



Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association

An association of commercial vegetable, potato and berry growers.

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State Legislative Priorities for 2023

The Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association is an association of commercial vegetable, potato and berry growers with about 800 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.

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.

Business Depreciation Deduction Limit (Section 179) – The state limit should be consistent with the federal limit so different depreciation tables are not needed.

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.

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.

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.

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2023 New Policy Resolutions

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

State

1. Supporting the addition of resident senior hunters (65 and older), resident senior lifetime hunter (65 and older), and POW license holders to the current state Game Commission policy which allows junior license holders, mentored youth, disabled hunters with a permit to use a vehicle, and resident active-duty Armed Services personnel, to harvest antlered deer with two or more points on one antler, or spike three or more inches in length.
2. Supporting the development of an Earn-a-Buck Program where harvesting a second antlered deer within a license year would be permitted if the hunter has harvested and submitted harvest tags for at least two antlerless deer.
3. Supporting the expansion of the Red Tag Program to allow taking deer on Sundays with the landowners approval.
4. Supporting the Game Commission following their staff biologists' recommendations when setting seasons and limits.
5. Supporting a review of the DEP/Growing Greener grant reimbursement process to provide reimbursement within 30 days to participating farm operations and county conservation districts.
6. Supporting requirements for government agencies and authorities levying Stormwater Management Fees to calculate, publish and enact unlimited offsetting credits to those fees for the following:
 - a. Each acre of compliance for each of the following:
 - i. An NRCS or County Conservation District approved Plan.
 - ii. an Erosion and Sediment Plan.
 - iii. 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, wooded or grass acres.
 - f. Positive ratios of pervious to impervious areas.
7. Supporting requirements that stormwater credits be established before fees are levied and that such credits include currently implemented practices as well as new practices.
8. Supporting requirements that no stormwater fee be levied on properties with less than 20 percent impervious land area.
9. Supporting an agricultural exemption for storm water management for building projects that are 10,000 sq. ft. or less.
10. Supporting provisions that hayride attractions not be recognized as an amusement ride and therefore exempt from the Amusement Ride Inspection Act regulations.
11. Supporting the development of an online portal by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture develop to provide safety resources, requirements and online training for conducting agritourism operations.
12. Supporting the establishment of size and weight requirements by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture for tow vehicles involved in hayride agritourism operations.
13. Recognizing Penn State Extension's continued relevance to production agriculture and field-based extension education efforts and urging the University to build upon these programs that are vital to our industry composed of small family farms, including nearly a quarter of which belong to the plain communities who do not have access to online resources.

Federal and State

1. Supporting the ability to take Section 179 deductions for ag equipment in the year in which the equipment is ordered and paid for.
2. Supporting a change in the due dates for quarterly state and federal tax payments to be April 15th, July 15th, October 15th and January 15th to represent true quarterly payments.