



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Governor Shapiro, Agricultural Leaders Visit Penn England Farms in Blair County to Highlight How His “Lightning Plan” Will Lower Energy Costs and Increase Energy Production for Pennsylvania Farmers and Rural Communities

Governor Shapiro and Agriculture Secretary Redding visited family-owned Penn England Farms, home to a manure digester that produces clean energy to power the farm, cut costs, and reduces nearly 40,000 metric tons of pollution each year.

The Governor's commonsense “Lightning Plan” will help lower energy costs for agriculture producers and rural communities by allowing multiple farmers to share a digester, cut costs, and sell excess energy back to the grid.

The Lightning Plan is backed by labor leaders, industry experts, environmental advocates, and consumer groups — independent studies confirm that the plan will cut energy costs, create jobs, and drive billions in new energy investment.



Williamsburg, PA – Today, Governor Josh Shapiro and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) Secretary Russell Redding visited Penn England Farms in Blair County to highlight how the Governor’s “[Lightning Plan](#)” — a comprehensive, all-of-the-above energy plan to secure Pennsylvania’s energy future — would lower energy costs for farmers and rural communities all across the Commonwealth.

Penn England Farms, a family-owned dairy operation, uses an on-site manure digester to convert waste into clean energy — reducing nearly **40,000 metric tons of pollution each year** while powering the farm and contributing excess energy to the grid. Since building their digester in 2006, Penn England has saved \$1.6 million in energy costs – nearly \$90,000 on average each year. Under **Governor Shapiro’s** plan, more farms could access this technology through his **community energy** proposal, allowing multiple farmers to share a digester, cut costs, and sell excess energy back to the grid.

"Pennsylvania has always been a leader in energy and agriculture — two industries that power our economy. If we want to stay competitive, we need to invest in both," said **Governor Shapiro**. "My Lightning Plan will cut red tape, speed up next-generation energy projects, and lower costs for consumers. By expanding community energy efforts, we'll help farmers share resources, reduce costs, and generate new revenue — creating a stronger, more sustainable rural economy. I look forward to working with both Democrats and Republicans in the General Assembly to get this done."

By expanding community energy, the Lightning Plan will help farmers share digesters and other energy resources, reducing upfront costs and lowering utility bills. It also invests in next-generation energy projects — including anaerobic digesters, hydropower, and solar — to create clean, reliable, and affordable energy. These investments will not only support farmers but also create energy jobs and attract investment in rural communities, strengthening Pennsylvania's position as a leader in the clean energy economy.

Methane digesters play a key role in this effort, converting manure into renewable natural gas and electricity while significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. They also produce nutrient-rich organic fertilizer, helping farms improve sustainability, waste management, and operational efficiency. At farms like Penn England, digesters are an essential tool — but for many farmers, the upfront cost can be a barrier. **Governor Shapiro's** community energy proposal will help solve this problem by allowing farmers to collaborate on shared digesters, making the technology more accessible, cost-effective, and economically beneficial.

"Our family has spent generations producing high-quality milk while being responsible stewards of the land — that's why we installed a digester," said **Yvette Longenecker, owner of Penn England Farms**. "A digester allows us to turn something we already have — manure — into something valuable: renewable energy. It helps power our farm, reduces odors, improves water quality, and provides an additional revenue stream to keep our operation sustainable."

"Governor Shapiro's energy plan is a bold step toward a cleaner, more sustainable future for Pennsylvania, and agriculture plays a key role," said **Secretary Redding**. "By investing in on-farm digesters, farmers can turn waste into renewable energy, reduce emissions, and create new revenue streams. Aligning energy and agricultural policy will keep Pennsylvania at the forefront of food production and renewable energy for generations to come."

"As a farmer and president of the Blair County Farm Bureau, I know the challenges our industry faces — from rising costs to the need for more efficient practices. That's why today's announcement is so important. The community energy proposal gives farmers the opportunity to invest in methane digesters, reduce energy costs, and improve farm operations to stay competitive," said **Mark Heeter, President of the Blair County Farm Bureau**. "The Agricultural Innovation Program has already been a valuable resource, and increasing investment in this initiative is critical to ensuring farmers can access the technology needed to keep their businesses strong. On behalf of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and farmers across the state, I thank the administration for recognizing the importance of agriculture and supporting innovation. We look forward to working together to strengthen our industry."

"It's an honor to share the podium with Governor Shapiro and Secretary Redding. I had the privilege of serving as President of the Pennsylvania Economic Development Association when the Governor took office, and we were eager to engage with the new administration's vision. Governor Shapiro quickly recognized that Pennsylvania's last formal economic development plan was from 2003 — outdated for today's modern economy. Since then, his administration has worked hard to create bold initiatives like the Site Development Fund, housing programs, Main Street revitalization, and the Lightning Plan, which we're here to highlight today," said **Steven McKnight, President and CEO of the Altoona Blair County Development Corporation (ABCD)**.

"Programs like these are fueling growth across the Commonwealth, allowing rural and agricultural communities — like Williamsburg — to embrace innovative energy solutions, reduce costs, and stay competitive. Governor Shapiro, we appreciate your vision, planning, and ongoing partnership in strengthening Pennsylvania's economy."

Investing in Agricultural Innovation

In addition to supporting clean energy, **Governor Shapiro's [2025-26 proposed budget](#)** includes historic investments to drive agricultural innovation and sustainability.

Pennsylvania is home to 50,000 farms, contributing \$132 billion to the economy and supporting nearly 600,000 jobs. To ensure Pennsylvania remains a national leader in agriculture, the Governor's proposals include:

- **An additional \$13 million for the Agricultural Innovation Grant Program** to support cutting-edge projects that modernize and strengthen Pennsylvania's farms. In its first application period, the program received 159 applications requesting nearly \$70 million in funding. The **Shapiro Administration** launched [the first Ag Innovation Program in the nation](#) in 2024 and seeded it with \$10 million. That program has funded multiple anaerobic digesters to produce renewable energy from manure, including [a community digester in Blair County run by UGI Energy Services](#) and one at [Brubaker Farms in Mount Joy, Lancaster](#).
- **Investing \$2 million to sustain Pennsylvania's new animal testing laboratory** in the western part of the state, providing critical services to help farmers maintain healthy livestock.
- **An additional \$4 million to expand the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System**, connecting Pennsylvanians at risk of hunger with healthy, locally produced food.
- **A \$4 million increase for the State Food Purchase Program**, which provides emergency food assistance to low-income Pennsylvanians.

By producing more energy all around the Commonwealth, **Governor Shapiro's** Lightning Plan will boost key sectors Pennsylvania's economy, including manufacturing, robotics and technology, agriculture, and life sciences. [Independent studies](#) confirm that the Governor's plan will save Pennsylvanians money on their electricity bills, create

energy jobs, and lead to billions in new investment in power plants and energy infrastructure.

Broad Support for Governor Shapiro's Lightning Plan

Earlier this month, at [Voith Hydro in York](#) — one of the world's largest dedicated hydropower manufacturing facilities — **Governor Shapiro** launched the legislative push for his commonsense energy plan. Co-sponsorship memos have begun circulating in the General Assembly, marking the first step in advancing this legislation. The Governor's energy plan has earned the backing of a [broad coalition, including labor organizations, industry leaders, environmental advocates, and consumer groups.](#)

"Community Energy will make clean, renewable energy more affordable and accessible for farmers, helping them lower utility costs and boost profitability," said **Senator Judy Schwank**. "I'm proud to partner with Governor Shapiro to introduce Community Energy legislation, which is just one exciting piece of the Lightning Plan. This is a pivotal opportunity to come together and embrace comprehensive energy policies that will power Pennsylvania's bright future."

"The demand for energy in Pennsylvania continues to grow and as demand rises so does the strain on the utility grid," said **Representative Peter Schweyer**. "Community energy will help reduce the strain on the electricity grid and help lower utility costs by allowing people that cannot currently utilize solar panels or other renewable energy sources to get access. Folks can save money and reap the grid benefits. I am pleased to work with Gov. Shapiro on community energy and look forward to getting this bill across the finish line and to his desk."

Governor Shapiro's energy plan will provide funding for new projects through an updated EDGE manufacturing tax credit, streamline energy project approvals by creating a state energy siting board to cut red tape, and cut energy costs through the community energy proposal and by increasing rebates for energy-efficient appliances. The Lightning Plan will supercharge energy development in the Commonwealth, positioning Pennsylvania to lead the way in clean, reliable, and affordable energy for years to come.

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