



Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association

An association of commercial vegetable, potato and berry growers.

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State Legislative Priorities for 2020

The Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association is an association of commercial vegetable, potato and berry growers with 950 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 – Unlike Pennsylvania, many states follow the Federal guidelines that clearly state H-2A employers are exempt from unemployment contributions for H-2A workers. The H-2A program is already very expensive and employers are required to provide a 75% guarantee of the workers' contracted wages. Moreover, the employees usually are not in the country long enough to collect any benefits. We strongly support HB 2032 which would exempt H-2A employers from making unemployment contributions on H-2A wages.

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 \$1.97 million to research in the past 31 years, but we need the extension and research infrastructure that is supported by state appropriations.

Agritourism Liability Limitation - Many of our growers have found that adding agritourism activities to their on-farm markets greatly increases their ability to attract more customers for their farm products. However, it also has sometimes opened them up to frivolous lawsuits. We strongly support HB 1348 which enables farmers to decrease their liability exposure from agritourism activities.

Broadband Internet Access – High-speed broadband internet access has become a necessary utility for small businesses like our members' farms to be competitive in today's marketplace. The state should make every effort to accurately identify those areas of the state that do not have general access to such high-speed service so that resources can be focused on alleviating this deficiency.

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 provides growers with some compensation to help cover harvesting and packing costs of products that they donate to the food bank system – products that they might otherwise have left unharvested in the field. We would encourage increased funding of this program.

2020 Policy Resolutions

The Members of the Association recently adopted these additions to our Policy Resolutions putting the Association on record as:

State Resolutions

1. Urging the Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Committee to actively inform growers of the differences between “Jack-O-Lantern pumpkins” and “Howden pumpkins” for the purposes of reporting their pumpkin acreages to FSA and to explain the possible consequences of how they report their pumpkin acreages.
2. Opposing the closing of Regional Department of Agriculture Offices.
3. Supporting online enrollment or reenrollment of lands for DMAP and Red Tag programs.
4. Supporting the increase of Red Tag and DMAP permits to 4 per hunter per property enrolled in the respective programs.
5. Supporting a requirement for PennDOT to notify CDL drivers and commercial truck owners of Spotted Lanternfly regulations and penalties with their license and registration renewal.
6. Supporting a 50-mile radius of operation from the farmer's farm(s) for farm vehicles with the Type B and Type C biennial certification of exemption.
7. Supporting research funding on the effect of new insecticides, seed treatments and diseases on honeybees.
8. Supporting the exemption of H-2A workers' wages from state unemployment contributions.
9. Supporting the state funding of the review of any mandated DEP permit instead of by the permit holder.
10. Supporting the elimination of all permit fees for farmers to repair or replace non-public agricultural culverts, pipes or bridges.
11. Supporting a requirement for government agencies and authorities levying Stormwater Management Fees to offer offsetting credits to those fees for the following:
 - a) Each acre of compliance under each of the following: an NRCS or County Conservation District approved Conservation Plan, an Erosion and Sediment Plan, an Act 38 Nutrient Management Plan, and/or an implemented NRCS Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan.
 - b) Each approved Manure Management Plan.
 - c) Erosion controlling structures including diversion ditches, grass waterways, stone waterways and terraces.
 - d) NRCS or County Conservation District approved manure holding structures.
 - e) Each acre of forested or wooded acres.
 - f) Positive ratios of pervious to impervious areas.”
12. Opposing any fee, tax or ordinance based on stormwater runoff.

State and Federal Resolutions

1. Supporting increased efforts by the state and federal governments to facilitate broadband internet access to all areas of the state.
2. Supporting the exemption of Pennsylvania agriculture from Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) requirements mandated under the Federal Clean Water Act, and the funding by the state of all mandated Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) implementation practices.
3. Supporting the use of water quality monitoring in local watersheds for the verification of theoretical data in the Chesapeake Bay Model.
4. Supporting the use of genetic engineering of potatoes and the modern, enhanced potato breeding methods that enable breeders to improve potato varieties much sooner than traditional breeding methods.

The Association's full Policy Resolutions can be found at <https://www.pvga.org/representation/>.