



Chester County Comprehensive Plan Update Agriculture Issues Facing Chester County

Top 4 Issues

- The cost of agricultural land is high, making it a barrier of entry to new farmers and/or farmers looking to expand.
- There is insufficient ACRE (Agriculture, Communities, and Rural Environment Act/Act 38) guidance to help municipalities zone appropriately/avoid over regulating.
- There is insufficient education about the variety of and competitiveness (salary/benefits, etc.) of agricultural careers, which makes workforce development difficult.
- The inability to expand or grow an operation can impede a second generation from coming into the operation, which makes it less stable or likely to continue in the future

All Other Identified Issues

- The public drive time-consuming and costly regulatory changes, which significantly affect agricultural producers, yet the public is often not aware of how the industry really works.
- There is a lack of understanding by municipal officials on how highly regulated the agricultural industry is at the state and federal level.
- There is constant tension/conflict between farm uses and nearby residential areas.
- A lack of affordable housing makes it difficult to recruit and maintain an agricultural workforce.
- While often necessary, it is difficult for farmers to incorporate accessory or secondary farm uses into their operations because of local regulations.
- “Open space” preservation is often in conflict with “agricultural land” preservation because of the desire for more passive or “environmentally friendly” uses that prohibit production agriculture (noise, odor, etc.).
- There is no working definition of “agricultural economic development”, which impedes collaborative, directed industry support.
- There is insufficient information on how much preserved agricultural land there is in the county (differentiated from open space lands).
- There is significant pressure to innovate and use technology, but the risk of doing so is high because it may not happen “fast enough” to meet consumer demand (to capture profit), the cost is considerable and most often must be repaid by increased production, and local regulations may prevent it.