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Acting Governor Guadagno Signs Bill Package Supporting Student Access To Healthy Foods

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"Farm to School" Program Sources New Jersey Produce to Area Schools

Trenton, NJ – Taking action to increase student access to healthy, locally-grown foods, Acting Governor Kim Guadagno today signed five bills at Terhune Orchards in Mercer County that support and streamline New Jersey's "Farm to School" program.

"Children who live in the Garden State should have ready access to the more than 100 varieties of produce grown by our state's 9,000-plus farms," said Acting Governor Kim Guadagno. "By signing these bipartisan bills, we are nurturing a program that puts more of these healthy, locally-grown foods directly into the hands of our kids while supporting New Jersey's third-largest industry: agriculture."

The package of unanimously passed bills supporting the "Farm to School" program raise awareness of the program, create potential revenue streams for continued development and create a clearinghouse web portal to allow farmers to better connect with schools and food banks. The bills that were signed today include:

A-156 (Space, McHose, Andrzejczak, Riley/Barnes, Oroho) – Requires the Department of Agriculture to post on its website certain information regarding the state's Farm to School program

A-2641 (Space, Andrzejczak, Dancer, Wilson/Barnes) – Provides for voluntary contributions on gross income tax returns to support Farm to School and School Gardens programs

A-2642 (Andrzejczak, Riley, Space, Dancer/Barnes, Oroho) – Allows contributions to the New Jersey Farm to School program

A-2643 (Space, Riley, Dancer, Wilson, Andrzejczak/Barnes, Oroho) – Establishes "Best in New Jersey 'Farm to School' Awards Program" to annually recognize the best Farm to School programs implemented by a school or school district

A-2644 (Dancer, Andrzejczak, Space, Wilson/Beach, Beck) – Directs the Department of Agriculture to establish a clearinghouse website for farmers to offer produce and dairy products for use by school breakfast programs, school lunch programs and food banks

"I'm proud to sign these bills, which fuel a program that fuels our kids," added Acting Governor Guadagno.

More than 250 New Jersey schools participate in a "Farm to School" program, connecting school nutrition with local farms, improving the quality of school meals and strengthening relationships in the community. The program also helps children understand where their food comes from through the integration of food-related education into the curriculum

and hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits and culinary classes.

"The Farm Bureau has been a steadfast supporter of the Farm to School and recent School Gardens programs," said Ryck Suydam, President of the New Jersey Farm Bureau. "We think they substantially improve the understanding of food nutrition among the student population and also provide the potential for an expansion of our great Jersey Fresh produce onto the menus of school lunches and other meals provided by school districts. It's a win-win for nutrition and local farmers. We applaud Acting Governor Guadagno for signing these bills."

Following the bill signing, the Acting Governor toured Terhune Orchards, which provides produce to more than a dozen schools in the area, adding great local and fresh food choices to the cafeteria offerings. Since 1975, the Mount Family has owned and operated the Orchards. Terhune grows more than 35 crops on 200 acres, including about 30 varieties of apples, 28 varieties of peaches and 7 varieties of pears, and offers a "Pick-Your-Own" program for apples, berries, flowers and pumpkins. The farm is open to the public year-round and hosts seasonal festivals throughout the year.

"We are so happy to welcome Acting Governor Guadagno to Terhune Orchards today," said Pam Mount, owner of Terhune Orchards. "For the last forty years we have hosted educational tours and camps for school-aged children. Every year, more than 10,000 kids learn how to grow fruits and vegetables and how New Jersey farms work to provide them the healthy foods they eat."

In 2011, Governor Christie signed legislation to establish the last week of September as "Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week" in New Jersey to highlight and promote the value of New Jersey agriculture and fresh foods, as well as the value and importance of fresh farm foods for children, their health and success in school.

Agriculture is New Jersey's third largest industry. In 2012, the state's 9,071 farms on 715,057 acres generated sales totaling \$1.14 billion. The horticulture industry is one of New Jersey's top agriculture commodities. The industry includes nursery, greenhouse, sod and Christmas trees and generated \$444.8 million in sales in 2012.

Acting Governor Guadagno was joined by, among others, Senator Steven V. Oroho (R-Morris, Sussex and Warren), Senator Shirley K. Turner (D-Hunterdon and Mercer), Assemblywoman Celeste Riley (D-Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem), Assemblywoman Donna Simon (R-Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset), New Jersey Department of Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher and New Jersey Department of Education Acting Commissioner David Hespe.

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