



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **KOMARINSKI FARM NAMED FAYETTE COUNTY 'PLACE'**

**Uniontown, PA** – Just ahead of May Beef Month, the first new Fayette County Agricultural Land Preservation Board sign was unveiled during a farm tour and dinner at the 170-acre Komarinski farm in Farmington – one of only two Certified American Grassfed beef farms in Pennsylvania. Though the sign was new, the Komarinski's commitment to farmland preservation goes back about two decades.

"It was very important to us," Dan Komarinski said. "We definitely have created a legacy for our family. It's something we're very proud of, and we know the land is going to be used like it should be – the way we feel it should be."

Dan Komarinski, a retired agriculture educator who taught in the Connellsville Area School District for 31 years, and his wife Cindy, a professor and program director at Westmoreland County Community College School of Culinary Arts/Hospitality, run the farm along with Cindy's son, Colby Brooks.

For its commitment to quality beef and agricultural land preservation, the Komarinski farm has earned the Faces and Places designation for May.

Fayette County Agricultural Land Preservation Board Chairman Darrell Becker said agricultural land preservation begins with the farmer.

"What ends up happening is the farmer petitions to preserve a historic farm. What the state does is it buys the preservation rights from the farmer," Becker said.

He explained that the farm's market value is based on a grading system determined by such factors as the type of soil, availability of water and proximity to any other preserved farmland.

The application goes before the state agricultural board, and if it is approved, the farmer receives compensation from selling the development rights, Becker said.

"It puts that farm in permanent agricultural easement," he said, noting that anyone wanting to use the land for anything other than an agricultural purpose would then need to get approval, which he called "highly unlikely."

Becker said the farmer still owns his or her land.

Cindy Komarinski said for her family, the process was a complex one.

“When Dan and I decided to fill out the application with the county, the biggest thing was really educating the bank that held our mortgage,” she said. “The bank really had a difficult time with it. Even our financial advisor had advised us to give up on the process. We said, ‘Absolutely not.’ We just felt like this was what we wanted to do.”

So, the Komarinskis contacted the bank president and were pleasantly surprised to find out that though the local bank branch was unfamiliar with the farm preservation process, the bank president was not.

“We thought, ‘Somebody has to know about this.’ It turned out he did,” Cindy Komarinski said.

The Komarinskis began the process in 2001, and their farm was designated preserved agricultural land in 2003.

Becker said it is one of 24 preserved farms in Fayette County alone.

“Pennsylvania leads the nation in preserved farmland,” he said.

Becker said in recent years, the Fayette County commissioners have given a great deal of support to the program, and the state matches county contributions. Becker also credited the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce and the Redstone Foundation for its help in sponsoring the new signage, a project that has been in the works for “at least a decade.”

“Agriculture is number one in the county, and the chamber recognizes that,” Becker said. “We’re thankful for them, as we are for the commissioners.”

The Komarinskis said they, too, are grateful for the support of the county commissioners and the county chamber, as well as the Fayette County Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, among others.

As well as being preserved agricultural land, the Komarinski Farm also is one of only two Certified American Grassfed farms in Pennsylvania. They said after hearing about the distinction from some contacts and doing some research on their own, they decided to try for the designation.

“We found out what we had to do, and basically, we were already doing it,” Dan Komarinski said.

He added in the case of the Komarinski farm, “it all began with rotational grazing. We wanted to try it and see how the cows did on that.”

Dan Komarinski said rotational grazing means putting a larger number of cows in a smaller area, and then moving them often. He said the process leads to more efficient utilization of the grass and less waste.

He explained that, to be a certified American grassfed producer, a farm cannot cultivate any kind of grain on it. Applicants must fill out an extensive questionnaire and submit to an inspection process.

“We are 100% grassfed,” he said. “We make our own hay, and that’s what we feed (the cattle) in the winter.”

Dan Komarinski said cattle are forage animals for which eating grass comes naturally. He said farmers began feeding them grain in order to prepare them to go to market more quickly – about 18 months, as opposed to 24 to 28 months for grassfed beef.

In addition to being more cost-effective, Cindy Komarinski said becoming a certified American grassfed producer was about the health of the cattle.

“For us, it was the more natural way to raise them,” she said. “We have a lot of customers that buy our beef that have health issues. So, they want 100% grassfed.”

While the Komarinski farm is a business and a livelihood, it also is about family. The Komarinskis said their son Colby and their grandson have shown an interest in maintaining the farm for generations to come. And in fact, the property was a family farm for generations before they bought it.

“It was actually a land grant from William Penn,” Dan Komarinski said. “From my understanding, there were two brothers and a sister that came from Ireland in the 1700s, and this is where they settled. It was in their family until we purchased the farm in 1998.”

Cindy Komarinski said the members of the Gleason family who owned the farm at that time had been renting it out while searching for a permanent owner – all the while turning down offers from coal mining companies and other organizations that would turn it into something other than a farm.

“They told us they had been waiting on a family to come along that would love it as much as they did,” Cindy Komarinski said.

It’s safe to say their patience paid off.

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