



Sustainable Agriculture Focus Group

Agriculture Professionals, Farmers, Interested
Community Members



Contributing Members

Co-Facilitators: Kay Snyder and Peter Broad

- ▶ Adam Cotchen
- ▶ Alysha Trexler
- ▶ Ed Trexler
- ▶ Amy Manko
- ▶ Andrew Sandeen
- ▶ Barb Barker
- ▶ Bob Livingston
- ▶ Bob Madden
- ▶ Candice Bolger
- ▶ Carrie Miller
- ▶ Darlene Livingston
- ▶ Hilario Molina II
- ▶ Kay Smith
- ▶ Marthe Weyandt
- ▶ Season Petrovich
- ▶ Tom Beresnyak
- ▶ Leya Ramer
- ▶ Pam Bryan



Challenges:

Youth are leaving the county and there is a workforce shortage.

Farmers need information and training.



Utilize Sustainable Ag Philosophies to Develop a Skilled and Qualified Workforce to Fill Labor Shortages in the Agricultural Arena

- ▶ Sustainable agriculture practices
- ▶ Soil health
- ▶ Agriculture technology
- ▶ Mechanical repair of equipment
- ▶ Apprenticeships
- ▶ Migrant labor options: increase awareness and equip employers
- ▶ Agriculture diversification opportunities
- ▶ Farm safety education
- ▶ Agritourism
- ▶ Ag legal issues: regulations, food safety requirements, leasing
- ▶ Meat cutting and scheduling meat processing



Strategies:

- ▶ Work with community colleges, school districts, agriculture organizations already actively educating farmers, and state-wide organizations to develop educational programs and resources.
- ▶ Ensure widespread publication of programs already available as well as those developed to meet the needs.
- ▶ Develop agriculture incubator.
- ▶ Seek federal, state, county financial resources, grant and sponsorships to fund programs.
- ▶ Media focus to promote agriculture.



Challenge:

Indiana County needs to capitalize on its agriculture asset.



Promote Local Agriculture as an Economic Driver in Indiana County

- ▶ Connect children and adults to farms, local fresh produce and farm products (often to purchase), and sustainable agriculture.
- ▶ Share sustainable ag practices.
- ▶ Information about leasing land to agriculture producers.



Strategies:

- ▶ Publicize existing programs, events and success stories through media outlets.
- ▶ Encourage educational events developed for public and consumers such as farm tours, festivals, farm to table, involving multiple ag organizations as well as more agritourism.
- ▶ Explore school partnerships including: farm to school initiatives, nutrition-based curriculum and experiential learning opportunities, gardening, recycling, Ag in the Classroom Program, Mobile Ag Learning Center, etc.
- ▶ Seek grant funding through USDA Farm to School Grant Programs, and others.
- ▶ Workshops and classes for public on leasing, sustainable ag practices, etc.



Challenge:

Ensuring the Continued Success
of Agriculture in Indiana
County



Develop and Maintain County Wide Collaborations and Strong Support Systems

- ▶ Local & county wide economic development planning and policy documents encouraging sustainable agriculture practices.
 - ▶ Reduce pollution, improve water quality, and reduce carbon footprints.
- ▶ Strong networks among agriculture producers, providing support to each other.
- ▶ Farm sustainability begins with succession planning.
- ▶ New, well paying jobs in sustainable agriculture in Indiana County.



Strategies:

- ▶ Work with Office of Planning and Development, Chamber of Commerce and others to develop more priorities related to sustainable agriculture.
- ▶ Publicize farm groups currently meeting in county.
- ▶ Encourage casual meetings of farmers with similar interests.
- ▶ Work with farmers to develop succession plans.
- ▶ Utilize above educational priorities to prepare employees for jobs in sustainable agriculture.



Office to Coordinate Information and Facilitate Action in all Four Areas of Sustainable Task Force

- ▶ Staff to facilitate and implement above items as well as other task force priorities.
- ▶ Develop a county calendar and publicize events already taking place in county and region.
- ▶ Gather data to understand local producers' marketing strategies.
- ▶ Assess whether certain types of food hubs/processing facilities might be needed in Indiana County.
- ▶ Promote western Pennsylvania agriculture opportunities.