
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 815 Session of
2003

INTRODUCED BY GRUCELA, COY, CREIGHTON, DALEY, GEORGE, HARHAI,
HERMAN, LaGROTTA, LAUGHLIN, McCALL, McILHATTAN, SHANER,
SOLOBAY, STABACK, SURRA AND TANGRETTI, MARCH 11, 2003

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS,
MARCH 11, 2003

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Family Farm and Food Protection Commission.

2 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
3 hereby enacts as follows:

4 Section 1. Short title.

5 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Family Farm
6 and Food Protection Commission Act.

7 Section 2. Legislative findings and purpose.

8 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

9 (1) Pennsylvania's principal industry is agriculture and
10 Pennsylvania has one of the largest rural populations in the
11 nation, with over 7.7 million acres dedicated to farming.

12 (2) Farmers are a vital component of this Commonwealth's
13 economy, comprising the largest industry in this
14 Commonwealth, generating over \$3,700,000,000 annually in farm
15 receipts, supporting a \$43,700,000,000-a-year agribusiness
16 economy and employing nearly 20% of this Commonwealth's work

1 force.

2 (3) The entire nation looks to Pennsylvania as one of
3 the biggest providers of food in the country; ranking in the
4 top ten in most commodities.

5 (4) Across the nation, agriculture is changing due to
6 global competition, strict environmental standards,
7 biotechnology, food safety concerns and technological
8 advances.

9 (5) The Commonwealth's agriculture is being threatened
10 by low commodity prices, market dynamics, loss of farmland,
11 drought disasters and development pressure.

12 (6) It is the purpose of this act to establish the
13 commission to assess in a bipartisan manner the current
14 Commonwealth agricultural policy in an effort to determine if
15 the Commonwealth's policy reflects the changing atmosphere of
16 agriculture and to make recommendations as to address these
17 concerns.

18 Section 3. Definitions.

19 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
20 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
21 context clearly indicates otherwise:

22 "Agribusiness." A business related to agriculture.

23 "Agriculture." The commercial production of agricultural
24 crops, livestock or livestock products, poultry products, milk
25 or dairy products, or fruits and other horticultural products.

26 "Center." The Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

27 "Commission." The Family Farm and Food Protection Commission
28 established in section 4.

29 "Department." The Department of Agriculture of the
30 Commonwealth.

1 Section 4. Commission.

2 (a) Establishment.--The Family Farm and Food Protection
3 Commission is established as a legislative commission.

4 (b) Membership.--

5 (1) The commission shall be comprised of 14 members:

6 (i) Two senators:

7 (A) one appointed by the President pro tempore
8 of the Senate; and

9 (B) one appointed by the Minority Leader of the
10 Senate.

11 (ii) Two representatives:

12 (A) one appointed by the Speaker of the House of
13 Representatives; and

14 (B) one appointed by the Minority Leader of the
15 House of Representatives.

16 (iii) Four individuals engaged in agriculture:

17 (A) one appointed by the President pro tempore
18 of the Senate;

19 (B) one appointed by the Minority Leader of the
20 Senate;

21 (C) one appointed by the Speaker of the House of
22 Representatives; and

23 (D) one appointed by the Minority Leader of the
24 House of Representatives.

25 (iv) Three members appointed by the Governor who are
26 engaged in agriculture or agribusiness.

27 (v) The Secretary of Agriculture of the
28 Commonwealth.

29 (vi) The Dean of the College of Agricultural
30 Sciences at The Pennsylvania State University.

(vii) The Dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine
at the University of Pennsylvania.

(2) Members appointed under paragraph (1)(iii) and (iv)
must be domiciled in this Commonwealth.

(c) Functions.--The commission has the following powers and
duties:

(1) To conduct at least one hearing in each region of
the department. At each hearing, to solicit and receive all
of the following:

(i) Testimony from public, private and academic
experts relating to agriculture and the food and fibre
system of this Commonwealth.

(ii) Testimony regarding existing State government
programs which affect agriculture.

(iii) Testimony regarding existing academic programs
which affect agriculture.

(2) To make, by December 31, 2004, a report to the
General Assembly on all of the following:

(i) Current State government policy on agriculture
in this Commonwealth.

(ii) Policy recommendations which will enhance or
encourage the economic, environmental and social benefits
of agriculture in this Commonwealth.

(iii) Testimony regarding technological and
biological advances within agriculture.

(iv) Testimony regarding the economic impact of
market changes regarding food production supply and
demand.

(d) Meetings.--

(1) Eight members constitute a quorum. Action of the

1 commission requires a vote of at least eight members.

2 (2) The commission shall meet initially in March 2003.

3 At this meeting, a chairperson and vice chairperson shall be
4 elected from among the members.

5 (e) Reimbursement.--Members under subsection (b)(1)(iv)
6 shall receive all of the following:

7 (1) The sum of \$200 per day for each day on which the
8 commission meets.

9 (2) Reimbursement under 4 Pa. Code Ch. 40 (relating to
10 travel and subsistence).

11 (3) Reimbursement for necessary expenses incurred in the
12 discharge of their functions.

13 (f) Commonwealth assistance.--The department, the center and
14 The Pennsylvania State University College of Agricultural
15 Sciences shall assist the commission by providing office space,
16 personnel and other administrative support necessary for the
17 administration of this act.

18 Section 5. Expiration.

19 This act shall expire July 1, 2005.

20 Section 6. Effective date.

21 This act shall take effect in 60 days.