



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Governor Shapiro, Secretary Redding Call for Expedited Federal Support for Pennsylvania Growers Impacted by Devastating Crop Freeze

In a [letter](#) sent to USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins, Governor Shapiro urged the federal government to expedite disaster assistance for Pennsylvania farmers affected by the April freeze, including faster damage assessments and crop insurance payments.

Early estimates indicate Pennsylvania's specialty crop industry could face between \$150 million and \$200 million in economic losses – and the Shapiro Administration is mobilizing quickly.

Pennsylvania ranks among the nation's leading producers of apples, peaches, grapes, cherries, and strawberries, and major crop yield losses among these specialty crops would have a significant impact on the Commonwealth's agricultural economy.







Lancaster, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** and **Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding** visited Cherry Hill Orchards in Lancaster County to meet with local growers impacted by the devastating freeze in April and call on the federal government to quickly deploy more support for Pennsylvania farmers. Earlier today, the Governor sent a [letter to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins](#) requesting a Secretarial Disaster Designation and urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expedite disaster assistance for Pennsylvania farmers affected by the April freeze, including faster damage assessments that will help growers begin filing crop insurance claims.

As the **Shapiro Administration** continues to assess widespread crop damage and push for federal assistance for Pennsylvania growers, Governor Shapiro is calling on the federal government for their support in helping growers recover financially and maintain long-term market stability. The **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture** is exploring additional flexibility with appropriated state funds to respond to this situation and working with Penn State Extension to collect early industry assessments.

“My Administration has prioritized Pennsylvania agriculture from day one because we know farming powers our economy, feeds our communities, and sustains our rural communities. Right now, Pennsylvania farmers are facing catastrophic losses through no fault of their own, and they deserve a federal government that moves with urgency,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “I’ve called on USDA to cut through delays, expedite the disaster declaration, and ensure farmers receive the assistance and crop insurance support they need to recover and keep their operations moving forward. We will

continue to have the backs of our farmers and make sure we explore every option at our disposal to help them through this crisis.”

Since the freeze event, the **Shapiro Administration** has directly engaged with more than 200 growers and agricultural stakeholders across the Commonwealth to gather firsthand damage reports and identify immediate needs facing the industry. While the Department of Agriculture expects a clearer understanding of long-term impacts in the coming weeks, early estimates indicate Pennsylvania’s specialty crop industry could face between \$150 million and \$200 million in economic losses.

“This freeze didn’t just damage crops – it jeopardized years of hard work and the future stability of family farms across Pennsylvania,” said **Secretary Redding**. “Cherry Hill Orchards’ story is one we are hearing in every corner of the Commonwealth. Growers are facing heartbreaking losses that will ripple far beyond the orchard or field, impacting local economies, farm markets, processors and packagers, and the families who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.”

Governor Shapiro and **Secretary Redding** toured the orchard alongside owner **Corey McCleaf**, a fifth-generation grower whose apple and peach crops suffered near-total yield losses after overnight temperatures dropped as low as 19 degrees in parts of the Commonwealth. After weeks of warm weather, the subsequent April freeze impacted crops on his orchard that had started to blossom and the low temperatures damaged the fragile blooms.

“Fruit farming is a year-round investment of time, labor, and faith in the season ahead, and after a freeze like this, you can see months of work and planning impacted in just a few hours,” said **McCleaf**. “For operations like ours, these losses affect not just this year’s crop, but the employees, families, and local communities that depend on Pennsylvania agriculture. Having Governor Shapiro and Secretary Redding here on the farm, seeing the damage firsthand and advocating for federal disaster assistance, means a great deal to growers across the Commonwealth.”

“This is a dire time for our farmers, and I appreciate Governor Shapiro joining us on the ground in Lancaster to hear directly from them,” said **Senator James Malone**. “I echo his calls for a swift USDA Secretarial Disaster Designation and support. I will be advocating for the state to fill in gaps wherever our farmers need support to help keep this industry strong.”

“We are thankful for the Governor’s quick action in working with Sec. Rollins at the USDA to organize a disaster designation and look forward to continued working relationships with all stakeholders to ensure we can help our growers in their time of crisis,” said **Representative Eddie Pashinski, House Democratic Ag Chair**. “I look forward to working with my colleagues on legislation needed to make funding available. While we work in the legislature, I encourage all Pennsylvanians to do what they can do to support or to buy from their local orchards and fruit growers over the next several months.”

“Our Fruit Farmers have suffered a devastating loss. We need to do everything we can to help them make it to next years crop,” said **Representative Steven Mentzer**.

Pennsylvania is investing in long term solutions like the [Agricultural Innovation Grant Program](#) — the first of its kind in the nation — to help farmers address challenges like protecting their operations from severe weather by giving orchard and farm owners the tools to put innovative technology to work on their farms. The [first \\$10 million round of grants](#) is funding solutions on 186 farms across Pennsylvania, including a \$58,964 grant awarded to Ridgetop Orchards in Bedford County to install wind machines to provide freeze protection for fruit crops. The second \$10 million round of grants, under review now, drew 317 applications requesting a total of \$73 million.

Cherry Hill Orchards represents the widespread damage many specialty crop growers are experiencing statewide after the April freeze at a time when farmers are already under pressure from rising input costs, volatile export markets, and an unreliable labor supply. Growers and farmers from Adams, Berks, and Franklin counties who also joined Governor Shapiro and Secretary Redding in their visit reported how the freeze also damaged their crops.

Pennsylvania ranks among the nation's leading producers of apples, peaches, grapes, cherries, and strawberries and many orchards also sell directly to consumers and invite them to pick their own produce for purchase. Major crop yield losses among these specialty crops without relief would have a significant impact on the Commonwealth's overall direct-to-consumer sales and agritourism.

Governor Shapiro's Continued Commitment to Agriculture

Agriculture is critical to Pennsylvania's economy, with more than 53,000 farms supporting over 600,000 jobs and contributing \$132.5 billion annually. Since taking office, **Governor Shapiro** has demonstrated that he understands that Pennsylvania's economic success depends on our rural communities and farms. **Governor Shapiro's Economic Development Strategy** recognizes agriculture as one of five key industries powering the Commonwealth's economic growth and the **Shapiro Administration** is committed to investing in its continued growth.

Governor Shapiro's 2026-27 budget proposal furthers long-term agricultural growth and resilience by:

- Increasing funding for the Agricultural Innovation Grant Program to **\$19 million** to help build the future of American agriculture right here in Pennsylvania
- Fully funding the [Pennsylvania Farm Bill](#) to support business planning, infrastructure, and workforce development
- Supporting research funding, market expansion, and land stewardship to build resiliency across ag sectors
- Continuing the Fresh Food Financing Initiative to expand access to local food and support small businesses
- Investing in the Center for Plant Excellence to support specialty crop and other growers

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.

Growers and farmers who were impacted by the freeze event should visit agriculture.pa.gov to find information and resources related to reporting losses, business planning, and risk management.

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