

Beginning Farmers & Ranchers (BFR) Resources Guide

Pennsylvania United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Beginning Farmer and Rancher (BFR) Contacts

**Farm Service Agency
(FSA):** Michael Sherman

PA Beginning Farmer &
Veteran Coordinator

Address:
Farm Service Agency
359 East Park Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17111
Phone: 717-645-3037
Email:
michael.sherman@usda.gov
Agency Website:
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

**Natural Resources
Conservation Service
(NRCS):** Janette Leshner

District Conservationist & PA
BFR Champion

Address: USDA-NRCS
441 Plum Creek Rd
Sunbury, PA 17801
Phone: (570) 415-3117
Email:
janette.lesher@usda.gov
Agency Website:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Risk Management Agency (RMA):
Tonya Harris

Risk Management Specialist & BFR
Champion

Address: Raleigh Regional Office
Risk Management Agency
United States Department of Agriculture
4405 Bland Road, Suite 160
Raleigh, NC 27609
Phone: 919-875-4907
Email: tonya.d.harris@usda.gov
Agency Website:
<https://www.rma.usda.gov/>

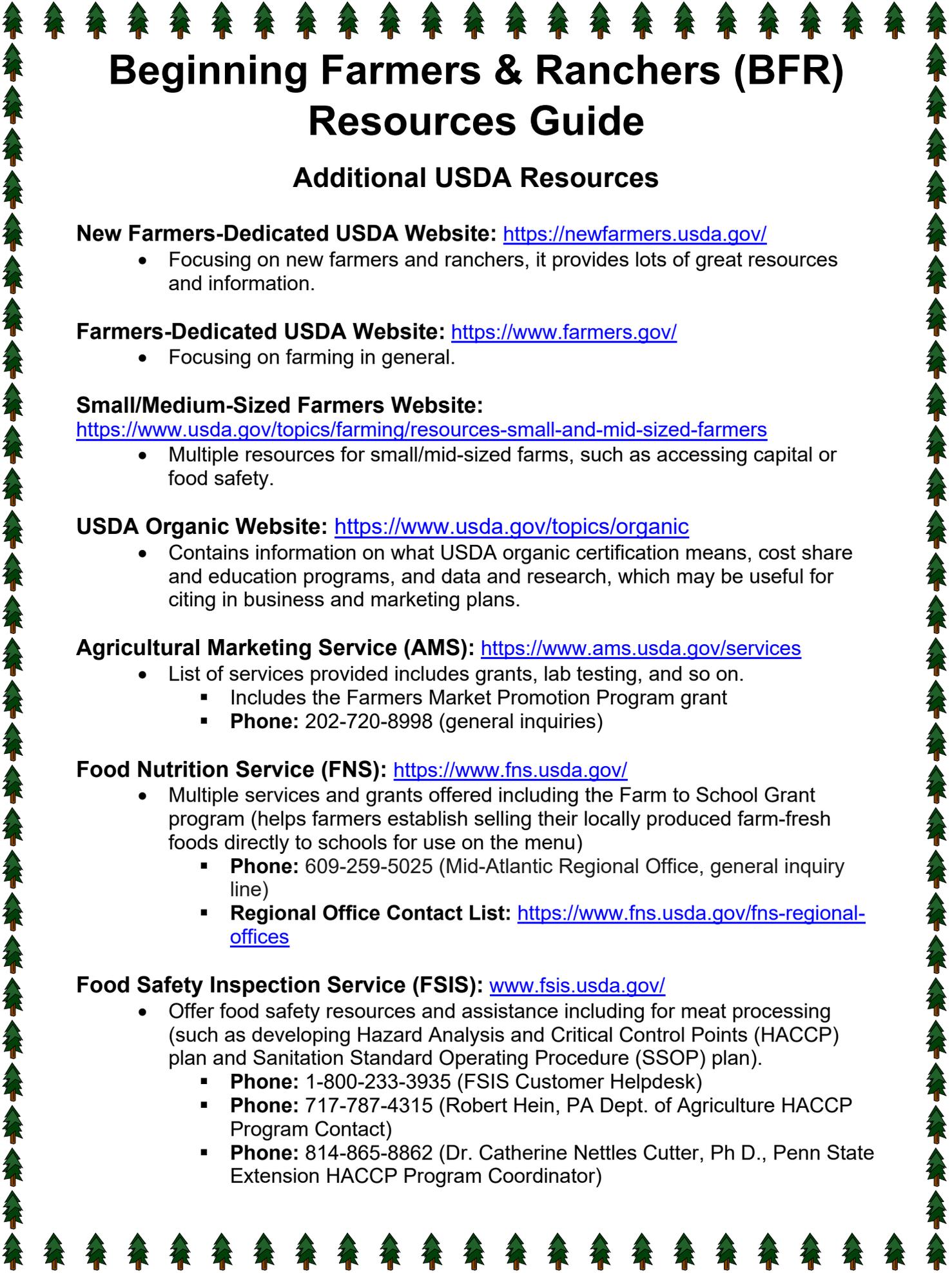
Rural Development (RD): Dethon Kistler

Loan Specialist & PA BFR Champion

Address: Rural Development
U.S. Department of Agriculture
359 East Park Drive, Suite 4
Harrisburg, PA 17111
Phone: 717-237-2284
Email: dethon.kistler@usda.gov
Agency Website: <https://rd.usda.gov/>

Notes: The Beginning Farmer and Rancher (BFR) Coordinator and Champions conduct outreach and connect BFRs with helpful resources.

Beginning Farmers are generally defined as farming (filing a Schedule F form for tax purposes) for 10 years or less.



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Additional USDA Resources

New Farmers-Dedicated USDA Website: <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/>

- Focusing on new farmers and ranchers, it provides lots of great resources and information.

Farmers-Dedicated USDA Website: <https://www.farmers.gov/>

- Focusing on farming in general.

Small/Medium-Sized Farmers Website:

<https://www.usda.gov/topics/farming/resources-small-and-mid-sized-farmers>

- Multiple resources for small/mid-sized farms, such as accessing capital or food safety.

USDA Organic Website: <https://www.usda.gov/topics/organic>

- Contains information on what USDA organic certification means, cost share and education programs, and data and research, which may be useful for citing in business and marketing plans.

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS): <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services>

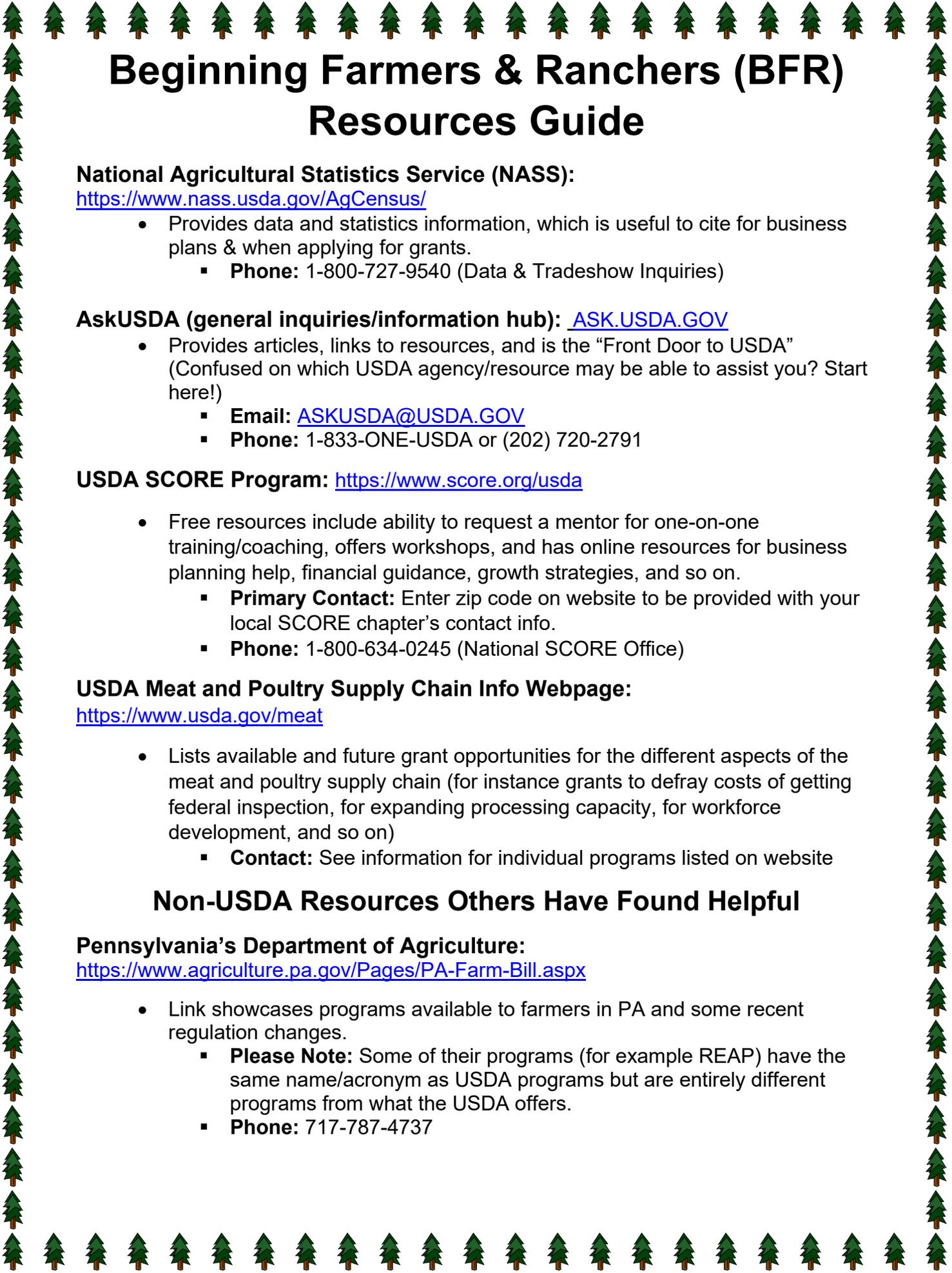
- List of services provided includes grants, lab testing, and so on.
 - Includes the Farmers Market Promotion Program grant
 - **Phone:** 202-720-8998 (general inquiries)

Food Nutrition Service (FNS): <https://www.fns.usda.gov/>

- Multiple services and grants offered including the Farm to School Grant program (helps farmers establish selling their locally produced farm-fresh foods directly to schools for use on the menu)
 - **Phone:** 609-259-5025 (Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, general inquiry line)
 - **Regional Office Contact List:** <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS): www.fsis.usda.gov/

- Offer food safety resources and assistance including for meat processing (such as developing Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan and Sanitation Standard Operating Procedure (SSOP) plan).
 - **Phone:** 1-800-233-3935 (FSIS Customer Helpdesk)
 - **Phone:** 717-787-4315 (Robert Hein, PA Dept. of Agriculture HACCP Program Contact)
 - **Phone:** 814-865-8862 (Dr. Catherine Nettles Cutter, Ph D., Penn State Extension HACCP Program Coordinator)



Beginning Farmers & Ranchers (BFR) Resources Guide

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS):

<https://www.nass.usda.gov/AqCensus/>

- Provides data and statistics information, which is useful to cite for business plans & when applying for grants.
 - **Phone:** 1-800-727-9540 (Data & Tradeshow Inquiries)

AskUSDA (general inquiries/information hub): ASK.USDA.GOV

- Provides articles, links to resources, and is the “Front Door to USDA” (Confused on which USDA agency/resource may be able to assist you? Start here!)
 - **Email:** ASKUSDA@USDA.GOV
 - **Phone:** 1-833-ONE-USDA or (202) 720-2791

USDA SCORE Program: <https://www.score.org/usda>

- Free resources include ability to request a mentor for one-on-one training/coaching, offers workshops, and has online resources for business planning help, financial guidance, growth strategies, and so on.
 - **Primary Contact:** Enter zip code on website to be provided with your local SCORE chapter’s contact info.
 - **Phone:** 1-800-634-0245 (National SCORE Office)

USDA Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Info Webpage:

<https://www.usda.gov/meat>

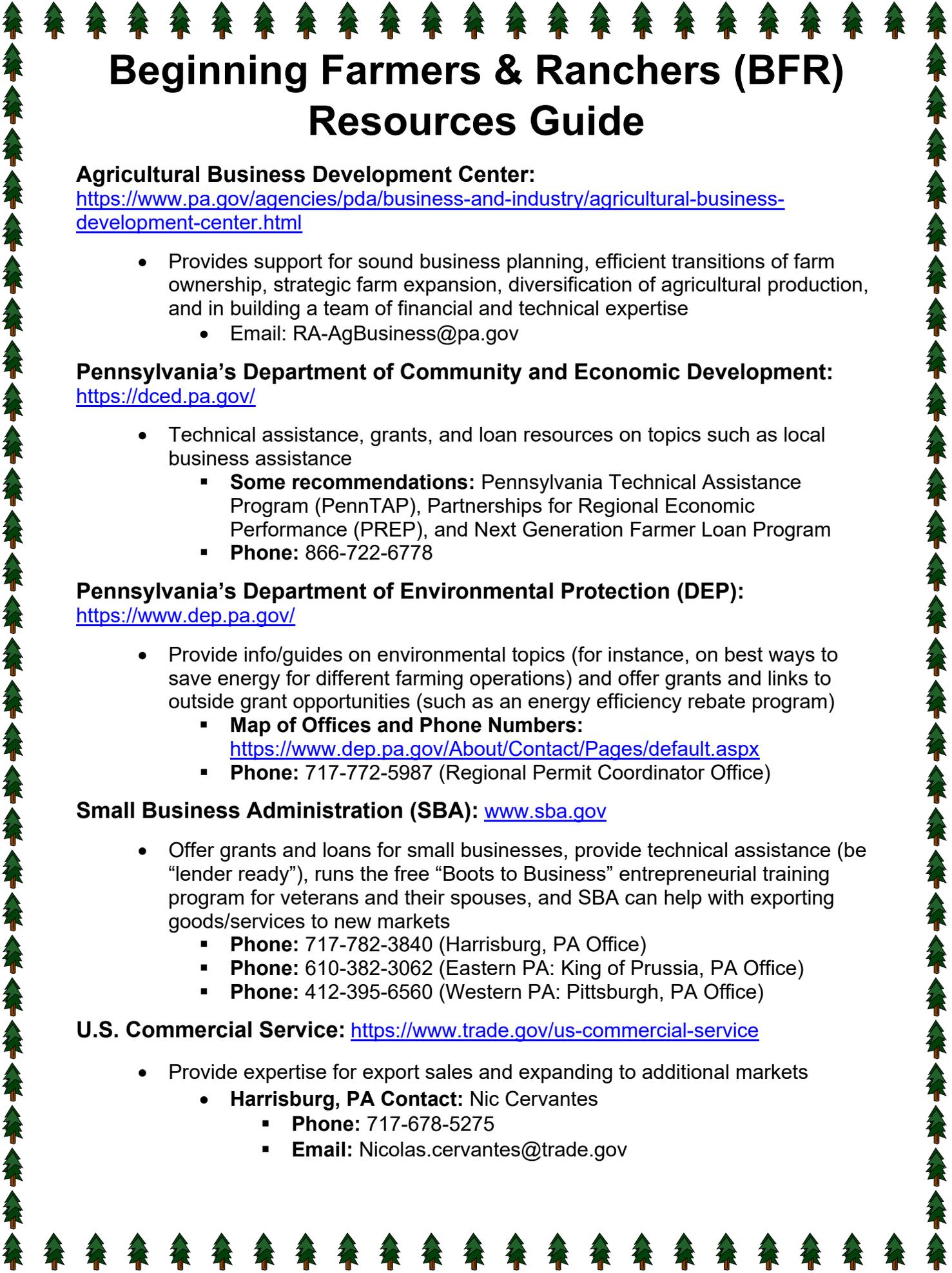
- Lists available and future grant opportunities for the different aspects of the meat and poultry supply chain (for instance grants to defray costs of getting federal inspection, for expanding processing capacity, for workforce development, and so on)
 - **Contact:** See information for individual programs listed on website

Non-USDA Resources Others Have Found Helpful

Pennsylvania’s Department of Agriculture:

<https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Pages/PA-Farm-Bill.aspx>

- Link showcases programs available to farmers in PA and some recent regulation changes.
 - **Please Note:** Some of their programs (for example REAP) have the same name/acronym as USDA programs but are entirely different programs from what the USDA offers.
 - **Phone:** 717-787-4737



Beginning Farmers & Ranchers (BFR) Resources Guide

Agricultural Business Development Center:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/pda/business-and-industry/agricultural-business-development-center.html>

- Provides support for sound business planning, efficient transitions of farm ownership, strategic farm expansion, diversification of agricultural production, and in building a team of financial and technical expertise
 - Email: RA-AgBusiness@pa.gov

Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development:

<https://dced.pa.gov/>

- Technical assistance, grants, and loan resources on topics such as local business assistance
 - **Some recommendations:** Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program (PennTAP), Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP), and Next Generation Farmer Loan Program
 - **Phone:** 866-722-6778

Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP):

<https://www.dep.pa.gov/>

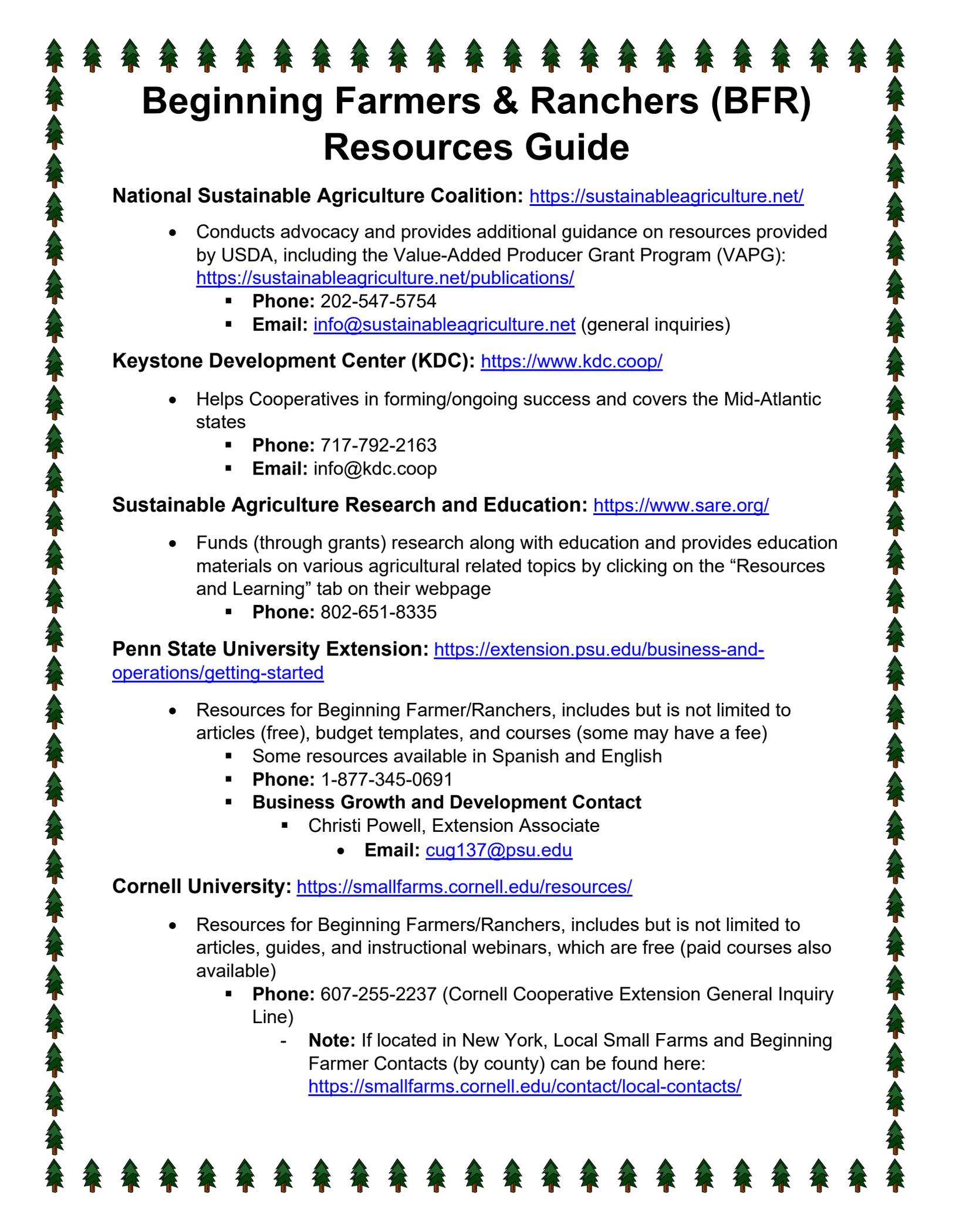
- Provide info/guides on environmental topics (for instance, on best ways to save energy for different farming operations) and offer grants and links to outside grant opportunities (such as an energy efficiency rebate program)
 - **Map of Offices and Phone Numbers:**
<https://www.dep.pa.gov/About/Contact/Pages/default.aspx>
 - **Phone:** 717-772-5987 (Regional Permit Coordinator Office)

Small Business Administration (SBA): www.sba.gov

- Offer grants and loans for small businesses, provide technical assistance (be "lender ready"), runs the free "Boots to Business" entrepreneurial training program for veterans and their spouses, and SBA can help with exporting goods/services to new markets
 - **Phone:** 717-782-3840 (Harrisburg, PA Office)
 - **Phone:** 610-382-3062 (Eastern PA: King of Prussia, PA Office)
 - **Phone:** 412-395-6560 (Western PA: Pittsburgh, PA Office)

U.S. Commercial Service: <https://www.trade.gov/us-commercial-service>

- Provide expertise for export sales and expanding to additional markets
 - **Harrisburg, PA Contact:** Nic Cervantes
 - **Phone:** 717-678-5275
 - **Email:** Nicolas.cervantes@trade.gov



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National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition: <https://sustainableagriculture.net/>

- Conducts advocacy and provides additional guidance on resources provided by USDA, including the Value-Added Producer Grant Program (VAPG):
<https://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/>
 - **Phone:** 202-547-5754
 - **Email:** info@sustainableagriculture.net (general inquiries)

Keystone Development Center (KDC): <https://www.kdc.coop/>

- Helps Cooperatives in forming/ongoing success and covers the Mid-Atlantic states
 - **Phone:** 717-792-2163
 - **Email:** info@kdc.coop

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education: <https://www.sare.org/>

- Funds (through grants) research along with education and provides education materials on various agricultural related topics by clicking on the “Resources and Learning” tab on their webpage
 - **Phone:** 802-651-8335

Penn State University Extension: <https://extension.psu.edu/business-and-operations/getting-started>

- Resources for Beginning Farmer/Ranchers, includes but is not limited to articles (free), budget templates, and courses (some may have a fee)
 - Some resources available in Spanish and English
 - **Phone:** 1-877-345-0691
 - **Business Growth and Development Contact**
 - Christi Powell, Extension Associate
 - **Email:** cug137@psu.edu

Cornell University: <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/resources/>

- Resources for Beginning Farmers/Ranchers, includes but is not limited to articles, guides, and instructional webinars, which are free (paid courses also available)
 - **Phone:** 607-255-2237 (Cornell Cooperative Extension General Inquiry Line)
 - **Note:** If located in New York, Local Small Farms and Beginning Farmer Contacts (by county) can be found here:
<https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/contact/local-contacts/>



Beginning Farmers & Ranchers (BFR) Resources Guide

National Young Farmers Coalition: <https://www.youngfarmers.org/>

- Offers many services such as helping with land access, advocacy, supply discounts, and so on
 - **Phone:** 518-643-3564 (New York Area Office)
 - **Phone:** 866-926-0438 (Washington, DC District Office)

Farmer Veteran Coalition: <https://farmvetco.org/>

- Offers many services (career counseling, corporate discounts, resource referral, and so on), has a small grant program, and runs the Homegrown By Heroes program (label that certifies product as being U.S. veteran produced)
 - **Phone:** 530-756-1395

Pennsylvania Veteran Farming Project: <https://www.pavetfarms.org/>

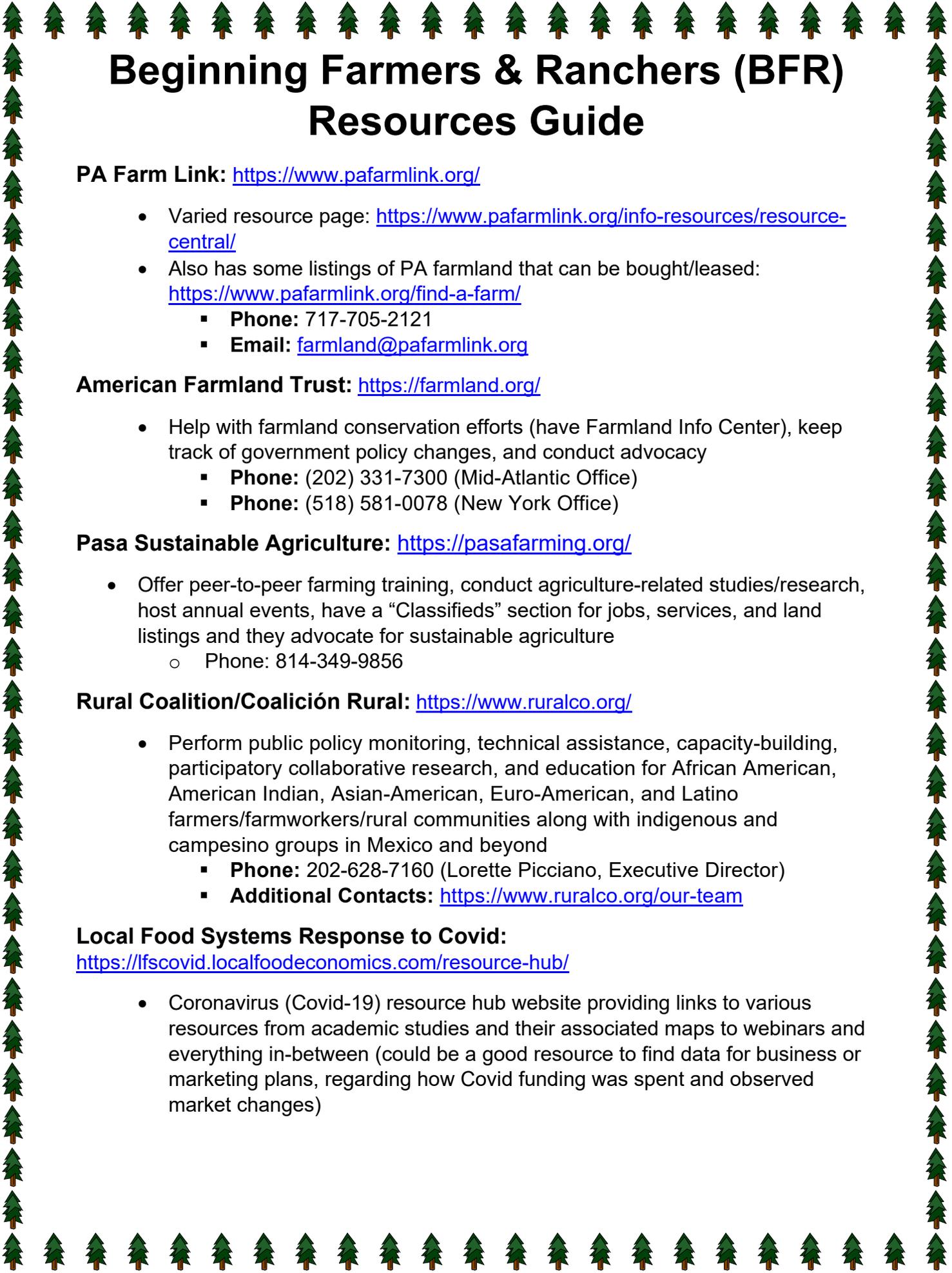
- Connect veterans with agricultural resources, bring together employers/mentor farmers, help with apprenticeships, help locate and assist in filling out grants, and convene workshops and meetings
 - **Phone:** 724-691-1087
 - **Email:** pavetsfarm@gmail.com

AgrAbility: <http://www.agrability.org/Resources/Veterans/>

- Help military veterans or beginning farmers with disabilities or other functional limitations get into agriculture (provide resources, training, financial assistance, and so on).
 - **Phone:** 800-825-4264 (Cindy Chastain, Veteran Outreach Coordinator)
 - **Email:** chastai1@purdue.edu

Rodale Institute: <https://rodaleinstitute.org/>

- Focus on regenerative organic agriculture and have the Veteran Farmer Training and Rodale Institute's Farmer Training (RIFT) programs, which offer paid internships.
 - **Phone:** 610-683-1400 (Kutztown, PA Headquarter Office)



Beginning Farmers & Ranchers (BFR) Resources Guide

PA Farm Link: <https://www.pafarmlink.org/>

- Varied resource page: <https://www.pafarmlink.org/info-resources/resource-central/>
- Also has some listings of PA farmland that can be bought/leased: <https://www.pafarmlink.org/find-a-farm/>
 - **Phone:** 717-705-2121
 - **Email:** farmland@pafarmlink.org

American Farmland Trust: <https://farmland.org/>

- Help with farmland conservation efforts (have Farmland Info Center), keep track of government policy changes, and conduct advocacy
 - **Phone:** (202) 331-7300 (Mid-Atlantic Office)
 - **Phone:** (518) 581-0078 (New York Office)

Pasa Sustainable Agriculture: <https://pasafarming.org/>

- Offer peer-to-peer farming training, conduct agriculture-related studies/research, host annual events, have a “Classifieds” section for jobs, services, and land listings and they advocate for sustainable agriculture
 - Phone: 814-349-9856

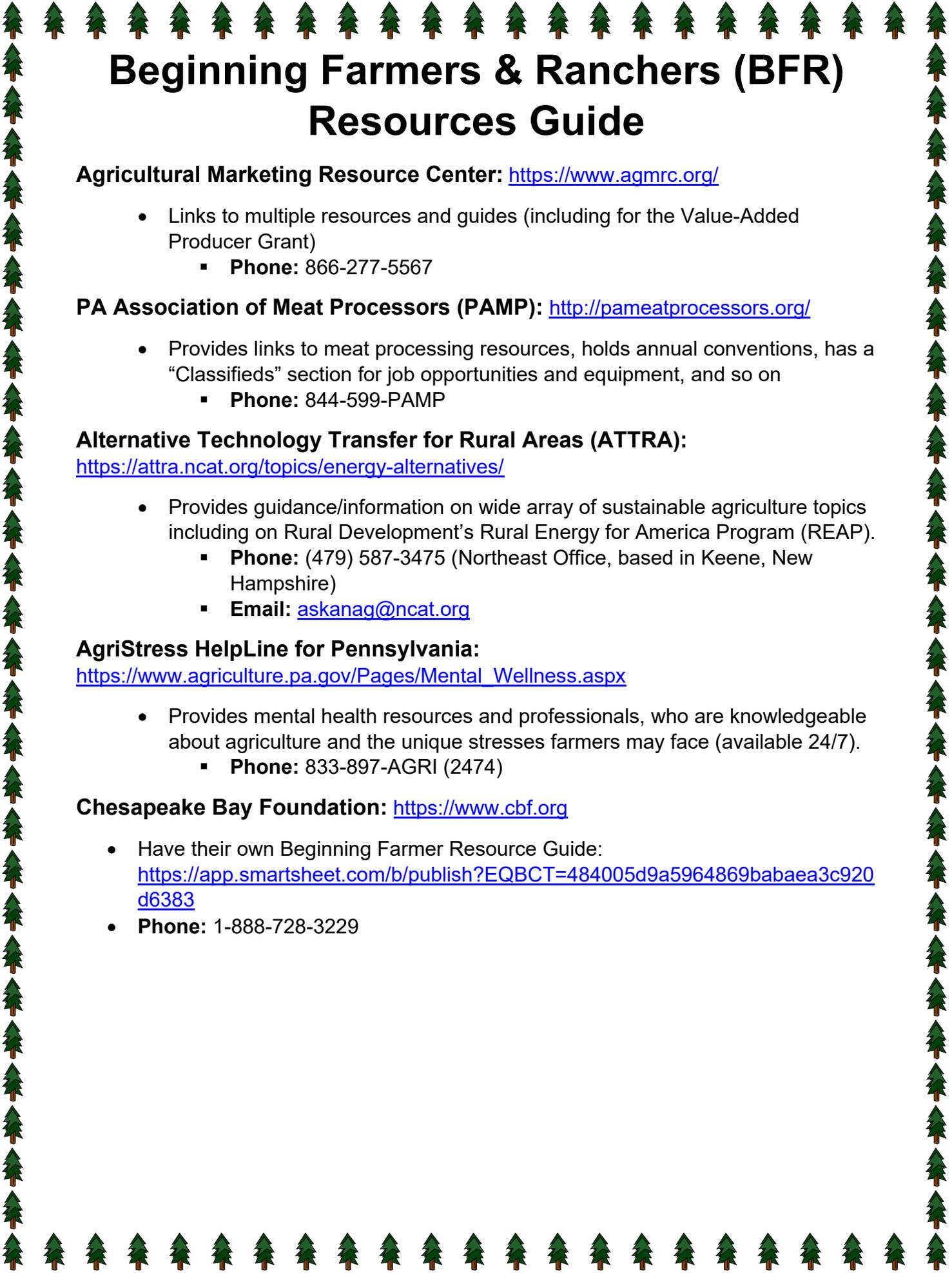
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural: <https://www.ruralco.org/>

- Perform public policy monitoring, technical assistance, capacity-building, participatory collaborative research, and education for African American, American Indian, Asian-American, Euro-American, and Latino farmers/farmworkers/rural communities along with indigenous and campesino groups in Mexico and beyond
 - **Phone:** 202-628-7160 (Lorette Picciano, Executive Director)
 - **Additional Contacts:** <https://www.ruralco.org/our-team>

Local Food Systems Response to Covid:

<https://lfscovid.localfoodeconomics.com/resource-hub/>

- Coronavirus (Covid-19) resource hub website providing links to various resources from academic studies and their associated maps to webinars and everything in-between (could be a good resource to find data for business or marketing plans, regarding how Covid funding was spent and observed market changes)



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Agricultural Marketing Resource Center: <https://www.agmrc.org/>

- Links to multiple resources and guides (including for the Value-Added Producer Grant)
 - **Phone:** 866-277-5567

PA Association of Meat Processors (PAMP): <http://pameatprocessors.org/>

- Provides links to meat processing resources, holds annual conventions, has a “Classifieds” section for job opportunities and equipment, and so on
 - **Phone:** 844-599-PAMP

Alternative Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA):

<https://attra.ncat.org/topics/energy-alternatives/>

- Provides guidance/information on wide array of sustainable agriculture topics including on Rural Development’s Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).
 - **Phone:** (479) 587-3475 (Northeast Office, based in Keene, New Hampshire)
 - **Email:** askanag@ncat.org

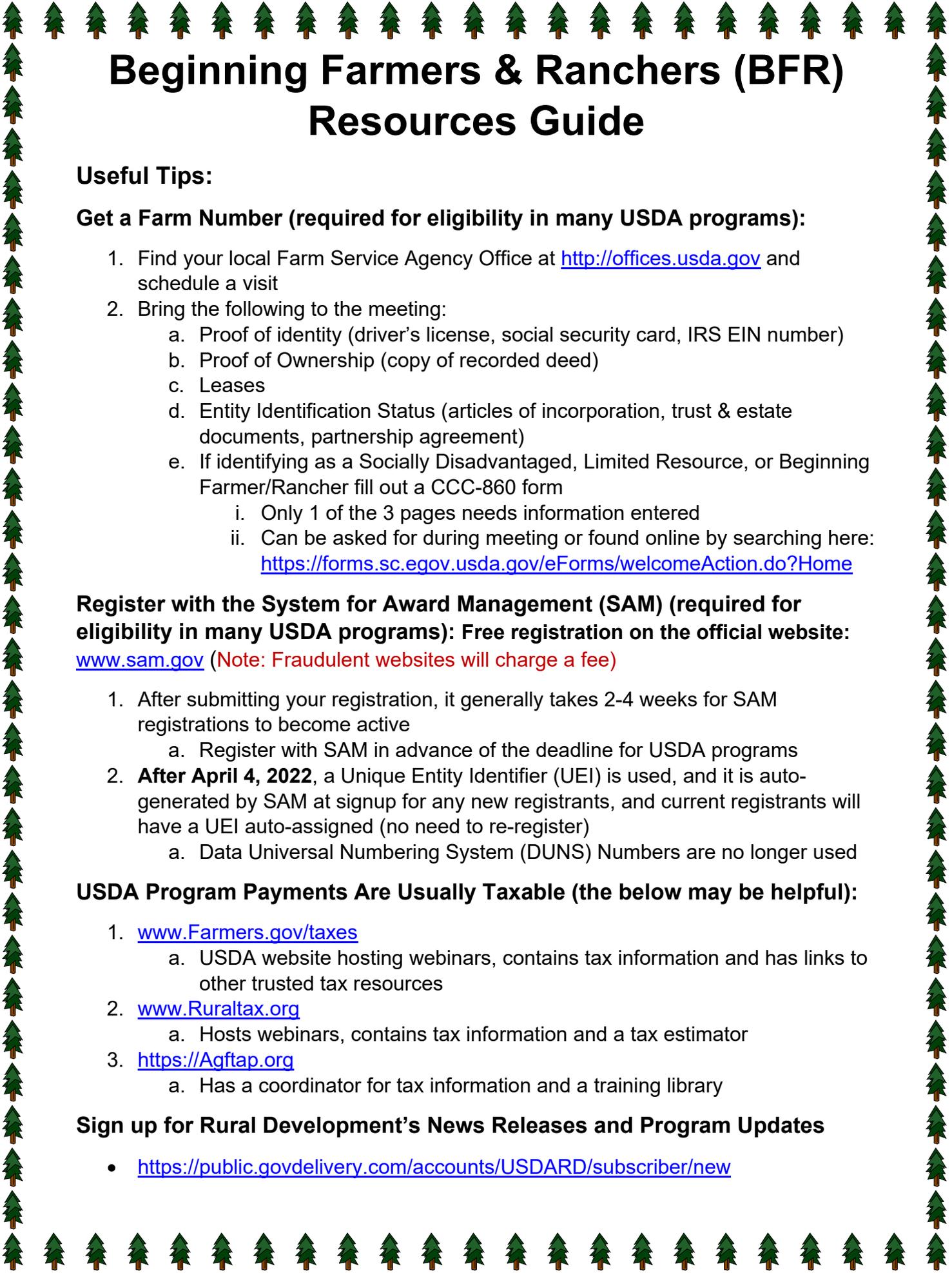
AgriStress HelpLine for Pennsylvania:

https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Pages/Mental_Wellness.aspx

- Provides mental health resources and professionals, who are knowledgeable about agriculture and the unique stresses farmers may face (available 24/7).
 - **Phone:** 833-897-AGRI (2474)

Chesapeake Bay Foundation: <https://www.cbf.org>

- Have their own Beginning Farmer Resource Guide:
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=484005d9a5964869babaea3c920d6383>
- **Phone:** 1-888-728-3229



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Useful Tips:

Get a Farm Number (required for eligibility in many USDA programs):

1. Find your local Farm Service Agency Office at <http://offices.usda.gov> and schedule a visit
2. Bring the following to the meeting:
 - a. Proof of identity (driver's license, social security card, IRS EIN number)
 - b. Proof of Ownership (copy of recorded deed)
 - c. Leases
 - d. Entity Identification Status (articles of incorporation, trust & estate documents, partnership agreement)
 - e. If identifying as a Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, or Beginning Farmer/Rancher fill out a CCC-860 form
 - i. Only 1 of the 3 pages needs information entered
 - ii. Can be asked for during meeting or found online by searching here: <https://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms/welcomeAction.do?Home>

Register with the System for Award Management (SAM) (required for eligibility in many USDA programs): Free registration on the official website: www.sam.gov (Note: Fraudulent websites will charge a fee)

1. After submitting your registration, it generally takes 2-4 weeks for SAM registrations to become active
 - a. Register with SAM in advance of the deadline for USDA programs
2. **After April 4, 2022**, a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is used, and it is auto-generated by SAM at signup for any new registrants, and current registrants will have a UEI auto-assigned (no need to re-register)
 - a. Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Numbers are no longer used

USDA Program Payments Are Usually Taxable (the below may be helpful):

1. www.Farmers.gov/taxes
 - a. USDA website hosting webinars, contains tax information and has links to other trusted tax resources
2. www.Ruraltax.org
 - a. Hosts webinars, contains tax information and a tax estimator
3. <https://Agftap.org>
 - a. Has a coordinator for tax information and a training library

Sign up for Rural Development's News Releases and Program Updates

- <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDARD/subscriber/new>