

# DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE BUDGET HEARING WRAP

Wednesday, February 25, 2026



## General Overview:

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) Secretary Russell Redding and senior PDA staff testified before the House Appropriations Committee today. The hearing began with a discussion about the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, which has reached a crisis level in Pennsylvania. House Republicans focused their questions on key areas, including farmland preservation, the effectiveness and fairness of PDA grants, and regulatory reform for Pennsylvania farmers.

## Key Takeaways:

- For PDA, the governor is proposing total General Fund spending of \$249.9 million for Fiscal Year 2026-27, a decrease of \$3.4 million, or 1.4%, compared with the current fiscal year.
  - The apparent decrease is due, in part, to the proposed transfer of some costs from the General Fund back to the Race Horse Development Trust Fund.
- House Republicans remained concerned that too many farms in Pennsylvania are shutting down. In some cases, farms are being replaced with solar panels, data centers, and other industrial uses. Members were heartened to hear that PDA is actively participating in discussions on responsible development across the state, but are concerned that this is not a priority for the governor.
  - There are 12,000 farms currently awaiting protected status; PDA is working to end this backlog.
- PDA has significantly increased the number of grants in recent years. Members inquired about the processes used to ensure fairness in awarding grants and advocated for transparency and accountability.
- Members asked PDA about their involvement in the governor's plan for recreational marijuana. More specifically, members expressed concern that there may be negative impacts on current hemp farmers due to a failure to develop processes and economic development opportunities.
- While permitting is not often associated with farming, many farmers experience delays in projects due to permitting issues. House Republicans asked PDA how they are working to cut red tape for farmers.
- County Fairs are culturally and economically crucial across rural Pennsylvania. Members shared how important continued state funding for fairs is in their districts.

## Notable Q&A:



Rep. Zach Mako discusses how local methane digesters can support Pennsylvania's energy needs.

Rep. Chad Reichard shares the importance of supporting County Fairs in Pennsylvania.



Rep. Marla Brown asked PDA about their strategy and thoughts on solar panels, and other industrial uses, replacing farmland.