

## Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Allowing Special Occasion Events on Preserved Farmland

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**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (S757) authorizing commercial farms that are located on preserved farmland to hold special occasion events, subject to certain conditions. The Legislature concurred with the Governor's conditional veto of an earlier version of the legislation. The Governor recommended changes to ensure protections for agricultural or horticultural production on preserved farmland.

"As the Garden State, agriculture is quintessential to New Jersey's identity and agritourism is the next frontier to maintaining this heritage," **said Governor Murphy**. "This law will open new revenue streams for those who work tirelessly to maintain the preserved farmland that is core to our state's cultural fabric. I am especially proud to sign this bill in honor of the late Assemblyman Ron Dancer, whose legacy of advocacy for our state's agricultural and tourism industries is found writ-large in this new law."

Special occasion events allow preserved farmland owners the opportunity to introduce new streams of income to family farming operations and increase the enjoyments offered to the public by agritourism.

"This bill permits operators of preserved farms to host special occasion events that the public can enjoy with their family and friends on agricultural lands," **said NJDA Secretary Douglas H. Fisher, who is also the chair of the State Agriculture Development Committee**. "I appreciate Governor Murphy signing this bill today which enables farmers to augment their bottom line which in turn helps to secure agriculture's continued success in the Garden State."

Under the bill, a preserved farm that produces agricultural or horticultural products worth more than \$10,000 annually may hold up to a maximum of 26 special occasion events per calendar year, of which 6 may have 250 guests or more in attendance.

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Senators Paul Sarlo and Steven Oroho, and Assemblymembers Roy Freiman and Raj Mukherji. The late Assemblyman Ron Dancer also served as a primary sponsor of the bill.

"New Jersey's farms are one of the state's most productive and attractive assets," **said Senator Paul Sarlo, Chairman, Senate Budget Committee**. "In addition to growing fruits and vegetables, our farms offer a beautiful venue to host weddings and other events that help farmers supplement their income and preserve their farmland. This will help make life more affordable for farmers and provide economic benefits to their communities."

"This law gives farmers in New Jersey the opportunity to supplement their income by hosting special events on their land. Agritourism is a growing industry and, by allowing our farmers to participate, we make it possible for them to expand their businesses, grow the economy and showcase that which makes New Jersey's agricultural community special. Further, it provides access to farms and farmland, allowing all to enjoy the beauty of nature, and gives insight into the challenges and rewards farmers encounter in growing the food we consume," **said Assemblymen Roy Freiman and Raj Mukherji**. "By finding a balance between protecting preserved farmland and giving farmers in the Garden State the ability to host events, we can introduce new streams of income to the farming industry without compromising agricultural production."

"I am proud this legislation will be signed into law. Our heritage as the 'Garden State' goes back hundreds of years, and our farming tradition is still thriving in many families and communities throughout the state," **said Senate Minority Leader Steven Oroho**. "In addition to growing fruits, vegetables, and grains, our farms can also be used for wedding ceremonies and many other special events. This bill, now law, will provide an economic benefit to farmers, preserve important farmland, and showcase New Jersey's rich agricultural legacy."

"Special occasion events for farms have become a critical part of the farmers' plan to keep farming as well as great destinations for the residents of the state. As a champion of New Jersey's acclaimed agricultural industry and an ally to all farmers, I know my late friend Assemblyman Dancer would have celebrated today, and then would have gone back to work on the next bill to help farmers. We shared much of the same vision for New Jersey's future and I have been honored to help ensure his public service continues to make a positive impact," **said Assemblyman Alex Sauckie, who currently serves the 12th legislative district, succeeding the late Assemblyman Dancer**. "His legacy is felt in the lasting success of the Garden State's farming communities."

Under the bill, a special occasion event is required to not interfere with the use of the preserved farmland for agricultural or horticultural production, have minimal effects on the occupied area, and must be designed to protect the agricultural resources of the land to ensure that the land can be readily returned to productive agricultural or horticultural use after the event. All applicable State and local laws and ordinances including those concerning food safety, litter, noise, solid waste, traffic, and the protection of public health and safety apply to the special occasion event.

"This legislation will allow preserved farm owners an additional economic opportunity to help sustain their farm viability into the future," **said Allen Carter, President of New Jersey Farm Bureau**. "The Farm Bureau appreciates the Governor, his Administration and the Legislature's work to help set reasonable rules for hosting events on preserved farmland."

"Our industry keeps the 'Garden' in the Garden State," **said Devon Perry, the Executive Director of the Garden State Wine Growers Association**. "As the fastest growing sector of agriculture in New Jersey, we celebrate ongoing support of agritourism across the board."



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