



# **Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association**

*An association of commercial vegetable, potato and berry growers.*

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## **State Legislative Priorities for 2019**

The Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association is an association of commercial vegetable, potato and berry growers with 1,000 plus members representing an industry that annually produces crops valued at over \$147 million on 3,950 farms with 50,000 acres of farmland across the Commonwealth.

**Unemployment Compensation for H-2A Labor** - Pennsylvania does not specifically address H-2A employees when it comes to UC taxes and after many years of not paying UC tax for H-2A workers accountants are recommending the tax be paid. Most states apparently follow the Federal guidelines that clearly state H-2A workers are exempt from this tax. The H-2A program is already very expensive and employers are required to provide a 75% guarantee of their wages which is in essence an UC fund for them plus they would never be in the country long enough to collect. We recommend Pennsylvania follow federal guidelines pertaining to withholding from employees and employer contributions to the unemployment compensation (UC) fund when employing H2A workers.

**Penn State Agricultural Extension and Research Appropriations** - Funding for Penn State Extension and Research is critical to maintain agriculture's cutting edge and should be continued at least at current levels. The vegetable and berry industries have given over \$1.86 million to research in the past 31 years, but we need the extension and research infrastructure that is supported by state appropriations.

**Farmers' Market Nutrition Program** - Both the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) and low-income senior citizens coupons have greatly increased farm market sales while providing nutrition to needy Pennsylvanians.

**Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus Program (PASS)** – This Program has been very successful in sourcing over 4 million pounds of food from Pennsylvania agricultural producers – providing them some compensation to help cover harvesting and packing costs of products that they might otherwise have found more economically feasible to leave unharvested. PASS has enabled producers to donate these products to the food bank system across the state. Currently funded at \$1.5 million, we would encourage funding of \$3 million annually.

**Sunday Hunting** - Our members continue to oppose Sunday hunting.

**Driftwatch** – The introduction of dicamba and 2,4,D tolerant crops will result in the wider use of dicamba and 2,4,D in the state. Drift and/or volatilization of both of these herbicides can cause extensive damage to certain vegetable crops. Driftwatch is a voluntary registration program that allows growers of sensitive crops to register their field locations so applicators using dicamba and 2,4,D can locate potentially sensitive crops. However, funding is needed to establish the registry system.