



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Thursday, September 3, 2026**

**Contact:** Shannon Powers, [aginfo@pa.gov](mailto:aginfo@pa.gov) or 717-603-2056

**Montour County High School Students Demonstrate Drone-Piloting Skills — Cutting-Edge Career Preparation Supported by PA Farm Bill Agriculture & Youth Grants**

*The Shapiro Administration is investing in PA Farm Bill Ag & Youth Grants to give students the skills employers in Pennsylvania's \$132.5 billion Ag Industry are seeking.*

*Drones are among technologies funded under the Shapiro Administration's historic \$30 million Agricultural Innovation Grant Program, which is supporting 185 projects driving ag industry progress statewide — and changing the skills needed in the ag workforce.*

**Danville, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding** spent the morning with students from **Danville Area High School** Advanced Placement Environmental Science and Honors Veterinary Science classes and their agricultural science teachers **Van Wagner** and **Mike Schultz**. Students demonstrated valuable career skills they are gaining with the help of drones and classroom equipment purchased with **PA Farm Bill Agriculture & Youth Grants**.

"Teaching students to use technology employers need today gives them the skills and inspiration to stay in Pennsylvania and drive our agriculture industry forward tomorrow," **Secretary Redding said**. "The **Shapiro Administration** is committed to investing in opportunities every young person needs to succeed, and funding the technology and innovation Pennsylvania's agriculture industry needs to attract these talented students and continue competing and leading the nation tomorrow."

Since 2023, Ag & Youth grants have supported career preparation for Montour County youth with two awards to Danville High School totaling \$15,000 and two awards to Penn State Extension's Montour County 4-H Environmental Science and Agriculture programs totaling \$8,850.

"This opportunity has allowed me to provide my agriculture students with hands-on drone-flying experience," Danville teacher **Van Wagner** said. "Drones are a cutting-edge technology being used in multiple areas of our global economy. My students gain valuable flying experience and can even apply for a drone pilot's license from the

Federal Aviation Administration. These students graduate high school not only with some really amazing experiences but with an actual pilot's license."

Pennsylvania's ag employers are increasingly investing in agricultural drones and will need workers with flexible, tech-savvy skills and the imagination for how they can make work more efficient and productive.

Drones are among the technologies funded under the Shapiro Administration's historic [\\$30 million Agricultural Innovation Grant Program](#), which is supporting 185 projects driving ag industry progress — and changing the skills needed in the workforce statewide. Drones enable precision farming jobs including monitoring crops for damage, disease, and moisture, as well as maturity and number of blooms in orchards. Drones are used both to gather data to inform decision-making, and to target spraying, seeding, and other crop treatments.

In January, Sec. Redding announced the Shapiro Administration's most recent investment of \$600,345 in PA Farm Bill Agriculture & Youth Grants, including 62 awards to schools and youth organizations in 33 counties, funding projects empowering youth across the state to succeed in Pennsylvania's \$132.5 billion agriculture industry.

Today, Sec. Redding also invited school districts and youth nonprofits to [apply for 2026-27 grants](#), funded at \$500,000 in the 2026-27 state budget. The **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture** program is accepting applications now through Friday, October 2, 2026 at 5 p.m.

Governor Josh Shapiro's bipartisan [2026-27 budget](#) funds an eighth year of Ag & Youth Grants through the PA Farm Bill. Since 2019, Ag & Youth Grants have invested \$3.5 million in 377 projects now providing opportunities for students statewide.

[Ag and Youth Grants](#) provide direct funding of up to \$7,500 and matching grants of up to \$25,000 to support projects, programs, and equipment purchases by youth-run organizations, and those with programs that benefit youth or promote agriculture, community leadership, vocational training, and peer networking. Past funded projects include agriculture career seminars and field trips, agricultural safety training, capital projects, and equipment purchases aimed at leading students to opportunities in agriculture and building the future workforce Pennsylvania's agriculture industry needs.

Governor Shapiro's bipartisan 2026-27 budget increases career and technical education funding by \$10 million, bringing Pennsylvania's annual investment in workforce development — including CTE, vo-tech, apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships — to \$193 million, a 60 percent increase since he took office.

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

- Investing \$13.8 million each year in the **PA Farm Bill**, supporting youth education and workforce development initiatives aimed at helping students and employers in both rural and communities to compete.
- Continuing support for the [Commission for Agriculture Education Excellence](#) to increase the quality of agricultural education in Pennsylvania and align curriculum with the skills employers need to succeed.
- Creating [five new apprenticeship programs serving the agriculture industry](#).
- Investing in [business planning, and incentives for new and beginning farmers through PA Farm Bill Initiatives](#) that help attract the skilled workers Pennsylvania farms need to succeed.

Find detailed guidelines and how to apply for [PA Farm Bill Agriculture & Youth Grants](#) at [www.agriculture.pa.gov](http://www.agriculture.pa.gov), or in the August 29, 2026 edition of the [Pennsylvania Bulletin](#).

Learn more about opportunities in agriculture at [agriculture.pa.gov/kidsarethefuture](http://agriculture.pa.gov/kidsarethefuture) and Shapiro Administration investments in the future of Pennsylvania agriculture at [shapirobudget.pa.gov](http://shapirobudget.pa.gov).

###