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Wolf Administration Announces \$500,000 Available for Ag and Youth Education Programs During Virtual Pennsylvania Farm Show

Harrisburg, PA – During the virtual 2021 Pennsylvania Farm Show, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding has announced the availability of \$500,000 through the Pennsylvania Farm Bill's Ag and Youth Grant Program to fund projects such as ag education and workforce development programs, seminars and field trips, agricultural safety training, capital projects, or equipment purchases that will help to build a strong future workforce for Pennsylvania's leading industry.

"We predict a shortfall in the agriculture workforce in the coming years as more older farmers retire and new, more technological jobs are created," Redding said. "The remedy is education and awareness. By sparking an early interest in agriculture through hands-on programs, we cultivate future industry leaders. Agriculture offers a variety of satisfying, family-sustaining jobs. These grants will expose youth to all that agriculture has to offer and lead to a strong ag workforce for tomorrow."

A total of \$500,000 is available for two different grant types that can be awarded under the program:

- Direct, non-matching reimbursement grants of up to \$7,500 to defray costs of an eligible project, other than a capital project; and,
- Matching reimbursement grants of up to \$25,000 to defray the costs of an eligible capital project or equipment purchase, where the grant covers no more than 50 percent of the project cost.

Those interested in the [Ag and Youth Grant Program](#) can find a link to apply and more information at agriculture.pa.gov/pafarmbill. The application link will become available January 25 and will be accepted through March 5 at 5:00 PM.

Pennsylvanians interested in agriculture education are encouraged to participate in the Pennsylvania Farm Show's virtual panel discussion, *Cultivating the Future – How Agriculture Education & Youth Organizations are Creating the Leaders of Tomorrow*, scheduled to take place this evening at 8:00 PM. The discussion will be livestreamed on the [Pennsylvania Farm Show Facebook page](#). Viewers can submit questions in the comments.

Ag education takes many forms in Pennsylvania. Some schools expose students to agriculture careers by including it in their lesson plans. W.B. Saul High School in Philadelphia centers its entire curriculum around a working farm on the school's campus.

Saul High School senior Asjah Thomas credits the school with bringing her career goals into focus.

“I chose Saul High School because I was interested in agriculture,” Thomas said. “It started off with me in sixth grade. I told myself I wanted to be a marine biologist. Since then I’ve been living up that dream. I still want to be a marine biologist. I’m an environmental science major. I want to go into the Navy for engineer reasons, but that also goes hand in hand with what I want to do.” She intends to work on climate change through marine biology.

Great careers start with early interest. And early interest can be spurred through strong ag education programs, which can be created or boosted through the Pennsylvania Farm Bill’s Ag and Youth Grant Program opening soon.

“The sooner you can plant that seed of interest about what the food and agriculture system is, the better. The jobs in agriculture are found everywhere across the country,” Redding said. “It’s key to have a school that inspires you and teachers that inspire you, who can articulate a vision for learning and opportunity. I see that converging within our ag science programs around Pennsylvania.”

Education for food production continues into college.

Darian Poles, a junior agriculture student at Delaware Valley University, has career ambitions involving beef cattle.

“When I graduate, I hope to work on a big cattle ranch,” Poles said. “Beef cattle is my passion. My goal is to work around the United States and figure out where I fit best. The goal after college is to get more experience, to work and get some dirt on my hands, and eventually become a cattle manager at a ranch.” Ultimately Poles would like to have his own cattle ranch.

The next generation is eager to take its place. Expanding agriculture education can help them reach their goals and assure a sustainable food system.

The PA Farm Bill is Governor Tom Wolf’s bold, aggressive, and necessary investment in Pennsylvania agriculture to grow opportunities and resources, remove barriers to entry, and inspire future generations of leaders for the industry.

For more about the PA Farm Bill’s investments in agriculture or the work of the [Commission for Agricultural Education Excellence](#), visit agriculture.pa.gov.

Note: Photo and video available at pacast.com.

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