

Mercer County Farm Bureau

Newsletter of the Mercer County Farm Bureau

A quarterly publication

September 2021

DATES TO REMEMBER

MCFB Board Meeting

County Board meets at 8:00 p.m. (7:30 after time change) the first Monday of the month at the Pig Barn, Munnell Run Farm

Sept 16 Regional Day Growing Strong Leaders

Fayette County
Republic Food
\$10.00

MCFB Annual Meeting and Fall Dinner

6:30 p.m.
Oct. 7
Mercer County
Extension Office
\$13.00

LOCAL FARMERS SHARE CONCERNS WITH LAWMAKERS

The annual Legislative Tour was held at the Canon Creamery on August 13th. Approximately 30 attendees were first treated to a tour of the robotic milking operation on the Canon farm as well as the new milk bottling facility that the Canon family opened earlier this year. Over lunch, farm bureau members were able to express a farmer's perspective and advocate for support or voice opposition to issues that impact Pennsylvania's ag industry to the policy makers who were in attendance. Local Mercer County Commissioners Scott Boyd and Matt McConnell were present along with Parke Wentling, PA State Representative, Michele Brooks, PA State Senator, as well as representatives from Mark Longjetti's office, and US Congressman Mike Kelly's office.

Topics addressed included broadband access in rural areas, the stepped-up basis in tax law, agricultural labor reform, climate sustainability, and concerns in the dairy industry. The elected officials were very attentive and offered their support of the agricultural industry. Commissioner Scott Boyd shared his support of bringing better connectivity to the rural areas and shared how Mercer County has targeted improving broadband in our area. The investment in strong internet availability will continue for the next two years. More information on the topics discussed can be found on pages 4 and 5.



Mark and Marie Canon with daughter Josie in the new Canon Creamery bottling area.

2021 ANNUAL MEETING AND FALL DINNER

The annual Mercer County Farm Bureau meeting and fall dinner will be held at the Mercer County Extension Office, north of Mercer, on October 7 and 6:30 pm. The cost is \$13.00 per person with reservations required and needed by October 1. The meeting will include reports from PFB State Directors Bob and Sandy Craft. There will also be discussion on Annual Meeting changes, policies, and legislative issues.

PENNSYLVANIA FARM BUREAU DUES INCREASE EXPLAINED

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In 1987, President Ronald Reagan implored USSR leader Mr. Gorbachev to “tear down this wall” in reference to the Berlin Wall. The Minnesota Twins, Penn State Nittany Lions, Los Angeles Lakers, and New York Giants all won championships. Those were headlines from thirty-four years ago – the same year that saw the last dues increase in PFB membership dues.

The increase was a necessary move as PFB has lost non-agricultural members who joined in order to receive a discount on Nationwide insurance. This discount is no longer available to non-agricultural members, as rules set by the Pennsylvania Insurance Commission, online insurance purchasing, lawsuits, and changes in the industry, led to the ending of this discount. This resulted in non-agricultural members not renewing their memberships in PFB. Prior to 2017, an increase in dues was not needed due to the rapid growth in membership. At this time, it has become necessary to raise the dues. It is hoped that the increase will stall the need for any type of fundraising. At the state level, PFB has trimmed their budget by reducing 11 employees over the past year.

Your dues go to PFB, the American Farm Bureau Federation and cover the cost of regular publications mailed to all voting members. The decision to raise dues was made at the 2021 Board of Directors meeting that had the proper quorum of voting members in attendance.

MEMBERSHIP GOAL

Mercer County Farm Bureau membership is 348 members. At this time, the goal has not been reached, but we are very close at 345 members. Combined membership from Mercer, Beaver, Lawrence, Washington, Greene, Fayette, Westmoreland, and Butler Counties stands at 5,401 voting members. Voting members can take advantage of the Nationwide 10% discount. The newsletter contains a page outlining member benefits and you can also find member benefits at pfb.com. Probably most important is the voice you gain for someone to advocate for farm friend policies and regulations. If you know of anyone who may be interested or benefit from membership, please contact Larry Moose

BACK TO SCHOOL

When students return to school this fall, one class in each of the Mercer, West Middlesex, and Greenville School Districts will be able to dig in and learn about agriculture as they receive an Ag Awareness Crate. Three crates are available for educating students on pork, pumpkins, or soybeans. Crate sponsorship costs \$150 and the MCFB sponsored crates for the fourth grade Mercer Elementary classroom. For more information on the educational crates, contact Sandy Craft.

GROWING STRONG LEADERS

This year's Regional Day will be held in Fayette County at Republic Food in Republic, PA. The cost is \$10. Attendees will be able to tour the Republic Food facility, learn about diversified farming from speaker Amanda Bolin, create a glass etching craft and hear about ag grant writing. It will be a very beneficial day. The program was put together by the Mercer County Women's Leadership Committee. Please contact Sandy Craft for more information at (814) 715-4244 or smvcraft5@gmail.com

MOOOVING ON TO NEW ADVENTURES



Allied News Photo

After decades of working tirelessly for the promotion of agriculture, Carol Ann Gregg has put her pen down. Writing for numerous publications, including the MCFB Newsletter, Carol Ann graduated from Slippery Rock University in 1963 with a degree in education. Carol Ann married George Gregg in 1963 and began life on their farm in Liberty Township where they raised their two sons. Between motherhood and working on the farm, Carol began writing articles about farming. Carol Ann has shared with the public innovative practices in agriculture through her writing as well as implementing new ideas with her husband on their farm prior to selling their herd of dairy cattle in 1994. Carol Ann was the recipient of the 2019 Outstanding Woman in Agriculture Award for her many fine contributions to the field. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to educate the public and promote agriculture over the past five decades. Job well done! Enjoy your well-deserved time off to do as you please!

FALL HARVEST

A Farm Futures survey conducted in August is predicting 178.7 bushels per acres for corn yields and 51.3 bushels per acre for soybean yields. This is slightly off from the USDA's projection of 179.5 bpa for corn and 50.8 bpa for beans. Regardless of what your yield may be, slow down and be safe! A July 20, 2021 article by Chris Bennett in *Farm Journal, Ag Web* recounts the story of 72 year old farmer Alabama Carl Lucas as he was pulled into a PTO shaft by his shirttail. He was swung around the PTO three times which took off all of his clothes except his work boots and underwear. His injuries included a severed arm, a severed artery behind his left knee, a broken tibia, a broken fibula, a broken right ankle, multiple fractured vertebrae, fractured ribs, blood clot in neck, severe concussion, and massive blood loss. His survival is credited to the actions of his co-workers.

He is back to farming again and wants to share his story so that others will *not* have a story to tell.

Contact information for our national and state legislators:

U.S. Senator Bob Casey
17 South Park Row, Suite B-150
Erie, PA 16501
Phone: 814-874-5080

U.S. Senator Pat Toomey
United States Federal Building
17 South Park Row, Suite B-120
Erie, PA 16501
Phone: 814-453-3010

Congressman Mike Kelly
33 Chestnut Avenue
Sharon, PA 16146
Phone: (724) 342-7170
www.Kelly.house.gov

State Senator Michele Brooks
100 Hadley Road
Suite 9
Greenville, PA 16125
(724) 588-8911
mbrooks@pasen.gov

State Representative Mark Longietti
2213 Shenango Valley Freeway,
Unit 2-E
Hermitage, PA 16148
Phone: 724-981-4655
mlongiet@pahouse.net

State Representative Timothy Bonner
234 West Pine St.
Grove City, PA 16127
724-458-4911
tbonner@pahousegop.com

State Representative Parke Wentling
395 High St.
P.O. Box 17
Conneaut Lake, PA 16316
Phone: 814-382-7200
pwentling@pahousegop.com

LEGISLATIVE TOUR TOPICS

The topics discussed with lawmakers at the 2021 legislative tour, as well as PFB's official stance on the issue are shared below.

Stepped-Up Basis

The stepped-up basis is a tax provision that prevents capital gains taxes from being assessed when assets are transferred at death to an heir. Capital gains taxes are only assessed on the amount the asset appreciates during the time they own it and if/when the asset is sold. This would make an unfair burden on farms which would result in needing to sell the farm or a portion of it to pay the taxes. Take into consideration that since 1997 cropland value has increased by 168 percent which would equal \$890 capital gains tax *per acre!*

Farm Bureau opposes any measure that would repeal stepped-up basis, collect capital gains tax at death, or increase capital gains taxes. Since the FB Call to action, 18,000 people have made their voices heard and shared their opposition to this measure. There are lawmakers from both parties who oppose!

Agricultural Labor Reform

Agriculture in the United States faces a critical shortage of workers every year. The requirements of a job in agriculture are unattractive to citizens. A workforce to assist in farm work is necessary to compete in the foreign markets and to spur the US economy. Since 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act has made it illegal for employers to hire individuals not authorized in the US. Employers must use the Immigration and Naturalization Service Form I-9. Employers are not permitted to question the authenticity of the document which has led to fraudulent applications. If you question the document, you can be sued by the applicant and by the Department of Justice.

In order to maintain an agricultural work force, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau supports reform through legislation if it includes an uncapped Agricultural Worker Visa Program (AWP) that is flexible to provide for the differing needs of farmers, as well as a fair, economic wage structure for workers. Additionally, PFB supports an adjustment of status for experienced but unauthorized agricultural worker and their spouses and children who currently live in the U.S.

Broadband

Currently 25 percent of U.S. farms have no access to the internet with approximately 18 percent of rural citizens lack access to internet service or only have low speed options.

Farm Bureau supports H.R. 3369 the *Broadband for Rural Act* and S. 1659 and H.R. 3193 the *Eliminating Barriers to Rural Internet Development Grant Eligibility*. These resolutions provide investment in USDA rural areas that are most underserved as well as removing obstacles that can delay rural broadband. The Farm Bureau also supports the continuation of Universal Service Fund to maintain affordable communication services in rural areas, additional funding for Rural Utilities Service to address the need for high-speed connectivity, and using a combination of tax incentives, grants, or regulations to increase internet access in rural areas.

Climate and Sustainability

Farmers are doing their fair share of climate-smart farming by protecting land, air, and water. Farmers are producing more food than ever before while using less water, conserving more soil and improving biodiversity. Less than 10% of all greenhouse emissions come from agriculture. By combining agriculture, land use, and forestry, there is a net loss for carbon emissions. Livestock production is more efficient and produces less greenhouse gas than in previous years and accounts for only 3.3% of emissions.

Farm Bureau supports legislation that provides tools and assistance for farmers to maximize carbon sequestration and the reduction of other greenhouse gas as well as assist in the development of private sector greenhouse gas markets. Additionally Farm Bureau supports providing incentives for farmers to prioritize and incorporate sustainability and green practices while protecting farmers' ability to operate. Farm Bureau would like to see H.R. 2820 the *Growing Climate Solutions Act* be supported.

Dairy

The volatility of markets for milk, the pandemic, declining milk prices, and worldwide increased milk production have led to a huge decline in dairy operations with Pennsylvania having the highest losses of all of the Northeast states. In 2018, 370 dairies were lost followed by 470 in 2019 and 300 in 2020. Farm Bureau member Steve Paxton shared that when a local veterinarian opened his practice nearly four decades ago, he served 380 clients. That number has fallen to 8 dairy farmers. Farm Bureau is concerned about the imbalance in pricing and pooling of milk which has cost farmers hundreds of millions of dollars. The Federal Milk Marketing Order needs to be modernized.

Farm Bureau requests support for Modified Bloc Voting as a first step toward Federal Milk Marketing Order Reform, prohibiting the misleading labeling of nut and plant-based food products as "milk", H.R. 818 *Giving Increased Variety of Ensure Milk into the Lives of Kids Act* and H.R. 1861 the *Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2021*

CARBON COST

How much is that doggie in the window, may have been a popular question in the 20th century, but in the 21st century, the new question is how much is a ton of Carbon? An article in *Scientific America* by Jean Chemnick, E&E News on March 1, 2021, reports "the Biden administration used the Obama-era formula for a central social cost of carbon for 2020 of \$51 a ton, with methane and nitrous oxide, which both pack a stronger climate punch than CO₂, at \$1,500 a ton and \$18,000 a ton in 2020, respectively. These would rise to \$85 a ton for CO₂, \$3,100 a ton for methane and \$33,000 for nitrous oxide by 2050 as damage from warming is expected to progress.

These social cost figures replace the \$1-to-\$7-per-ton CO₂ values and \$55-per-ton methane value of the Trump administration..."

Expect to hear more about Carbon Markets moving forward. Farmers could benefit from practices in which they already have in place, but farmers are cautioned to do their research before signing a commitment.

The Pennsylvania Pumpkin Patch

A nice fall drive through the country will undoubtedly reveal a field punctuated with a plethora of orange dots. Upon closer inspection, you will find that those dots are actually squash, or what we commonly call pumpkins, which if you want to take it one additional step, you could say they are gourds. All pumpkins are gourds, but not all gourds are pumpkins! How much do you know about pumpkin production in Pennsylvania? The answers to these questions are based on a survey conducted by Zippia. They used data from the U.S. Census of Agriculture and was included in an article by Helen Rudoler in *The Daily Pennsylvania* in 2020.



1. In terms of pumpkin production, where does the state of Pennsylvania rank?
 - a. 2nd
 - b. 12th
 - c. 28th

If you guessed, second, you are in the right patch! Illinois comes in at number one.

2. How many pumpkin farms are in Pennsylvania?
 - a. 278
 - b. 1,305
 - c. 2,017

Pennsylvania is home to 1,305 pumpkin farms. Illinois higher production of pumpkins comes from less pumpkin farms with only 572 farms.

3. Illinois pumpkin acreage totals 17, 399 acres with Pennsylvania farming a distant 6, 871 acres of pumpkins. Which state is in third place with 5,592 dedicated pumpkin acres?
 - a. California
 - b. Michigan
 - c. New York

Our friends to the north, New York holds the third spot.

4. Even though Illinois grows more pumpkins than Pennsylvania, the Keystone State makes more money per pound and in 2017. How much did the crop fetch?
 - a. \$1.3 million
 - b. \$13 million
 - c. \$31 million

If you guessed the answer that had a 1 and a 3 in it, specifically the answer 13 million, you are right!

5. True or False A hundred pounds of pumpkins in Pennsylvania is worth \$21, or three times as much as the pumpkins in Illinois because the pumpkins in Pennsylvania are mainly grown for the fall décor market while Illinois grows pumpkins for the canning industry.

The correct response is true.

6. True or false Pumpkin growing is a \$600 million dollar industry.

The correct response is false. Jack-o-lantern pumpkin sales totaled \$600 million dollars. The entire pumpkin crop is a billion dollar industry.



Pennsylvania Farm Bureau

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www.scriptsave.com

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1.888.497.7447
www.clearvaluehearing.com

Publications

PFB adds value to membership and keeps members informed through a variety of print and digital publications. Members receive 5% off advertising rates in our print publications. Contact advertising coordinator for details.

A \$3 portion of annual dues covers a one-year subscription to a PFB publication. Members can receive either 3 issues of the County Focus newspaper or 4 issues of the quarterly Positively Pennsylvania magazine. Publication frequency and details are subject to change.

Travel

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510 S. 31st Street P.O. Box 8736
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www.pfb.com

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Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Health Services
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MSC BUSINESS SERVICES
717.731.3517
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Mercer County Farm Bureau
Robert Craft, president
27 Cassidy Drive
Mercer, PA 16137

stamp

RESERVATIONS for the Oct. 7 Annual Meeting and Fall Dinner
\$13 per person *Reservations are due October 1, 2021*

The dinner is at 6:30 p.m. on October 7, *at the Mercer County Extension Office, Route 19, Mercer, PA 16137*

Mail reservations to Sandy Craft, 27 Cassidy Drive, Mercer, PA 16137. You can also RSVP to Sandy at 814-715-4244 or smvcraft5@gmail.com . She also accepts text messages.

Number of people attending _____ @ \$13 total _____

Make checks payable to Mercer County Farm Bureau

Name _____

Address _____

City, State,
Zip _____

Phone _____