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EDITORS: The following information is for immediate release. If you have any questions or wish to schedule interviews, please contact Karen Costello, program and marketing coordinator of the Chester County Economic Development Council, at 610 458-5700.

Custom farmers key to agricultural future of Chester County

Economic Development Council, Agricultural Development Council present seminar

WEST CHESTER _ Custom farming is a key component to a successful agricultural future of Chester County, James Jordan, Jr., told approximately 50 attendees of a seminar on “Local Outsourcing: The Role of Custom Farmers in Chester County.

Jordan, executive director of the Brandywine Valley Association, said farmers doing work for landowners can help save farmland. “The BVA can’t farm its land without custom farmers,” Jordan said, “and we need the income from our agricultural lands to balance our budget.”

He added, “At the end of the day, if farming is done correctly it is a win-win situation for the farming community and neighbors, it keeps land open and conserves sensitive environmental resources. New technologies enable farmers to manage operations more efficiently by using less seed and sprays which have an added bonus of reducing environmental impacts.”

The Chester County Ag Forum seminar was sponsored by the Chester County Agricultural Development Council and the Chester County Economic Development Council. The seminar was presented on Wednesday at the county’s Government Services Building.

Taking part on the panel along with Jordan were Wayne Brubaker, a senior accountant and consultant with MSC Business and PA Farm Bureau; Dennis Breckbill, owner of Breck-A-De-Farm; and Jamie Hicks, co-owner of Hicks Brothers, LLC.

Custom farmers can help a farmer by planting and maintaining crops while the landholder retains the risk and the crop at harvest. Another option is where a farmer rents ground from the landowner through a lease agreement and assumes all the risk of the operation and owns the crop and the resulting payment from the commodity sale.

Brubaker pointed out farm equipment is expensive and some farmers can’t afford to purchase every needed piece of equipment. Therefore, custom farmers serve an important role as a custom farmer can spread out an investment of costly equipment over a number of farms.

Hicks, a fourth generation Chester County farmer, and Breckbill, a long-time county farmer who has been doing custom-farming for years, discussed their experiences with custom farming.

The Chester County Agricultural Development Council’s purpose is to help Chester County farmers continue to farm while encouraging additional agricultural opportunities, create an environment to attract new farmers and agricultural activities, educate residents and municipal officials, and partner with others to help resolve problems and issues related to agriculture. For more information, see www.chesco.org/agdev.

The Chester County Economic Development Council is a private, non-profit economic development organization that has been nurturing economic growth in Chester County and the surrounding region for over 50 years. The Council’s portfolio of business growth services includes: low-interest financing, small business lending, workforce training, retention and expansion, customized international business assistance, land and

building site selection, brownfields consultation and remediation, urban redevelopment, and agricultural economic development. The Council also offers state-of-the art conference and training facilities at its facility in Eagleview. For more information, see www.cceconomicdevelopment.com.