



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 7, 2024**

**Contact:** Shannon Powers, [shpowers@pa.gov](mailto:shpowers@pa.gov), 717.603.2056

**Shapiro Administration Announces \$3 Million Investment to Fight  
Hunger, Reduce Food Waste, and Support Pennsylvania Apple  
Growers**



***Increased funding for innovative food security program provides solution.***

**Peach Glen, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and Feeding Pennsylvania CEO Julie Bancroft** visited **Knouse Foods** in Adams County today to see how a \$1 million state investment is turning surplus Pennsylvania apples into apple sauce and apple juice to feed hungry families across the state. The **Shapiro Administration's** investment of \$1 million of [Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System](#) (PASS) funds, and \$2 million of federal funds offered apple growers a tangible solution to meet the challenge of keeping a bumper crop of apples from going to waste.

"Pennsylvania apple growers had a great year in 2023," **Sec. Redding** said. "When they came to the department looking for a solution last fall, we were able to call on existing partnerships across the apple industry and Feeding Pennsylvania's network, and devote the \$1 million increase the PASS program received in the 2023-24 budget to getting nutritious Pennsylvania apple products onto the tables of hungry Pennsylvania families."

PASS is an innovative program that reimburses farmers and agribusinesses for the costs of harvesting, processing, packaging, and transporting surplus food. Donated food is distributed through a partnership with Feeding Pennsylvania's network of food banks and pantries, reducing food waste and tackling hunger, while supporting Pennsylvania agriculture. PASS distributed more than four million pounds of food during the 2022-23 fiscal year and is on track to distribute more than five million pounds in 2023-24.

According to Feeding America, [more than 1.2 million Pennsylvanians – including more than 325,000 children – are dealing with hunger](#). That means one in eight Pennsylvania kids face hunger.

"Apples are already the number one fresh fruit in the PASS program," **Feeding Pennsylvania CEO Julie Bancroft** said. "This collaborative processing project exemplifies the responsiveness of PASS to Pennsylvania's agricultural community and charitable food network."

Pennsylvania is the nation's 4<sup>th</sup> largest apple producer and home to processing giants like grower-owned [Knouse Foods](#), one of the nation's largest food processors.

"We've enjoyed a good relationship over many years with the PA Department of Ag and Secretary Redding," **Knouse Board President Will Lower Jr.** said. "When the opportunity was presented to use PA growers' apples to make Mussleman's apple sauce, apple juice, and apple slices to feed Pennsylvanians through the Feeding Pennsylvania network, we said 'YES!' and we'd like to thank the folks from the department and affiliated organizations for working cooperatively with our Knouse team to accomplish this worthwhile program."

The Administration also dedicated \$2 million of the \$6.8 million in federal funds the Agriculture Department received in 2023-24 through **USDA's Local Food for Local**

**Schools Cooperative Agreement Program** to meeting this challenge. This investment will pay for sliced apples and apple sauce bound for schools in all 67 Pennsylvania counties. Nutritious Pennsylvania-grown apples will be on the menu for students who now receive universal free breakfast for the first time ever under the Shapiro Administration.

**Governor Josh Shapiro's [2024-25 budget](#)** dedicates \$3 million to help reduce food insecurity, boost the Senior Food Box Program, and reinforce PASS.

The budget feeds growth in Pennsylvania agriculture, supporting apple growers and others across the state's \$132.5 billion industry through smart investments in economic development, job creation, and innovation.

Learn more about [PASS](#) and many other investments in growing a stronger Pennsylvania economy through agriculture in Governor Shapiro's [full budget in brief](#).

The Governor's full Economic Development Strategy is available at [PAGetsItDone.com](#).

# # #