



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Shapiro Administration Celebrates National Apprenticeship Week on Lehigh County Farm Training Next Generation of Farmers**

*Pennsylvania leads the nation in the percentage of farmers under 35 — and under Governor Shapiro’s leadership, the Commonwealth has created more [apprenticeship opportunities and training programs](#) to train young Pennsylvanians who want to work in agriculture.*

**Emmaus, PA** – Today, **Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding** and **Pasa Sustainable Agriculture Executive Director Hannah Kinney Smith** celebrated National Apprenticeship Week at **The Seed Farm**, a 42-acre incubator farm in Lehigh County dedicated to training the next generation of farmers. The event celebrated Pasa’s new role as stewards of the farm alongside their regional and **Shapiro Administration** partners who are investing together to offer access to land, infrastructure, and expertise to aspiring farm entrepreneurs through the farm’s programs and resources.

Specialized training is among the most pressing challenges for young people seeking to work in agriculture, and a skilled workforce is among the greatest needs of employers across Pennsylvania’s \$132.5 billion agriculture industry. Pennsylvania leads the nation in the percentage of farmers under 35 — and under **Governor Josh Shapiro’s** leadership, the Commonwealth has created more [apprenticeship opportunities and training programs](#) to train more young Pennsylvanians who want to work in agriculture.

“Pennsylvania needs farmers,” **Secretary Redding said**. “And beginning farmers need support like hands-on training under experienced mentors, as well as land access and capital for equipment. The **Shapiro Administration** is committed not only to giving beginning farmers tools to succeed, but to helping Pennsylvania agriculture businesses meet increasingly complex challenges in a specialized industry.”

Pennsylvania offers 11 apprenticeships to prepare for careers in agriculture, including two in collaboration with Pasa — Diversified Vegetable and Dairy Grazing Apprenticeships — both of which offer earn-while-you-learn specialized training pairing apprentices with master farmers in real-world farm environments.

Situated on preserved farmland in Lehigh County, [The Seed Farm](#) mentors Diversified Vegetable Apprentices and offers beginning farmers access to land, equipment, infrastructure, and technical assistance through its Farm Business Incubator program.

“The Diversified Vegetable Apprenticeship was extremely pivotal and important for my journey and for our farm’s journey,” said **San Sankofa**, owner-operator of **Herbal Affirmations**, a Lehigh Valley farm business, who also works with Pasa sharing the expertise he gained as an apprentice and since with other farmers. “Being mentored by **Mill Creek Urban Farm**, **New Morning Farm**, and **Katydid Hill** was a privilege.”

Established in 2010 by Lehigh County and **Penn State Cooperative Extension** with support from a USDA grant, the farm was designed to support farmland preservation by preparing farmers to take over protected agricultural land. In 2019, The Seed Farm merged with **Community Action Lehigh Valley**, integrating its programs into **Second Harvest Food Bank**.

The Seed Farm has expanded its infrastructure with support from a \$27,754 **Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Grant** from the Commonwealth in 2022 to expand a greenhouse and in 2024, a \$76,626 **Regional Food Systems Infrastructure** grant to upgrade its commercial kitchen and washing and packing station.

After more than a decade of partnership with The Seed Farm through workshops, farmer training, and collaboration, Pasa’s new role formalizes and deepens a shared commitment to farmer development and success.

“This partnership represents an exciting opportunity to strengthen the support for beginning farmers in our region while building on The Seed Farm’s strong foundation,” said **Pasa’s Executive Director Hannah Kinney Smith**. “By connecting our training programs with on-the-ground incubator opportunities, we’re creating a more complete pathway for farmers to launch and sustain their businesses.”

Pasa’s stewardship builds on this legacy while expanding opportunities for farmers at every stage of their careers. Through pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, Pasa trains individuals seeking careers in agriculture — many of whom aspire to become farm owners or professional managers. The Seed Farm now serves as a critical next step in that journey. A host of partners — including the Shapiro Administration — continue to support the shared goal of strengthening the future of agriculture in the region.

“Apprenticeships create real opportunity for Pennsylvanians to build rewarding careers while helping employers develop the skilled workforce they need,” said **Labor & Industry Deputy Secretary for Workforce Development Patricia Blumenauer**.

“Programs like these give aspiring farmers the chance to earn while they learn, gain hands-on experience from seasoned mentors, and build a path into Pennsylvania’s agriculture industry. By investing in workforce development partnerships like these, the Shapiro Administration is helping train the next generation of agricultural leaders and strengthen our economy for the future.”

## **Supporting the Ag Workforce Through Career Opportunities**

Pennsylvania agriculture supports over 48,800 farms, nearly 600,000 jobs, and contributes \$132.5 billion annually to the Commonwealth's economy. Governor Shapiro's Administration has put agriculture at the center of conversations about economic development for the first time ever and has worked to invest in the future of ag and train the next generation of farmers.

Pennsylvania leads the nation in the percentage of farmers under 35 — and under **Governor Shapiro's** leadership, the **Department of Labor & Industry** and the **Department of Agriculture** have partnered to create more [apprenticeship opportunities and training programs](#) in Pennsylvania's agriculture industry to build on that leadership and train more young Pennsylvanians in ag careers.

Since day one, the **Shapiro Administration** has supported youth and career training programs in the agriculture industry by:

- Creating [four new apprenticeship programs serving the agriculture industry](#).
- Increasing funding for career and technical education and apprenticeships by nearly **\$65 million** — a 50% increase since the day he took office.
- Calling for a dedicated **\$12.5 million** Workforce and Economic Development Network appropriation, leveraging \$10 million in existing funds and \$2.5 million in new state funds to train additional workers.

**Governor Shapiro's** [2026-27 budget proposal](#) also calls for funding the historic PA Farm Bill for an eighth year. Since taking office, the Governor has invested \$13.8 million each year in the PA Farm Bill, supporting youth education, workforce development, and business transition initiatives aimed at helping young people seeking ag careers and ag employers compete and succeed. PA Farm Bill initiatives supporting [new and beginning farmers](#) include low-interest [Next Generation Farm Loans](#) to help beginning farmers access land and equipment, [Farm Vitality Grants](#) to fund business planning, and Beginning Farmer and Realty Transfer Tax Credits, providing added incentive to farmers to sell or lease land, livestock, or equipment to qualified beginning farmers.

### **The Shapiro Administration's Long-Term Commitment to Agriculture**

**Governor Shapiro** understands that Pennsylvania's economic success depends on our rural communities and farms. The **Shapiro Administration** has prioritized long-term agricultural growth and resilience by creating the nation's first Ag Innovation Program and investing **\$20 million** to help build the future of American agriculture right here in Pennsylvania.

Ag Innovation Grants are at work funding solutions on 186 farms across Pennsylvania. A second \$10 million round of grants has drawn more than 317 applications requesting a total of \$73 million. Applications are under review now. The Governor proposed a **\$9 million** increase to the program in his 2026-27 budget proposal, due to incredible demand from farmers.

Agriculture is one of the cornerstones of **Governor Shapiro's Economic Development Strategy** — Pennsylvania's first in two decades.

Read more about investments to keep Pennsylvania agriculture competitive and thriving [in Governor Shapiro's 2026-'27 budget proposal](#) and continued support for Pennsylvania farmers at [pa.gov/governor](http://pa.gov/governor).

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