

FOCUS GROUP: Innovative, Sustainable Agriculture

Draft: March 18, 2018

Wish/Goal List: “We wish that/there was ___ in Indiana County.”	Assets: Current resources/capacity that can contribute to achieving our goals/wishes.	Needs: Items/actions necessary to achieve our goals/wishes.	Potential Partnerships: Intentional agency/institutional connections needed to achieve our goals/wishes.	Recommended Actions: What action steps need to be taken, and by whom (agency, institution) to move toward achieving these goals?
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AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION: INNOVATIVE, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

1.	<p>We wish that that were more workshops and other ways to increase awareness of the benefits of various sustainable agriculture practices (e.g., less use of pesticides, creating healthier soil, building riparian buffers, improved pasture management and use) available to agricultural producers and others in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PASA: some scholarships and a Workshare Program available for annual conference; meetups or programs at farms in various parts of the state • Indiana County Conservation District – some money available to put on workshops • Penn State Extension • Western PA Conservancy • Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) • PA Certified Organic (PCO), Leslie Zuck • Growing Organic Farms Conference (GPOF) – annually in Harrisburg (www.gpofconference.org) • PA Project Grass • PA Forage and Grasslands Council • Organic Valley Dairy/CROPP: has producers shipping to them from Indiana County (Peter Miller) • Western PA Conservancy • SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting the word out about relevant workshops/programs • Identify what programs are most needed and in demand, since there are plenty of people and groups ready to put on programs • Grants, financial incentives to encourage farmers and others to build riparian buffers, and engage in other sustainable practices • Policy changes that encourage more sustainable practices • Find more ways to spread knowledge from local farmers that utilize sustainable practices • Get professionals (e.g., vets) on board • Have farmers who have tried sustainable practices share their experiences with others through farm visits, tests plots, articles in social media or newspapers, etc. • Get articles in newspapers and social media about sustainability • Encourage PSU Extension to have research test plots on farms in Indiana County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PASA • Indiana Conservation District • Western PA Conservancy, Indiana • Penn State Extension • Natural Resources Conservation District, Indiana • Project Grass • PA Forage and Grasslands Council • Western PA Annual Spring Grazing Conference • SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) • Local networks or organizations of specific types of farmers • Social media • Local newspapers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Penn State Extension (Rachel Milliron, Armstrong County) to have more research test plots and the educational activities associated with them in Indiana County, helping agricultural producers see results and accept them as practice. <p>NOTE: Rachel plans to do soybean sentinel plots, and a couple of small research projects in soybeans with the on-farm network, and intends to do at least one summer field day. Target areas: Indiana and Westmoreland Counties. Hopes to find farm locations after finding out about funding.</p>
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2.	<p>We wish that there were recurring classes/formal ag education program sat ICTC and/or or a local community college (for students and adults, customized for local needs in sustainable agriculture and identified areas of job demand or growth – including technology use and mechanical repair in agriculture, since there are lots of opportunities for new jobs and products in this area) available in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICTC • Local community colleges: Which ones are left? • Penn State Extension (Andrew Sandeen) • Indiana County Conservation District • Robertshaw Business Incubator • PA Farm Bureau • Penns Manor and Marion-Center FFA • PA Dept. of Agriculture (Scott Sheehy, Workforce Development Program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify promising areas of job growth/decent paying jobs for further developing sustainable agriculture and agricultural diversification in Indiana County: e.g., perhaps training people to manage or work in agriculture production or processing facilities utilizing vacant commercial buildings that are being repurposed. • Identify jobs in sustainable agriculture that such programs could help fill: e.g., we need more certified ag technical service planners in Indiana County • Create new jobs for trained agricultural workers in innovative, sustainable agriculture (or fill unmet demands) in the county • Scholarships for people who are being trained/retrained • See if there is funding available for retraining former coal miners or others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICTC • Local community colleges • Penn State Extension, Indiana County • Indiana County Conservation District • Robertshaw Business-Incubator • PA Farm Veterans: may be funding • PA Farm Buareau, Indiana • FFA • All 7 Indiana County School Districts: school boards, administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate conversation with Westmoreland Community College about the possibility of developing a new program (or something smaller). Andrew Sandeen (Penn State Extension, Indiana County) is happy to take a role in exploring and pushing forward with this goal. • Petition 7 school districts to appeal to Eric Palmer at ICTC for Ag Program (network with existing ag programs) • Seek funding: federal, state, county sources for educational \$ and/or grants • Seek support money and curricular support from state and national Farm Bureau
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		

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<p>3. We wish that there were more efforts to increase awareness and understanding of migrant workers (culture, language, etc.), which could improve general attitudes towards them and equip employers with effective training strategies and business relationship management in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts who work with migrant worker families: Dr. Hilario Molino and Dr. Victor Garcia (Mid-Atlantic Research and Training Institute for Community and Behavioral Health, IUP), Deke Showman (Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit, PA Migrant Education Recruitment Coordinator; email: Deke-Showman@iu5.org; ph. 814-734-5610, ext. 7052) • Friends of Farmworkers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops, newspaper articles, use of social media to raise awareness • Work with relevant organizations that can help increase awareness and understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-Atlantic Research and Training Institute for Community and Behavioral Health (MARTI), IUP • Friends of Farmworkers • Media outlets • PA Migrant Education 	
<p>4. We wish that there were more agricultural diversification (e.g., greater crop diversification, new ways of generating income) in Indiana County. QUESTION: DOES THERE NEED TO BE MORE DETAIL TO THIS FOR ANYONE TO ACT ON THIS?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn State Extension • Indiana County Conservation District • Western PA Conservancy • PASA • Adequate land base available in county for agricultural diversification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local policies and programs that encourage agricultural diversity • Further training of local farmers • Incentives for local farmers to diversify and become more sustainable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn State Extension, Indiana County • Indiana County Conservation District • ICTC and community colleges • Indiana County Office of Planning and Development • Indiana County Commissioners 	

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<p>5. We wish that farm laborers were provided adequate education on safe practices in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PA Farm Bureau groups have good programs. (Jefferson County has a GREAT program school kids go through.) Penn State Extension has a farm safety program at state level. Can they bring it to Indiana County? PA Friends of Farmworkers may be able to help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what programs are most needed locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Penn State Extension, Indiana County PA Farm Bureau, Indiana County PA Friends of Farmworkers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide educational program on safe practices for farm laborers
<p>6. We wish that there were workshops on legal issues for agricultural producers (e.g., requirements for having employees, environmental regulations, business paperwork, food safety, avoiding lawsuits) in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PA Farm Bureau attorneys (who do programming for PFB) could hold meeting in region PSU Center for Ag & Shale Law (usually work with partners on programs) Social media and traditional media outlets to publicize workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs assessment of what topics are most important to cover locally Coordination between relevant local organizations and appropriate legal experts for doing workshops PR to publicize workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSU, Indiana County Indiana County Conservation District PA Farm Bureau PSU Center for Ag & Shale Law Relevant organizations to publicize workshops on the Facebook page, website, newsletter, newspaper, etc.: e.g., PA Farm Link, PSU Indiana County, Indiana Gazette, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request Farm Bureau to hold workshops on legal issues for agricultural producers

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7.	<p>We wish that more meat producing farmers received training in meat cutting or how to address the processing logjam in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn State Extension: Brian Moyer) • PASA 2018 (Feb.) annual conference: Brian Moyer and Matt LaRoux did a program on how farmers can address the processing logjam • Penn State Extension: Jonathon Campbell, Meats Specialist • NC Choices: meats program • Logjams: schedule early and talk with processors early to find out when they can take animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop materials listing available resources • Publicize available resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn State Extension (Brian Moyer, Jonathon Campbell). Note upcoming course as an example of possibilities: https://extension.psu.edu/traditional-italian-processed-meats-workshop • PASA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for more inspectors • Lobby the Game Commission to find a way to stop the backlog of meat processing that happens when processors shut down for deer season (e.g., asking for grants)

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PUBLIC EDUCATION: INNOVATIVE, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

8.	<p>We wish that there were ways to connect more children and adults with local farms, farmers, gardening, plants, fresh produce, sustainable agriculture, etc. in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Farm Bureau: teacher training, Mobile Ag Ed Science Lab, Agriculture in the Classroom • Indiana County Farmers’ Market: opportunities to meet farmers and buy local produce; educational events to educate consumers and their families, including a children’s day • Indiana Food Coop: opportunities to buy local produce; educational events • Chevy Chase Children’s Garden Program • Chevy Chase Community Garden • Indiana Community Garden: community events, garden plots, community time, educational signage, youth garden program • Future Farmers of America (FFA) • 4H • Farm/garden-related Friends of the Parks programs • Vale Woods Farms (Cambria County): open houses, events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional resources and expertise to grow some of these assets • Encourage the development of additional ways to connect children and adults with local farms, farmers, gardening, plants, fresh produce, etc. • Pursue relevant grant opportunities • Do more to utilize a diverse range of social media (websites, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) to publicize events – including social media such as Instagram that might be used more by younger people • Advertise events and programs through schools, newspapers, and radio • Get PR and articles about events and programs in local newspapers and on the radio • Encourage teachers, Girl Scout/Boy Scout leaders, etc. to plan field trips, service projects, and hands-on learning experiences at relevant local sites • Educate 4H leaders and others working with youth more on sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Farm Bureau • Indiana County Farmer’s Market • Indiana Food Coop • Chevy Chase Community Center and Community Garden • Indiana Community Garden • Indiana County 4H • PSU, Indiana County • Future Farmers of America • Friends of the Parks, Indiana County • Indiana County teachers • Indiana County Recreation and Parks Commission (who want to include more non-sports related activities in their youth program) • Local service organization such as Kiwanis might provide grants or scholarships for specific programs or facilities • Indiana County Tourist Bureau • Some Indiana County Eco-Tour and Geocache sites • Indiana County school districts, school boards, and teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory existing programs/activities, and make sure they are well publicized • Encourage the development of additional events that connect more children and adults with local farms and ag producers: a meal on the farm, a farm visit or tour, a festival of some sort — preferably involving multiple ag-related organizations and lots of volunteers to help. (See the examples of successful public events listed under “Needs” in Item #13.) • Explore possibilities for Indiana County school districts developing farm to school initiatives through which : (1) Schools buy and feature locally produced, farm-fresh foods on menus. (2) Schools incorporate nutrition-based curriculum and provide students with experiential learning opportunities such as farm visits, garden-based learning, and recycling programs. (E.g., USDA Farm to School Grant Programs, National Farm to School Network.)
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<p>9. We wish that there were more education of the public on the value of buying locally grown, sustainable agricultural products and on how consumers can buy from local markets in Indiana County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indiana County Farmers Market: website, Facebook page providing educational items • Indiana County Food Coop • Radio ag programs • 4H • FFA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better market Indiana County agriculture • Need media buy-in of local agriculture to be really successful (e.g., <i>Reading Eagle</i> has a Berks Country section in newspaper once a week. Could list programs and promote awareness.) • Assess what local farms have interesting stories to highlight (e.g., How many people in Indiana County know that Turner's milk comes mostly from farms right here in Indiana County?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indiana County Farmers Market • Indiana County Food Coop • Social media • Local newspapers • Local radio stations • Indiana County Fair • Local supermarkets who could have "Buy Local" signs on products, etc. • Indiana County Tourist Bureau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a weekly (or monthly) highlight put together that includes a good photo and shares a little bit about a farm with an interesting story, the people who work there, what products they produce, and where they can be purchased. Highlights could be broadcast all over the place: social media, signage, flyers, website, press release, etc.

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<p>10. We wish that there were more education of non-ag people about what makes producers sustainable (creating an informed community that understands why farmers are creating riparian buffers, using cover crops, etc.) in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant educational programs (and in some cases signage at county sites) of various organizations: Penn State Extension, Penn State Extension Master Gardeners, Indiana Community Garden, Stormwater Education Partnership, Friends of the Parks, etc. • A number of Indiana County Eco-Tour and Geocache sites • Strong set of partners if wanted to have county field days or other event featuring certain farms: Penn State Extension, Indiana Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation District, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More local educational programming and signage • Greater publicity about existing sustainable ag efforts • Consider having county field days (as occurs in some other counties) where certain farms are featured in one area of the county since they have completed some type of conservation practices or something else of note. The day of the event the public may go to the farms on their own and there's set things to see: tours to be given by farms owners or employees. Maybe the NRCS or Conservation District person leads educational tour with people about project that was completed on farm, educational displays, etc. • Review examples of successful public events done in other locations: a meal on the farm, a twilight tour, a day on the farm, a festival of some sort, etc. Would require lots of people, good leadership, a decent location, and agreeable owners. For examples, see https://vermontbreakfastonthefarm.com/ and Michigan State : http://msue.anr.msu.edu/community_food_systems/ , http://www.canr.msu.edu/breakfast_on_the_farm/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn State Extension, Indiana County • Penn State Extension Master Gardeners, Indiana County • Indiana County Conservation District • Natural Resources Conservation District, Indiana • Indiana Community Garden • Indiana County Stormwater Education Partnership • Friends of the Parks • Indiana County Eco-Tour and Geocache Passports • Social media • Newspapers, radio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop events on farms that provide opportunities for non-ag people to interact with ag people: a meal on the farm, a day on the farm, a farm tour, a festival of some sort -- preferably involving multiple ag-related organizations and lots of volunteers to help

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<p>11. We wish that there were more education of landowners who lease to agricultural operators in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSU Ag & Shale Law Center • PA Farm Link: has a leasing document developed by PSU Ag & Shale Center. Do programs around PA where Center attorney Sean High discusses all aspects of leasing. Can do one locally if known interest and can cover costs. Invite landowners and those wanting to lease since both need education and learn to put it all in writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding of the value of the land beyond the rent • Create templates for landowner-operator agreements • Identify level of interest in doing a program in the county. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn State Extension, Indiana County • PA Farm Link • Indiana County Conservation District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop fliers and send information out to all landowners via: Clean and Green and plat-book list

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: INNOVATIVE, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

<p>12. We wish that local and county-wide economic development planning and policy documents would expand and encourage the use of sustainable agriculture techniques to reduce pollution, enhance water quality, and reduce carbon pollution in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Farm Bureau, Indiana County • Indiana County Conservation District • PSU Extension • PASA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to highlight BMP (Best Management Practices) in farming community • Need to provide incentive funding programs that encourage local farmers to make changes • Make sure agriculture is on the radar of groups such as Office of Planning and Development or Chamber of Commerce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Farm Bureau, Indiana County • Indiana County Conservation District • PSU Extension, Indiana County • PA Farm Senate Committee • Dept. of Environmental Protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to develop a stronger voice and more priorities for sustainable agriculture with groups such as the Office of Planning and Development and the Chamber of Commerce
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<p>13. We wish that there were more new, well paying jobs in sustainable agriculture available in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indiana County Small Business Incubator (at IUP's Robertshaw Building) • Penn State Extension, Indiana County • Indiana County Conservation District • ICTC and community colleges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital, grants • Policies that would encourage more such jobs in the county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn State Extension, Indiana County • Indiana County Conservation District • ICTC and community colleges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs at ICTC or community colleges to learn these jobs • Assist agricultural producers in growing their business, overcoming hurdles to expand and develop
<p>14. We wish that there were more developed agritourism (various agriculturally based activities that bring visitors to the farm) in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn State Extension • PASA • Successful agritourism nearby • Reports on successful agritourism initiatives elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital investment • Grant program to help local farmers who wanted to develop agritourism • Study successful initiatives elsewhere: e.g., Vale Wood Farms (Cambria County), Soergel Orchards (Wexford) • Policies to encourage more agritourism in the county • Effectively use technology to connect consumers with agritourism in the county • PR (social media, newspapers, radio) listing local agritourism events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn State Extension • PASA • Indiana County Conservation District • Relevant social media outlets • Indiana County Tourist Bureau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist interested agricultural producers through providing workshops, mentorships, information about technical assistance, grant support, etc.

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<p>15. <i>We wish that there were strong networks among agricultural producers and with organizations that can provide support in areas of agriculture w that are not well developed in Indiana County.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Farm Bureau, Indiana County • Learn from existing organizations/networks that are already in place in the county—e.g., Republic Food Network/PSU Extension sheep programs in area • Learn from informal networks that are already in place, including small groups of farmers with similar interests – e.g., crop farmers who do custom work for others or buy on larger scale so they can get the discount for all people they plant for • See what is being done in other counties to successfully share resources, expertise, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to develop co-op or broker systems for farmers in areas of agriculture where currently not well developed • Inventory what is already in place and how these kinds of initiatives can be extended to other aspects of agriculture – e.g., greenhouse growers who might want to work together to purchase more soil or soil amendments at cheaper prices • Needs assessment of local farmers and what would be helpful • Volunteers and mentors to help with networking • Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSU Extension • Republic Food Network • PA Farm Bureau • Indiana County Conservation District • PASA • Expand or replicate existing informal networks in other areas of county ag • Indiana County Fair Board • Food Co-op of Indiana, PA • PA Farm Link • Programs offering small business loans • Keystone Development Ctr • Robertshaw Business Incubator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an agriculture incubator
<p>16. <i>We wish that there were more data available to understand where agricultural producers are selling their commodities, and why – including how much of what they produce remains in Indiana County.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations that collect relevant data or can identify producers to survey: PSU Extension, Indiana County Conservation District, The Center for Rural PA, U.S. and PA Depts. Of Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out what data are currently being collected • Determine what additional data would be useful (e.g., do we need a processing plant for some of the product, which might provide an opportunity for a new industry?) • Capital and grants to develop new facilities as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSU Extension • Indiana County Conservation District • Indiana County Commissioners • Indiana County Office of Planning and Development • Robertshaw Small Business Incubator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a survey for local producers • Develop a survey for consumers (to find out what agricultural products they buy and from whom) • Assess what types of food hubs might be needed n Indiana County., and what it would take to develop them. (A food hub, as defined by the USDA, is “a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing,, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products.”)

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<p>17. We wish that there were an office to coordinate information and to help encourage and facilitate projects in all four areas explored by the Sustainability Task Force, including sustainable agriculture in Indiana County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous programs/workshops available through PSU Extension, PASA, Republic Food Network, PA Women’s Agricultural Network, etc. • Micro-loans available through Farm Service Agency, PSA (Krystal Sellers), Farm Credit (Kathy Hartzell), Idea Foundry (revolving loan program based in Pittsburgh that works with farmers) • PA Farm Link Facebook page and other organizations list upcoming events • Existing websites list resources and events: PSU Extension, PA Farm Bureau, PASA (PA Association for Sustainable Agriculture), Indiana County Conservation District, Indiana County Sustainability Task Force, etc. • Utilize existing websites, Facebook pages, newsletters, etc. to post information • Local newspapers, radio, Indiana County Tourist Bureau • IUP Small Business Institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate ag people on where to find relevant information — including social media, print, and radio • Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Farm Link • PSU Extension: wide variety of workshops, programs, etc. in a broad range of topics • PA Farm Bureau • Republic Food Network • PASA • Relevant social media platforms • Local media outlets: newspapers, radio, etc. • Indiana County Tourist Bureau • Indiana County Office of Planning and Development • Indiana County Conservation District • Western PA Conservancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open a County Office of Sustainability to coordinate information for projects in all four areas explored by the Sustainability Task Force, including agriculture • Develop a resource list of who to contact to learn more about available programs and support. Share with relevant organizations and see if it can be posted on relevant websites. • Maintain a website where all sustainable ag programs are listed. • Explore additional ways to publicize programs and cross list activities, including to people who don’t have decent internet access. • Utilize formal-informal networks of ag people with specific interests.