

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

1/31/2014

PA High Tunnels, Hoop Houses Tax-Exempt

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The Pennsylvania House and Senate have unanimously approved bills that would make hoop houses and high tunnel-style greenhouses exempt from real estate taxes. The bills just need the governor's signature to go into law.

The ruling comes after two PA counties, Blair and Erie, began levying real estate taxes on high tunnel greenhouses, which are used to protect plants from adverse weather and extend the season, among many other uses. They're low cost and easy to erect, which helps agriculture producers remain profitable. Proponents of the new rule argued that taxing the structures would have removed the economic benefit of the structures. Opponents of course pointed out the lost revenues to taxing authorities.

These temporary structures are taxed based "on their degree of permanence and their contributory value to their property," says Blair County Assessment Director Gene Porterfield. A 6,000-sq. ft. hoop house or high tunnel would be assessed at \$12,000 to \$24,000 and generate a county real estate tax of about \$912.

Pushing for the exemption was the Pennsylvania State Council of Farm Organizations (PSCFO), which represents more than 60 agricultural organizations. **GT**