

## Main Players

The Leadership Team introduces and promotes the program in the community, coordinates task force meetings, and organizes immediate followup to the survey results. The Leadership Team serves on the Task Force and also arranges for the training of the business Volunteer Visitors.

The Task Force is a broad-based group of local community leaders. The Task Force should include representatives of local Economic Development Councils, Industrial Development Authorities, Chambers of Commerce, local government, area utilities, community colleges, and other well-respected, influential community leaders.

Farm Visitation Teams consist of two persons per team. Visitation Teams will visit from two to four farms. These teams can be made up of Task Force members, educators, business people or retirees.

### **Supporting Organizations:**

Central Pennsylvania Conservancy  
Cumberland County Commissioners  
Cumberland County Conservation District  
Cumberland County Planning Commission  
Future of Cumberland County Agriculture  
Committee  
Penn State Cooperative Extension

### **For More Information:**

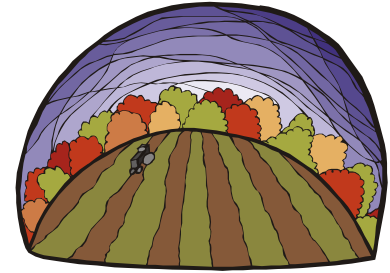
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# The Future of Cumberland County Agriculture:



*A community-based  
program to address the  
needs and future of farming  
in Cumberland County*

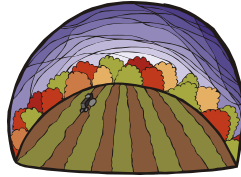


## INTRODUCTION

Farming in Cumberland County provides a wide variety of benefits, including jobs, income, and open space. Yet farming in the county is under pressure from development, competition from other farmers, and the general state of the economy.

Many Cumberland County farmers are uncertain about the future of farming in the county; a recent survey of farmers in Cumberland County found that almost half (41%) did not know whether their land would still be farmed in ten years. Uncertainty means farmers will be hesitant to make the investment decisions they need to remain competitive, making them more likely in the long run to go out of business. This relatively high level of uncertainty among farmers indicates the future of agriculture in Cumberland County is unclear.

The Future of Cumberland County Agriculture is a program to help the community respond to the challenges facing agriculture in Cumberland County. It helps the community identify the concerns and barriers to survival and growth facing local farms, and then develop and implement a community-based plan for sustaining farms and farming in the county, with the ultimate goal of sustaining a healthy local farm economy and creating an improved business climate in the county.



### The Future of Cumberland County Agriculture:

## OBJECTIVES

### Short-Term

- Provide community support for local farms
- Solve immediate individual farm concerns
- Increase the public's appreciation for and understanding of agriculture's role in the local community

### Long-Term

- Increase the competitiveness of local farms and agribusinesses
- Sustain a healthy farm economy and create an improved business climate
- Establish and implement a strategic action plan to insure the future of farming in Cumberland County

In the long-term, the program can make local farms more competitive by evaluating and addressing their broader needs and concerns. The program establishes an economic development plan for the local community. The process creates a broad-based community coalition to sustain long-term economic development efforts.

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE

**Farmer "Let's Talk" Sessions:** Three public meetings for farmers to share and discuss the issues, challenges and opportunities they face.

**Farm Visits:** Local community leaders receive training on how to conduct the local farm interviews. After receiving training, Volunteer Visitors call on farms and interview the farmer. A proven survey tailored to Cumberland County is used for the interviews, pinpointing farm needs, concerns and development plans. Individual farm data is kept confidential.

**Immediate Follow-Up:** A local Task Force reviews the survey results and responds to the needs and concerns expressed by farms.

**Strategic Planning:** University faculty and other experts computerize the information from the "Let's Talk" and Farm Visits, and prepare an initial draft report for the Task Force. The report includes data analysis and suggests recommendations for improving the local business climate. The Task Force uses this report, its knowledge of the community, and a strategic planning process to develop an action plan.

**Implementation:** The action planning process fosters the development of local implementation teams. These teams spearhead efforts to achieve the goals in the action plans. Farms, agribusinesses, other local businesses and a variety of agencies may be drawn into the process by these teams.