

Among the range of options for improving on-farm nutrient use efficiency, the project will promote a number of especially useful and economically viable tools, including the Pre-Sidedress Nitrate (PSNT), fall Cornstalk Nitrate tests and site-specific agriculture technologies. These tools help farmers significantly improve nutrient use efficiency. They give farmers the information they need to have greater confidence in crop nitrogen needs, which enables them to reduce buffer application of nutrients, thereby reducing fertilizer costs and reducing nitrogen loss to the environment.

Every farm is unique. It is the goal of the *Lancaster Farms* project to 1) work with interested farmers to identify best management practices and/or technologies best suited to that farmer's situation and preferences and 2) secure appropriate technical/financial assistance to help make them happen. Participation is 100% voluntary, and participating farmers will play a lead role in deciding how they will participate.

How Will the Process Work?

Representatives from a number of organizations serve as local advisors and partners, including: Lancaster County Conservation District, Lancaster County Cooperative Extension, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Brubaker Consulting, University of Connecticut, Lancaster Farmland Trust, the Lancaster County Ag Land Preserve Board, TeamAg Inc., Pennsylvania State University, and others. Other key local partners include producer groups, county planners and commissioners, local agricultural consultants, conservation leaders, and economic development entities. The farmers themselves – all kinds and all sizes – are the core of the project. The Center for Conservation Incentives (CCI) is a lead coordinator of the project and will contribute technical and policy expertise and financial support. NRCS has provided both technical and financial support for the project.

Lancaster Farms is interested in collaborating with all interested stakeholders in Lancaster County. We welcome input, ideas, and participation.

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Lancaster Farms

*Finding
Solutions to
Nutrient
Challenges*

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Agriculture is the cornerstone of Lancaster County, socially and economically. In addition, it provides one of the most critical opportunities to address natural resource challenges, especially water quality in Chesapeake Bay and its vital tributaries.

Lancaster Farms is a 100% voluntary, cooperative project of Lancaster County farmers, agricultural leaders, conservationists, and other interested stakeholders. The goal is to improve agricultural nitrogen use efficiency county-wide by 30% or more while maintaining or improving the economic viability of participating farms, in part by solving and therefore removing environmental constraints those operations may currently face. Each participating farm's contribution to the county-wide nitrogen use efficiency goal will vary depending on individual goals and situation.

Lancaster Farms is a truly innovative project that will break new ground on a very serious challenge – a county-wide excess of agricultural nutrients. For Lancaster County – which imports more agricultural nutrients than are exported in food and fiber and has more manure nutrients that can be utilized by the county's farmland -- the dominant current approach of addressing challenges on an individual farm-by-farm basis, which produces significant benefits around the country, is unlikely to get the job done on its own. New tools and technologies and more coordinated partnerships are needed. The **Lancaster Farms** project will take a countywide, multi-partner, and highly coordinated approach to bring Lancaster County into nutrient balance, which is essential if Lancaster, and Pennsylvania, are to meet water quality goals set out in the Chesapeake Bay Agreement Tributary Strategies.

Why Lancaster County?

Lancaster is an ideal location to launch this program because agriculture in Lancaster County:

- Produces more products than any other non-irrigated county in the nation, generating \$1 billion and one out of five jobs in the county;
- Contributes almost 65% of the county's total N load delivered to the Chesapeake Bay, which translates into 3.4% of the Chesapeake Bay-wide agricultural total N load;
- Is in a good position to leverage the new technologies and practices that can greatly improve nutrient use efficiency; and
- Has an excess of nutrients from commercial fertilizer and manure, indicating that significant progress toward improved nutrient use efficiency is possible.

Project Fundamentals

Lancaster Farms has four core goals:

1. Develop a performance-based incentives program that encourages and enables both English and Plain Sect farmers to improve on-farm nutrient use efficiency through a wide range of technologies and practices,
2. Develop an economically self-sustaining manure brokering program to foster improved use of manure within the county and adjacent counties,
3. Develop a county-wide strategy to address the county's surplus nutrients by treating and exporting excess manure for appropriate use, and
4. Develop farmer-led discussion groups to foster and enhance the long-term success of nutrient use efficiency and conservation practices.

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