



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 7, 2019

Departments of Agriculture, Education Celebrate FFA at Annual Mid-Winter Convention during 103rd PA Farm Show

Harrisburg, PA – Today at the 103rd Farm Show, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and Education Secretary Pedro Rivera celebrated agricultural education during the state FFA's Mid-Winter Convention with more than 5,000 FFA members and guests.

“As a former FFA student, I know firsthand the transformative power of the blue corduroy jacket,” Secretary Redding said. “As Secretary of Agriculture, I know the contributions that these students make to our state and our industry; the talent, skills, and leadership that will inspire the future of Pennsylvania.”

Pennsylvania's more than 150 high school agriculture education programs continue to prepare students for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) careers and beyond. The Economics and Statistics Administration – part of the U.S. Department of Commerce – reports that STEM occupations are projected to grow by 17 percent from 2008 to 2018.

“Today's FFA members are tomorrow's industry, and community leaders,” Secretary Rivera said. “Agriculture is among the top drivers of the Pennsylvania economy; and agriculture education opening doors to learners of all ages to explore a wide range of high-tech professions, and preparing students for college, career and community readiness.”

Today's Mid-Winter Convention recognized the academic, leadership and field-based experiences of 409 Keystone Degree recipients, the highest honor earned at the state level. In addition, the Pennsylvania FFA Alumni Association awarded more than 364 first-year members their own official FFA jacket after completing a competitive application process.

Last year marked the creation of the Commission on Agriculture Education Excellence. The 15-member commission complements Governor Tom Wolf's PAsmart initiative, an innovative investment in STEM and computer science education and hands-on technical education programs so students and workers get the skills that employers need. PAsmart will invest \$20 million in new funding for computer science and STEM education, as well as an additional \$10 million investment in apprenticeships and job training programs for in-demand careers.

As part of a workforce development plan outlined in a report issued in 2018, the departments are working to identify gaps in education and training for those in-demand career paths; focus on work-based learning, including micro-credentials and apprenticeships; and help Pennsylvanians obtain meaningful careers on the way to finding solutions to the shortage of talent in the near and long-term.

The Pennsylvania FFA Association helps students develop their potential for leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. Pennsylvania is home to nearly 13,000 members. For more information, visit <http://www.paffa.org/>.

The [Pennsylvania Farm Show](#) is the nation's largest indoor agricultural event, featuring 12,000 competitive exhibits, more than 5,200 of which are animal competitions, plus 300 commercial exhibitors. The show runs January 5 – 12, 2018. Admission is free and parking is \$15 in Farm Show lots. The Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center is easily accessible from Interstates 81 and 83.

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