



Pennsylvania
Department of Agriculture



Pennsylvania
Department of Labor & Industry

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 20, 2024

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Shapiro Administration Visits Berks County Dairy to See How Apprenticeships Are Helping Dairy Farmers Get Stuff Done

Registered apprenticeships kickstart careers in earn-while-you-learn positions; bring valuable, skilled workers to Pennsylvania's powerhouse dairy industry.

Womelsdorf, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and Labor & Industry Secretary Nancy A. Walker joined the state-supported **Center for Dairy Excellence** today at Berks County's **Zahncroft Dairy** in Womelsdorf to showcase Dairy Herd Manager Apprentices and how important their work is to the future of Pennsylvania's dairy industry.

"Apprenticeships are critical opportunities to get hands-on, real-world experience with the enticement of earning while you learn," **Secretary Redding** said. "They are just one part of the **Shapiro Administration's** comprehensive strategy to keep our agriculture industry a national leader by investing in opportunities for everyone to succeed in the field that is key to Pennsylvania's future."

The [Center for Dairy Excellence](#) sponsors Dairy Herd Manager Apprentices and Farm Labor Pre-apprentices, which are registered with the Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) within the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I). The apprenticeship offers hands-on experience in a real-world setting, without interrupting the apprentices' income stream. The goal is to develop the skilled managers and labor the nearly 5,000 dairy farms across the state need to succeed. With additional funding from the [Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center](#), the program is expanding its reach to provide more opportunities for workers over age 18.

Zahncroft Dairy, a family-owned farm in Berks County, has worked closely with the center on transition planning. The farm, which has been in the Sattazahn family since the 1930s, transitioned from Dennis and Betsy Sattazahn to their sons, Doug and Dave, who now oversee daily operations and the apprentices. With 270 Holsteins and Brown

Swiss cows, Zahncroft Dairy averages 92 pounds of milk per cow per day, producing a significant volume of dairy products to support the local economy. Kristina Quinn is their first Dairy Herd Manager apprentice.

“We were excited to engage with the Dairy Herd Apprenticeship program to help Kristina hone her skills,” **Zahncroft Dairy Co-owner Katie Sattazahn** said. “The combination of hands-on learning combined with the outside learning opportunities strengthens our operation and gives Kristina more perspective about PA's dairy industry.”

Pennsylvania has [eight registered agriculture apprenticeship](#) programs, including the Dairy Herds Manager Apprenticeship. These programs are part of a broader strategy to enhance agricultural education, increase opportunities to enter the ag workforce, and ensure Pennsylvania remains a leader in agriculture.

“Apprenticeship programs open doors for all Pennsylvanians by offering meaningful career pathways without the burden of debt,” said **Secretary Walker**. “Through collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, this program is a direct response to the workforce needs of the dairy industry. It is a commitment to workers and their families, our farmers, and a win for Pennsylvania’s evolving economy.”

Since taking office, **Governor Josh Shapiro** has prioritized creating opportunities for hardworking Pennsylvanians to secure good-paying jobs. The Shapiro Administration supports skills-based hiring and values every career path, whether it requires a college degree or not. In July, **Governor Shapiro** signed the bipartisan [2024-25 budget](#), which increased funding for vocational-technical and Career and Technical Education programs by \$30 million over last year.

Across Governor Shapiro’s first two budgets, the Administration has committed an additional \$61 million to workforce development initiatives and has approved more than 50 new apprenticeships and enrolled nearly 10,000 new apprentices statewide. Pennsylvania’s more than 1,500 programs now have nearly 16,000 current apprentices.

Pennsylvania has the second largest number of dairy farms in the U.S. and is ranked eighth nationally in milk production. The Pennsylvania dairy industry provides more than 47,000 jobs and supports our state economy to the tune of \$11.8 billion annually. Pennsylvania continues to be a national leader in production of ice cream, butter, and Swiss cheese.

“The Center for Dairy Excellence continues to hear from Pennsylvania dairy producers about their need for a more skilled workforce and how challenging it can be to fill this important leadership role within their team,” said **Workforce Development Manager Michelle Shearer**. “The Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship program is an exciting opportunity for dairy producers and young dairy professionals alike. Now that we have several students in the process of completing the program, we are seeing how beneficial these apprenticeships are to developing a skilled workforce at the farm level.”

Pennsylvania's bipartisan 2024-'25 budget includes robust investments in the state's dairy industry, including \$5.6 million to reform Dairy Margin Coverage protections that protect dairy farmers from harmful price fluctuations, \$1.45 million for the Center for Dairy Excellence, continued investment in buy-local promotions like PA Preferred® and [Scooped: An Ice Cream Trail](#) to introduce visitors to dairy families and their delicious products at creameries across the state.

Among investments to keep Pennsylvania agriculture a national leader, the budget also invests \$10 million in a new Agriculture Innovation and Conservation program, \$5 million to expand the services of the PA Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System in Western Pennsylvania.

These and other investments complement **Governor Josh Shapiro's** Economic Development Strategy that recognizes agriculture as critical to our future economic success.

Find the full Economic Development Strategy at PAGetsItDone.com.

Photos and broadcast quality video of the event can be found at pacast.com.

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