

Redding: Budget prioritizes investments

Department of Agriculture's general operating line set to see \$2.2M increase

PUBLISHED ON FEBRUARY 20, 2017



Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding (Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture)

HARRISBURG, Pa. — With the state facing grave financial challenges, Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding said Gov. Tom Wolf's budget proposal calls for targeted investments that will continue to grow the agriculture industry while achieving significant savings that put the commonwealth on the path to fiscal responsibility and a sustainable future.

"Gov. Wolf's budget takes a fresh look at how we operate as a state," said Secretary Redding. "The Governor has prioritized finding savings while not sacrificing the services Pennsylvanians depend on. The department's budget certainly reflects that commitment. This budget makes investments we need to meet our core mission of protecting human and animal health, safeguarding consumers and ensuring the safety of our food supply."

Redding explained that the budget proposed for the 2017-2018 fiscal year includes a \$2.2 million increase in the Department of Agriculture's general operating line. This funding will allow the department to maintain current staffing levels, while also making critically needed investments to improve its information technology infrastructure — allowing the department to operate more efficiently — and in its food safety laboratory capacity. The administration will also work to preserve \$2 million from this year's budget that was appropriated for avian influenza preparedness and response.

The proposed budget preserves funding for vital programs that help Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens, including the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and the State Food Purchase Program. The budget provides level funding for Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences and Cooperative Extension, and it makes new investments in farmland preservation, as well as in the department's weights and measures operation, giving the state additional resources to replace aging equipment needed to ensure large trucks are operating under proper weight guidelines, which is important for the safety of motorists on the road.

The commonwealth is also making a greater investment in water quality through a three-year, \$45 million plan that will invest new resources through the departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources, and Environmental Protection to address more than 19,000 miles of impaired local waterways — one of the state's most pressing environmental challenges. The three agencies will use these funds to put in place plans and practices that will reduce nutrient and sediment runoff; improve technical capacity by enhancing conservation training opportunities; install more riparian buffers; control stormwater in communities with municipal separate storm sewer systems; and leverage additional federal support.

Redding added that while there is much to tout in this budget, difficult decisions had to be made given the state's nearly-two-billion-dollar structural deficit. He noted, in particular, the elimination of funding to the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine. An analysis of funding by other states to private colleges found Pennsylvania's support to UPenn to be higher than any other state.

"The University of Pennsylvania's veterinary school is one of the best schools of its type in the nation, but given the budget challenges we face, the state can no longer support a school operated by a private university," said Redding. "UPenn's New Bolton Center laboratory is an important part of the commonwealth's infrastructure for supporting animal health, and we are committed to continuing our support of that lab and the other two facilities that make up the Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System."

The secretary explained that in recent years, the commonwealth has appropriated more than \$10.6 million annually to support operations at the Pennsylvania Veterinary Lab (operated by the Department of Agriculture in Harrisburg), the Animal Diagnostic Lab (operated by Penn State University in State College), and the New Bolton Center (operated by UPenn in Kennett Square). Of this total, \$5.35 million goes to support the Veterinary Lab, and a separate appropriation of \$5.309 million goes to the Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission to support both the Diagnostic Lab and New Bolton Center at approximately \$2.5 million apiece.

Additionally, last year, Governor Wolf made a significant investment in New Bolton Center's future when he authorized the release of \$500,000 in capital funds to begin the work of looking at how to improve the center. This release — part of \$65 million in authorized funding — will begin to look at whether adding a new Pennsylvania Equine Toxicology and Research Laboratory to the center's campus make sense for improving animal health and welfare in the state. Right now, the equine lab is located on the West Chester University campus — some 12 miles from the New Bolton Center campus. Consolidating the labs into one location offers the potential to streamline work flow, create efficiencies, and offer new ways to collaborate.

"The magnitude of the state's structural deficit required that difficult choices be made," said Redding. "Before taking any steps to realize new revenue to fill that deficit, however, the Governor committed to first eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy, eliminating waste, and looking for ways to capitalize on the state's existing resources."

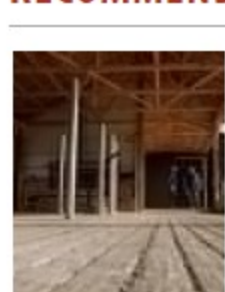
One such resource is the Farm Show Complex and Expo Center. The 2017-18 budget proposal calls for the commonwealth to enter into a lease-leaseback arrangement for the complex in which a private entity will lease the Farm Show from the state for a 29-year term in exchange for a fair market payment of \$200 million. The state will then lease the facility back from the private entity over the same period with annual payments that include a negotiated interest rate.

"To be clear, this is not an attempt to sell or to privatize the complex. The commonwealth will continue to own, operate and manage the facility. All of the staff will continue to be employed by the commonwealth," Redding said. "This is simply a financing mechanism that uses the value of the property to address funding shortfalls."

For more information on the Governor's 2017-2018 budget proposal, visit budget.pa.gov. To learn more about the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, visit agriculture.pa.gov.

— Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

RECOMMENDED ARTICLES



Agriculture Secretary celebrates conservation progress in Ag

NOVEMBER 01, 2022

CHRISTIANA, Pa. — Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and conservation partners visited a no-till, rotational grazing farm in Lancaster County to highlight Governor Tom Wolf's \$22.5 million investment in conservation and sustainability through his Pennsylvania Farm Bill. Partners demonstrated farm management methods that are resulting in more efficient operations; cleaner waterways; and nourished, productive land, and [...]

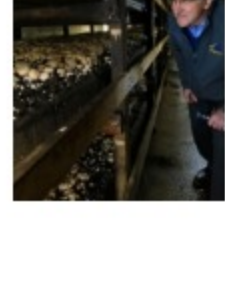
Read More

Statement by Secretary Vilsack on the President's FY 2023 budget

MARCH 30, 2022

WASHINGTON — The Biden-Harris Administration submitted to Congress the President's Budget for fiscal year 2023. The President's Budget details his vision to expand on the historic progress our country has made over the last year and deliver the agenda he laid out in his State of the Union address—to build a better America, reduce the [...]

Read More



Redding highlights Pa.'s \$746 million mushroom industry

MARCH 14, 2022

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and Department of Community and Economic Development Acting Deputy Secretary Mandy Book stopped at Chester County's To-Jo Mushrooms, Inc., on the Food Fuels Pennsylvania tourOpens In A New Window. The company's West Grove processing facility demonstrates how Pennsylvania's \$746 million mushroom industry powers jobs and innovation and fuels our [...]

Read More

Alliance for NY's Farmland applauds state budget

APRIL 07, 2021

ALBANY — The Alliance for New York's Farmland, a coalition of farmers, land trusts, and agricultural and environmental organizations led by American Farmland Trust (AFT), applauds the passage of New York's SFY22 budget, which includes unprecedented support for programs to keep land in farming and farmers on the land. A third of New York's farmers [...]

Read More

SPREAD THE WORD

2 Shares



2



Sponsored Links by Taboola



Counselling Courses In Australia For International Students

Counselling Courses

Click Here



Refugees Get Medical Rights here

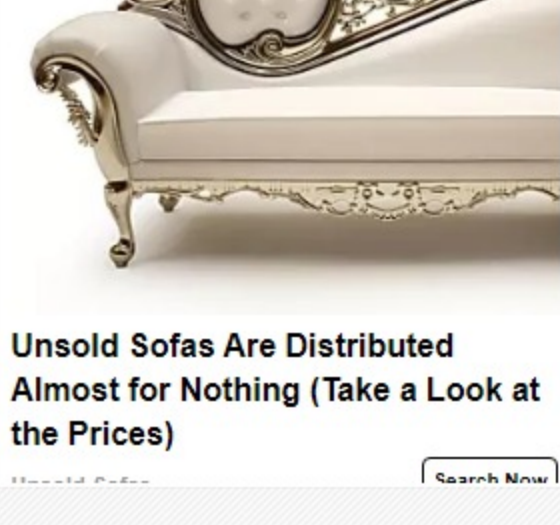
Our Better World

Learn More



The Best Places to Buy Second Hand Furniture in India (See More)

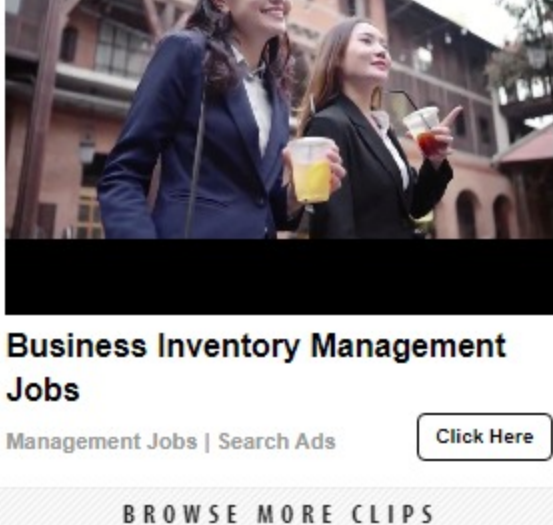
Used Furniture



Unsold Sofas Are Distributed Almost for Nothing (Take a Look at the Prices)

Unsold Sofas

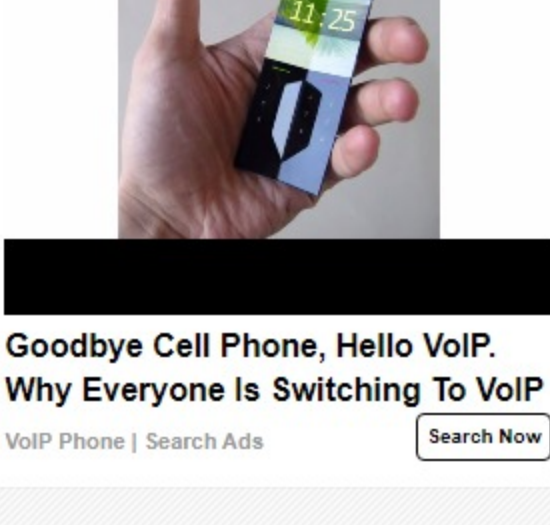
Search Now



Business Inventory Management Jobs

Management Jobs | Search Ads

Click Here



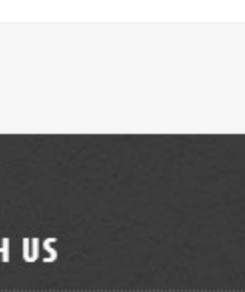
Goodbye Cell Phone, Hello VoIP. Why Everyone Is Switching To VoIP

VoIP Phone | Search Ads

Search Now

BROWSE MORE CLIPS

Budget calls for \$30M in cuts to school's vet program



Conservation Legacy Award

MORNING AG CLIPS

Contact Us

Sponsors

About Us

Advertise with Us

Privacy Statement

Terms of Service

CONNECT WITH US

Like Us on Facebook

Instagram

LinkedIn

Twitter

YouTube

TikTok

TRACK YOUR TRADE

Markets & Economy

Cattle Updates

Dairy News

Policy & Politics

Corn Alerts

QUICK LINKS

Account

Postal Membership

Just Me, Kate

Farmhouse Communication

GET THE MAC APP TODAY!

