

April 11, 2023

To: Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski, chair House Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee; and Rep. Dan Moul, Republican chair, House Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee

Dear: Chairman Pashinski and Chairman Moul,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's involvement in organic agriculture. My name is Justin Clapper, and I'm the Manager of the Government Affairs and Communications Division at Pennsylvania Farm Bureau. I live in Bedford County, where, in my personal life, I own and operate Clapper Family Beef alongside my wife and daughter.

As the state's largest general farm organization, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is proud to represent over 28,000 members from every sector of Pennsylvania agriculture. Whether they're mushroom growers, distillers, dairymen, cattlemen, maple syrup producers, or they produce products conventionally or organically, our members represent a wide array of interests and commodity groups.

Organic farms play an important role in the Commonwealth's agricultural ecosystem. In fact, Pennsylvania farms rank 3rd in the nation in organic sales and 1st in the sale of organic livestock and poultry with over \$730 million sold. We also rank 1st in the sale of organic mushrooms with over \$95.4 million sold.

Organic food products are increasingly sought after on supermarket shelves, and we intend to assist our members in providing fresh, high-quality organic food to the public.

While we certainly welcome those who implement organic farming practices as members of our organization, some do not view those members very favorably. Many of you have likely heard that there is a divide, or at the very least a tension, between farmers who use traditional farming methods and those who grow organic products. I can tell you with certainty that Pennsylvania Farm Bureau supports those producers who use organic farming practices just as much as we support those producers who use any other farming practices.

Organic producers face the same challenges that other farmers do. Between land use pressures, market changes and workforce shortages, it doesn't take long to realize that organic farmers have a lot more in common with other farmers than you may initially suspect.

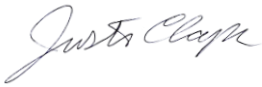
According to Jim Buckle, organic farmer, and President of the Maine Farm Bureau, "Organic farmers are taking advantage of high visibility in the consumer space right now and are positioned to be powerful advocates for American agriculture on a larger scale." Keeping that in mind, we at Pennsylvania Farm Bureau are looking to connect producers of all types to promote agriculture in our state and beyond.

At a time when agriculture is facing more threats than ever, it's critical that no matter what methods you implement on your operation, we come together to promote our common goals. Our membership reflects both the diversity and unity of Pennsylvania agriculture.

It's also important to note that Pennsylvania Farm Bureau supports HB 157 sponsored by Chairman Pashinski. The PA Preferred program provides an invaluable service to farmers across the Commonwealth by helping consumers easily identify agricultural products that are grown, produced, and processed in Pennsylvania. Establishing the PA Preferred Organic program in statute would expand the opportunities available to our members and allow more farmers to experience the benefits of the PA Preferred Program.

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today, and I welcome the chance to answer any questions that you might have. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Justin Clapper".

Justin Clapper
Manager, Government Affairs & Communications Division
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau