



# Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association

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

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## State Legislative Priorities for 2021

The Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association is an association of commercial vegetable, potato and berry growers with over 700 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 exempting 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 101 which enables farmers to decrease their liability exposure from agritourism activities.

**High Tunnel Stormwater Management Requirements** – Recent exemptions for high tunnels from stormwater management plan requirements do not cover many farm situations because the farms currently have very limited amounts of impervious area.

**Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Regulations** – Stormwater fees being imposed by local governments need to account for the water absorbing capacity of farmland and should be reduced accordingly for farmland.

**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 Vegetable Growers Association



## **2021 Policy Resolutions**

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

### **State Resolutions**

1. *Supporting provisions that agricultural vehicles which are less than 14'0" in height traveling on the road or in the road right of way not be liable for any damage resulting from knocking down low hanging tree limbs and branches encroaching the road right of way.*
2. *Supporting state appropriations for an Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program that will be sufficient to reduce the level of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment runoff estimated from agriculture by at least 50 percent by 2025.*
3. *Supporting an exemption for farmers from regulations for draining wet areas on croplands if the area drained is two acres or less.*
4. *Supporting a collaboration between the Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture and Labor and Industry and the agriculture industry to identify ways to improve workforce development at the state and local level and to assist growers in providing or accessing housing for H-2A workers.*
5. *Supporting changes in the PA Game Commission definition of a "farmer" to include any individual or entity that actively cultivates, operates, or manages land for a profit when determining wildlife harvests for crop damage.*
6. *Supporting provisions that all agriculture and agriculturally-related businesses, including but not limited to farm markets, farmers markets and greenhouses and their retail operations be deemed "essential" during a disaster emergency.*
7. *Supporting modifications to the permitting and engineering requirements for the construction of farm ponds to make such ponds more economically feasible for growers.*
8. *Supporting a prohibition for counties and municipalities in Pennsylvania to enact and enforce zoning ordinances that require tracts or parcels of agricultural land, consisting of 10 or more acres, to be re-zoned if the agricultural land is being used for commercial purposes.*

### **Federal and State Resolutions**

1. *Supporting research to combat new emerging pests (e.g., Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, the Spotted Wing Drosophila Fruit Fly, Bermuda Grass Stem Maggots, the Spotted Lanternfly, etc.).*
2. *Supporting efforts to have all 48 contiguous states develop a reciprocal agreement regarding their farm plate registrations and to have at least Pennsylvania pursue such agreements with neighboring states.*
3. *Supporting incentives and support be given to utilities to offer three-phase power to farm operations at a more reasonable cost.*

The Association's complete Policy Resolutions are available at [www.pvga.org](http://www.pvga.org)