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Shapiro Administration 2025 Urban Agriculture Tour Highlights Investments in Expanding Ag Apprenticeship Training and Access to Fresh Food in Philadelphia Neighborhoods

Philadelphia, PA – Today, **Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding** and **Labor & Industry Secretary Nancy A. Walker** continued the **Shapiro Administration's** 2025 Urban Agriculture Tour in Philadelphia. The tour stopped at **Sankofa Farm at Bartram's Garden**, where investments under **Governor Josh Shapiro's** leadership are feeding the future of Philadelphia neighborhoods through career training for young adults.

"Young people across Pennsylvania are receiving priceless life skills, confidence, and in some cases, starting their careers debt-free, with stellar credentials and top-notch experience through the seeds planted when we invest together in urban agriculture," **Secretary Redding** said. "Those seeds — planted by **Shapiro Administration** investments and cultivated by strong community partnerships with visionary leaders like those at Sankofa Farm — will yield a harvest of transformed communities for years to come."

Sec. Redding and other Shapiro Administration leaders are crossing the state, meeting dynamic Pennsylvanians who are working to increase fresh food access in areas where it is scarce; break down racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic barriers; and overcome historical inequities to grow opportunities for their communities to thrive.

In April 2025, the **Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry** awarded John Bartram Association \$399,533 to create and pilot an 18-month registered apprenticeship at Sankofa Farm to equip young adults for agriculture careers. The grant was part of a [**\\$6.6 million investment to expand career**](#) opportunities in agriculture, health care, and information technology.

"Agriculture plays an integral role in Pennsylvania's economy, and through this strategic investment in Sankofa Community Farm, the **Shapiro Administration** is taking meaningful action to build a more inclusive and innovative agricultural workforce," said **Secretary Walker**. "This new apprenticeship builds on the farm's nationally recognized, accredited youth workforce model rooted in African Diaspora cultural traditions and food justice. I look forward to seeing all Sankofa will continue to accomplish in the ever-growing world of urban agriculture."

On Monday, Sec. Redding [kicked off the tour](#) at Bidwell Training Center in Pittsburgh, where a high-tech greenhouse expansion funded through a historic [Agricultural Innovation Grant](#) is underway, and urban students are training for in-demand culinary and horticulture careers, earning valuable experience, credentials, and a free education with support through the state budget.

During a Tuesday stop in Johnstown, Sec. Redding saw the skilled handiwork of a devoted crew of youth who have disabilities and are training at the **Department of Labor & Industry's [Commonwealth Technical Institute at the Hiram G. Andrews Center](#)**. The students are learning hands-on property maintenance and equipment operation through a partnership with **Sandyvale Memorial Gardens**.

Earlier today, the tour visited the **Work2Ride Program at Chamounix Stables** in West Fairmount Park, where Philadelphia youth build confidence, discipline, and leadership through animal care, barn management, and equestrian sports. [A \\$500,000 Shapiro Administration investment](#) through the **Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development** is helping to renovate the equestrian center and stable.

In his first two budgets, Governor Shapiro has increased funding for vo-tech, career and technical education (CTE), and apprenticeships by nearly \$65 million — a 50 percent increase since the day he took office. [Governor Shapiro's 2025-26 budget proposal](#) looks to build upon this momentum, calling for a dedicated \$12.5 million Workforce and Economic Development Network appropriation, leveraging \$10 million in existing funds and \$2.5 million in new state funds to train additional workers.

This February, **Governor Shapiro** announced the nation's first Agricultural Innovation grants, a **\$10 million investment** in [88 ag businesses in 46 Pennsylvania counties](#) to fund state-of-the-art agricultural technologies that agriculture businesses and their workers need to compete and succeed.

In March 2025, the Shapiro Administration announced a [\\$500,000 investment in Pennsylvania Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Grants in 10 counties](#) to help address longstanding challenges in city neighborhoods. Pennsylvania has invested more than \$3.2 million in urban agriculture through the program, one of many [Pennsylvania Farm Bill](#) grants and initiatives, since 2019. In total, 160 Urban Ag projects in 19 counties are expanding fresh food access in locations often served by a single convenience store.

Funded projects include greenhouses, off-grid energy and water systems, cold storage, and tools to expand the reach of organizations that feed economic, community, and personal growth through agriculture.

Three of Pennsylvania's 13 registered agriculture apprenticeship programs, and two of four registered pre-apprenticeship programs in agriculture were approved under the Shapiro Administration.

Governor Shapiro proposed continuing these earn-while-you-learn investments and many others, as well as increasing support to keep Pennsylvania a national leader in agriculture in his 2025-26 budget. The Governor's budget proposes investing:

- An **additional \$13 million** for the historic **Ag Innovation Grant Program** to help build the future of American agriculture right here in Pennsylvania. In its first year, the program was oversubscribed by nearly \$60 million, receiving 159 applications for nearly \$70 million worth of innovation projects.
- A **\$4 million increase** to connect Pennsylvanians at risk of hunger with healthy, local food through the **Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS)** and a \$4 million increase to the **State Food Purchase Program (SFPP)** to provide emergency food assistance for low-income Pennsylvanians and support local farmers.
- Continued funding of **\$13.5 million** to keep Pennsylvania farms – both urban and rural – thriving through the [Pennsylvania Farm Bill](#), to protect and promote Pennsylvania's \$132.5 billion agriculture industry, support strategic business planning, and grow the infrastructure and workforce agriculture businesses need to stay competitive.

Learn how **Governor Shapiro's** [Economic Development Strategy](#) recognizes agriculture as key to our future economic success.

Read about more investments to keep Pennsylvania agriculture, and Pennsylvania communities, healthy, competitive and thriving in **Governor Shapiro's** 2025-26 budget proposal at shapirobudget.pa.gov.

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