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## **Wolf Administration Celebrates 600,000 Acres of Farmland Preserved, \$253 Million Invested in PA Economy, Food Security**

*New farms preserved in Berks, Butler, Centre, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Erie, Lancaster, Lehigh, Mercer, Montgomery, Northampton, Schuylkill, and York counties*

**Harrisburg, PA** – Governor Tom Wolf today announced that Pennsylvania’s nation-leading farmland preservation program has reached more than 600,000 acres of farmland preserved, leaving it forever safeguarded from future residential, commercial, or industrial development.

Since taking office in 2015, Governor Tom Wolf has made farmland preservation a priority investment dedicating more than \$253 million in the state’s program, an increase of 132 percent over the previous administration’s investment in the program. Combined with investments from county farmland preservation programs, Governor Wolf’s \$253 million investment has preserved nearly 100,000 acres since 2015.

“Pennsylvania’s farmland preservation program is of utmost importance – agricultural development and farmland preservation are inextricably tied to food security and nutrition and the population of Pennsylvania and the world are only increasing,” said Governor Wolf. “My investments in preserving Pennsylvania farmland for perpetuity are critical to increasing the quantity and diversity of food, driving economic transformation, and ensuring that land is always available for Pennsylvania’s \$132.5 billion **agriculture** industry.”

The 600,000-acre milestone was celebrated at the Martin Farm in Berks County today, where **Agriculture** Secretary Russell Redding was joined by Senator Judy Schwank, Senate **Agriculture** & Rural Affairs chair and industry leaders.

Today, Pennsylvania safeguarded an additional 2,515 acres on 29 farms in 14 counties, investing more than \$7.5 million in the future of **agriculture**. Pennsylvania’s nation-leading farmland preservation program preserves farms from development, and it makes targeted investments in the future of farming and food security for Pennsylvania.

"In just 34 years, Pennsylvania has preserved more than 600,000 acres of the most productive, non-irrigated farmland in the United States," said Redding. "As climate change and our growing population place increased demand on land use, this program becomes even more critical to the resilience of **agriculture**. The acreage preserved over the past 34 years, and what we look forward to preserving tomorrow, is an investment in the future needs of Pennsylvania, the nation and the world."

The 29 farms preserved today are in Berks, Butler, Centre, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Erie, Lancaster, Lehigh, Mercer, Montgomery, Northampton, Schuylkill and York counties.

These farms include a vineyard as well as multiple crop and livestock operations.

"Not every state is fortunate enough to have an **agriculture** industry like we have in Pennsylvania," said Senator Schwank. "It's a major economic driver and serves as the green infrastructure that sustains the Commonwealth environmentally. Preserving farmland ensures we can grow our own crops and rely less on imports and products. Buying locally grown food keeps money in local economies, creates jobs and provides economic stability to farmers. The continued growth of the Farmland Preservation program is very encouraging, and I believe will help Pennsylvania maintain its robust **agriculture** industry well into the future."

Since the program began in 1988, federal, state, county, and local governments have purchased permanent easements on 5,928 Pennsylvania farms totaling 601,647 acres.

#### **Highlights among today's purchases include:**

- Mark L. and Ann M. Miller farm, a 112.42-acre crop and sod operation in Upper Saucon Township, Lehigh County. This highly productive farm roughly one hour's drive from the New York City metropolitan area is in a region of the Lehigh Valley undergoing intense development pressures from residential subdivisions.
- The Glen Hetherington #5 farm is a 102.99-acre crop operation in Union Township, Schuylkill County. The farm is in an important farming area which now includes 830 acres of preserved farmland. The Hetheringtons are donating 47.58 acres of woodland to the program in addition to the productive farmland offered for this easement purchase. Many preserved farms include woodland tracts, which are crucial for Pennsylvania's thriving timber industry, in addition to the benefits they offer for wildlife habitat, water quality and storing carbon dioxide to offset climate change.

#### **Farms preserved and dollars invested, by county:**

**Berks County** – total investment: \$375,651 state, \$207,200 county

The Benjamin & Karah Davies farm, a 20-acre livestock operation

The Kenneth & Elizabeth Ehst farm, a 27-acre crop farm

The Curtis & Dorothy Huber farm, a 20-acre crop farm

The Dennis & Donna Kunkle farm, a 61-acre crop and livestock operation

The Jeremy & Cindy Martin farm, a 50-acre crop and livestock operation

The Warren & Bonnie Wessner farm, a 76-acre crop farm

**Butler County** – total investment: \$38,549 state, \$78,497 county  
Thurber Farm, an 88-acre crop and livestock operation

**Centre County** – total investment: \$148,564 state, \$50,000 county  
The Larry & Suzanne Harpster farm, an 82-acre crop farm

**Chester County** – total investment: \$954,838 state, \$443,970 county  
The Virginia Kelsall farm, a 49-acre crop and livestock operation  
The Douglas & Jessica Engle farm, a 172-acre crop farm

**Cumberland County** – total investment: \$509,985 state, \$100,000 county  
The Jacob & Lora Crider farm, a 92-acre crop and livestock operation  
The Floyd & Susan Martin farm, a 68-acre crop and livestock operation

**Dauphin County** – total investment: \$39,540 state only  
Andals Farm, a 26-acre crop farm

**Erie County** – total investment: \$361,535 state only  
The Kevin & Colleen Osborn farm, a 218-acre crop farm

**Lancaster County** – total investment: \$1,723,754 state only  
The Joshua & Britni Akers farm, a 154-acre crop and livestock operation  
The Bradley & Lois Beiler farm, a 92-acre crop and livestock operation  
The Thomas & Iva Lapp farm, a 102-acre crop and livestock operation  
The Jerry Paul & Laurie Beth O'Donnell farm, a 113-acre crop and livestock operation

**Lehigh County** – total investment: \$676,372 state, \$17,990 county  
The Mark & Annie Miller farm, a 112-acre crop farm

**Mercer County** – total investment: \$185,806 state, \$61,026 county  
The Harold & Marlyn Hill farm, a 239-acre crop and livestock operation

**Montgomery County** – total investment: \$1,932,433 state, \$870,309 county  
AFZ Development, a 36-acre crop farm  
The John & Donald Black and Donna Horn farm, a 44-acre livestock operation  
The Jason Lutchendorf #1 farm, a 76-acre crop farm  
The Scott & Sharon Melanson farm, a 26-acre crop farm

**Northampton County** – total investment: \$227,635 state, \$277,470 county  
Sutliff Farms #1, a 33-acre crop farm  
The Carl & Judith Nicholas farm, a 16-acre crop farm

**Schuylkill County** – total investment: \$215,534 state, \$215,534 county  
The Glenn Hetherington #5 farm, a 151-acre crop farm

**York County** – total investment: \$13,251 state, \$817,890  
The Randall & Sarah Patterson farm, a 228-acre crop and livestock operation  
Pennsylvania Wine Works, a 44-acre vineyard

In 2019, an [agriculture](#) research study funded by the department and conducted through the University of Pennsylvania, found the total economic impact of farmland preservation in Pennsylvania to be valued from \$1.8 to \$2.9 billion annually. The report also estimated environmental benefits of farmland preservation to be an additional \$1.9 billion annually.

To learn more about [Pennsylvania's Farmland Preservation Program](#), and investments in a secure future for Pennsylvania [agriculture](#), visit [agriculture.pa.gov](#).

Investments in preserving farmland for future production are further enhanced by investments Governor Wolf made in establishing Pennsylvania's first-ever [PA Farm Bill](#) in 2019. It created the [Agriculture](#) Business Development Center to support business planning, marketing, diversification, and transition planning for Pennsylvania farmers. The bill package also included a realty transfer tax exemption for the transfer of preserved farmland to a qualified beginning farmer.

To learn more about the Pennsylvania Farm Bill, visit [agriculture.pa.gov/pafarmbill](#).

Note: Photo and video from today's celebration event are available at [PACast.com](#)

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