



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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At Schuylkill County Potato Farm, Governor Shapiro Highlights First-in-the-Nation Agricultural Innovation Grant Program, Delivering Results to Support Pennsylvania Farmers

In the first year of Governor Shapiro's Agricultural Innovation Grant Program, the Commonwealth is investing in 88 cutting-edge solutions and technologies in 45 counties to support Pennsylvania agriculture.

The Governor highlighted a \$200,000 grant to help Stermann Masser install cutting-edge planting technology during his visit — which will help double the number of acres used for potato planting and harvesting.

In order to further support Pennsylvania farmers, Governor Shapiro is proposing additional funding to expand the program in his [2025-26 proposed budget](#).



Sacramento, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** visited **Sterman Masser Potato Farm in Schuylkill County** to highlight how strategic Commonwealth investments — like the **Shapiro Administration’s first-in-the-nation [Agricultural Innovation Grant Program](#)** — are strengthening Pennsylvania’s agriculture industry, creating jobs, and driving economic growth. These investments provide grants, loans, and technical support to farmers and agricultural businesses adopting cutting-edge technologies, ensuring Pennsylvania remains at the forefront of the ag industry. The Governor’s visit showcased how Pennsylvania is leading the nation in supporting farmers and delivering results for one of the Commonwealth’s largest and most innovative potato growers.

Sterman Masser, an eighth-generation family business with over 400 employees, received a **\$200,000 grant** to purchase and install a state-of-the-art potato planter. This new equipment will boost planting efficiency, reduce fuel usage, and allow Sterman

Masser to double the number of acres they plant and harvest — from 1,000 acres before this grant to 2,000 acres with their new equipment. As a result, for the first time in 50 years, Pennsylvania will see an increase in the number of acres used for potato planting and harvesting.

“Our farmers are the backbone of our economy here in Pennsylvania — they put food on our tables, in our stores, and in our restaurants every day. If we want to compete and succeed as a Commonwealth, then we have to invest in our ag economy,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “When I was campaigning to be Governor, I heard over and over again from folks in the ag industry that they needed access to capital to invest back in their operations. That’s why we came together last year — Democrats and Republicans alike — to address that challenge and create a brand-new, first-in-the-nation Ag Innovation fund that’s delivering real results like this new planter here at Sterman Masser.”

Operating one of the largest potato processing facilities in the Northeast, Sterman Masser combines state-of-the-art technology with sustainable farming and supply chain practices. The company is widely recognized for its environmental stewardship and commitment to innovation — exactly what the **Shapiro Administration** designed the grant program to support.

Since taking office, **Governor Shapiro** has placed significant emphasis on supporting and growing Pennsylvania’s agriculture industry — bringing Democrats and Republicans together to invest in new technologies, strengthen supply chains, and drive economic growth for farmers and producers. The Governor remains committed to ensuring Pennsylvania’s farmers have the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed. The Commonwealth is home to 50,000 farms, contributing \$132 billion to the economy and supporting nearly 600,000 jobs.

“We are fortunate to live and operate in the Keystone State, that under Governor Shapiro’s leadership continues to invest in agriculture,” said **Dave Masser, CEO of the Masser Family of Companies**. “The Ag Innovation Grant we received is meaningful to assist us in securing a state-of-art automated 8-row planter that will be more efficient, save fuel, and utilize the latest technology to ensure we give our seed potatoes the best start. In Pennsylvania, we have a narrow window to plant over 1,000 acres of potatoes, and this planter will greatly assist us in planting in optimal conditions. Investing in innovation keeps Pennsylvania growing for the next generation.”

As one of the largest growers, packers, shippers, and processors of potato products in the region, Sterman Masser offers a diverse selection of fresh potato offerings — from bulk quantities to ready-to-eat convenience products — including red, white, yellow, and russet varieties.

Pennsylvania plays a critical role in the nation’s potato supply chain, consistently ranking among the top producers of processing potatoes. The Commonwealth is also known as the Snack Food Capital of the World, home to iconic brands and food processing plants that transform Pennsylvania-grown potatoes into chips, fries, and

other snack foods enjoyed across the U.S. and beyond. Supporting companies like Stermann Masser ensures continued growth and resilience in this vital sector.

Stermann Masser's project is one of **88 grant recipients** through **Governor Shapiro's \$10 million Agricultural Innovation Grant Program**. The program, [announced](#) in February, helps farms and food businesses adopt new technologies, sustainable practices, and modernized infrastructure. The program received **159 applications** totaling over **\$68 million** in requests — underscoring strong demand for forward-looking agricultural investment.

"Investments in innovation like the one we're seeing at Masser's are essential to keeping Pennsylvania agriculture strong, competitive, and future-ready," said **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding**. "Thanks to the leadership of Governor Shapiro and the strong support of the General Assembly, we're making it possible for farmers to modernize their operations, improve sustainability, and create jobs in rural communities. We're working hand-in-hand with producers to ensure their long-term success and preserve the vitality of Pennsylvania's agriculture industry for generations to come."

"When I was in high school, one farmer fed about 25 people. Today, that number has escalated to over 150," said **Kent Heffner, President of the Schuylkill/Carbon County Pennsylvania Farm Bureau**. "The need to increase our efficiency will only grow. I believe the future of agriculture will focus on smaller farms doing on-farm processing and selling directly to consumers. That means more funding will be needed to get these projects up and running — everything from fruit and vegetable processing to meat and milk. The need for this program is going to be great. We've entered a new era — the era of sustainability — where we must get food from farm to table more efficiently to feed more people than ever before. Thanks to the Ag Innovation Grant Program, Pennsylvania is on the forefront of this era. Thank you, Governor Shapiro."

The funded projects span **45 counties, 31 commodities, and 40 types of innovation** — including precision irrigation, robotics, biodegradable packaging, and carbon-storing crops. **Governor Shapiro** is proposing **an additional \$15 million** in his [2025–26 proposed budget](#) to meet continued demand and expand access to innovation capital for Pennsylvania farmers and producers.

Governor Shapiro's Record of Delivering for Agriculture

Since taking office, **Governor Shapiro** has prioritized agriculture as a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's economy. His administration has:

- Created Pennsylvania's first statewide [Economic Development Strategy](#) in nearly two decades — naming agriculture as a key sector alongside life sciences, manufacturing, robotics, technology, and energy as vital drivers of Pennsylvania's long-term economic success.
- **Fully funded the PA Farm Bill** at \$13.8 million annually — supporting workforce development, processing expansion, and market access.

- Invested **\$1 million to launch the Organic Center of Excellence**, empowering organic farmers and establishing the **PA Preferred Organic™** brand.
- Preserved **333 farms and 27,500 acres** through the nation's leading **Farmland Preservation** program.
- Invested over **\$60 million to mitigate Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza**, supporting poultry farmers and disease monitoring.
- Opened a **state-of-the-art animal health lab** in Western Pennsylvania to enhance disease testing and biosecurity.
- Expanded the **Fresh Food Financing Initiative** with \$2 million to increase access to local food and support small businesses.

To ensure Pennsylvania remains a national leader in agriculture, **Governor Shapiro's [2025–26 budget proposal](#)** builds on this record, including:

- **\$15 million** to expand the Agricultural Innovation Grant Program and support the development of biodigesters.
- **\$4 million** more for the **State Food Purchase Program**, which helps stock food banks and pantries.
- **\$4 million** more for the **Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System**, connecting surplus farm products to those in need.
- **\$2 million** to fully operate the new state animal diagnostic lab.

Governor Shapiro's leadership is ensuring Pennsylvania remains a national leader in agriculture — supporting our farmers, growing rural economies, and strengthening the food supply chain for generations to come. These investments are critical to the future of Pennsylvania agriculture, and the Governor is helping to build a more resilient agricultural economy, safeguard the food supply, and secure a prosperous future for Pennsylvania's farming communities.

Learn more about the commonsense investments to in the Governor's 2025-26 budget proposal at shapirobudget.pa.gov and how the **Shapiro Administration** is [supporting Pennsylvania's farmers](#).

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