

# AG QUARTERLY

## October 2023



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.

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# PRESERVATION SPOTLIGHT

## Quaker City Farms - Zettlemoyer Family Settlement # 807



- Quaker City Farms has been in business since 1993, with the entire Zettlemoyer family involved in the operation in some way. They raise dairy heifers and grow hay, corn, soybeans, and small grains on 600 acres.
- The farm is preserved through a partnership with Resource Environmental Solutions, which preserved the stream and wetlands areas, and the State & County Ag Conservation Easement Program, which preserved the farmland.
- Preserving the farm with two easements allowed both programs to leverage funds and preserve additional land, supporting further preservation in Albany Township.



***"We decided to sell the [easement] to do exactly what the program is intended to do and that is to preserve the farm forever. We preserved the conservation land to help bring the wetlands and life back to our streams from years of overgrazing cattle."***



# AG LAND PRESERVATION STATS

3

## 2023 Q3 Report



**816**  
Farms  
Preserved

**78,129**  
Acres  
Preserved

### Year to Date (Sept. 30):

Farms preserved: **11**  
Acres preserved: **825.6**  
Modification requests: **21**  
Farms transferred: **32**  
County invested: **\$136.8K**  
State invested: **\$2.1M**

### Program Total:

County invested: **\$84.5M**  
State invested: **\$92M**



# Q3 HIGHLIGHTS

## Orchard Twilight Tour

The Berks County Department of Agriculture partnered with Penn State Extension and The Berry Farm to host the 2nd annual Twilight Tour on September 19th. The event drew about 65 people from the general public to learn more about where their food comes from. The tour included an orchard walk, food preservation presentation, free ice cream, and of course free apple samples!





# Q3 HIGHLIGHTS

## Inside Berks Business

As a collaboration between Berks Business Education Coalition and our department, we took teachers and ag department staff to discover the diversity of the ag industry in Berks County. We visited The Berry Farm & Orchard, a robotic milking dairy (Corner View Farm), and Rodale Institute.



## Ag Progress Days

We were privileged to join Schuylkill Valley students, their teacher, and Commissioner Leinbach at Ag Progress Days, a three-day agricultural show at State College, PA, which includes a public officials' luncheon.





# Q3 IN NUMBERS



## Facebook

Reach: **26,231 (up 42%)**

Total followers: **871**

New followers: **88**



**65**

Berks Residents  
educated on food  
production & food  
preservation safety.

## Ag Event Calendar



**129** events posted

**4,100+** views



**150**

Conversations  
with attendees  
at the Oley Fair



**3,549**

food map  
site views



**1,510**

Promotional items  
distributed at  
Kutztown & Oley Fair

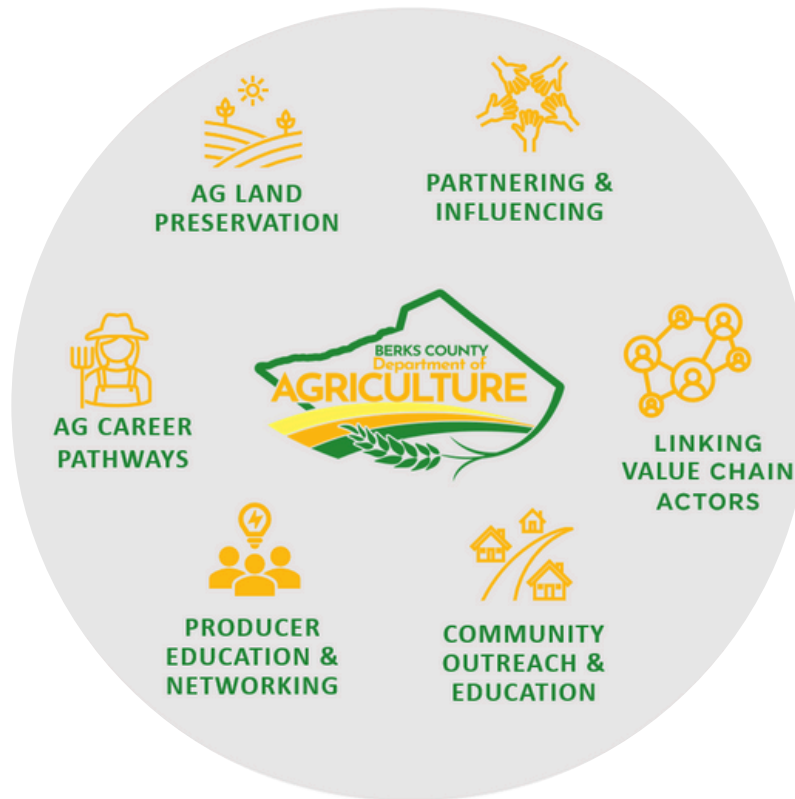


# 2023 OBJECTIVES

## Quarterly Update

The Dept. of Ag team continues to successfully meet our 2023 objectives. We're still hard at work for the rest of 2023 and looking forward to planning for a great year ahead.

### Strategic Functions of the Berks County Department of Agriculture



## 4. Increase local sourcing of agricultural products.

- Continued to update local food map data and added new locations.

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

- New brochures developed for the Dept. of Ag and the farmland preservation program.
- Established monthly staff development meetings on project management and departmental target setting and tracking.
- Scope of work defined for Berks County Agricultural Economic Impact Study & Strategic Plan.

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

- Database vendor contract signed and onboarding begun.
- New staff members leading farm visits on their own.
- Two board member continual learning workshops held.

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

- Organized and co-hosted the Orchard Twilight Tour & Food Preservation Event.
- Sponsored and exhibited at the Kutztown, Berks Co. & Oley Fairs.
- Posted over 90 events on the Berks Ag Calendar





## Ag & Natural Resources Career & Job Fair | November 9, 2023

**Audience:** high school and college students, adults; open to the public.

**Description:** Career & Job fair with 35+ exhibitors highlighting diverse employment opportunities in ag and ag-adjacent fields.

**Partners:** Over 35 local organizations, universities and businesses; local school districts; Berks County Intermediate Unit.

## Farm Tire Collection Day | November 9, 2023

**Audience:** Farmers with large agricultural tires that need to be discarded.

**Description:** A collection event that provides free tire disposal for large farm tires, thus reducing environmental and human health risks.

**Partners:** Berks County Conservation District; Allegheny Towing & Salvage.

## Students Interacting with Business | November 8 & 16, 2023

**Audience:** 9th grade students; participation requires schools to register with the Berks Business Education Coalition.

**Description:** Students visit local agribusinesses to learn about career opportunities and skills required for employment or owning a business.

**Partners:** Berks Business Education Coalition; local schools.

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





Don't forget to visit the Berks Ag Event calendar for ag-related events in your area!



# BERKS AG EVENT CALENDAR

Find your next event here, from credit courses to weekend family fun! This calendar is a community effort to benefit farmers and non-farmers alike!

[growtogetherberks.com/events/](http://growtogetherberks.com/events/)



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
Berks County Department of Agriculture  
Berks County Agricultural Center  
1238 County Welfare Road  
Leesport, PA 19533 • (610) 378-1844  
[DeptofAg@countyofberks.com](mailto:DeptofAg@countyofberks.com)

## GROW TOGETHER

BUY BERKS. SUPPORT FARMS.





# SPECIAL EVENT

Agriculture & Natural Resources Career & Job Fair  
November 9, 2023

Come meet these exhibitors!





# AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES



## CAREER & JOB FAIR

NOVEMBER 9, 2023, 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  
marketing veterinary nurseries medicine  
agricultural research entomology  
crop production  
agronomy natural resources forestry  
conservation economics  
robotics biotechnology food processing  
wildlife management meat processing turf management  
finance education

or at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0A48ACA62EA0FA7-career>

For more information contact : [deptofag@countyofberks.com](mailto:deptofag@countyofberks.com)

or 610-378-1844



## Carbon Sequestration Research Funding



- **The USDA is designating \$300 million toward researching and monitoring carbon in soils.**
- **A bill has just been introduced to support soil carbon sequestration research.**
- **Many “Carbon Credit” programs already exist, and this proposed legislation and funding will help to “quantify carbon stored in the soil” and incentivize farmers for the good work they are already doing.**

Did you know that farming sequesters significant amounts of carbon when farmers eliminate tillage and plant cover crops? By not plowing the soil, no-till farmers reduce carbon emissions, sequester more carbon, and have a lower carbon footprint than conventional tillage farming. This is because the soil is left undisturbed and is not releasing carbon into the atmosphere. Additionally, cover crops planted after cash crops continue the process of absorbing and storing carbon from the atmosphere throughout the winter.

The article and more information can be found at:  
<https://www.foodmanufacturing.com/facility/news/22867631/how-much-carbon-is-stored-in-farm-fields>



## 82% of Berks farmland is used for growing crops

### Land Use Practices

- **No till: 37%**
- **Reduced till: 17%**
- **Intensive till: 15%**
- **Cover Crop: 28%**

No till has many benefits including reduced carbon footprint, pollution prevention, erosion reduction, and increased soil moisture.

Source: 2107 USDA NASS Agricultural Census data







**CONTACT US OR STOP BY!**

610-378-1844 | [DeptofAg@countyofberks.cm](mailto:DeptofAg@countyofberks.cm)

Berks County Agricultural Center

1238 County Welfare Rd., Leesport, PA 19533

Office hours: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm