



Berks County Farm Bureau Berks Newsletter

Robin Lincoln, Editor

May/June Edition • 2018

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

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**You are invited to a
Roundtable Discussion with
PA Secretary of Agriculture
Russell Redding and State
Senator Judith L Schwank.**



Wednesday, June 6

6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Berks Ag Center Auditorium

1238 County Welfare Road, Leesport

This event is an opportunity for farmers to discuss issues facing agriculture with Secretary Redding and Senator Schwank!



BCFB at the Fightin' Phils

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

Come early and see us near the entrance gate
FREE TICKETS – up to 6 per BCFB member

Send a stamped, self addressed envelope to
Robert Tercha, 25 Mertz Road, Mertztown, PA 19539
Questions? Contact Robert Tercha 610-451-2460
Deadline June 15, 2018

Join us! Gruber Wagon Works Tour Saturday, July 21, 2018

\$8/person
Tour last 2 hours
First Tour begins 10am



Mail your check to Robin Lincoln 315 South Baumstown Rd, Birdsboro PA 19508
Check made out to: BCFB (Berks Co Farm Bureau)
Reserve your spot by July 7 deadline.

Bring your own lunch, picnic tables will be available.

GPS: Heritage Center 2201 Tulpehocken Rd Wyomissing PA 19610 610-374-8839
www.countyofberks.com/parks

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Members Meet with EPA Administrator and Members of PA's Congressional Delegation in D.C.

A group of 10 farmers, who are Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) members, recently met with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt and representatives of Pennsylvania's Congressional Delegation during a three-day advocacy visit to Washington D.C.

The farmers discussed a variety of topics, including the 2018 Farm Bill, Pennsylvania's struggling dairy industry, agriculture labor reform and international trade. PFB members also traveled to the Canadian Embassy, where they discussed trade issues with an official from Canada, who along with the United States and Mexico, are continuing to participate in negotiations involving the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

During a meeting with the EPA Administrator, Farm Bureau members were encouraged to hear that Mr. Pruitt views agriculture as a partner in helping to improve the environment and that he wants farmers to have a seat at the table when decisions are being made about responsible regulations. Farmers have been especially pleased with Pruitt's support for withdrawing the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule in favor of creating a rule that includes input from all stakeholders to improve waterways without pushing farmers out of business. Other topics included worker safety standards, CERCLA and the Renewable Fuel Standard program.

Specifically, the group of farmers met with Senators Bob Casey and Pat Toomey, along with Congressmen Lou Barletta, Tom Marino, Patrick Meehan and Glenn 'GT' Thompson. They also visited with legislative staff from the offices of Representatives Ryan Costello, Dwight Evans, Mike Kelly and Keith Rothfus.

"It's critically important for farmers to meet with policymakers in Washington D.C., so they can gain a better understanding of the issues affecting food production, the environment and the national economy," said PFB President Rick Ebert. "Our farmers are discussing issues and promoting policies that will reduce or eliminate obstacles that threaten their livelihood and actions that could hinder the ability of the next generation to work on the family farm."

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is the state's largest farm organization with more than 62,000 member families, representing farms of every size and commodity across Pennsylvania.

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Editor's note: Farmers participating in the trip included Jodi Calkins of Bradford County, Robert Craft of Mercer County, Tim Crouse of Lebanon County, Paul Hartman of Berks County, Dale Hoffman of Potter County, Tim Leshner of Northumberland County, Shawn Saylor of Somerset County, Arland Schantz of Lehigh County, Lisa Wherry of Washington County and Marty Yahner of Cambria County.

Deadline to Sign-Up for Improved Dairy Safety Net Approaching

The deadline for farmers to sign up for the newly overhauled dairy Margin Protection Program is coming up June 1. A recent federal spending bill included updates intended to bolster the effectiveness of the risk management program, which pays out when the difference between the national all-milk price and average feed cost falls below a certain threshold.

The program now has the potential to pay out monthly, rather than every other month. Production eligible to be covered under lowest tier of premiums was increased to 5 million pounds and premium rates for that tier were also greatly reduced. The \$100 administrative fee is now waived for limited resource, beginning, veteran, and disadvantaged producers and will be refunded to eligible farmers who already signed up for 2018 coverage.

Coverage signed up for by June 1 will be retroactive to Jan. 1. Farmers must enroll for coverage by submitting form CCC-782. Farms that previously signed up for 2018 coverage must re-enroll. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has an online tool to help farmers determine which level of coverage to buy. That tool is available at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool.

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* Farm Certified

Rural Broadband Bill Advances in General Assembly

A bill that would direct the state to determine whether state-owned property and other assets could be leveraged to help expand access to high-speed internet in rural areas has cleared its first hurdle in the state House.

House Bill 1642, sponsored by Rep. Kristin Phillips-Hill of York County, passed the House State Government Committee and now heads to the full chamber for consideration. The committee's vote came the same day that Pennsylvania Farm Bureau held a news conference with members and lawmakers calling for measures to expand access to broadband internet.

PFB supports the bill and believes it is one of many steps that state government needs to take in order to expand broadband services to rural areas. Many rural families face few, if any, choices for high speed internet and have to make do with often more-expensive, less-reliable and lower-quality service than many urban and suburban residents. At the same time, a high-speed connection is becoming more and more important to success in agriculture, business and family life.

Governor Signs Bill Reducing Red Tape for High Tunnels

A proposal to make it easier for farmers to build high tunnel structures so they can meet growing demand for local fruits and vegetables is now law.

Gov. Tom Wolf recently signed House Bill 1486, marking a victory for Pennsylvania Farm Bureau on one of its significant legislative priorities this session. The bill cleared the General Assembly in March.

The new law prevents municipalities from requiring that farmers submit stormwater management plans on high tunnel structures that meet common sense guidelines clearly outlined in the bill.


"This is a victory for farmers across the Commonwealth, who are helping to meet increased consumer demand for locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables," said PFB President Rick Ebert. "High tunnel structures, which are also called hoophouses, clearly should not be required to meet the same regulatory standards as permanent commercial office buildings or housing developments."

More and more farmers are looking to use high tunnels to extend the growing season for fruits and vegetables. But the burdensome paperwork, delay and cost often imposed by local regulations can make high tunnels cost prohibitive for many farmers. PFB believes high tunnels play a critical role in helping farmers keep up with growing demand for local food and that farmers using them should not have to undergo regulatory burdens intended for commercial and residential development.

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Rosetree Consulting  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.

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IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
June 6	Roundtable Discussion	Berks Co Ag Auditorium	6:00 pm
June 8	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks Co Ag Center	7:30 pm
June 26	BCFB at Fightin' Phils	Reading, PA	6:05 pm
July 13	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks Co Ag Center	7:30 pm
July 21	Gruber Wagon Works Tour		10:00 am
August 10	BCFB Board Meeting	D Wagner	7:30 pm
September 14	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks Co Ag Center	7:30 pm
September 28	Fall Banquet	Virginville, PA	
October 4	Measure the Candidate		
October 21	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks Co Ag Center	7:30 pm



Check out Berks County Farm Bureau website:

www.pfb.com/berks

**See more information in the
online version of the newsletter!!**