

AG QUARTERLY

October 2024



BERKS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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WHAT WE DO

The Berks County Department of Agriculture promotes agriculture in Berks County by preserving farmland, invigorating agricultural economic development, and connecting our community to agricultural resources.

WHO WE ARE

We are a department of the County of Berks, established in 2015 to serve Berks County residents. We are a team of eight staff who are dedicated to ensuring a thriving agricultural industry in Berks County.

Credits

Content and editing by Berks County Dept. of Agriculture staff; template design by Rick Royer, Berks County Planning.

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PRESERVATION SPOTLIGHT

GValley Farm, LLC - Hartman Family Settlement #827

Excerpts from "Beginning the Eighth Generation" by Clyde A. B. Myers, originally published in the Reading Eagle.

- The Hartman family operates GValley Farms in Lower Heidelberg Township, owning 250 acres and renting an additional 300 acres. Crops grown include: corn, soybeans, wheat, hay and straw.
- Dean and Darene are the seventh generation on the farm and son Jared is the eighth. The family preserved their home farm in 2024 when Jared decided to continue farming.
- GValley Farms contributes to the ag economy, providing inputs to companies like FM Browns and Perdue and purchasing supplies from Deer Country, Hooper, Agriteer, FS, and Helena.



Jared Hartman spoke of his family's legacy:

"Continuing our family's heritage in farming is of great importance to me and I have worked hard to make it a success."

Please see our website for full articles on preserved farms.

AG LAND PRESERVATION STATS



2024 YTD:

Farms preserved: 6

Acres preserved: 503.2

Modification requests: 18

Farms transferred: 39

County invested: \$618,709

State invested: \$ \$779,775

2024 Committed Funding:

County: \$1,083,377.00

State: \$2,411,601.69

Total: \$3,494,978.69



Q3 HIGHLIGHTS

Fair Sponsorships

The Department sponsored all four fairs in Berks County to promote agriculture and outreach. We sponsored Kempton (June), Berks County Fair (July), Kutztown Fair (August), and most recently the Oley Fair in September!



Inside Berks Business

The Department continued to provide educators the opportunity to visit ag businesses to experience the science and technology that exists in modern agriculture.



Planning Directors Day Out

The Department hosted the Planning Department leadership on farm visits to demonstrate components of stewardship reviews for the easement program, talk with landowners about their concerns and discuss land use as it relates to the County Comprehensive Plan.



Q3 HIGHLIGHTS

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Discover Ag Podcast- Discovering Berks County



Tara Vander Dussen & Natalie Kovarik were taken on a tour of Berks County and all things local food and agriculture by our very own Pam Shupp-Menet, Director of Community and Economic Development. After a fun meeting with the Oley & Kutztown chapters of the FFA, the duo was introduced to some local PA & PA Dutch cuisine. Local producers were on hand to provide samples of their Berks County delicacies. Products of the following were also sampled: Pure Wild Tea, ACEC Farm, Way-Har, Deitrich's Meats, Tom Sturgis, Dieffenbach's, Pilsudski Mustard, Reading Soda Works, Weaver's Orchard, and Tony's of West Reading. There was special appearance of the New PA Dairy Princess & Berks Dairy Ambassador. An overall great turnout and fun night highlighting the impact of Berks County Ag at the Miller Center in Reading.



OUR WORK IN NUMBERS



2024 Q3 Online Presence

Our staff continue to promote agriculture and share resources with thousands of Berks County residents via Facebook, the online Local Food Map, and the Berks Ag Event Calendar.

12,576 GrowTogether
Website Visits

1266 Online Food
Map Visits

6615 Ag Event
Calendar Views

167 Ag Events
Listed

10,038 Facebook
Page Reach

98 Facebook
Posts



2024 Third Quarter Events

100 People attended the
Discover Ag Podcast

53 FFA Students met with
the Discover Ag
Podcasters

500+ Promotional items given
away at the Oley Valley
Community Fair

500+ Children participated in
the Farmer for a Day
Tent at the Oley Fair

6 Teachers and Education
Staff participated in
Inside Berks Business

2024 OBJECTIVES

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Third Quarter Update

Our team has continued to make key advances on all three of our annual objectives in 2024.

Continue strengthening the agricultural land preservation program.

- Landscape software:
 - Mobile app, geolocated photos being used during inspections.
 - Reporting templates in process.
- Baseline visits for all selected parcels are being conducted to minimize potential future conflicts with program requirements.

Refining Department of Agriculture's strategy, function, and branding.

- Berks County Ag Study:
 - Study report draft completed
 - Presented to Advisory Committee
- Partnered with Dairy Excellence Foundation to provide Back-to-School Boxes for 15 Ag Educators in Berks County School Districts

Continue the Dept. of Agriculture's community outreach.

- Promoted local agriculture through sponsorship of the live Discover Ag Podcast at the Miller Center.
- Hosted Inside Berks Business, a day-long tour highlighting agriculture and technology for educators.

STRATEGIC FUNCTION of the Berks County Department of Agriculture



Want to know more?

Don't hesitate to reach out - we'd love to hear from you.

UPCOMING...



AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

CAREER & JOB FAIR

NOVEMBER 14, 2024 8:30-11:30 AM
Leesport Farmers Market, Leesport, PA

FREE and open to high schoolers, college students, and adults of all education levels!

- Exhibitors include: local companies, government agencies, and colleges.
- Opportunities for internships, volunteering, job shadowing.
- Current or future employment opportunities.

Ag is more than farming!
It includes

Save THE Date

Register Here

business engineering
food safety horticulture environmental science

animal production
nurseries veterinary medicine

marketing
agricultural research entomology

crop production
agronomy natural resources forestry

conservation
wildlife management

robotics
meat processing

economics
biotechnology food processing

finance education
turf management

Questions? Contact : DeptofAg@berkspa.gov or 610-378-1844

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

Students Interacting with Business | November 8, 2024

Audience: High School students

Description: Students tour local agribusinesses to learn about careers in agriculture and necessary job related skills.

Partners: Berks Business Education Coalition and local agribusinesses

Tire Collection | November 7, 2024

Audience: Berks County farmers

Description: Free tire collection event for tractor and farm truck tires, registration required. Allows for easy disposal and recycling of tires, which can provide breeding areas for mosquitos.

Partners: Allegheny Towing and Salvage

Agriculture & Natural Resources Career & Job Fair | November 14, 2024

Audience: High school & college students, adults of all education levels.

Description: Career and job fair focused on careers in the agriculture and natural resources fields. Attendees will find potential internships, job shadowing, and current or future employment opportunities.

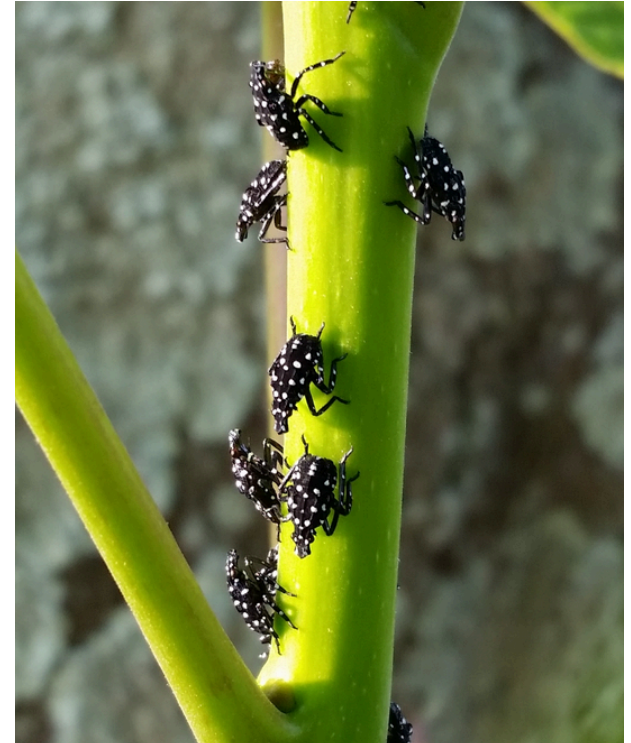
Partners: Local agribusinesses, government agencies, and colleges.

AG NEWSFLASH

Discovered Potential Weakness in Spotted Lanternflies

Spotted Lantern flies are native to China but were discovered in Berks County, PA in 2014. They eventually spread to other counties and are now in 13 other states. Though colorful as an adult, the insect feeds on fruit trees, grape vines, wood and ornamental trees, along with other crops and plants. This has caused lots of issues and profit loss for producers and PA Forestland.

USDA scientists have now discovered the spotted lantern has an attraction to vibration which is one of the first known weaknesses. Both adults and nymphs are attracted to vibrations of buzzing electrical power lines. “Most power lines in North America carry alternating current electricity at a rate of 60Hz. Using vibration to entice the lanternflies to gather is a major step toward improving control methods. Mankin said that further research will focus on traps and finding ways to disrupt spotted lanternfly mating behavior.”



**“USDA scientists have discovered that the spotted lanternfly, an invasive threat to fruit crops and many trees, may have an Achilles heel – an attraction to vibration.”
-Scott Elliott**

Source:
<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2024/01/19/spotted-lanternfly-reveals-potential-weakness>

BERKS COUNTY AG FACT

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\$152.5 million

Nursery, greenhouse,
floriculture & sod
market value in Berks County.



Berks County ranks
#2 of 66 counties in PA and
#23 of 2,660 counties in the U.S
for Nursery, greenhouse,
floriculture & sod sales.

Source: 2022 National Ag Census



CONTACT US OR STOP BY!

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