

The Differences Between
The Farmland Preservation Program,
The Agricultural Security Area Program,
and
Clean and Green

The intent of all of these programs is to promote and maintain a viable agricultural industry in the state of Pennsylvania. The Clean and Green program does this through tax relief and incentive, Agricultural Security Areas through added protection to farmers, and Farmland Preservation through permanent removal of development potential. Because these three programs all have a similar focus, they are oftentimes confused. The following brief descriptions are intended to clear up any confusion regarding them.

Clean and Green is a tax program that is coordinated through the county tax office (582-2131, ext 4116). The intent of the program is to provide real estate tax relief for individuals, owning ten or more acres, who are using their land for agricultural, forest, or conservation uses and to provide an incentive for landowners to keep their properties in open space use. Rather than pay taxes based on fair market value, the owner pays taxes on the agricultural value of the land. Should a landowner opt to develop the land, he will not only begin to pay taxes based on fair market value, but he will also pay a penalty (roll-back taxes) for removing the land from agricultural, forest, or conservation activity.

The Agricultural Security Area is a program intended to ease surrounding developments' impact on normal farming practices. Each township forms and maintains its own Ag-Security Area. It is a voluntary program whereby a landowner chooses to join with other landowners to receive certain benefits--by remaining in an Ag-Security Area, a farmer receives added assurance that his normal farming practices will receive nuisance claim protection, protection from eminent domain and from special development projects. Additionally, by being in an Ag-Security Area, a farmer is eligible to be considered for the Farmland Preservation program. A landowner can choose to leave the program at any time without penalty.

The Farmland Preservation Program is a voluntary permanent deed restriction program that removes the development potential from a property. Farmers whose lands are included in an Agricultural Security Area are eligible to sell or donate their development rights (a conservation easement) to the County Agricultural Land Preservation Board. An agricultural conservation easement is a legally recorded deed restriction that limits land to agriculture and open space uses. Most future non-agricultural land development and subdivision would be prohibited. A landowner who sells or donates an agricultural conservation easement retains all rights to use the land for agricultural operations and for any purposes that does not interfere with the ability to farm the land. While an easement removes the development rights, the landowner still holds the title to the property, the right to restrict public access to it, and the right to sell, give, or pass the property to whomever he or she wants. The Agricultural Easement is held and enforced by the County Ag-Land Preservation Board

*For more information, contact the Perry County Conservation District, 31 West Main Street, P. O. Box 36
New Bloomfield, PA 17068 or Phone (717) 582-8988.*