



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Tuesday, January 13, 2026**

Contact: Shannon Powers, 717-603-2056 or [aginfo@pa.gov](mailto:aginfo@pa.gov)

## **Shapiro Administration Celebrates Two Decades of Fueling Growth, New Investments in Pennsylvania's \$132.5 Billion Agriculture Industry through Centers for Excellence**

*Public-private partnerships and targeted investments are growing the skilled workforce, research, and development, and expertise Pennsylvania's agriculture producers need to thrive in the future.*

*The Shapiro Administration launched The Center for Plant Excellence in 2025 and established the Organic Center of Excellence to support Pennsylvania's ag industry.*

**Harrisburg, PA** – On the fourth day of the Pennsylvania Farm Show, **Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Lisa Graybeal** and leadership from Pennsylvania's **Centers for Excellence** gathered to celebrate how the centers are feeding the nation's growth through bringing together industry associations, higher education institutions, and the Commonwealth to help advance research, innovation, and business growth in Pennsylvania's different plant and animal agriculture sectors.

"This year's Farm Show theme, *Growing A Nation*, isn't just a reference to the food on our plates," **Graybeal** said. "It's a recognition that agriculture is the foundation of our economy, the health of our communities, and the security of our nation. The Centers for Excellence are enhancing Pennsylvania's global competitiveness and growing the future of our industry and our economy."

"By combining the practical experience and in-depth knowledge of a wide spectrum of industry professionals with the expertise of our world-class research and teaching institutions, the centers are a model that works, making strategic investments where each industry needs them most to ensure Pennsylvania continues to be a national leader."

Collectively, the centers receive a **\$4.1 million investment** through the state budget.

**Governor Josh Shapiro's Administration** launched **The Center for Plant Excellence** in 2025 and established the **Organic Center of Excellence** and signed legislation establishing a PA Preferred Organic™ brand to help open new markets for Pennsylvania producers.

The two newest centers join **The Center for Dairy Excellence**, **The Center for Poultry & Livestock Excellence**, **The Center for Livestock Excellence**, and **The Center for Beef Excellence**.

In the beef industry, the funding works to support and invest in Beef Education Initiatives through the [PA Beef Producers Working Group](#) and the Beef Quality Assurance Program, to help improve farm infrastructure with the [Center for Beef Excellence's](#) Grant Initiatives to improve herd genetics & veterinary infrastructure, and to fund youth outreach, including the PA Beef to PA School Program and Beefing Up Backpacks.

“What really makes this investment meaningful is how these funds are used,” said **Scotty Miller, farm manager of Masonic Villages Farm**. “Through the beef line item, we are strategically reinvesting in the industry in a way to create long-term value and measurable impact.”

The [Center for Dairy Excellence](#) is a public-private partnership providing Pennsylvania’s 4,800+ dairy farms with grants and resources related to business management, transformation, transition and reinvestment. Dairy Excellence initiatives result in a \$4 investment from the private industry for every \$1 invested by the Commonwealth.

“The Center for Dairy Excellence has empowered us, whether it’s through the profit team and helping us understand more about cow comfort, whether it’s introducing us to the PA Preferred® program to helping us put a logo on our little cheeses that we sell from our cow’s milk or most importantly, farm transition,” **Farmer Kendra Nissley, of Jubilee Heritage Cheese** said.

The [Center for Poultry and Livestock Excellence](#) supports a \$12 billion industry, with Pennsylvania’s poultry, swine, lamb, sheep and goat industry recently experiencing growth rates of above 25%. There are more than 400 million poultry; 1.5 million swine; 98,000 sheep and 57,000 goats across the state. The Center for Poultry and Livestock Excellence is helping farms and other businesses across the agriculture landscape by providing seed money for more than \$5.4 million in annual research support and offering programs and support that benefit more than 2,350 farmers and industry stakeholders.

“These investments make a difference,” **Jim Shirk of Silver Valley Farm** said. “It’s a three-legged stool of support when you can bring together the government, you can bring together industry, and you can bring together academia.”

The [Center for Plant Excellence](#) is dedicated to advancing the plant industries by supporting research, fostering industry collaboration, and providing resources that drive sustainability and growth — ensuring a resilient future for growers in industries like forestry, landscaping and nursery businesses, public gardens, orchards, vineyards, and tree farms.

“We are thrilled to be a part of the inaugural round of grant recipients from the new Center for Plant Excellence, **Executive Director Heidi Witmer of LEAF Project** said.

“We are especially grateful that the center has chosen to invest both in research and career development because it's that magic combination that will build the future of our industry.”

Pennsylvania's plant sector is a powerhouse of economic activity. The state ranks first in the nation for the number of floriculture businesses, with 741 operations generating \$209 million in annual sales. Pennsylvania also boasts one of the country's most valuable hardwood industries, contributing \$21.8 billion to the economy. The specialty crop sector is equally strong, with Pennsylvania ranking fourth in apple production and maintaining a top position in vegetable and small fruit sales. These industries not only fuel the economy but also enhance Pennsylvania's landscapes, tourism, and quality of life.

**Governor Shapiro's** 2025-26 budget also continues to foster Pennsylvania's national legacy as an agricultural leader through targeted investments including, among others:

- Another **\$10 million** in the nation's first **Ag Innovation Program** to help build the future of American agriculture right here in Pennsylvania. Eighty-eight grants totaling **\$10 million** awarded in the first round are funding cutting-edge solutions and technologies shaping the future of agriculture across the state.
- Continued support for poultry producers to help them recover losses from Highly Pathogenic Avian influenza and improve biosecurity on their farms with the nation's only HPAI recovery fund. With more than **\$13.5 million** in grants distributed, **\$59.5 million** in funds remain for use in 2025-26.

These investments are crucial for the future and continued excellence of Pennsylvania agriculture. By supporting family farms and the infrastructure and workforce they need to thrive, the Governor is helping to build a more resilient agricultural economy, safeguard the food supply, and secure a prosperous future for Pennsylvania communities.

Read more about commonsense investments to keep Pennsylvania agriculture competitive and thriving in Governor Josh Shapiro's 2025-26 budget at [shapirobudget.pa.gov](http://shapirobudget.pa.gov).

# # #