

**Opportunities for State Initiatives to Sustain Agriculture
Developed from Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission for Agriculture
in Lancaster County**

1. Adopt as policy the “Good Neighbor” language contained in the Penn State Cooperative Extension’s pamphlet “Understanding Your Community’s Agriculture.”
2. Facilitate opportunities for education at public locations such as the grocery store, school cafeteria, movie theater, restaurants, etc
3. Establish a program where students can receive tuition reimbursement for agreeing to work a certain number of years at specified locations that support agriculture
4. More money toward farmland preservation
5. Enabling legislation allowing counties to tax for a dedicated funding source to help with preservation in the future
6. Develop a strategy for a long range solution for manure management issues that will be affordable to producers and may also generate profit.
7. More grant money for Agricultural Development such as First Industries Fund.
8. Identify new solutions and provide education to help producers better address environmental problems. Make changes in nutrient trading program to increase chance of success.
9. Lancaster Ag community would like to be assured that with position it holds in State’s Ag Industry/Economy, PDA, DEP, The Governors Office, and Legislature, ensures that Lancaster County Agriculture has a ‘seat at the table’ either through our elected officials or otherwise – during any/all discussion of proposed regulations which may have an impact on Agriculture.
10. Investigate development of a renewable fuels market and make the state bureaucracy more flexible and time efficient in getting alternative solutions implemented.
11. Provide more low-interest loans, grants and creative financing
12. Provide an easily accessible, single clearing house for all regulatory permitting pertaining to agriculture.
13. Easier enabling of reduction of real estate taxes on preserved farms.
14. Enact an exemption from the state real estate transfer tax on the sale of a preserved farm.
15. Enact a change to allow the State of Pennsylvania’s First Industry program to offer a lower interest rate for loans to owners of preserved farms, below the current reduction of 1% from the normal loan rate, and approaching or equaling the loan rate offered by PennVest, which currently is 1%.
16. Pass Senate Bill 252 to amend the Tax Reform Code by reducing the valuation of farmland upon which an easement has been placed through the Agricultural Area Security Law (the state farmland preservation program) to \$1.00 per acre for inheritance tax purposes. Legislative delegation should also support an amendment that would also include farms preserved by private farmland trusts.
17. The State Farmland Preservation Board and/or the state legislature should change the state farmland preservation ranking system to reduce the 40% minimum weighting on soils to 25% to enable counties to give a higher weighting for applicant farms that are adjacent to preserved farms and other applicant farms.
18. Recommended changes to the state farmland preservation program with the Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation Administrators organization include: 1) Reducing the percentage weighting on soils; and 2) allowing county funds used jointly with township funds to count for state matching fund purposes.
19. For each acre of prime soils removed from production because of a road expansion, any and all funders of road expansions—the township, PennDOT, county, federal government, or private providers—must preserve at least 10 acres elsewhere in the County where the work is being done, but within an Agricultural Security Area.
20. Explore tax abatement programs proposed in other states that would provide an enticement for individuals to enter the ag industry to determine the applicability of such programs to Pennsylvania.