

Agricultural Security Areas (ASA)

What are Agricultural Security Areas?

An agricultural security area (ASA) is agricultural land that has been officially designated as an agricultural district by the local municipality. ASAs are intended to promote more permanent and viable farming operations by strengthening the farming community's sense of security in land use and the right to farm.

What are the benefits of ASAs?

As a landowner, there are a variety of benefits to enrolling land in an agricultural security area.

- **Limited protection from local regulations** – Local governments may not unreasonably restrict farming operations and farm structures. Local governments shall provide exceptions for normal agricultural activities within ASAs when defining public nuisances.
- **Limited protection from condemnation of land** – The power of state and local agencies to exercise eminent domain over productive farmland in an ASA is limited. Generally, condemnation of farmland within an ASA must be reviewed by the Agricultural Land Condemnation Approval Board and show that the proposed condemnation would not have an unreasonable adverse affect upon the preservation and enhancement of agriculture or municipal resources within the area; or that there is no reasonable or prudent alternative to utilizing the lands within the ASA.
- **Eligibility for the agricultural conservation easement program** – Landowners enrolled in ASAs are eligible to participate in the state/county agriculture conservation easement program.

How are ASAs established?

The agricultural security area program is administered by the local township. Creating an agricultural security area is a collaborative effort between farmers and the local officials. There is no cost to the landowner for enrolling in the program and involvement in the program is completely voluntary. To establish an ASA the landowners must submit a proposal to the local municipality. The local officials review proposals and a public hearing is conducted. Following the hearing, the local governing body will come to a decision on the creation of an agricultural security area. The local municipality is then responsible for reviewing the agricultural security area every seven years.

How much land is enrolled in ASA throughout the County?

Cumberland County has approximately 73,000 acres of land in enrolled in ASAs throughout seventeen municipalities. This represents approximately 20% of the total land area of Cumberland County.