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Agriculture Fuels Jobs & Economy; Learn While You Earn Apprenticeships Fuel Ag's Future

Lancaster, PA – This week, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding will travel Pennsylvania, visiting agriculture apprenticeship programs in Lancaster, State College, Williamsburg and Pittsburgh in honor of National Apprenticeship Week. Part of the Wolf Administration's \$30 million investment in relevant Ag and other workforce training, seven state-certified agriculture apprenticeship programs and two pre-apprenticeships, offer the next generation of workers hands-on, paid experience in high-demand food and agriculture jobs.

"Pennsylvania's agriculture workers are essential to ensuring food and agricultural goods reach consumers across the commonwealth and the world," said Secretary Redding. "National Apprenticeship Week is an opportunity to highlight skilled careers in agriculture and Pennsylvania opportunities to learn while you earn and get ahead in a growing field. These programs are training the next generation of food and agriculture workers for in-demand, competitive jobs. Apprenticeships open up career pathways to fulfilling and meaningful work."

Pennsylvania's \$132.5 billion agriculture industry fuels more than 593,000 jobs across the commonwealth, paying nearly \$33 billion in wages each year. Over the next decade, agriculture is expected to face a workforce deficit of 75,000 workers as farmers and laborers retire and new technology-based positions become available. [Agricultural apprenticeship](#) programs are preparing the next generation of agriculture and food workers by developing technical skills and the agility required to master emerging technologies through on the job, hands-on training.

"To help the next generation of leaders thrive, the Wolf Administration launched the PAsmart initiative in 2018, investing \$30 million in job training, in particular for STEM education. Part of that investment meant boosting the number of registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs across the commonwealth," said Secretary of Labor & Industry Jennifer Berrier. "Right now, L&I has more than 1,500 registered apprenticeships, as well as 74 registered *pre*-apprenticeships."

These programs are incumbent upon the dedication and guidance of established professionals who are willing to design a unique curriculum and, ultimately, take on apprentices. We see that symbiotic relationship happening in real time here in Lititz at Binkley & Hurst, which has been part of the development and creation of Northeast Equipment Dealers Association's apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs since the beginning."

In 2018, Governor Tom Wolf launched the [PAsmart](#) initiative, investing \$30 million in job training and science and technology education. As part of the PAsmart initiative, Registered Apprenticeship, Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Ambassador Network Grants support schools, students, workers and businesses across the commonwealth to help Pennsylvanians

develop skills for in-demand jobs, and in turn, support businesses by creating a skilled workforce to hire.

In recognition of workforce needs, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture launched a workforce development initiative in 2015 to promote and expand the state's agriculture education programs and career and technical education opportunities. Through this initiative, the department identified the [25 most in-demand occupations](#) in agriculture, including production agriculture; animal health and veterinary services; landscaping; food manufacturing, forestry, lumber and wood products; and conservation and natural resources.

"For agriculture education and workforce, apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities are valuable to the sustainability of our industry," said Stephon Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of the Commission for Agriculture Education Excellence. "Providing opportunities to obtain valuable skills relevant to career interests creates opportunities to identify talent early on and shape student experiences to fit job requirements, business and organizational culture."

Through the [Commission for Agriculture Education Excellence](#), the Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture and Education have produced a comprehensive [agricultural education report](#) for schools across the commonwealth. In coordination with the Departments of Agriculture and Education, the 15-member commission is charged developing a statewide plan for agricultural education. In addition to the commission, the Wolf Administration invests in future generations of agriculturalists through [Pennsylvania Farm Bill](#) programs, including the Ag & Youth Grant Program, Farm to School Program and Farm Vitality Grant Program.

National Apprenticeship Week is November 15-21, 2021. Tour dates and locations for Pennsylvania's Agriculture Apprenticeship Tour include:

- Monday, November 15: [Virtual Panel Discussion](#) and visit to Binkley & Hurst in Lititz, PA
- Tuesday, November 16: Penn State's Meat Laboratory in State College, PA
- Wednesday, November 17: Clover Creek Cheese Cellar in Williamsburg, PA
- Thursday, November 18: Eichenlaub Inc., in Millvale, PA and Braddock Farms in Braddock, PA

To learn more about agriculture apprenticeship programs and workforce development initiatives, visit agriculture.pa.gov.

Note: Photos and video of tours will be available at PACast.com.

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