



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Pennsylvania Farm Show ‘Cultivating Tomorrow’ Spotlight: Young Women Shaping Agriculture’s Future

Harrisburg, PA – Today, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding will address diversity and inclusion as a key challenge in cultivating a bright future for Pennsylvania’s agriculture industry.

The Pennsylvania Farm Show spotlight will focus on women in agriculture who are shaping the industry’s future, creating jobs and building a stronger food system.

“Part of the story in agriculture is who is in agriculture,” Secretary Redding said. “And that diversity is so important. We get a chance to see the women who are playing such a critical role not just in shaping the landscape, but in shaping our future. From our classrooms to our boardrooms, these women are leading agriculture in Pennsylvania.”

According to the USDA, nearly 18,000 of Pennsylvania’s farms have a female principal operator, and more than 29,000 farms have women producers working on them. PA farms with women as principal operators generate more than \$1.6 million in annual revenue, and farms where women share in running the operation generate \$3.5 million.

Women run all types and sizes of operations from crops to cattle to specialty produce, vineyards and orchards. And women work not just in production agriculture but in every segment of the workforce, from research and development, to marketing, to imagining and building the food systems of tomorrow.

Like many of their peers, three Lehigh Valley women – Liz Wagner, Allison Czapp and Aimee Good – have found careers growing agriculture businesses, each taking a unique path to success, and inviting younger women to join them.

Last November, before spiking COVID cases curtailed travel, Redding visited Liz Wagner, owner-operator of Crooked Row Farm in Orefield, Lehigh County. Wagner, whose parents had purchased farmland in New Tripoli while she studied journalism and English in college, was working at a non-profit after graduation. She was disillusioned with city life and missing home in the Lehigh Valley.

“I asked my parents, ‘what if I do an apprenticeship and give farming a try?’” said Wagner. “They were very willing, so I went away for a season to a 14-acre organic farm in the Hudson Valley that sold to two farm markets in Manhattan twice a week. The volume was incredible. The business was incredible. I learned the nuts and bolts of what an organic vegetable operation looks like.”

The apprenticeship was the start of what is now a thriving and expanding business. Crooked Row Farm has continued to grow during the pandemic and was awarded a \$24,598 [Fresh Food Financing Initiative COVID Relief grant](#) to build new cold storage at its market stand to continue

servicing a neighborhood food pantry's produce needs and help ensure access to healthy food in the surrounding community.

Wagner says people are sometimes surprised at her occupation. "Even now, after all these years they ask, 'Does your husband farm?'" she says. "No, I'm the farmer. It's kind of fun to be able to be like no, this is my business. I own it. I operate it. I'm delegating. It's very empowering. The labor is fun. I like it. It's a lot different from where I saw myself 10 years ago and I'm very happy to have made this leap."

Alison Czapp, director of [Buy Fresh Buy Local Lehigh Valley](#), also has a background in journalism, and studied anthropology and food systems.

"I'm really interested in seeing how food brings people together and builds community and how those systems work," said Czapp. "While I've worked on farms, I am by no means a farmer and my talents are really best served in working on some of those bigger system challenges in the Lehigh Valley and the nation."

Czapp works to increase food access programs, food system equity and food system infrastructure. "So while my hands aren't in the dirt," she says, "I'm still looking to see how do we grow the agriculture system as a whole, how do we create demand for product and how do we assist farmers in selling their product."

"Right now, the agriculture sector is ripe for career innovation. Women are overwhelmingly the people making decisions about what their households eat, so it is absolutely essential that women are also deeply involved in designing the food system, deciding how food is grown, and determining what the future of agriculture looks like in Pennsylvania."

Aimee Good owns and operates The Good Farm, and its 235-member certified organic CSA in Germansville, Lehigh County, along with her husband John. Good also had no plans to be a farmer. Instead, after studying environmental science and biology, she did a short stint on a farm for a post-graduation "break." "Maybe I'll just work on a farm for a year, and then I'll go find my real job," she recounts. "After that, I just never stopped farming."

The Goods spent 11 years farming on Rodale Institute land and running a CSA for the organic research organization. She helped design the [Diversified Vegetable Apprenticeship](#), one of first "learn while you earn" state-approved farming apprenticeships, with Pasa Sustainable Agriculture, and is a firm believer in the value of apprenticeships to attract young people into farming and ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to succeed.

"Because we were trained as apprentices it's part of our mission to carry that forward and train other young people who really want to get involved in this line of work. Because you really can't learn it without working on a farm. You can go to classes. You can go to workshops, but there's no replacement for the experience you gain working under a skilled farmer."

"To cultivate tomorrow, we must continue to be accommodating and welcome all to the industry we love and are proud of," Secretary Redding said. "Tangible support like state-approved ag apprenticeships, the Fresh Food Financing Initiative, and funding for beginning farmers through the [PA Farm Bill](#) help open those doors.

"I love to see people who are excited about and have a passion for an industry they never thought they'd be a part of, and now they're leading it. It's where they see the intersection between feeding people and their own life goals."

Today's Farm Show panel, '**Cultivating Diversity: How Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are Strengthening Agriculture**' explores how feeding equality feeds future success. At 10:00 AM, Secretary Redding joins leaders from Feed the Barrel, Agribility, [MANRRS](#), the National Young Farmers Grant program and others to discuss Cultivating Diversity. Join the virtual conversation on the [PA Farm Show Facebook page](#) or at [pacast/live/farmshow](#).

For the most up-to-date information on the virtual 2021 Pennsylvania Farm Show like the [Pennsylvania Farm Show on Facebook](#), follow [@PAFarmShow](#) on Instagram, and visit [farmshow.pa.gov](#).

Notes for media: Visit the [Media](#) tab at [farmshow.pa.gov](#) for a [2021 Social Media Toolkit](#), links to [press releases](#), [photo gallery](#), contacts and more.

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