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## **Secretary of Agriculture Highlights Public-Private Partnership that Ensures Safe Food for Pennsylvanians**

**Plymouth Meeting, PA** – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding was joined by Senator Amanda Cappelletti and Representative Mary Jo Daley at Maple Acres Farm in Montgomery County today to highlight the partnership between the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania Farmers Union, and farmers across the state to keep locally grown produce safe for consumers.

“Fresh produce is an important part of a healthy diet,” said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. “But without farmers taking care on the farm to implement science-based controls to ensure the safety of produce, consumers are at risk for contracting foodborne illness.

“Through voluntary on-farm readiness reviews with our Bureau of Food Safety, Pennsylvania’s farmers are doing their part, taking proactive initiative, to ensure the health and safety of their product for Pennsylvanians.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), about 48 million people in the United States become ill each year because of foodborne illness. Foodborne illness is a significant public health burden that is largely preventable. Pennsylvania farmers do their part to prevent these outbreaks by implementing food safety practices on the farm. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture coordinates with the Pennsylvania Farmers Union to educate farmers on their responsibilities and requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule, offering free and voluntary On-Farm Readiness Reviews to evaluate on-farm practices and work with operators to improve the safety of produce for consumers.

“At the Farmers Union, we work hard to demystify the On-Farm Readiness Review process for Pennsylvania farmers and educate the industry,” said President of the Pennsylvania Farmers Union Heidi Secord. “We want all farmers to succeed in providing safe food to consumers.”

On-Farm Readiness Reviews are offered to farmers as an opportunity to prepare for the FDA’s full implementation of the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. The reviews are an opportunity for farmers to problem solve with inspectors and identify opportunities to address weaknesses and strengthen food safety practices to meet requirements of the Produce Safety Rule.

The first week of August marks [National Farmers Market Week](#) and Pennsylvania is home to [more than 1,000](#) farmers markets and on-farm markets that contribute to their communities' health both physically and economically.

A [PA Preferred](#) member and one of Pennsylvania's nearly 6,000 preserved farms, [Maple Acres Farm](#) is one of nearly 500 farms who have taken advantage of the free on-farm review to improve the quality of products they offer. In addition to taking this extra step to ensure the safety of their produce, Maple Acres further serves their community by accepting Pennsylvania [Farmers Market Nutrition Program](#) vouchers so that low-income families and seniors can purchase their safe, fresh produce.

"I'm grateful for Pennsylvania's farmers and farmers markets that work hard every day to contribute to a safe, reliable, local food supply," added Redding. "They're simultaneously strengthening the economy, improving the health of our citizens and growing the entrepreneurial spirit of our commonwealth."

Note: Photo and video from the event will be available at [PACast.com](#).

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