

Why do citizens volunteer to help?

With your time spread so thin between your family and your work, why would you contribute time to the Future of Cumberland County Agriculture program? Citizens and local leaders who have participated in similar programs in other states cite the following reasons they have been active in them:

It demonstrates that “we CARE about farming.” Just visiting farms demonstrates that your community cares about its local farms and appreciates their contributions to the area. It is surprising how many farmers feel unappreciated and have not been personally told that the community values them.

It is FUN! We guarantee you will have fun!! You will enjoy socializing with other key community leaders and participating in and influencing important community decisions.

It is a LEARNING experience. You will learn about your local economy’s strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of local farms and businesses, and gain insights on how your community is likely to develop in the future. You will learn about new options for working with existing farms and ways you can shape your local destiny.

It brings the community TOGETHER. In many communities, citizens and local leaders are thinking about their future, but they are not working together to impact the future. This program brings your community together. Business persons, farmers, local government officials, education officials, and interested citizens all work together for the future of existing farms and the community.

It is DO-ABLE and it gets RESULTS. Citizens just like you and your neighbors have done this program in all sizes and types of communities.

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

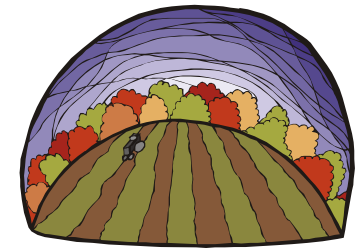
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The Future of Cumberland County Agriculture:



VOLUNTEER VISITORS

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



INTRODUCTION

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. It then develops and implements 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.

OBJECTIVES

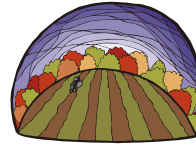
Short-Term

- 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.



The Future of Cumberland County Agriculture:

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. The survey pinpoints 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. Support from resources within and outside the community becomes mobilized.

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.

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.

VOLUNTEER VISITORS

The Future of Cumberland County Agriculture program needs a few volunteers to help with the farm visits. As a volunteer, you will attend a two-hour orientation session, which will provide an overview of how the process works, and tips on how to conduct an effective interview with farmers.

During orientation, the Leadership Team will help you identify your Visitation Team member and select the farms you will visit. You or your team member should contact the farmer to set up and complete the interviews within two weeks of your orientation session. Together, you and your team member will visit two to four farms. One team member will ask questions while the other records the answers on the survey form provided by the Leadership Team. Each visit typically takes one hour.