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January 6, 2020

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Wolf Administration Announces PA Farm Bill Grant Funding to Increase Agriculture Education Opportunities

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf today announced the approval of \$500,000 in Ag and Youth Grants to fund 55 projects that will improve access to agriculture education in the commonwealth, with a goal of addressing the looming 75,000 workforce deficit Pennsylvania's agriculture industry faces in the coming decade.

"Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders, entrepreneurs, scientists, and agribusiness owners," said Gov. Wolf. "This \$500,000 is the seed to tomorrow's bountiful future for Pennsylvania agriculture."

In July of this year, Governor Wolf signed Act 40 to reenact Pennsylvania's Ag and Youth Grant Program as part of the state's first-ever Pennsylvania Farm Bill. The program, funded at \$500,000, provides youth organizations direct, non-matching grants of up to \$7,500 to defray costs of eligible projects and matching reimbursement grants of up to \$25,000 for capital projects or equipment purchases. Eligible projects included those that are for education or workforce development seminars or field trips; agricultural safety training programs; and capital projects or equipment.

"All youth should have access to the same opportunities for growth and career development," said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. "These programs are urban, rural, or suburban, and they all further our mission to grow the industry's future leaders. It's experiences in these programs that we hope will influence PA youth for a lifetime."

The \$500,000 in ag and youth grants approved for funding will benefit 55 projects in 25 counties. The approved projects include the following direct grant projects:

Allegheny County

- Bible Center – Oasis Project, \$7,500, urban agriculture programming
- Pennsylvania State University, \$5893, community pollinator garden

Blair County

- Williamsburg Community Junior Senior High School, \$7,500, equipment

Bradford County

- Pennsylvania State University, \$4,500, cheese-making program
- Canton Area School District, \$7,250, hydroponics equipment

Bucks County

- Pennsylvania State University, \$3,000, Animal and Veterinary Science Clinic

Centre County

- Pennsylvania State University, \$7,500, robotics program

Chester County

- Chester County FFA, \$7500, equipment
- Chester County Intermediate Unit, \$6,900, Animal and Veterinary Science Program
- Octorara Area School District, \$3,500, drone purchase for precision agriculture

Clarion County

- Pennsylvania State University, \$6,894, community pollinator garden

Clinton County

- Keystone Central School District Career and Technology Center, \$5,500, equipment

Columbia County

- Central Columbia FFA, \$7,500, equipment

Cumberland County

- West Shore School District, \$3,510, aquaponics equipment
- The Gardens at Boiling Springs, \$7,360, hydroponics equipment
- Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture, \$7,500, scholarships for 15 schools in the commonwealth to host the Mobile Ag Lab.

Erie County

- Erie School District, \$6,010, urban ag program
- Union City Area School District, \$7,500, equipment

Franklin County

- Franklin County 4-H Goat Club, \$7,500, purchase of animal pens
- Franklin County Career Tech, \$7,350, equipment

- Franklin County FFA, \$1,500, equipment

Greene County

- West Greene School District, \$7,490, fume extraction unit for ag mechanic program

Jefferson County

- Brockway School District, \$7,500, equipment

Montgomery County

- Stewart Middle School Garden, \$2,000, garden program

Montour County

- Danville Area High School, \$7,500, iron working equipment

Northumberland County

- Warrior Run School District, \$5,862, hydroponic equipment

Perry County

- LEAF Project Inc., \$7,500, community garden program

Philadelphia County

- Vepo Farms, \$7,500, hydroponics equipment and specialized programs for students with autism.
- Philly Goat Project, \$7,500, middle school livestock program
- The U School, \$5,120, expand intensive senior year agriculture CTE program
- VietLead, \$5,120, urban ag program
- Saul High School – Philadelphia School District, \$7,500, laptops for CTE program
- Graced Early Learning Center, \$7,500, elementary ag program
- Boy Scouts of America's Cradle of Liberty Council, \$7,500, ag mentoring program
- Norris Square Neighborhood Project, \$6,500, heritage crop program

Tioga County

- Wellsboro Area School District, \$2,000, Mobile Ag Science Lab

Washington County

- Burgettstown Area School District, \$7,500, creation of an FFA Chapter

Wayne County

- Wayne Highlands School District, \$7,500, Mobile Ag Lab

York County

- Northern York School District \$7,500 to Gifford Pinchot FFA for enhancements to their middle school programming and workforce development through industry tours and professional certification courses.
- Edgar Fahs Smith STEAM Academy \$7500 to fund the purchase of hydroponics equipment for students to grow seeds, which will then be transferred to areas where students are working to restore native habitats.
- York County Libraries \$7500 for York County Libraries SummerQuest to incorporate gardening and farm field trips to expose children to agriculture.

And the following 12 matching grant projects:

Allegheny County

- Hilltop Urban Farm, \$25,000, farm expansio

Bedford County

- Bedford County Tech Center, \$8,000, ag science structure

Centre County

- Pennsylvania State University, \$25,000, high tunnels for student farm

Chester County

- Octorara Area School District, \$12,500, precision ag equipment

Greene County

- West Greene School District, \$25,000, ag ed facility upgrade

Lancaster County

- Penn Manor School District, \$21,154, ag mechanics equipment

Lycoming County

- Montoursville Area School District, \$25,000, upgrade CNC equipment

Montgomery County

- The Farm, Home, and Youth Foundation of Montgomery County, \$25,000, 4-H Center upgrade
- Variety, \$14,000, to engage youth with disabilities in farm to table production

Philadelphia County

- School District of Philadelphia, \$25,000, Fox Chase Farm program expansion
- JASTECH/Overbrook Environmental Education Center, \$7,500, purchase high tunnel

Tioga County

- North Penn Liberty – Southern Tioga School District \$25,000 for a building to house the Ag Production Career and Technical Education program and FFA Chapter.

Earlier today at the Pennsylvania Farm Show, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and Education Executive Deputy David Volkman had the opportunity to meet some of the youth who will benefit from the approved funding, including members of the Pennsylvania FFA and 4-H, and LEAF, a group that cultivates leadership through hands-on agricultural experiences for youth from diverse backgrounds.

“Pennsylvania has a rich history in agriculture and in connecting students with the industry through organizations like FFA and 4-H,” said Department of Education Executive Deputy Secretary David Volkman. “The grants will allow even more students to learn about these vital businesses and the career opportunities they offer.”

Representatives Eddie Day Pashinski and Pam Delissio were champions for Act 40, which reinstated the Ag and Youth Grant Program in Governor Wolf’s PA Farm Bill.

“As a former teacher, I know how valuable hands-on learning can be for students – that’s why I believed it was critical the Pennsylvania Farm Bill included funding for the Ag and Youth Grant Program,” said Representative Pashinski. “These grants will provide invaluable experiences, helping to inspire our next generation of farmers and producers.”

“It was a privilege to have prime sponsored the Ag and Youth grant bill as part of the historic PA Farm bill,” said State Representative Pamela A. DeLissio. “Even though HB1518 became incorporated into SB660, it is benefiting many youth organizations and helping to ensure future generations of farmers and many other agriculture related careers.”

For more information on the Pennsylvania Farm Bill, visit agriculture.pa.gov.

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