

PA Preferred: Not as Hard to Qualify as You Might Think

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Do you look for the yellow check mark? The "PA Preferred" label and marketing tool certainly seems to be successful in helping consumers choose Pennsylvania-grown products in the produce aisles and beyond.

A recent [story from the Reading Eagle](#) emphasizes how shoppers have put locally grown food more top-of-mind than ever when it comes to choosing their foods. Grocery stores, restaurants and suppliers have recognized this trend and stocked more Pennsylvania-grown items.

To keep consumers from being confused as to what is grown locally and what isn't, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture issues the [PA Preferred](#) designation to qualifying farms, processors and supporting organizations. Those who have earned the designation have permission to use a logo sticker on their products displaying the PA Preferred status.

While that word "qualifying" may scare off food and agriculture businesses envisioning mounds of paperwork in an already employee-strapped industry, [the department has made the qualifications](#) for the designation quite easy for farms:

- Be located in Pennsylvania
- Produce a commodity entirely harvested from a Pennsylvania location OR grown in a Pennsylvania location for at least 75% of its production cycle
- For beef farms, the animals must be raised in the state for at least 100 days

Nearly all of Pennsylvania's 58,000 farms could meet those standards.

One of the misconceptions about the PA Preferred program is that it is solely for farms. However, processors and supporting organizations are eligible to earn the designation as well to entice customers and let them know where their food is coming from.

Some examples of these groups that can earn and have earned PA Preferred status:

- Businesses that process commodities into preserved items such as jams, salsas, pickles, dressings and others
- Breweries, wineries and distilleries
- Fluid milk plants
- Farmers markets
- Retailers, grocery stores and nurseries are eligible, but must be physically located in Pennsylvania and must carry a substantial amount of Pennsylvania-produced products

- Restaurants must be physically located in Pennsylvania and must strive to offer as many entr e items with featured Pennsylvania-produced ingredients as practical given seasonal restrictions and market availability

If you have any questions on how your farm, processing business or supporting business can obtain the PA Preferred status and further support Pennsylvania Agriculture, please [contact me](#) or any member of the [Barley Snyder Food & Agribusiness Industry Group](#).

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