

Agricultural Info Sheet

Agriculture is Diverse in Chester County

Are Your Municipal Regulations Up to Date?

The county's prime agricultural soils position it to excel in agronomy and horticulture industries such as row crops, nursery, viticulture, as well as fruit and vegetable production. Approximately one-third of county land is farmland, just under 150,000 acres. The county also has a significant amount of livestock industries (beef, swine, lamb and poultry), dairy, and egg production and one of the most densely populated equine areas in the country.

The unique indoor growing sectors led by advancements in the mushroom sector are cutting edge, as is the potential for advancements in greenhouse production and aquaculture. There are numerous specialty ag niches present within Chester County's agricultural fabric.

“Approximately one-third of county land is farmland, just under 150,000 acres.”

TOTAL VALUE OF AG PRODUCTS SOLD



Chester County **ranked 2nd** among all 67 Pennsylvania counties and **53rd** in the U.S. in the total value of agricultural products sold with annual sales of \$712,468,000.

VALUE OF PRODUCTS SOLD PER ACRE



Chester County **ranked 18th** of over 3,000 counties in the U.S. in value of agricultural products sold per acre of land in farms with a value per acre of \$4,733.00.





Consideration for Municipal Officials

When updating municipal ordinances, consider how you define and regulate “agriculture” and have your solicitor look at:

Agricultural Operations – Protection from Suits Act of Jun. 10, 1982, P.L. 454 No. 133 (The right to Farm Act).

Helps protect farmers’ normal agricultural operations from nuisance suits for farms that are ten contiguous acres OR less than ten contiguous acres in area but has an anticipated yearly gross income of at least \$10,000.

The Agricultural Security Area Act (ASA).

ASAs are a tool for protecting our farms and farmland from non-agricultural uses. ASAs may include non-adjacent farmland parcels of at least 10 acres or be able to produce \$2,000 annually from the sale of agricultural products. www.agriculture.pa.gov

The Agricultural Communities and Rural Environments Act (ACRE).

ACRE decisions from the Attorney General’s Office and relevant case law can help determine how best to manage the intersection of agriculture and residential uses. www.attorneygeneral.gov
www.chescofarming.org

Other Considerations

- Recognize that while many agricultural sectors, such as dairy farms and equine operations, require larger tracts of land, not all sectors do. Vineyards, produce operations and indoor agriculture can be conducted on small parcels. This means **there is more opportunity for agriculture to occur in more suburban areas.**
- While it can be a challenge to know how to **regulate accessory uses** related to agricultural operations, it is important to understand that many farmers today rely upon revenue from additional uses to stay in business and bring in future farming generations. Many farmers have significant interest in providing agritainment (fun on the farm) opportunities for customers such as pick-your-own opportunities, winery tasting rooms and creameries.
- **Agritainment/Agritourism** are great ways for families and friends to spend time together at a farm learning about the people who grow our food and appreciating the land and natural resources that make it possible. On-farm agritainment includes activities such as pick-your-own, petting zoos, hay rides, corn mazes, pumpkin patches, and fall festivals. Agritourism is the practice of touring agricultural areas to see farms and often to participate in farm activities. The Pennsylvania legislature recently passed the **Agritourism Activity Protection Act.**

