CAO). So raising those average weights could push more farmers into CAFO and CAO designations—which increases permitting and environmental regulations.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau research found the initial proposal by the State Conservation Commission for animals such as chickens, pigs and dairy cattle fell above average for weights determined by universities or industry groups. PFB’s research was generally implemented for the final animal weights as proposed by the State Conservation Commission.

## **NRCS Seeks Grant Proposals for Chesapeake Bay Conservation**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is seeking grant proposals for \$3 million in funding available for projects that address conservation practices in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Projects funded through the grant program will promote nutrient reduction the bay watershed. NRCS is accepting proposals from governmental and non-governmental organizations, along with individuals. NRCS will award up to \$500,000 per projects between one and three years in length. Grants will fund projects that prevent soil loss, reduce legacy sediments or make public-private investments in working lands conservation. Grant proposals must be submitted by June 5. For more information, including how to apply, contact Noel Soto at 717.237.2173, or noel.soto@pa.usda.gov.

## **Penn State Makes Changes to Extension Operational Structure**

Penn State University is changing the operational structure of its Extension offices, with an effort at building customer relationships. The changes will allow Extension to evolve into the digital age and use technology to showcase services and research available.

Penn State Extension is moving away from the position of district directors and is instead splitting it into two positions: a customer relations manager and a business operations manager. Extension will be organized into 10, multi-county areas. Client relations managers will focus on building county-level support for Extension and its programs and finding ways to best serve communities. The business operations manager will focus on the day-to-day operations of county offices.

As part of the change, all Extension educators will now be part of a unit that works in collaboration with the experts in the College of Agricultural Sciences. Educators will be able to draw on expertise from across the college's academic departments. Penn State is also working on ways to deliver training and information, including a number of digital products such as videos, webinars and online resources.

"These steps are designed to dramatically improve the relevancy, usability and reach of our programs and services," said Dennis Calvin, director of Penn State Extension. "The goals are to listen and learn, to match customer needs and priorities with a robust portfolio of science-based information and education."

## **PFB Website Provides Answers On Transportation Questions**

Farmers with questions about moving agriculture vehicles on roadways, or related questions, can visit [www.pfb.com/transportation](http://www.pfb.com/transportation) to get numerous answers on transportation issues. Copies of PFB's updated transportation booklet can be downloaded from this sight. Transportation laws governing the various types of agriculture equipment

and vehicles are often complicated. That's why the PFB has put together a comprehensive document to give farmers the resources they need when faced with questions about agriculture transportation.

## **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 membership, 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 PFB's Member Relations Division at 717.761.2740 and tell them you'd like to support the next generation with a gift of membership!

## **State Approves 16 Hemp Research Projects**

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has approved 16 research projects on the growing and cultivation of industrial hemp. Last year, lawmakers approved an Industrial Hemp Research Pilot Program, which allows for the limited growing of hemp. Hemp has a lengthy growing history in Pennsylvania, but its cultivation was banned shortly after World War II.

The 2014 federal Farm Bill allowed states to launch pilot industrial hemp projects. Most hemp used in products comes from China and Canada and research suggests the growing and production of hemp in the United States could be a nearly \$600 million industry.

Projects were approved in Armstrong, Bedford, Berks, Bucks, Centre, Dauphin, Franklin, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Perry, Schuylkill and Westmoreland counties.

The projects will focus on how to use hemp for production, including which strains grow best in Pennsylvania. Some projects will examine hemp's potential as a cover crop, as animal bedding and as a food product. Award recipients will be working with several higher education institutions including Delaware Valley University, Penn State and Lehigh University.

"The level of thought that went into these proposals, along with the ingenuity and range of the underlying research questions, is impressive," said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. "It is energizing to see the alliances that already have been created among academic, civic, farm and industry organizations."

## Apple Growers Approve New Marketing Program



Pennsylvania apple growers have voted on a replacement for the Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Program, which they opted last fall to discontinue.

Starting May 27, growers will be assessed five cents per bushel for fresh apples and one cent per bushel for processed apples. That will generate between \$200,000 to \$250,000 annually, which will be used for membership to the U.S. Apple Association, research, consumer education and the related administrative costs.

The change was approved by 68 percent of eligible growers, representing 78 percent of the state's apple production. Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding said his department is happy with the vote. "Pennsylvania's apple industry is ranked fourth in the nation and is a strong contributor to the state's agriculture economy," he said. "We look forward to working with the commonwealth's apple growers in charting the future of this industry."

The new program will be overseen by a seven-member board. Growers interested in serving or nominating a board member should contact Jen D'Angelo with the state at [jedangelo@pa.gov](mailto:jedangelo@pa.gov) or 717.783.9948. Growers with questions about the new program should contact Laura England, Bureau of Market Development Director, at [laengland@pa.gov](mailto:laengland@pa.gov) or 717.783.8462.

## AFBF Launches Market Intel Reports

The American Farm Bureau Federation is launching a website to keep farmers up-to-date on the latest in agriculture marketing. Market Intel, available at [fb.org/marketintel](http://fb.org/marketintel) and on Twitter (@FBMarketIntel) will feature the insight of several AFBF staff members on the latest trends impacting agriculture markets.

"Our aim with Market Intel is to analyze current events in agriculture – related to both crops and livestock – through an economic lens," said John Newton, AFBF's director of market intelligence. "The timely market intelligence on the agricultural economy that we provide will be useful for farmers, lawmakers and consumers. Farmers and ranchers will find Market Intel to be a useful decision-making resource for marketing and planting."

Along with Newton, AFBF economic staff members Katelyn McCulloch, Veronica Nigh and Bob Young will analyze policy shifts and how it relates to issues like trade, transportation, taxes and the economy.

## Member Benefit Spotlight Butler County Farmer Saves With Grainger

It was an inopportune time to have a motor start to fail. During the height of cider season, Larry Voll noticed that a motor that helped power his cider press was starting to fail. Voll and his family operate Soergel Orchards, located near Pittsburgh, and apple cider is a popular fall seller at their store. Voll called Grainger, who was able ship a three-phase electrical motor, which normally retailed at more than \$1,300. Using the Grainger discount, Voll saved more than \$300 on the motor. That more than paid for the cost of a yearly Farm Bureau membership, Voll said. Voll was able to replace his motor and keep pressing cider without skipping a beat.

Farm Bureau members are entitled to a 10 percent discount on all Grainger catalog items—and their thousands of tools and supplies, along with free shipping for online orders. To learn more about Grainger and other discounts available to Farm Bureau members visit [www.pfb.com](http://www.pfb.com) and click on the Member Benefits and Services Tab. Or call our Member Relations department at 717.761.2740.

## Member Benefit Spotlight Campground Offers Discount to Farm Bureau Members



Buttonwood Campgrounds in Juniata County is offering Farm Bureau members up to a 25 percent discount for reservations.

The campground, along the Juniata River outside Mifflintown, provides a 25 percent discount to Farm Bureau members for any weekday stay, Monday through Thursday. The campground is also offering a 10 percent discount for rentals on Friday through Sunday. Buttonwood is open from April 15 to Oct. 31 and offers RV and tent sites and also rents out cabins.

Farm Bureau members only need to show their Farm Bureau membership card when they show up at check-in. The campground features a number of amenities—a number geared for children and families. Buttonwood rents out canoes, kayaks and also tubing, and will also shuttle boats to a launch point up river. Kids can also ride pedal cars, play laser tag and take advantage of the playground equipment at the campground. There are also themed weekends throughout the year.

Buttonwood takes reservations by phone or online. Any discount will be applied to Farm Bureau members when they arrive at the campground for check-in. For more information visit: [buttonwoodcamp.com](http://buttonwoodcamp.com).