



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Governor Shapiro and Agriculture Secretary Redding Visit The Rodale Institute in Kutztown, Celebrate Organic Field Day and Meet Veteran Farmers

Governor Shapiro and Secretary Redding join the annual Organic Field Day as the Shapiro Administration pushes for more investments in organic agriculture



Kutztown, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** and **Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding** visited the Rodale Institute in Kutztown to celebrate the Institute's Annual Organic Field Day and meet with U.S. military veterans currently enrolled in the Institute's Veteran Farm Training program.

The Annual Organic Field Day brings hundreds of farmers, gardeners, university faculty and students, and legislators together to celebrate Pennsylvania's organic agriculture sector. Governor Shapiro has pushed for more investments in organic agriculture through the Pennsylvania Farm Bill and the creation of the new Organic Center of Excellence through the 2023-24 budget.

"The Rodale family's legacy is just one example of the family farms across Pennsylvania that have led the way on agricultural innovation here in our Commonwealth," **said Governor Josh Shapiro**. "We need to come together to support this innovation with smart investments – and that's what our Commonwealth has done with the Rodale Institute, investing over \$5.3 million in grants that fund research and job training initiatives. My Administration will continue to make these investments, fully funding the Pennsylvania Farm Bill and creating an Organic Center of Excellence to support the future of Pennsylvania agriculture."

Pennsylvania's agriculture sector is a major economic driver in the Commonwealth, contributing 132 billion dollars a year to Pennsylvania's economy, and the Shapiro Administration is committed to continuing Pennsylvania's long tradition of agricultural leadership. Last week, Governor Shapiro [joined](#) Secretary Redding at York Fresh Food farms during Urban Agriculture Week to announce a commitment of \$200,000 from the GIANT Company to support 2023-24 PA Farm Bill Agriculture Infrastructure Grants.

"Today's conversation has focused on the growth of organic agriculture, but also the growth of the workforce needed to support this sector. Through the Organic Center of Excellence, we can connect workforce development efforts with our business development efforts and continue to support anyone who wants to be in farming," **said Secretary Russell Redding**. "Governor Shapiro's leadership is a bolt of energy into our work – and he sees even greater opportunity for Pennsylvania's farmers and agriculture industry in organic through the creation of an Organic Center of Excellence.

Participants of the Field Day learned from Rodale Institute experts about the latest organic agriculture farming trials, research, and demonstration projects and had the opportunity to visit nearly 20 demonstration stations. The Commonwealth, through the Department of Agriculture and Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, has invested \$5.3 million into the Rodale Institute to support its research and job training initiatives.

"Rodale Institute is thrilled and honored that Governor Josh Shapiro visited Rodale Institute's Organic Field Day," **said Rodale Institute CEO Jeff Tkach**. "The agricultural sector undergirds Pennsylvania's economy and support from Harrisburg enables this critical sector to grow and become a center for innovation. I'd like to thank Governor Shapiro for his commitment to the farmers of our Commonwealth and for investing in an

Organic Center of Excellence, which will ensure a strong future for regenerative organic farming and the health of our soil for future generations.”

Governor Shapiro and Secretary Redding also met with former United States servicemembers currently enrolled in the Institute's [Veteran Farmer Training program](#), which offers military veterans a chance to learn agricultural skills and is led by a former U.S. Army staff officer.

"As I transitioned out of the military, I found it hard to adjust back to civilian life. I tried different jobs, but nothing felt as meaningful. That's when it became clear that if I was going to change my life, I would have to change the things around me," said **Ramon Madrid, a second-year fellow in Rodale's Veteran Farmer Training Program and a two-time Iraq war veteran.** "That's when I discovered the Rodale Institutes Veteran Farmer Training Program. Rodale Institute gives me an opportunity to serve my country in a regenerative way – and we have a mission to protect our food supply for our nation and to pass the skill of organic farming to our next generation."

For more information on the Rodale Institute's mission and programs, visit rodaleinstitute.org/about/. For more information on the Pennsylvania Farm Bill and initiatives to grow and sustain Pennsylvania agriculture, visit agriculture.pa.gov/pafarmbill.