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Secretary of Agriculture Announces \$1 Million Farm Vitality Grant Program, Secures Strong Future for Pennsylvania Agriculture

Boiling Springs, PA – On a preserved farm in Cumberland County, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding today announced the opening of the \$1 million Farm Vitality Grant Program. One of the largest of the programs in Governor Tom Wolf’s Pennsylvania Farm Bill, the Farm Vitality Program aims to enhance the long-term health and vitality of Pennsylvania’s farms.

“Pennsylvania’s more than 53,000 farms are the backbone of our reliable food system. They are the heart of Pennsylvania, just like this \$1 million Farm Vitality Grant Program is the heart of the Pennsylvania Farm Bill,” said Redding. “Pennsylvania’s farm families need sound business plans, because their success is success for all of Pennsylvania.”

Trever Gill, fourth generation Cumberland County farmer, received a \$7,200 Farm Vitality grant last year to seek succession and business planning services, through Ag Choice Farm Credit, to help their family navigate the transition of their 95-acre Boiling Springs farm to Gill from his grandparents. Gill is one of 133 grantees in 46 counties from the first round of Farm Vitality funding.

The 2020-21 Farm Vitality Grant Program will help fund professional services for those planning for the future of a farm. It aims to enhance the long-term health and vitality of Pennsylvania’s farms through sound business planning, efficient transitions of farm ownership, strategic farm expansion, diversification of agricultural production, and financial and technical expertise.

Farmers and prospective farmers are eligible for up to \$7,500, which can cover no more than 75% of the project cost, through this program. Applications to the program will be accepted starting April 19, 2021. The program will remain open until all funds are exhausted.

Pennsylvania has long faced a looming agricultural workforce shortage, at one point estimating a deficit of 75,000 workers as farmers retire and new, technology-based positions become available. Many Pennsylvania Farm Bill programs – including Ag & Youth, Farm to School, Beginner Farmer Tax Credits, and Farm Vitality – were designed to address this workforce shortage and secure a stronger future for the industry. In fall 2020, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistic Service released data noting that with 12,598 producers under age 35, Pennsylvania has the highest percentage of young producers in the nation.

“The Farm Vitality Grant Program is just one more tool in our toolbox making Pennsylvania’s leading industry accessible and attainable to new and beginning farmers,” added Redding. “Attracting a new generation to this industry and removing barriers to access is critical to ensuring a strong industry and food-secure Pennsylvania.”

For more information about the PA Farm Bill, and investments to support Pennsylvania agriculture, visit agriculture.pa.gov/pafarmbill.

Note: Photo and video from this event will be available at pacast.com.

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