

AG QUARTERLY



April 2026



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 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

Cover photo credit: Glick's Greenhouse Facebook

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INFORMATION STATION

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Pennsylvania Team Ag Ed – Unlock your potential! Support your educational and career goals. These resources are here to help you grow, lead, and succeed – don't miss out on the chance to invest in your future!

Apply [here](#)!

Reading Area Transportation Study Public Review and Comment Opportunity – Public meetings to review the draft documents will be held:

- Tuesday, April 14, 2026 in person at 6PM in the Harvest Room at the Berks County Agricultural Center
- 2 virtual meetings on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 11AM **and** 6PM using Microsoft Teams. You **must** register to receive the link to participate. Do so [here](#).



Heller Family Settlement #353

Excerpts from "Farmland is Essential for the Agri-Business System" by Clyde A. B. Myers as published in the Reading Eagle.



- Roger and Janet Heller purchased their 95 acre farm in Heidelberg Township in 1971; they preserved it in 2005.
- The farm was once owned by William Penn and was part of 10,000 acres willed to his daughter. The land was cleared to fuel the iron furnace at Charming Forge and has been farmland since 1785.
- In addition to farming the land, Roger also worked in animal nutrition for 40 years, developing and balancing feeding rations for cattle.
- Agriculture includes more than just farming - farm supply and processing / distribution are important parts of the industry.

Roger Heller on future of agriculture, "There is a lot of uncertainty in farming, the weather, the economy and inflation are all yearly challenges...But without continuing funds to help preserve more farms, we will lose the entire agriculture/food industry system."

Please see our website for full articles on preserved farms.

AG LAND PRESERVATION STATS

5



853
Farms
Preserved

80,667.5
Acres
Preserved

2026 Totals:

Farms preserved: **5**

Acres preserved: **301.80**

Program Total:

County invested: **\$86.1M**

State invested: **\$97.6M**

Landowner Donated Value: **\$42.5M**

2026 ranking has begun with 20 farms selected totaling 1300 (+/-) acres.

The Berks County Department of Agriculture oversees the administration of the Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Program, which permanently preserves Berks County's farmland.

Q1 HIGHLIGHTS

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National Ag Day

The Department celebrated National Ag Day and America250 PA Berks by learning all about the barn stars commonly known as hex signs, and Pennsylvania Dutch culture. Patrick Donmoyer from the Pennsylvania German Heritage Center at Kutztown University and Eric Claypole, renowned hex sign artist, gave an informative presentation to the approximately 65 participants. We tested our skills at Scherenschnitte, making barn star-inspired cut paper designs. After lunch, we took a bus tour of the Kutztown and Lenhartsville area to see barn stars in the wild.



AG Literacy Week

The Department worked with B.A.R.N. to coordinate Berks County's participation in the PA Friends of Agriculture's Ag Literacy Program. Volunteers from around the County read *Cows Can Moo! Can You? All About Farms* by Dr. Seuss to over 1,900 students in over 90 classrooms and did an ag focused activity. Students learned about agriculture and where their food and fiber comes from.

OUR WORK IN NUMBERS

7



2025 Q4 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.

29,968 GrowTogether
Website Users

21,638 Food Map &
Events Calendar
Views

269 Local Farms &
Vendors Listed
on Food Map

132 AgEvents
on Calendar

72,600 Facebook
Page Views

70 Facebook Posts



2026 First Quarter Event Impact

97 Classrooms had
volunteer readers for
Ag Literacy book and
Exercise.

1700+ Students provided ag
education messaging
thru Ag Literacy
Week

68 Additional Ag
Literacy books
provided to Berks
County Library
System and FFA
programs to read.

2026 OBJECTIVES

First Quarter Update

Our team has continued to make key advances on our annual objectives in 2026.

Promote Ag Career Pathways.

- Made connections with 50+ potential Berks County Career and Job Fair participants at Keystone Farm Show and PA Farm Show.

Encourage Business Market Expansion

- Ressurect the Bountiful Berks moniker and work to build out digital platform, trademarking and usage guidelines.



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

- Guided the Ag Literacy event that resulted in over 1,900 students in 90 classrooms being exposed to agriculture through a book reading and an interactive activity.
- Provided Berks County Library systems with books and activities for their branches.

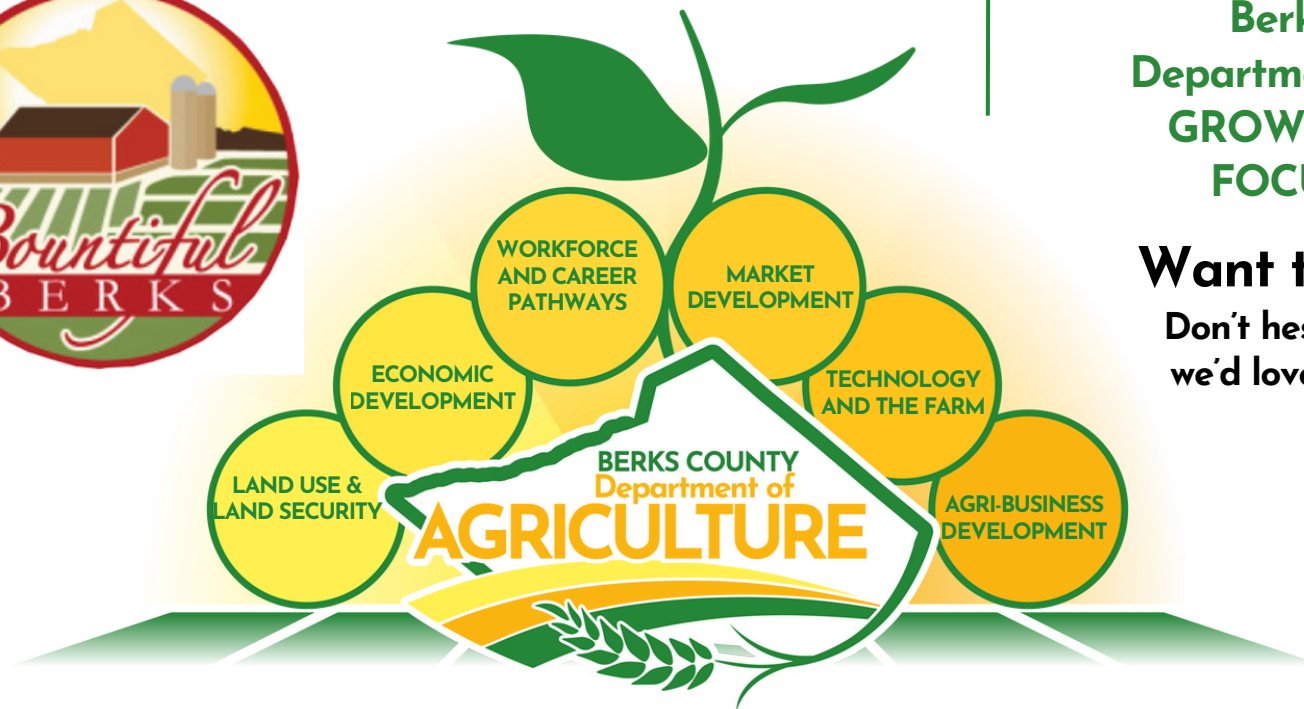
Supported Land Use and Land Security.

- Conducted Stewardship Visits on 133 farms in the ACE Program
- Partnered with PA Farm Link to provide targeted information to over 30 landowners who want to transition the farm. Berks County Area Agency on Aging also participated and provided information on their programs for all Berks County residents.

Berks County Department of Agriculture GROWING BERKS FOCUS AREAS

Want to know more?

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



National Women in Agriculture Recognition

On Monday March 9, 2026, In honor of Women's History Month and the United Nations' International Year of the Woman Farmer, several public and private officials visited Willow Run Farm in Maiden Creek Township, owned and operated by Deanne Weber.

The speakers took this opportunity to recognize the vital role women play in Pennsylvania's agriculture industry and highlight state programs and investments designed to strengthen rural communities and help farms remain sustainable across the Commonwealth.



"Pennsylvania's women farmers are innovators, entrepreneurs, and stewards of our land" - State Senator Judy Schwank



Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding, Pennsylvania State Senator Judy Schwank, and Berks County Department of Agriculture Executive Director Kim Fies were among those in attendance.



Farm to Table Dinner

On May 31, 2026, Berks County Farm Bureau will be hosting a dinner at Jeremy Meck's farm in Womelsdorf – the aim of the dinner is to support the growth of agriculture in Pennsylvania, with proceeds supporting the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture's Mobile Ag Lab, the Berks County Conservation District's SWAG bus, and agricultural literacy. The dinner will be held outside, in the field, under the open sky, and will feature five farm-to-table dishes, which will be prepared by Chef Dale Reitenauer of We Are PA Proud, including proteins such as rainbow trout and prime rib. Tickets are \$125 each and can be purchased [here](#). Not interested in dining, but still want to support Berks County Farm Bureau? You can submit a donation at the same link above!



Women Rooted in Agriculture

On May 8, 2026, join Penn State Extension for a women-in-dairy evening at Valley Milkhouse featuring a creamery tour, cheese tasting, and insights into cheesemaking and the factors that shape different cheeses. The event runs from 5:30PM to 7:30PM at the Valley Milkhouse in Oley. Registration deadline is May 5, and tickets are \$15 each. You can register [here](#).

Dairy Field Day

On April 16, 2026, join Penn State for a dynamic, on-farm workshop featuring hands-on demonstrations and practical discussions for dairy producers, farm workers, and industry professionals. Topics include dairy and beef research, transition cow management, soybean research, and dairy data management. A guided farm tour will conclude the day. The event is from 8:30AM to 3:00PM and is being held at the Spotlight Holsteins farm in Myerstown. Registration deadline is April 15, 2026, and tickets are \$15 each, and you can register [here](#).



Imagine Berks Comprehensive Plan Regional Meetings

Audience: Local Township officials

Description: Regional meetings with local officials to discuss updates to the Imagine Berks Comprehensive Plan and land use in their townships

Partners: Berks County Planning Commission, Workforce Development Board, Community and Economic Development, GRCA, IDA

Pop-up Farmers Market - June 13th

Audience: Members of the public

Description: A pop-up farmers market featuring Berks County grown and produced food and beverage products for sampling and purchase. This event will also serve as the kick-off for Barnopoly.

Partners: Local farmers and producers, Berks Ag Resource Network



Bountiful Berks Night at R-phils June 16

Audience: Berks County farmers and other members of the public

Description: A sponsored baseball game and Bountiful Berks hat giveaway to celebrate and promote the agriculture industry.

Partners: PA Friends of Agriculture, Berks County Farm Bureau, PA Beef Producers, Berks County Dairy Princesses

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



CONTACT US OR STOP BY!

610-378-1844 | DeptofAg@BerksPA.gov

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

www.berskpa.gov/departments/agriculture