

# West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Walt Helmick, Commissioner



304-558-3708

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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**Contact: Buddy Davidson**  
Communications Officer  
304/558-3708; 304/541-5932 (cell)  
[bdavidson@wvda.us](mailto:bdavidson@wvda.us)

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE OPENS NEW PRODUCE AGGREGATION FACILITY IN HUNTINGTON

**Charleston, W.Va.** – The first of several regional aggregation centers for West Virginia farmers opened today [Tuesday, June 28] in Huntington. The facility is a partnership between the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) and the West Virginia National Guard (WVNG).

The purpose of the facility is to provide another marketing option to small farmers in the region and to re-commercialize agricultural industries that once were common in the Mountain State.

“This is a great day for agriculture in West Virginia. This facility is a model that will be replicated throughout the state and will give farmers the opportunity to grow at a more commercial level,” said West Virginia Agriculture Commissioner Walt Helmick.

“This is a great step in diversifying our state’s economy and will be a great business for Huntington in the future. We’re grateful to General Hoyer [James A. Hoyer, WVNG Adjutant General] for his cooperation, the city of Huntington for its support, and everyone who has assisted along the way.”

Huntington Mayor Steve Williams said that he appreciated Commissioner Helmick’s dedication to agriculture, the City of Huntington, and West Virginia’s independence.

“Thank you for being a man of your word. When I took office three-and-a-half years ago, you promised to make Huntington a central figure in the growing agriculture industry in West Virginia. We’re proud for [this aggregation facility] to be here in Huntington,” said Mayor Williams.

“Agriculture is on the front line. We can grow it here, we can process it here and we can distribute it here. We don’t have to depend on someone far away making a decision that affects us. This is vision,” Mayor Williams continued.

The WVDA will operate the facility for the time-being. The long-term goal is to operate the center as a demonstration project and eventually turn it over to private industry. The building is being leased to WVDA by the WVNG, which had already decided to no longer use the building because it does not meet current security standards for military installations.



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WVDA has invested \$475,000 in equipment for the building which currently houses a multi-purpose root crop processing and packaging line, a black walnut sheller and a honey extractor. Plans are to expand the center in the future to include cleaning and packing lines for leafy vegetables and tomatoes.

The center, which will serve farmers from Jackson, Mason, Putnam, Lincoln, Wayne and Cabell counties, will be used this fall to process potatoes grown through the Potato Production Promotion Project, a joint effort of WVDA, the West Virginia Conservation Agency and the Western and Guyan Conservation Districts.



### WVDA Huntington Aggregation Center Fact Sheet

- A project of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, Walt Helmick, Commissioner, in partnership with the West Virginia National Guard.
- The facility will serve as a crop aggregation point for farmers in a region that includes Cabell, Jackson, Lincoln, Mason, Putnam and Wayne counties.
- The Huntington Facility will serve as a model for similar regional aggregation facilities throughout the state.
- The Huntington facility includes a new root crop processing and packing line that will be used during this year's harvest from this aggregation region.
- Two dozen potato growers are participating in the second year of a three-year pilot program funded by WVDA and administered through the West Virginia Conservation Agency's Western and Guyan Conservation Districts.
- Potatoes being grown in other parts of the state through the pilot project will be processed and packed at the Huntington facility.
- Conservation District offices provide technical support directly to farmers to help conserve West Virginia's soil, land, water resources.
- The root crop processing line can and will be used for other products in the future, such as beets, onions, carrots, etc.
- Other equipment to be located at the Huntington facility includes leafy vegetable wash line, a honey extractor and a black walnut sheller.
- This facility represents an approximately \$475,000 investment to help small farmers reach larger customer bases, and to leverage existing agricultural resources as one way of diversifying West Virginia's economy.

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