

**Good morning, Chairman Waugh, Vice-chair Wenger, and members of the committee. Thank you for providing this opportunity to give comment on two of the initiatives contained in the “Farmers First” proposal released this summer by Senators Waugh and Wenger. I am happy to be here today to speak on behalf of the over 37,000 rural and farm family members of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.**

### **ALTERNATIVE USES FOR MANURE**

**I would like to begin with the issue of alternative uses for manure in the state. As is recognized by this proposal, there is increasing pressure on many farmers who are involved in animal production to find alternative uses for the nutrients contained in animal manure. The marketplace is demanding increasing concentrations of animal units on farms for those operations to remain economically viable. Due to the increase in concentration of animals and the rapid escalation of regulation on these operations, viable alternatives are needed for the proper utilization of the nutrients contained in the manure produced.**

**Pennsylvania’s nutrient management law has required concentrated animal operations to properly balance the utilization of nitrogen contained in manure to the crops grown on land where manure is applied for many years now. More recently, the nutrient management regulations have been amended to include consideration of phosphorus levels in the soil where manure is applied. Phosphorus regulations will further limit the amount of manure that is land applied in many areas of the state.**

**Manure application setbacks from streams established through regulations under federal CAFO law also greatly reduces the amount of land on which manure can be applied in the state. A farmer operating a concentrated animal operation will lose twenty acres of land that he can no longer apply manure for every mile of stream on his farm with the established 100 ft setbacks contained in federal CAFO, nutrient management regulations and Act 38 which was recently passed into law.**

Simply transporting manure to land where the nutrients can be properly utilized in many cases is not a viable solution for the use of excess manure. Due to the often high moisture content and associated weight and volume of manure, transportation costs are prohibitive for long distances. Eligible fields to apply manure are increasingly difficult to find nearby to concentrated animal operations due to urban encroachment, particularly in the South-central and Southeastern sections of the state where the heaviest concentration of animal production is located.

While decreasing the level of nutrients contained in manure through diet and feed innovations will help address the excess of nutrients being land applied, methods of utilizing animal manure in an economically viable ways need to be found and adopted. Revitalizing the Agricultural By-Product Management Technology Board under the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to advance technologies and to evaluate regional manure management needs is a prudent first step to address this concern.

Creative innovations are urgently needed to properly utilize animal manure for the valuable resource that it is. Currently Maryland and Delaware provide state assistance for manure transportation to a plant where poultry manure is pelletized and used as fertilizer for golf courses and other more urban uses. Texas A&M University is working to develop a co-firing technology for coal and broiler litter to generate power. Clemson University has been studying the use of swine effluent and poultry litter on tree plantations and has found significant increases in wood value as a result. University of Georgia researchers are exploring the use of poultry litter compost in controlling runoff and soil erosion on highway and other public construction projects. Early results indicate that a treatment consisting of a mixture of poultry litter compost and ground wood waste produced lower soil and nutrient losses and better vegetative growth than any other treatments.

None of these innovations alone will adequately address the need to properly utilize excess manure in an economically viable fashion. However, it is these types of ideas,

and more, that will help us reach that goal. Certainly any use of public funds to address this concern should only be seed money for research and development to provide self-sustaining systems to properly utilize this valuable resource.

### **“FARMS TO SCHOOLS”**

Changing topics now to the “Farms to Schools” program. This program educates young children and their families about healthy diets and where food comes from before reaching the grocery store shelves. This type of educational process has long been a high priority of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau as evidenced by our active involvement in “Ag In The Classroom” activities as well as our own “Mobile Ag Ed Science Lab,” which is a 32ft. trailer containing a mobile lab with 12 work stations that provide hands-on experiments for grade and middle school students to learn more about agriculture and from where food comes. During the 2004-05 school year, two mobile Ag Ed Science Labs reached 25,000 students and 1,100 teachers in 22 counties of the state.

“Farms to Schools” is just further advancement of what we have been attempting to accomplish through “Ag In The Classroom” and the “Mobile Ag Science Lab” with an emphasis on proper nutrition and direct marketing opportunities for local farms in supplying healthy food choices to students and their families. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau supports any initiative that promotes purchasing preferences at the state level all the way down to the individual consumer in supporting Pennsylvania grown foods.

“Farms to Schools” is a program designed to promote Pennsylvania farm products as well promoting healthy lifestyles to present and future consumers. Further investment in expanding the program across the state, which has been successfully piloted by The Food Trust in Philadelphia schools, would be positive for the future health of Pennsylvanians and Pennsylvania agriculture.

**Pennsylvania Farm Bureau recommends Pennsylvania pass similar legislation to what was implemented in New York which mandates the state department of education and department of agriculture work together to link schools interested in purchasing farm products from the state with appropriate farmers and farm organizations and to recommend policy changes that would facilitate such purchasing. In fact, Farm Bureau would support a program in which all state and county prisons, government centers, schools, colleges, senior housing, juvenile facilities and other state institutions would be given general purchasing preferences for Pennsylvania foods.**

**Pennsylvania could also establish a week or an entire month possibly in November to coincide with Thanksgiving and Farm/City Week activities to promote the connection between food and agriculture. Also science standards at the state level should emphasize agricultural knowledge and awareness of food production that could be stressed during this time frame. This type of emphasis could further support and advance the “Farms to Schools” program across the state.**

**Again, Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today.**

**PENNSYLVANIA FARM BUREAU**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE  
PENNSYLVANIA SENATE  
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL  
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**Presented By**

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