

AG QUARTERLY

July 2023



BERKS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

THE TEAM

Emily Wangolo | Kimberly Fies | Amanda Burkard-Sell
Clyde Myers | Mary Shah | Jennifer Smilko | Ashley Rice | Sam Bond

PRESERVATION SPOTLIGHT



Becker Family Farm Settlement # 737

- The Becker Family grazes 30 cows on their 125-acre dairy farm in Brecknock Township.
- Parents Ken and Anne also work at Homestead Nutrition, Inc., helping fellow farmers with nutrient management plans and innovative solutions to heal the soil, plants, and livestock, while youngest son Doug manages the farm's dairy and crop operation.
- They stress that infrastructure (the connection between suppliers and producers) and communication between farmers and residents are important to the future of agriculture.



AG LAND PRESERVATION STATS

2023 Q2 Report



815
Farms
Preserved

2023 Total:

Farms preserved: **10**

Modification requests: **19**

County invested: **\$121K**

Acres preserved: **703.8**

Farms transferred: **23**

State invested: **\$1.8M**

78,007
Acres
Preserved

Program Total:

County invested: **\$84.4M**

State invested: **\$91.7M**

Q2 HIGHLIGHTS

Ag in the Classroom



A group of 20 teachers and school administrators joined us for Ag in the Classroom, a 3-day course highlighting the diverse food and fiber system of Berks County. The course included visits to over 12 different agribusinesses including beef production, robotic milking, farm fresh produce stores, high-yielding crop farms, wood products, and a sawmill along with many other educational stops.



Q2 HIGHLIGHTS

Ag Careers & Sofrito Day



Reading High School Career & Internship Fair

Spoke with over 25 students about career opportunities in agriculture.



Students Interacting with Business

Weaver's Orchard hosted 44 Exeter High School Students to showcase three key aspects of their business: fruit production, human resources, and event marketing and organization. Co-organized by the Berks County Dept. of Ag and the Berks Business Education Coalition.



Sofrito Container Garden Workshop

Over 25 participants made container gardens with plants that are key ingredients of sofrito - cilantro, Mexican cilantro, and aji dulce pepper. They also observed a sofrito making demonstration.

Q2 HIGHLIGHTS

Conferences & Achievements in Numbers



Facebook

Reach: **18,488**

Total followers: **783**

New followers: **61**



Showcased Berks agribusiness to **34** educators & conference attendees.

180
students
educated on ag
careers

Berks Ag Event Calendar

96 events posted

732 views

3,001
food map site
views



In April we co-organized the WeConservePA Conference for 357 attendees, hosted 25 attendees for the Berks Agritourism mobile seminar, and hosted the statewide PA Farmland Preservation Association conference at the Ag Center.

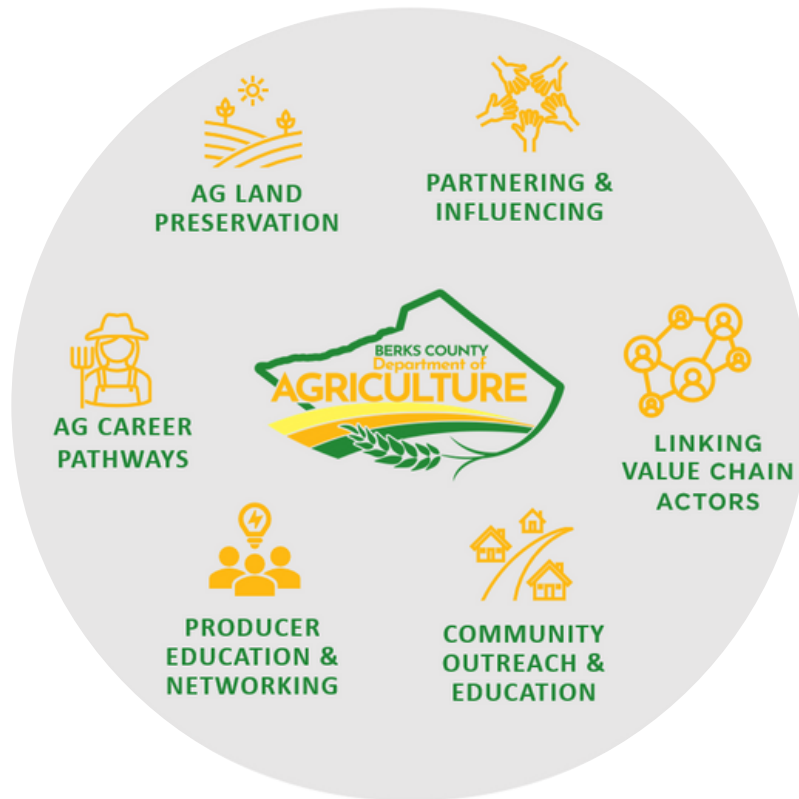


2023 OBJECTIVES

Quarterly Update

The Dept. of Ag team continues to successfully meet our 2023 objectives. As staff members adjust to new roles, they are bringing great creativity, skills, and knowledge to their work.

Strategic Functions of the Berks County Department of Agriculture



1. Establish the Dept. of Agriculture's strategy, function, and branding.

- New logo released!
- Branded quarterly template developed and in use. (Shout out Rick Royer and the Planning team that share his skills with us!)
- Team members assigned and successfully implementing initiatives.

2. Fortify the Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Program.

- Database vendor identified & contracting in progress.
- New staff members up and running; continued training ongoing.
- Board member continual learning workshops scheduled.

3. Expand the Dept. of Agriculture's community outreach.

- Coordinated student visit to Weaver's orchard.
- Hosted agribusiness tour during WeConservePA conference.
- Hosted 3-day Ag in the Classroom course for teachers.
- Participated in Reading High School's Career Fair.
- Participated in Career Day at Union & 13th elementary school.
- Co-hosted the Sofrito Container Garden Make 'n' Take workshop.
- Sponsored and participated in Kempton Fair.

4. Increase local sourcing of agricultural products.

- Co-launched online local food map with GRCA, providing all farm listing data, site design.
- Expanded farm list on food map from 157 farms to 222 farms in first 2 months of map launch.

UPCOMING...



Inside Berks Business | August 2, 2023

Audience: K-12 teachers

Description: One-day tour of the agribusiness industry of Berks County for teachers to better understand agribusiness and career opportunities for students.

Partners: Berks Business Education Coalition; 3 agribusinesses of Berks.

Superintendent Day | September 15, 2023

Audience: School district superintendents & administrators

Description: One-day tour of the agribusiness industry of Berks County for administrators to better understand agribusiness and career opportunities for students.

Partners: Berks County Intermediate Unit; 3 agribusinesses of Berks.

Orchard & Food Preservation Twilight Tour | September, date TBD

Audience: General public, those interested in fruit growing or preserving.

Description: An evening orchard walk and open house for the community to learn about fruit growing, agribusiness and options for safely preserving the season's abundance of fruit.

Partners: Penn State Extension & local orchard.

Would you like to partner with us
for future events? Give us a call or
email us: 610-378-1844 or
DeptofAg@countyofberks.com



Don't forget to visit the food map often to find the freshest Berks farm products this summer!

NEW LOCAL FOOD MAP!

Connect with local farmers, growers and other agriculture-related businesses throughout the county with the online Berks County Local Food Map. By utilizing the map, you can source food right in your own backyard. Search by business type, available products and accepted payment types. Whether you are looking for grass-fed beef, pick-your-own produce or specialty honey, this new tool can help you find it.



CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP BY:



www.growtogetherberks.com/directory

AG NEWSFLASH

'Fencing Livestock Out of Streams Is Next Front for Pennsylvania Water Regulations'



Pennsylvania has blocked local stream fencing requirements since 1980. Now, PA lawmakers are looking to advance a bill that would allow local regulation on stream fencing. Cattle and other livestock take a toll on the water quality and erode stream banks when they are not fenced out of the stream area. With this bill, livestock can have access to the stream to drink water or cross the stream to get to another pasture by using stream crossings/accesses.

These Best Management Practices (BMP) help to prevent further erosion and improve water quality by not allowing cows to loiter in the water. Limiting livestock access to water also helps with animal welfare such as decreasing foot rot and leg injuries. It's important to note that while stream fencing is a great BMP, farmers would need some type of government cost-sharing or it could be a burden to farmers.

The article and more information can be found at:

https://www.lancasterfarming.com/farming-news/conservation/fencing-livestock-out-of-streams-is-next-front-for-pennsylvania-water-regulations/article_c413ef0c-145f-11ee-9481-bfcde029e2b9.html

BERKS COUNTY AG FACT

Berks ranks 3rd out of 67 Counties in PA for

- Number of Farms: 1,809
- Value of Farm Product Sales: \$554,656,000
- Net Cash Farm Income: \$155,719,000





CONTACT US OR STOP BY!

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