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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Redding: Great Challenges Ahead for Pennsylvania Agriculture
Secretary of Agriculture featured speaker at Keller's Farmers' Breakfast

ELLIOTTSBURG – Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding today told attendees of Rep. Mark Keller's (R-Perry/Cumberland) 13th Annual Farmers' Breakfast that significant challenges lie ahead for the state's agriculture industry, but he remains excited about the future.

During his remarks, Redding cited the dairy crisis, Spotted Lanternfly, broadband access and workforce development as key agricultural issues in the Commonwealth. He discussed the recently unveiled PA Farm Bill, which would invest more than \$24 million to bolster infrastructure, expand resources and cultivate future generations of agriculture leaders.

"The Farm Bill is historic. We've never had a Farm Bill in Pennsylvania," Redding told the crowd. "The governor was very engaging and thoughtful in asking – what does the industry need? It addresses workforce needs and infrastructure needs, but it also is keeping our eye on the evolving industries, like industrial hemp."

Information about a challenge that may soon face Pennsylvania's pork producers was presented by another speaker. Dave Swartz, Penn State Extension assistant director of animal systems programs, outlined the serious threat posed by African swine fever, which has killed tens of millions of pigs in China, Russia and Eastern Europe. It has yet to appear in the United States.

"Security at our ports of entry to America is really a key factor in trying to keep this off of our shores," said Swartz.

During her presentation, Carol Hardbarger, a member of the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board, spoke about the board's history and responsibilities. She said the board is working hard to do its part in resolving the dairy crisis, which includes hosting "listening sessions" in farming communities across the Commonwealth. Four sessions have been held to date, and four more are planned during 2019.

The board is also increasing its efforts to promote the dairy industry through all of its social media platforms.

“We are trying to improve our education and outreach programs,” said Hardbarger, who reminded the crowd that the board issues a bi-monthly, electronic newsletter to which they can subscribe.

PennAg Industries Association was one of the breakfast sponsors.

“Representative Keller is one of a few people in the Legislature who come from an agricultural background,” said Chris Herr, PennAg executive vice president. “We are fortunate to have him.”

“We had another impressive list of speakers this year, and I was especially pleased Secretary Redding was able to take time out of his busy schedule to join us,” said Keller. “I hope those in attendance found the information our speakers presented to be useful.”

In addition, four groups of FFA members from Big Spring, Greenwood, Newport and West Perry high schools were presented with Keystone Degrees, which are given to members who meet certain requirements of the organization.

The breakfast was held at the Perry Mennonite Reception Center in Elliottsburg, Perry County, and attracted 240 people, which was the largest crowd in the event’s 13-year history.

Other sponsors included Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania, Seneca Resources, Sunoco Pipeline and Versant Strategies.

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