

Cover Letter for ACRE Complaint

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Date: October 13, 2025

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Farmland Preservation
2301 North Cameron Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110

RE: URGENT - Formal Complaint Under the Agricultural Communities and Rural Environment (ACRE) Act - Interference with Agricultural Operations at [REDACTED]

STOP WORK ORDER PREVENTING STATE AGRICULTURAL LICENSING

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to file an urgent formal complaint under Pennsylvania's Agricultural Communities and Rural Environment (ACRE) Act regarding improper interference with my legitimate agricultural operations at [REDACTED], located in Columbia County, Pennsylvania.

This matter requires immediate attention as the local Zoning Officer's stop work order is directly preventing me from completing necessary improvements to obtain required Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture licensing for my farm stand and cottage bakery operations.

Background

I am the owner of an agricultural property zoned for farm use, which I purchased with the intent to operate farming activities including a cottage bakery store and bait shop, both of which are permitted agricultural uses under local zoning ordinances and protected agricultural activities under the ACRE Act.

Nature of Complaint

The local Zoning Officer, Larry Frace, has issued a stop-work order and is preventing me from conducting legitimate agricultural improvements and operations based on:

1. **Hearsay evidence** rather than factual investigation
2. **Mischaracterization** of property improvements as zoning violations
3. **Improper interference** with agricultural building modifications necessary for farm operations
4. **Failure to respond** appropriately to proper zoning permit applications

Specific Facts

- **Property Status:** The property was purchased and advertised as agricultural property with existing structures, including a rental unit that was present at time of purchase (MLS listing evidence available)
- **Intended Agricultural Use:** I am converting the farmhouse into a cottage bakery store and operating a bait store, both permitted agricultural uses

- **Permit Application:** On November 14, 2024, I submitted a zoning permit application for building improvements to facilitate agricultural operations
- **Improper Stop Order:** The Zoning Officer issued a stop-work order based on unsubstantiated claims from unnamed third parties that I was creating an illegal apartment, rather than making legitimate agricultural improvements
- **Existing Structures.** The property has existing structures including a rental unit that was present when purchased, served by its own septic system
- **Protected Activities:** My bakery and bait shop operations are specifically protected agricultural activities under the ACRE Act

ACRE Act Violations

The Zoning Officer's actions constitute improper interference with protected agricultural operations under 3 Pa.C.S. § 951-956, including:

- Preventing normal agricultural operations and improvements
- Imposing restrictions beyond those applicable to commercial or industrial operations
- Failing to recognize legitimate agricultural uses (cottage bakery, bait shop)
- Using alleged zoning violations as pretext to halt protected agricultural activities

Additional Concerns

I am also pursuing separate legal action regarding:

- Alleged trespass onto areas of the property where the Zoning Officer was not authorized to inspect
- Failure to properly respond to legitimate permit applications
- Reliance on hearsay rather than factual evidence

Position on Local Zoning Appeals

I wish to make clear that I will not participate in local zoning hearing board proceedings unless and until the property is improperly rezoned for non-agricultural use. The activities being conducted and improvements being made are protected agricultural operations under the ACRE Act and fall within permitted agricultural uses under the current zoning designation. The ACRE Act provides state-level protections specifically designed to prevent local interference with legitimate farming activities. To submit to local zoning appeals would be to concede that agricultural protections under state law are subordinate to improper local enforcement actions, which is contrary to the intent and purpose of the ACRE Act.

Relief Requested

I respectfully request that the Department of Agriculture:

1. Investigate this matter under the ACRE Act
2. Issue findings regarding improper interference with agricultural operations
3. Direct the township to cease interference with legitimate agricultural activities
4. Require proper processing of my zoning permit applications for agricultural improvements
5. Provide guidance to the township regarding ACRE Act protections
6. Affirm that protected agricultural activities are not subject to local zoning restrictions beyond those applicable to other commercial or industrial operations

Documentation Enclosed

- Email correspondence with Zoning Officer Larry Frace (November 14-23, 2024)
- Email correspondence regarding farm stand application (September 11-23, 2025) - See Exhibit A