

# Lancaster County Farm Bureau Newsletter

Affiliated with Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau Federation

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## **Farm Vitality Planning Grants Available**

State grants are available for farms to develop business or transition plans to ensure their long-term economic viability.

Up to \$1 million is available through the Pennsylvania Farm Bill adopted last year. Funding is available for farmers or prospective farmers to create or obtain business plans to enhance the farm's long-term viability, plans for transitioning ownership of the farm to a family member or another owner and plans to diversify or expand an existing farm.

Grants of up to \$7,500 are available to cover up to 75 percent of project costs. Grants are first-come, first-served. The application period will close April 3 or when funding is exhausted. Apply or learn more at [www.agriculture.pa.gov/Pages/Farm-Vitality-Planning-Program.aspx](http://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Pages/Farm-Vitality-Planning-Program.aspx).

## **40th Annual FARMER Dinner**

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's political action committee, FARMER, invites you to our 40th annual statewide event: a celebration of farmer lawmakers!

Keynote speaker Mike Turzai, who serves as speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, along with past PFB President Keith Eckel and former state Secretary of Agriculture Sam Hayes will help us honor the men and women who came from the farm to work in Harrisburg. As FARMER celebrates the 40<sup>th</sup> year of its annual dinner, we want to give thanks to these farmer leaders who have made such an incredible impact on the agriculture industry.

You won't want to miss this special evening of honoring our farmers in Harrisburg! The dinner is scheduled for Tuesday, March 24 with a reception beginning at 5:30 p.m. and dinner starting at 6:30 p.m. RSVP by March 17 by emailing [govcom@pfb.com](mailto:govcom@pfb.com) or calling 717.761.2740 and asking for Ginny Keever.

Tickets are \$150 for one person or \$250 for two people. Larger sponsorship packages are also available. For more information about the event, FARMER and sponsorship packages, visit [www.pfb.com/FARMER](http://www.pfb.com/FARMER).

## **USMCA Signed Into Law**

The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, a new trade pact supported by Farm Bureau that replaces the North American Free Trade Agreement and expand market opportunities for American farmers, is now law. President Donald Trump signed the landmark trade agreement last month, following its bipartisan passage by Congress.

The Senate voted 89-10 in January to ratify the trade deal. Pennsylvania's delegation was split with Sen. Bob Casey, Jr. voting in favor of the agreement and Sen. Pat Toomey voting no. The House approved the measure 385 to 41 in December with all Pennsylvania members voting in favor.

"This trade agreement comes at a critical time for farmers and ranchers, increasing optimism that we'll turn the corner in 2020," American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall said. "USMCA is an important step toward restoring the competitiveness of America's farmers and ranchers, strengthening our trade relationships in North America and setting an example for agreements with other important trading partners."

USMCA was negotiated and signed in late 2018 by Trump, then-Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Mexico's legislature has already ratified the deal. The ratification process has just started in Canada.

The deal has been a key priority for Farm Bureau, especially as farmers have suffered financial losses as a result of trade disputes and market uncertainty. The agreement is expected to increase U.S. agriculture exports by \$2 billion and result in a \$65 billion increase in gross domestic product. It provides new market access for U.S. dairy and poultry, while maintaining the zero-tariff platform on all other agriculture products. The deal also gives U.S. dairy products tariff-free status and greater access to Canada's protected market, which is expected to net dairy producers an additional \$242 million.

"Nearly 60 percent of all agriculture exports from Pennsylvania, which total more than \$1.43 billion per year, were sold to Canada and Mexico under NAFTA," PFB President Rick Ebert said. "And those figures are expected to increase under the USMCA."



## **Agriculture Groups Urge Senate Action on Ag Labor**

Farm Bureau and other organizations are urging the U.S. Senate to take up agricultural labor reform as farmers face an increase in mandated costs associated with the H-2A guest worker program.

The Agriculture Workforce Coalition, of which Farm Bureau is a member, sent a letter to Senate leaders urging them to take up legislation that reforms the H-2A program, giving farm employers a more viable option to hire legal guest workers to supplement their U.S. workforce.

“A devastating labor shortage is impacting farmers today and jeopardizes the future success of U.S. agriculture,” the coalition wrote. “We must address this labor crisis harming farms across the United States so our producers can continue to feed, clothe and fuel our nation.”

The letter comes as farm employers face an average 6 percent increase in the Adverse Effect Wage Rate, an inflated wage employers must pay H-2A workers. The coalition noted that increases in the AEWR over the past few years have outpaced broader wage growth and farm revenue. That means farm employers must absorb the cost increases.

The House passed a bill in December that would expand farms’ access to guest workers for both year-round and seasonal labor; however, the legislation stopped short of meeting Farm Bureau’s policy objectives. Farm Bureau did not support the House bill and voiced concerns that it would continue some of the high costs associated with the current H-2A program and open up farm employers to a greater risk of being sued by workers.

## **Lancaster Co. Farm Bureau Coloring Contest**

The Safety Coloring Page Contest is open to any youth ages 4 to 6 years old. The contest is not limited to children or grandchildren of Farm Bureau members, but they must be a Pennsylvania resident. Only the provided coloring page will be accepted.

Download the coloring page at: <https://www.pfb.com/get-involved/women-s-leadership/831-safety-poster-contest>

The Lancaster County Farm Bureau first prizewinner will receive a \$20 gift card and the second prizewinner will receive a \$15 gift card. Entries will be judged on the following: neatness, appropriateness of coloring, appearance, and coloring within the lines. All entries must include the following information on the back of coloring page to be considered eligible: child’s name, address, phone number, county, age category, and parent’s name(s). The coloring pages must be submitted to Lancaster County Farm Bureau, 910 Pinkerton Road, Mount Joy, PA 17552 by April 1, 2020.

## **New Clean Water Rule Finalized**

The federal government has finalized a new clean water rule—supported by Farm Bureau—that aims to clarify which waterways are subject to federal regulation, giving farmers and other landowner’s clear and commonsense guidance for making land-management decisions.

The new Navigable Waters Protection Rule replaces the controversial 2015 Waters of the U.S. Rule (or WOTUS), which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers officially revoked last month. The new rule is set to take effect in about two months; however, opponents of the new rule will likely sue in an effort to stop it from taking effect.

The announcement marks a major victory for Farm Bureau, which lead a years-long fight against the 2015 WOTUS rule. Farm Bureau believes the 2015 regulation was illegal, overly broad and confusing and would have subjected nearly all Pennsylvania farmland to federal water regulations. In contrast, Farm Bureau believes the new rule takes a commonsense approach to balancing federal versus state and local jurisdiction over bodies of water. The new rule limits land areas that are subject to federal water regulation, excluding from federal jurisdiction many land areas with characteristics commonly found on farms, such as ephemeral streams, most ditches, isolated wetlands, prior converted cropland and storm water controls.

“Farmers and ranchers care about clean water and preserving the land, which are essential to producing healthy food and fiber and ensuring future generations can do the same,” American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said. “That’s why we support the new clean water rule. It provides clarity and certainty, allowing farmers to understand water regulations without having to hire teams of consultants and lawyers.”

## **Submit a Photo to Celebrate 70 Years of PFB**

This year, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is celebrating 70 years of advocating for agriculture and rural communities. To commemorate this milestone, we are freshening up our office walls with photos taken by our members from across the Keystone State. Our goal is to showcase the beauty of farming and rural life in the Keystone State across all four seasons.

To submit a photo for consideration, please fill out an online entry form and submit your photo at [www.pfb.com/PhotoSubmissions](http://www.pfb.com/PhotoSubmissions). The photographer’s name, county, title of photo, year the photo was taken, and optional photo description of 50 words or fewer will be displayed with the photograph, if selected. The deadline for entries is Nov. 1. Be sure to also share your photo on social media and use the hashtag #PFB70.

## **China to Ramp Up Purchases of U.S. Ag Goods**

China will purchase more U.S. agricultural products and the U.S. will drop its plan to impose increased tariffs on Chinese imports as part of an agreement signed by President Donald Trump and Chinese President in January.

The agreement is being referred to as “phase one” of a larger trade deal. It comes as welcomed news to farmers who have suffered the brunt of a lengthy trade dispute with China, one of the nation’s top agricultural trading partners. “Phase One of the new trade deal with China should benefit Pennsylvania farmers over the next two years, if China meets its commitment to annually purchase at least \$40 billion worth of agriculture goods from the U.S. in 2020 and 2021,” Pennsylvania Farm Bureau President Rick Ebert said. “American farmers, who produce soybeans, pork, beef, corn, dairy and seafood products, are expected to benefit from increased purchases from China. Farmers across America have suffered financially over the past 21 months due to the prolonged trade war with China. The new trade agreement should boost hopes among farm families that there will be a new demand for their products.”

The deal marks a major turning point in trade relations with China, which had been rocky since July 2018, when the Trump administration imposed new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from China and several other nations. China retaliated with tariffs on U.S. agricultural imports. The dispute escalated over the next year with the U.S. imposing tariffs on more Chinese imports and China retaliating with tariffs of its own, often targeting agriculture. “Farmers across America have suffered financially over the past 21 months due to the prolonged trade war with China,” Ebert said. “The new trade agreement should boost hopes among farm families that there will be a new demand for their products.”

## **U.S. House Passes Bill to Improve Broadband**

A Farm Bureau-backed bill that would improve data on broadband availability so that resources to expand service can be better targeted has cleared the U.S. House.

The Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability Act now heads to the Senate for consideration. The bill would require internet service providers to report more specific data on coverage, giving policymakers better information about where coverage exists and where funding to expand coverage would be best spent. The bill also requires the Federal Communications Commission to establish an audit process that ensures internet service providers are providing accurate data and create a user-friendly process to challenge the data.

“Broadband is a necessity and many rural areas still don’t have access to it or are underserved,” said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said. “With limited funding, it’s critical we target resources where they are needed most.”

## **Farm Bureau Members Set National Policy**

Delegates to the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 101st Annual Convention adopted policies to guide the organization’s work in coming year on key topics such as dairy programs, farm labor, hemp regulations, conservation compliance and climate change.

Pennsylvania delegates were among those from Farm Bureaus in all 50 states and Puerto Rico who voted on policy resolutions that originated at the county level. Also at the convention, AFBF President Zippy Duvall and Vice President Scott VanderWal were re-elected to two-year terms, three new members were elected to the AFBF Board of Directors and 13 board members, including PFB President Rick Ebert, were re-elected to two-year terms on the board.

Some policy highlights from the delegate session include:  
**Dairy programs:** Delegates voted to support creation of a flexible, farmer- and industry-led milk management system. This includes giving individual dairy farmers a voice by allowing them to vote independently and confidentially on rules governing milk prices.

**Farm labor:** Delegates updated labor and immigration policies, emphasizing that we must see significant changes to the H-2A program. The updates address problems with the adverse effect wage rate and emphasize the importance of year-round program access to all of agriculture.

**Hemp:** Delegates voted to support allowing a higher THC level in hemp. This gives Farm Bureau flexibility to engage in discussions with regulators about the appropriate legal level, and to increase the window of time farmers are allowed to conduct THC testing, acknowledging the many questions about how the testing process will work and the potential for backlogs.

**Conservation compliance:** Delegates called on USDA to significantly improve program transparency and due process for farmers. They specifically prioritized changes in USDA’s processes for wetland delineations and the appeals process. Delegates also adopted a new policy supporting the repeal of Swampbuster provisions.

**Climate change:** Delegates voted to support science-based climate change research and the documentation of agriculture’s tremendous advances toward climate-smart practices. Delegates also made clear they want federal climate change policy to reflect regional variations, and they oppose a state-by-state patchwork of climate change policies.

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A \$3 portion of annual dues covers a one-year subscription to a PFB publication. Farmer members receive 11 issues of the *Country Focus* newspaper and "friend of Farm Bureau" members receive 4 issues of the quarterly *Positively Pennsylvania* magazine. Applicants selecting "farmer", "part-time farmer" or "agribusiness" on the membership application are classified as "farmer" members. Should no box be checked and a farm name not be listed, member will be classified as "friend of farmer". Please contact your county Farm Bureau with questions regarding membership classification.



Lancaster County Farm Bureau  
910 Pinkerton Road  
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