

New Jersey Agriculture

2004

Annual Report



Agricultural Statistics

Message from the Governor



New Jersey is truly the Garden State, with over eight hundred thousand acres dedicated to our diverse agricultural industry. We are proud of our state's agricultural heritage. Protecting the family farm complements our efforts to preserve and protect all of our state's natural resources.

Whether it is confronting issues like invasive pests, making sure we provide nutritious food in our schools, or helping our neediest citizens through the state's 650 food pantries and soup kitchens, agriculture plays a role in the quality of life for all state residents.

Our diverse food and agriculture industry helps make New Jersey a great place to live and work. Through the dedicated work of the Department of Agriculture, we can keep our Garden State green and growing.

Acting Governor Richard J. Codey

Message from the Secretary



The Department of Agriculture this year continued to meet the challenges of ensuring a strong agricultural industry in the most densely populated state in the nation and also moved to make healthier, nutritious foods available in our schools.

We undertook a series of efforts to promote new economic opportunities for our farmers, including encouraging the growth of the agri-tourism industry, creating a new brand – Jersey Grown – for New Jersey ornamental horticultural products, and adding eight new community farmers markets.

We put more emphasis on the state's significant seafood industry by launching a Jersey Seafood website and establishing an aquatic farmer license program.

Farmers and fishermen in New Jersey have always known the key to survival is changing with the times. Through the accomplishments and initiatives outlined in this report, we will continue to work to retain our farms, strengthen our food and agriculture industries, and protect the character of New Jersey for generations to come.

Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



2004 Year in Review

The Department of Agriculture faced many challenges in 2004. From working to eradicate invasive species like the Asian longhorned beetle and helping farmers recover from devastating floods to convening a task force to revitalize an ailing peach industry, the Department decisively responded to those challenges, constantly seeking to deliver high-quality service to its many constituencies.

Protecting animal and plant resources was a priority as the Department confronted cases of Sudden Oak Death, Avian Influenza and West Nile Virus in horses.

While there were challenges, there also were many achievements. Some major objectives were accomplished in 2004:

- ☑ A proposed Child Nutrition Program Rule was published in the New Jersey Register. The rule requires school districts to improve the nutritional value of food offered in cafeteria a la carte lines, vending machines, school stores and fundraisers by development of a local level school nutrition policy in compliance with the Department's Model School Nutrition Policy.
- ☑ Marketing efforts were stepped up for additional New Jersey harvested products. The Jersey Grown and Jersey Seafood brands were launched to highlight New Jersey's ornamental horticultural products and the seafood and aquaculture industries. New websites were established.
- ☑ An Aquatic Farmer License Program was developed to protect the ownership of aquacultured stock and establish safeguards to protect the industry, wild stocks and the environment.
- ☑ Implementation of the Smart Growth Plan -- which reinforces our planning for agriculture to help keep our farmland open, green and productive -- continued with establishment of a Planners Tool Kit and new markets, implementation of economic development strategies, and working with community leaders, municipalities and counties.

Following are the highlights of these accomplishments:

Child Nutrition Rule Published

On September 15, 2004 proposed rule amendments and new rules concerning the Department's Child Nutrition Program were published. The rule was the culmination of the multi-agency Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids campaign announced in May 2003 that sought to combat a national epidemic of childhood obesity and promote better nutrition.

The Department -- which administers the federal school breakfast and lunch programs -- developed a Model School Nutrition Policy to help school districts develop their own policies for replacing unhealthy foods with more nutritious options.

The amended rule gives school districts until September 2007 to meet the nutrition standards, but requires them to adopt their own district-wide nutrition policies by September 2006.

Jersey Grown and Jersey Seafood Brands Launched

Building upon the success of the *Jersey Fresh* marketing campaign, the Department developed *Jersey Grown*, a new brand signifying ornamental horticultural products are grown in the Garden State, accustomed to New Jersey soil, disease and pest-free, and checked for quality.



A *Jersey Grown* website debuted at www.jerseygrown.nj.gov in September. The website features helpful and interesting information on the state's horticulture industry, both for consumers and the industry. Visitors are able to search for nurseries, garden centers, gardens and arboretums. They also can access gardening tips and fact sheets. The site was launched in conjunction with the distribution of point-of-sale materials to nurseries and garden centers in preparation for the fall planting season. There are currently 18 certified *Jersey Grown* suppliers.



Recognizing the importance of New Jersey's seafood and aquaculture industries, a *Jersey Seafood* website at www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov was launched in August. It provides consumers with a wide array of information on seafood products from the Garden State. Recipes, handling and storage information, listings of seafood-related events and more are available to on-line consumers who want to know more about the bounty of New Jersey's waters.

A USDA Value Added Grant was awarded to seven of our New Jersey aquaculture producers who intend to begin marketing live clams in mesh bags branded with the *Jersey Seafood* label. This new *Jersey Seafood* branded product will be marketed to our farm markets and some local retailers.

First Aquatic Farmer Licenses Awarded

An Aquatic Farmer License rule was adopted to establish a program to license the possession and ownership of aquacultured stock. In July, a series of Aquatic Farmer license workshops were held and the first licenses were issued in late September, early October.

The first group of Aquatic Farmer Licenses was awarded during a ceremony in October at the Tuckerton Seaport, Tuckerton.



The licensing program will provide a better mechanism for generating data on the size and scope of the New Jersey aquaculture industry and establish safeguards to protect the industry, wild stocks and the environment.

In addition to the Aquatic Farmer License to encourage development and expansion of the state's growing aquaculture industry, Rutgers University published the Aquacultural Management Practices/Health Management Plan. The recommended practices in this report are intended to assist aquatic farmers in complying with appropriate environmental regulations, facilitate the permitting process and preserve environmental integrity. In addition, the Health Management Plan was developed to minimize disease risks that may be detrimental to a new and growing farming sector. Also, the New Jersey Aquaculture Directory and Guidebook were developed to provide the aquaculture industry with ready reference for the field.

Implementation of Smart Growth Plan

The Department's Smart Growth Plan – developed in 2003 – outlines what is needed to ensure a strong agricultural industry and outlines a series of specific strategies to help retain farmland and help farmers be more successful. Implementation of the Plan has been ongoing, with development of a Planners Tool Kit to support municipal governments, businesses, non-profit groups, and local citizens in their efforts to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the Agricultural Smart Growth Plan. The Tool Kit, like the Plan, embraces the five key components that have been identified as critical for the future of farming: Farmland Preservation, Innovative Conservation Planning, Economic Development, Agriculture Industry Sustainability and Natural Resource Conservation.



*Long Valley
in
Washington
Township,
Morris
County.*

New markets were added, including eight community farmers markets, bringing the total to 69 in the 2004 season. Other new markets include Rutgers University's buying of products for institutional use and the development of a peach cider by a Gloucester County farmer.

In addition, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) – a federal/state partnership -- was implemented, with the goal of enrolling 30,000 acres of highly erodible cropland and marginal pastureland in conservation cover planning over its 10-year enrollment period. CREP's benefits include reduced soil erosion, improved water quality, improved wildlife habitats and increased farm income from marginal land.

Through these and other initiatives, the Department continued to work to achieve the seven major goals set forth in its Strategic Plan and to ensure a successful agricultural and food industry, protect natural resources that sustain it, and support the health and welfare of the general public.

2004 Accomplishments

Goal 1: Preserve Farms

Permanently preserve and retain the maximum amount of New Jersey farmland to maintain a viable agriculture and food industry, and promote smart growth and a high quality of life for New Jersey citizens.

► **Farmland Preservation Totals** – New Jersey continues to lead the nation in farmland preservation, with 16 percent of its approximately 805,000 acres of farmland permanently preserved. A total of 171 farms covering more than 13,000 acres were permanently preserved in 2004, including: 594 acres of the historic Joseph J. White cranberry farm in Pemberton and Manchester Townships in Burlington and Ocean Counties; the 209-Doak Farm in Alloway and Mannington Townships, Salem County; and the 126-acre Piney Hill Farm in Washington Township, Warren County. The Legislature in December approved the State Agriculture Development Committee's request for \$127.7 million in funding for additional farmland preservation projects in 18 counties. Since the inception of the Farmland Preservation Program in 1983, 1,222 farms covering 132,965 acres have been preserved statewide.



Secretary Kuperus at event heralding planned preservation of Atlantic Blueberry Farm, Hamilton Twp., Atlantic County –which will be the largest NJ farm preserved to-date.

► **Smart Growth** – An Agricultural Smart Growth Tool Kit was developed to support municipal governments, businesses, non-profit groups, and local citizens in their efforts to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the Agricultural Smart Growth Plan. The Tool Kit, like the Plan, embraces the five key components that have been identified as critical for the future of farming: Farmland Preservation, Innovative Conservation Planning, Economic Development, Agriculture Industry Sustainability and Natural Resource Conservation. The information included in the Tool Kit is a resource to provide planners with a starting point. Each community must assess its own strengths, weaknesses, and pressures that would lead to its own desired outcome to determine the tools that would be beneficial. The Tool Kit is available on the NJDA website at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/toolkit.htm.

► **Transfer of Development Rights** – The State Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Bank announced the availability of 50-percent cost-sharing grants of up to \$40,000 to help municipalities conduct the planning necessary to implement successful transfer of development rights programs. A total of up to \$1.5 million is available for the grants program. The grants were made available as a result of the State Transfer of Development Rights Act, which authorized municipalities statewide to enact TDR ordinances and authorized the State TDR Bank Board to provide municipalities with planning assistance grants to further the process.

► **Land Use Planning Workshop** – Secretary Kuperus was the opening speaker at an October workshop in Salem County to encourage local officials to plan for agriculture in their communities and to assist them in that process. The workshop was sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Food Systems Education Center at Pennsville in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and other sponsors. The Department plans on continuing that cooperative working relationship with the counties and municipalities of Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland Counties to strengthen the process of planning for agriculture.

► **Highlands Preservation** – The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act was signed into law to protect a major source of the state's drinking water as well as the other valuable resources of this unique region. The Act divides the more than 800,000-acre region into two areas: a preservation area, where development will be strictly regulated, and a planning area, where development will be monitored. The Highlands includes nearly 130,000 acres of active agricultural lands -- or about 15 percent of the region's total land area. The Act includes a number of provisions to help protect farm viability, including: excepting agricultural and horticultural activities and development from the definition of major Highlands development, and considering those activities separately, within the existing agricultural conservation framework; equity protection by requiring that appraisals for preservation purposes be based on regulations and zoning as of January 1, 2004, as well as the establishment of a voluntary transfer of development rights program; farmer representation on the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council, which is charged with developing and implementing a regional master plan; and recognition and support of the Right to Farm Act. More than 20,000 acres of farmland are permanently preserved in the Highlands region. An additional 10,000 acres are in the "preservation pipeline," with preliminary or final approvals for preservation or as active applications. To help build on those efforts and expand preservation in this region, an additional \$30 million in funding -- a portion of a ballot initiative approved by voters in 2003 -- was dedicated by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) for farmland preservation in the Highlands region, above and beyond general farmland preservation funding available for that purpose.

► **Federal Funds** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program made available \$5.5 million in federal funds in 2004 to assist New Jersey in farmland preservation efforts. In 2005, New Jersey will receive \$4.5 million of the more than \$78 million in federal funds available nationwide under this federal grant program.

► **Strategic Targeting Project** – The State Agriculture Development Committee continues to work closely with County Agriculture Development Boards, County Planning Boards and key municipalities on a more strategic, pro-active approach to prioritizing farmland preservation investments. The Strategic Targeting Project is coordinating farmland preservation efforts at all levels of government to make the most efficient and effective use of available resources in securing a bright future for farming and the agricultural industry, as a key component of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Smart Growth Plan. The Strategic Targeting Project provides a statewide framework into which Municipal Farmland Preservation Master Plan Elements, County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation/Agriculture Retention Plans

and information gathered through the State Development and Redevelopment Plan Cross Acceptance Process can be integrated.

► **Farmland Affordability/Availability** – With New Jersey’s land prices among the highest in the nation, the New Jersey Farmland Affordability/Availability Working Group presented recommendations to the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) on ways to make farmland more affordable and available to farmers. The SADC has distributed the working group's recommendations to counties, New Jersey Farm Bureau, Rutgers University's Cook College and other interested parties for comment before considering action. The working group included representation from the SADC, New Jersey Farm Bureau, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Farm Service Agency, First Pioneer Farm Credit, Rutgers University, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey, New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the Salem and Cumberland County Boards of Agriculture.

► **Farm Transfers** – The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) released a new publication to assist farm families in undertaking the planning needed to ensure they can successfully transfer the farm to the next generation. The publication is intended to provide farm families with information and ideas to consider as they evaluate their own situations and embark on their own transfer processes. Included is a section listing additional informational resources for farmers in farm transfer situations. The publication was developed through the SADC’s Farm Link Program. The program serves as a resource and referral center for new farmers, farmers seeking access to land and farming opportunities, landowners seeking farmers to lease or purchase land, and farmers working on estate and farm transfer plans. Funding assistance was provided through Growing New Farmers, a regional initiative of the New England Small Farm Institute. The farm transfer publication can be accessed at: www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/transferprofilesbooklet.pdf.



► **SADC Executive Director** – In December, the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) named Susan Craft of Moorestown as its new executive director. Craft, a professional planner, has served as coordinator of Burlington County’s farmland preservation and transfer of development rights programs since 1993. More than 19,000 acres of farmland have been preserved in Burlington County, more than any other county in New Jersey. Burlington County’s farmland preservation program is one of the top 10 county programs in the country. Under Craft’s direction, Burlington County established the first transfer of development rights (TDR) programs in the state in Lumberton and Chesterfield Townships. Under Lumberton’s TDR program, approximately 500 new residential units were developed and more than 840 acres of farmland permanently preserved. Craft, who graduated from Cook College, Rutgers University, with a bachelor’s degree in environmental planning and design, formerly was director of Burlington County’s Land Use Planning office for eight years.

Goal 2: Protect and Conserve Natural and Agricultural Resources

Encourage and support stewardship of agricultural and urban open land and other natural resources to protect and enhance fertile soils, clean water, and productive and healthy animal and plant resources.

► **Energy Conservation & Renewable Energy Sources via the Internet** – With the threat of increased utility costs due to artificial caps being lifted by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, the agriculture industry was poised to see an unwelcome increase in utilities bills. New Jersey has a variety of energy conservation and renewable energy programs in place that the agriculture community was encouraged to evaluate for farm operations and home use. The Department's website was modified to include information on these programs and where additional information could be secured. Links were provided to direct farm inquiries to energy-efficient equipment for heating, cooling, lighting; energy efficient new construction in smart growth areas; installation of renewable energy systems (solar, wind power, biomass); and loans and financing tools to implement these programs. Programs for the home include low-income retrofit measures for energy conservation; energy-efficient appliance and lighting rebates; energy-efficient heating/cooling equipment; and installation of renewable energy systems. The information is available at:



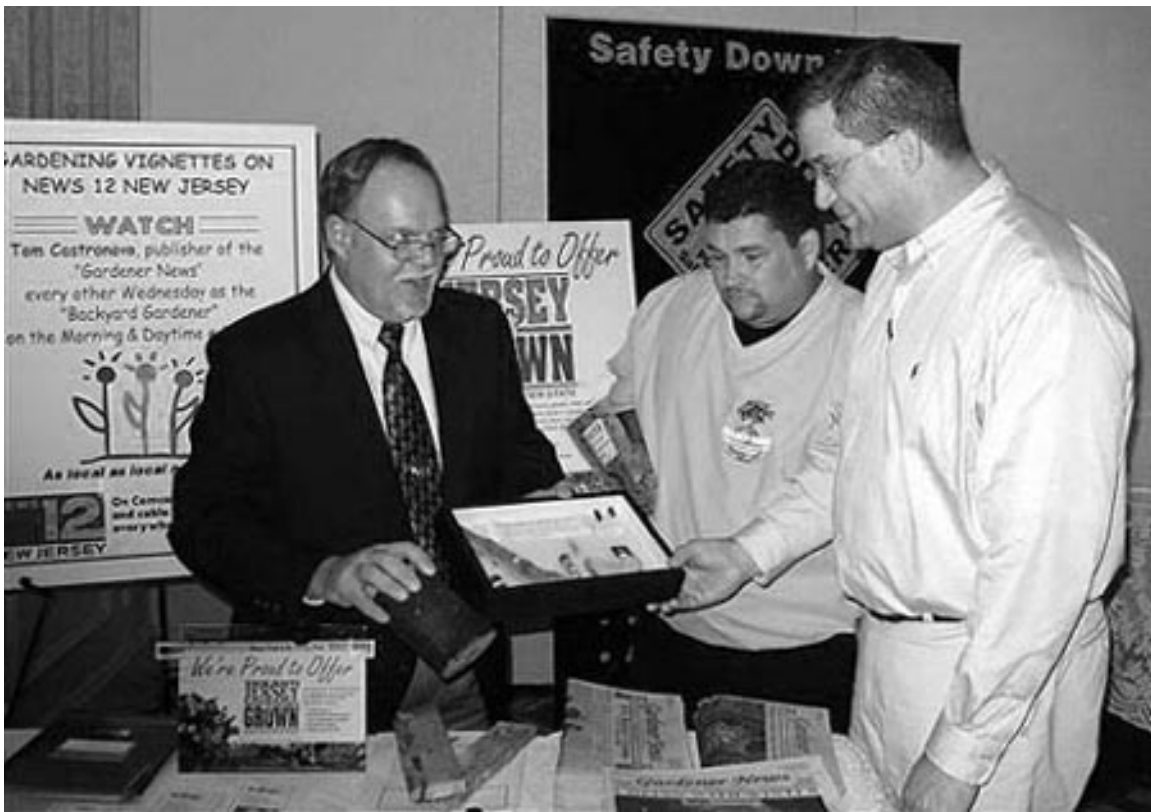
www.state.nj.us/agriculture/financialassistance.htm#energy.

► **Nation's Premier Film Recycling Program** – New Jersey's efforts to recycle greenhouse film have not gone unnoticed. Foreign countries and other states have turned to the Department for guidance on how to develop and implement agricultural film recycling programs in their region. Each year the tonnage of film recovered increases, and to date New Jersey has recaptured almost 2.8 million pounds of film. A national trade magazine published a feature article on New Jersey's nationally recognized film recycling program, and the state continues to be the nation's leader in the recycling of nursery and greenhouse film. Removal of the film is rather labor intensive so staff participated in a demonstration of a unique piece of equipment that peels and bales the polyethylene film off a hoop house in record time and with minimal labor. The recycling program will continue and other similar types of plastic are being evaluated for inclusion in this plastics recycling program.

► **CREP Program** – Enrollment by farmers and landowners in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a federal/state partnership, began in September 2004. The goal is to enroll 30,000 acres of highly erodible cropland and marginal pastureland in conservation cover planting. CREP's benefits include reduced soil erosion, improved water quality, improved wildlife habitats and increased farm income from marginal land. A total of \$100 million in state and federal funds will be available for this program over a 10-year period.

► **Watershed Program** – Wreck Pond, located between the Boroughs of Spring Lake, Spring Lake Heights, Sea Girt, and Wall Township, discharges directly into the ocean, and is a suspected source of bacterial contamination that results in the frequent closure of bathing beaches in those communities. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), in partnership with Freehold Soil Conservation District and Monmouth County Planning, are working with New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in the study of this watershed for the development of a Regional Stormwater Management Plan, which will provide the framework for both short and long-term stormwater management goals.

► **Asian Longhorned Beetle** – For the second time in two years, the Asian longhorned beetle was discovered in New Jersey. Four hundred and thirty-six infested trees were found in Carteret and Woodbridge, Middlesex County, with a few each in Rahway and Linden in Union County. Tree removal is continuing in the infestation area. In the first phase of cutting, 1,000 host trees will be removed, including the 436 identified as infested. By early 2005, more than 4,000 host trees in total will be removed. In field surveys of the Middlesex/Union infestation, 56,074 trees were inspected. Asian longhorned beetles, native to China and Korea, have caused serious tree losses in New York State and Chicago. Only once before were the beetles found attacking trees in New Jersey -- in Jersey City in October 2002. More than 100 infested trees and 400 trees total at that site were removed to eradicate the beetle. Follow-up inspections in Jersey City have shown no evidence of the beetle returning.



Division of Plant Industry Director Carl Schulze talks to landscapers about the Asian longhorned beetle infestation. Photo by Tom Castronovo.

► **Sudden Oak Death** – As part of the nationwide testing program for Sudden Oak Death (*Phytophthora ramorum*), one lilac bush at a Cape May County nursery tested positive for the disease in May 2004. All susceptible host plants in the block where the diseased lilac bush was found were destroyed. Additionally, all host plants within 10 meters of the infested block were pulled off the market for a 90-day period pending further testing. Two rounds of testing at the nursery continued with no additional detections of *Phytophthora ramorum* found in plant material at the nursery. *Phytophthora ramorum* is a serious fungal pathogen that affects certain trees and shrubs, such as oak and bonsai trees, lilacs, rhododendrons, and azaleas. In California since 1995, the fungus has killed tens of thousands of tanoaks, coast live oaks and California black oaks. Most plants experience leaf spots or twig dieback, but red and black oak trees are particularly susceptible under laboratory conditions.

► **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid** – The hemlock woolly adelgid is a serious pest and has devastated thousands of acres of native hemlocks in New Jersey. A foreign ladybug species, *Sasajiscymnus Pseudoscymnus tsugae*, that feeds on hemlock woolly adelgid, (*Adelges tsugae*), was produced and released by the Department's beneficial insect laboratory in cooperation with the United States Forest Service (USFS) as part of a regional biological control program. This season, beetles were released into five sites in Sussex County. Beetles were also supplied to five northeastern and mid-Atlantic states, and as laboratory starter colonies for new biological control projects in the southern Appalachian Mountain region. As part of a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the NJDA is rearing a second predatory beetle for the control of hemlock woolly adelgid. The lady beetle, *Scymnus sinuanodulus*, originally from China, is developing in the laboratory in the first phase of building a mass production program. The Division's laboratory colony of *S. sinuanodulus* is the second surviving colony in the world, the original colony being maintained at the USDA Forest Service Forest Health Research Laboratory at Hamden, Connecticut. New Jersey's work, in partnership with the USDA Forest Service, is to establish a colony in a second location to ensure against loss of the species from mishap, and to develop a mass production procedure that will allow distribution of the new beetle to forest managers and researchers working in biological control of hemlock adelgid throughout the Eastern states

► **West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)** – In 2004, six horses contracted West Nile Virus, two of which died, three were euthanized and the other remains alive. Last year, 150 horses were diagnosed with West Nile Virus. The reduced numbers are due to less viral activity throughout the state among all species, from humans and horses down to mosquitoes and birds. There is speculation that the public's awareness of the disease encouraged preventative measures including mosquito control, minimizing risk factors, and vaccinating their horses. There were six confirmed equine cases of EEE and one suspected case. There were eight cases in total last year.



► **Humane Treatment of Domestic Livestock** – In 1995, the New Jersey Legislature mandated that the New Jersey Department of Agriculture develop and adopt regulations governing the minimum standards of humane raising, keeping, care, treatment, marketing and sale of domestic livestock and poultry. Working with industry, New Jersey Farm Bureau, veterinarians, Rutgers University, and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, the Department developed what became the first regulations of their kind in the country. The New Jersey State Board of Agriculture and the Department of Agriculture continue ongoing review of scientific literature, veterinary school, land grant college, and agricultural extension curricula, and other pertinent scientific studies to ensure that New Jersey's standards continue to reflect practices supported by science and as informed by animal welfare concerns. Adoption of the Humane Standards Regulation has provided livestock owners with a clear understanding of their responsibilities as to the raising, keeping, care, treatment, marketing and sale of their animals. Further, these rules have provided law enforcement authorities and the State and county Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals with appropriate guidance as to standards for humane treatment. As those agencies enforce the State's animal cruelty laws, their cooperation with the Department of Agriculture has enhanced the ability of the State to ensure that diseases -- or threats of diseases -- are identified quickly and that appropriate action has been taken to prevent the transmission of those diseases which could harm the public or other animals.

► **New Jersey Cattle Health Assurance Program (NJCHAP)** – This voluntary quality assurance program for New Jersey beef and dairy cattle producers offers free, intensive, whole-herd health assessment and the opportunity to plan for improvements in weak areas. USDA funding provides for free Johne's Disease testing and herd improvement plans are being offered. Plans to expand NJCHAP include developing programs for biosecurity, herd health management and mastitis. In addition, the New Jersey Sheep and Goat Health Assurance Program (NJSAGHAP) was recently formed for sheep and goat producers interested in whole herd or flock health assessment.



► **Poultry Disease Surveillance** – With outbreaks of Avian Influenza (AI) and Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) in other states within the past two years, the Division of Animal Health continues its involvement with the National Poultry Improvement Plan program and has increased its surveillance for poultry diseases. In 2004, new regulations were put in place in order to safeguard New Jersey's industry as well as the nation's. Increased import requirements were put in place on poultry and poultry products entering and traveling through the state of New Jersey. This year, the Department received a grant from the USDA that allowed testing of live bird markets, farm markets, auctions, and distributors on a quarterly basis or more if needed. This also allowed for increased training sessions in biosecurity and prevention of AI in flocks. With this grant, the Animal Health Laboratory is now able to provide rapid testing for AI and END by adding state of the art testing equipment. In addition, New Jersey has increased the number of private flocks on routine testing schedules, and has been able to assist farmers with disease investigations and flock management. In addition to these requirements,

New Jersey is entering into a cooperative agreement with the USDA on AI. This agreement will allow increased surveillance in the Live Bird Marketing System by supplying the necessary staff, equipment, and cooperation between states to New Jersey. New Jersey is currently playing host to the Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza Working Group. This group consists of representatives from government and private industry of seven states from across the country that have a stake in preventing avian influenza. This group meets four times a year, and is in charge of setting policy on the prevention of AI. New Jersey has a very active role in this group and will continue to ensure that its industry is protected from this disease.

► **Strategic Plan for the State Soil Conservation Committee and Soil**

Conservation Districts – In December 2004, the State Soil Conservation Committee unanimously approved the *Strategic Plan for the New Jersey Department of Agriculture State Soil Conservation Committee and Soil Conservation Districts*. The objective of this Plan is to articulate a clear direction for the State Soil Conservation Committee, Soil Conservation Districts and the Conservation Partnership through the end of 2009. The plan is the culmination of a comprehensive analysis of the institutional, legislative, administrative and accountability needs of the soil and water conservation program identified in the *District Operations Review Workgroup Basis and Background Report* adopted by the State Soil Conservation Committee in September 2003. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to strengthen the State's Soil Conservation Program by encouraging a beneficial degree of statewide uniformity and consistency, establish program priorities, improve decision making, enhance communications and coordination among and between the Districts and the State Soil Conservation Committee and improve organizational responsiveness between our conservation partners. Given the array of district operations, it is important to meet the overall goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan while encouraging the diversity of locally-led conservation programs.

Goal 3: Protect Producers and Consumers by Ensuring Safe, High-Quality Agricultural Products and Services

Administer fair and effective regulatory, inspection, grading and other quality assurance programs for food agricultural products and agricultural inputs.

► **Best Practices for Biosecurity** – Best Management Practices (BMPs) were written for all the various species of livestock – cattle, horses, swine, sheep, goats and poultry, as well as for veterinary hospitals, slaughterhouses, livestock auctions, aquatic farms and fish and seafood operations – as mandated by the Governor’s Office. Developed using a \$300,000 grant from the Office of Domestic Preparedness, the best practices delineate steps people can take to increase security and biosecurity on their farms and agricultural premises. Condensed, easy-to-follow versions of these BMPs are scheduled to be distributed shortly to all livestock producers, to help them reduce the threat of various forms of bio-terrorism. Although the best management practices were developed to protect against acts of terrorism, they will be equally effective at preventing or minimizing the emergence and spread of infectious agents on farms.

► **Aquacultural Management Practices (AMPs)/ Health Management Plan Adopted** – Rutgers University published the AMPs developed by the NJDA as well as the related Aquatic Organism Health Management Plan. The AMPs are intended to assist aquatic farmers in complying with appropriate environmental regulations, facilitate the permitting process and preserve environmental integrity. These AMPs can provide significant economic benefits to aquatic farmers and substantially improve bottom line profits by reducing disease and mortality, improve the quality of aquatic stocks and reduce permitting costs. The Health Management Plan was developed to minimize disease risks that may be detrimental to a new and growing farming sector. It provides a proactive mechanism to predict and minimize disease outbreaks; protects wild and cultured stocks from major disease introductions and provides a means to confine disease outbreaks if they occur; provides feedback to growers on disease issues; addresses and decreases stress on aquatic stocks; suggests a mechanism for establishing export inspection protocols; and establishes a technical committee to deal with emergency situations.



► **Aquatic Farmer License Rule Adopted** – In 2004, 116 Aquatic Farmer Licenses were issued, 100 for hard clams, 10 for finfish, and six for oysters. The rule was adopted to establish a program to license the possession and ownership of aquacultured stock. Additionally, it provides a better mechanism for generating data on the size and scope of the New Jersey aquaculture industry and establishes safeguards to protect the aquaculture industry, wild stocks and the environment.

► **Premium Peach Grading** – A Peach Task Force was formed to develop a long-term strategic action plan designed to reposition New Jersey-grown peaches in the market place and identify new markets and opportunities to bolster the industry. One of the recommendations was to develop a new peach grade and protocol that would include freshness standards for peaches to be packed under a special *Premium Jersey Fresh* label. The new premium grade peach must meet the highest standards.



► **Organic Certification Law** – This legislation authorizes the Department to establish an organic certification program in accordance with national standards for organic production and handling. In addition, this legislation authorizes the Department to establish a transitional sustainable label to encourage conversion from traditional to organic production methods. The proposed rules necessary to implement this legislation were approved by the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture at the August meeting and will be published in the New Jersey Register early in 2005. The Department continues to work with the USDA and the Northeast Organic Farming Association in New Jersey to complete the process necessary to become an accredited certifying agent and then to become a State Organic Program.

► **Licensing and Bonding for Agricultural Commodities** – As a means of assuring that New Jersey farmers are paid for their product in case of default, the Department endorsed legislation that amended the security requirement for anyone buying or receiving milk, fruits, vegetables, eggs, live poultry, hay, grain or straw from New Jersey producers. The legislation removed the \$100,000 cap that had been in place since 1972 on the amount of surety required to be posted for milk and the \$50,000 cap for other agricultural commodities that has been in place since 1978.

► **Agricultural Chemistry Program** – These programs are administered to protect farmers and consumers by determining the manufacturer's compliance with the guaranteed content of feed, fertilizer and liming materials and to reduce the amount of misbranded and deficient products offered for sale, thereby insuring the quality and quantity of these materials and promoting crop yield. The Department collected and analyzed 1,106 random samples. In cases of deficient product, warnings or penalties were issued. Penalties received for deficient fertilizers are returned to farmers to offset losses that may have been caused by lower-quality product. Over the last two fiscal years, \$33,079.41 has been refunded to farmers.

► **Dairy Program** – The Department helped the dairy industry complete a feasibility analysis and develop a business plan for producing a variety of locally produced, value-added dairy products to improve the profitability for participating milk producers. Specific objectives completed were the development of a business plan including a cost/revenue and return on investment analysis for the installation and operation of a micro dairy processing facility in the New Jersey market area. Other objectives included the branding and labeling of locally-produced products and the expanding of the *Jersey Fresh* regulation to include the definition of high quality milk that can use the *Jersey Fresh* brand on products made with *Jersey Fresh* milk.



Fulper Dairy, West Amwell, Hunterdon County

When Farmland Dairy LLC (Parmalat) filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, the Department monitored the situation from the onset and helped the New Jersey dairy industry through a focused engagement. The Department made sure consumers had access to milk, worked to keep Farmland's plant open for the benefit of its employees and the economic impact to the community, and maintained the market for dairy producers. In addition, the Department promulgated emergency rules allowing the Secretary to provisionally waive the requirement that dairy farms and cooperative associations provide 28 days written notice to milk dealers of their intent to discontinue sales to the dealers; petitioned the bankruptcy court to authorize Parmalat to continue to pay dairy farmers in a timely manner and endorsed legislation to amend the security requirements for anyone buying or receiving milk from New Jersey producers.

► **Jersey Fresh** – The Jersey Fresh Quality Grading program had a record 257 participants for the 2004 growing season. Division staff visited supermarkets in the South Jersey area to encourage produce managers to buy *Jersey Fresh* whenever possible. The Department ordered 6 million *Jersey Fresh* twist ties that were sold to growers who participated in the Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program.

► **Farm Certification Program (Third-Party Audits)** – Three new employees were hired in 2004 to conduct third party audits. These new employees also will be utilized in the Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program. A logo was created for the NJDA Farm Certification Program, which incorporated the *Jersey Fresh* logo. This logo is for use by growers who participate in the Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program and have passed an NJDA-USDA Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices Third Party Audit. Ten New Jersey packers/producers successfully completed the GAP/GHP Third Party Audit in 2004. In addition, division staff went to Dover, Delaware, to conduct an audit for an apple grower, as Delaware lacked trained personnel to do GAP/GHP audits.



Goal 4: Support and Expand Profitable, Innovative Agricultural and Food Industry Development

Foster agricultural economic growth, profitability and a positive business climate through technical and financial assistance, market development, and effective product and industry promotion.

► **Flood Damage** – President Bush issued a Presidential Natural Disaster Declaration for Burlington, Camden, Warren, Sussex, and Hunterdon Counties, which were affected by heavy rain and floods in two separate storms in July and September. Emergency loans from the federal Farm Service Agency were made available to farmers. Additional federal aid was made available through a disaster declaration from USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman. In the July 12-13 storm, damage assessment reports from the Farm Service Agency showed that cranberries, tomatoes, melons, string beans, blueberries, hay, eggplant, wax beans and carrots were most affected. In addition to lost crops, \$1.75 million in land damage was reported in Burlington County and \$15,000 was tallied in Camden County. Across both counties, \$235,000 in damage to buildings, structures and equipment was reported. The FSA County Committee reported that the storm damaged cropland and supporting acreage in the following ways: severe erosion; washed-out dams; collapsed walls of irrigation ponds; debris deposited on cropland; drainage and irrigation ditches filled with debris and muck; and water control gates destroyed. Numerous farms in Sussex, Warren and Hunterdon Counties were affected by rain, floods and wind from the remnants of Hurricane Ivan on Saturday, September 18. Particularly hard-hit was the Great Meadows area of Warren County, where hundreds of acres of crops were damaged by flooding. The Department met with farmers in both areas to discuss short- and long-term solutions. Concerns in the southern counties centered largely on agricultural dam repair, while farmers in the northwestern counties sought action on de-snagging the Pequest River to alleviate any future flooding incidents. Both issues have become focal points of efforts by the Department.



► **Grants, Financial Assistance and Services Web Page** – A new web page launched in October on the state Department of Agriculture's main website, www.state.nj.us/agriculture, with a number of grants, financial assistance opportunities and special services available for farmers. The new web page serves as a clearinghouse for free or minimal cost assistance programs to anyone involved in agriculture in the state. Located at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/financialassistance.htm, the web page offers information and links for the following: soil and water conservation grants; value-added producer grants; marketing improvement grants; First Pioneer Farm Credit Grants (AgEnhancement); Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grants; energy and farm bill programs; technical assistance to dairy producers; deer fence cost

sharing; and support programs for new and established farmers. This site brings together -- for the first time -- the many funding opportunities, technical assistance and other services provided to farmers in the state by New Jersey, United States Department of Agriculture and other federal agencies.

► **Agri-Tourism** – In September 2004, members were named to the New Jersey Agri-Tourism Industry Advisory Council. It is made up of five at-large agri-tourism operators; five designated members from the New Jersey Wine Industry, New Jersey Agricultural Fairs Association, New Jersey Equine Industry Advisory Council, New Jersey Direct Marketing Association, and New Jersey agricultural museums/living history farms; and four ex-officio members: the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, New Jersey Farm Bureau, Rutgers University, and the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Development Commission. The Council is an outgrowth of the Department's economic development strategies and was created in acknowledgement of the agri-tourism sector's potential for growth in New Jersey. The panel is charged with developing and expanding the agri-tourism industry in the state. While there are no agri-tourism statistics in New Jersey, travel and tourism in general is the state's second largest industry, generating \$31 billion in revenues annually. As an example, income from agri-tourism related activities on Vermont farms totaled \$19.5 million in 2002. Agri-tourism includes pick-your-own activities; hay rides; corn mazes; farm tours; living history farms and other educational activities; agricultural food and seafood festivals; county fairs; equine industry activities including horseback riding; and other entertainment and recreational opportunities.



Corn
Maze at
K and S
Farms in
East
Windsor.



► **Jersey Grown** – Expanding on the success of the *Jersey Fresh* promotional program, *Jersey Grown* was established to promote the ornamental horticultural industry, the largest and fastest growing sector of agriculture. Eighteen suppliers have been licensed to sell their products under the *Jersey Grown* label. They have been provided with tags, signage and other point-of-sale materials. To be called *Jersey Grown*, the product must be grown in New Jersey, be checked for quality, and be pest and disease-free. In conjunction with the new branding program, a *Jersey Grown* website debuted at www.jerseygrown.nj.gov in September. The website features helpful and interesting information on the state's horticulture industry, both for consumers and the industry. Visitors are able to search for nurseries, garden centers, gardens and arboretums. They also can access gardening tips and fact sheets.

► **Jersey Seafood** – The United States Department of Agriculture awarded a Value Added Grant to seven New Jersey aquaculture producers who plan to develop a *Jersey Seafood* brand for live clams sold in mesh bags. The New Jersey Seafood Marketing Group is being formed to market the product to the state's farm markets and some local

retailers. To supplement these types of efforts and support New Jersey's seafood and aquaculture industries, the *Jersey Seafood* website debuted in August, providing consumers with a wide array of information on seafood products from the Garden State. Recipes, handling and storage information, listings of seafood-related events and more are available to on-line consumers who want to know more about the bounty of New Jersey's waters. It can be accessed at www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov.

► **Organic Aquaculture Grant** – The USDA granted \$61,000 to the Department, Rutgers Cooperative Extension and Organic National Advisory Committee to identify, evaluate and quantify market opportunities for organically grown U.S. aquaculture products. The grant was part of more than \$1.3 million awarded to 23 states for aquaculture market research.

► **New Jersey Aquaculture Directory and Guidebook Developed** – These two publications provide the aquaculture industry with ready reference for the field. The Directory lists individuals and businesses involved in the production of aquatic species and those related businesses that support the aquaculture industry in New Jersey. It also includes related organizations and contacts in extension, technical assistance, education, disease diagnosis and economic development. The Directory is available both in hard copy and on-line at: www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov/2004%20NJ%20AQUA%20DIR%20web.htm.



The Aquaculture Guidebook is designed to assist individuals through the permitting process, assist with site selection, access relevant information and develop viable business and marketing plans. The Guidebook is available online at:

www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov/guidebook_to_developing_aquaculture.pdf.

► **Deer Fencing Program** – The Department reinstated a cost-share program to help provide farmers with deer fencing, using \$300,000 in state funding provided by the Department and the Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife. Applications for the program, which had been unfunded the past several years, are under review. Farmers will be able to receive fencing material and up to 30 percent of the line posts needed. The program is being administered in conjunction with the Division of Fish & Wildlife of the Department of Environmental Protection. A Rutgers Cooperative Extension survey in 1998 indicated that almost 70 percent of wildlife crop loss was attributable to deer, creating an estimated \$5 million to \$10 million annual loss statewide.



► **Olympic Equine Event** – In July, the Horse Park of New Jersey hosted for the first time the final mandatory outing for horses and riders competing for a place on the 2004 U.S. Olympic team for three-day eventing. Fifteen horses from around the country participated in the competition. Four horses and an alternate were chosen for the Olympic team, which participated in the 2004 Olympic games in Athens, Greece, in August.

► **Jersey Bred Event** – For a second year, Monmouth Park hosted the Annual New Jersey Thoroughbred Festival. It featured a full card of races with \$700,000 in purses exclusively for New Jersey bred thoroughbreds. Equine is the third largest sector of New Jersey agriculture. In 2002, equine cash receipts totaled \$123 million. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture by the National Agricultural Statistics Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, there were 3,047 farms with 26,896 horses and ponies in the state.



► **Increased State Government Purchases of New Jersey Produce** – The Departments of Agriculture, Corrections and State Treasury worked together to allow for state purchases of over-produced and under-valued New Jersey farm products. In 2003, the second year of a pilot program, the Department of Corrections (DOC) purchased \$210,000 of New Jersey produce, an increase of 100 percent from the previous year. The program continued to grow for the 2004 growing season. The menu changes made available through this program have saved DOC approximately \$30,000. The Department of Agriculture also was able to purchase over 94,000 pounds of peaches in support of 2003's late harvest for the school lunch and school breakfast programs.

► **Jersey Fresh Economic Impact** – Using federal funds, a study was conducted to determine the economic impact of the *Jersey Fresh* Promotional Program. The study showed that each dollar spent on the *Jersey Fresh* program increased farm revenues by \$31.54. That increase boosted farm-related businesses by an additional \$22.95 of sales in agricultural support industries. In total, each dollar spent on *Jersey Fresh* promotion resulted in \$54.49 of increased revenue to the State.



Secretary Kuperus commemorates the 20th Anniversary of Jersey Fresh at the Eastern Produce Council Dinner in June.

► **A Strengthened Jersey Fresh Program** – Products labeled as *Jersey Fresh* are more easily identifiable to consumers who prefer to buy New Jersey produced fruits and vegetables. The Department of Agriculture expanded industry use of *Jersey Fresh* twist ties, rubber bands, UPCs and other branding material. Distribution of *Jersey Fresh* advertising materials increased last year to include 2,500 retail stores, and more than 500 farm and community markets.

► **Improved Retail Industry Coordination** – The Department developed a strategic approach to more effectively communicate the content and timing of New

Jersey's promotional and advertising efforts in advance of the production season. To improve communication between farmers and supermarkets, the Department now sends a weekly e-mail report of "Jersey Fresh Availability" to produce buyers, distributors, retailers and restaurants. The Secretary and Division of Markets and Development staff also conduct annual visits to the corporate headquarters of the regional supermarkets.

► **Eight New Community Farmers Markets** – The Department responded to inquiries from communities all over the State seeking to establish community farmers markets. Since spring of 2003, 19 new community farmers markets have been established. These new markets offer New Jersey consumers direct access to fresh agricultural products while offering the state's farmers direct access to their customers. Bringing together municipalities, farmers and consumers, the Department maintains a consumer-friendly website listing all of the 69 markets in the state. The website is designed to promote the markets to consumers while also matching up farmers and community markets. To search for a nearby community farmers market, visit this web address:

www.state.nj.us/jerseyfresh/searches/urban.htm.



Secretary Kuperus shows Assemblywoman Nellie Pou Jersey Fresh produce being sold at Paterson Farmers Market

► **Peach Industry Task Force** – The Task Force, consisting of leaders in the agriculture and peach industries, along with the Rutgers Food Policy Institute and retailers, developed a long-term strategic plan to strengthen the peach industry in the state. It was the start of a three-year process to focus attention on a sector of the New Jersey fruit industry to assist growers and retailers in identifying new markets for peaches, reposition Jersey-grown peaches in the market place and seek out new opportunities to bolster the industry. The Department made some positive changes that



will help the peach, as well as all other commodity industries. A new *Jersey Fresh* protocol was developed to sell the best of the best through: display ready packaging; stickering fruit to differentiate from other states; registering all farms in the Farm Assurance Certification Program; and upgrading the *Jersey Fresh* standard. Three additional inspectors were hired to perform third party audits and conduct Jersey Fresh Quality Grading program inspections. A special page was added to the *Jersey Fresh* website during the growing season that included announcements telling consumers where they could find *Jersey Fresh* products, including peaches, each week.

► **Economic Development Strategies** – In 2004, the Economic Development Work Team consisting of staff members from each of the Department's five divisions, Rutgers Food Policy Institute, the Food Innovation Center and the Cooperative Extension, identified 100 strategies that would have a positive impact the economic return to New Jersey growers. The strategies, both big and small, consisted of new programs, ideas, and projects. Progress of each idea or program was tracked throughout the year. Out of

the 100 strategies, 52 percent were successfully completed, 42 percent made progress and 6 percent had not been initiated. The *Jersey Fresh* brand was expanded to promote other agricultural industries through the establishment of the brand extensions of *Jersey Seafood*, *Jersey Organic* and *Jersey Grown* for horticultural products. Additional inspection staff was added to the *Jersey Fresh* Quality Grading program to provide third party food certifications. The Department continued its successful meat goat program and the Agri-Tourism Council met for the first time. Through the Department of Corrections and the School Lunch program, State purchases of New Jersey agricultural products were significantly increased in 2004. Moving into 2005, many of the 2004 Strategies, like third party audits and organic certifications, will be continued and many new strategies will be introduced. Efforts to strengthen the Jersey Fresh brand extensions such as *Jersey Grown* and *Jersey Organic* also will be continued in 2005. The Department's seafood and agri-tourism promotion programs will continue to develop and expand in the next year.

Goal 5: Provide Access to Fresh and Nutritious Foods for Children, the Needy and Other New Jersey Citizens

Implement food and nutrition assistance programs to maximize participation by eligible New Jersey citizens, and strengthen agriculture's relationship with the food industry.

► **Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids** – In an effort to promote healthier eating habits and combat obesity and childhood diseases, proposed rule amendments and new rules concerning the Department's Child Nutrition Program were published in September. The Department -- which administers the federal school breakfast and lunch programs -- developed a Model School Nutrition Policy to help school districts develop their own policies for replacing unhealthy foods with more nutritious options.

Under the amended rule:

► Schools will no longer be able to sell or serve children soda at any time during the school day. At present, schools may sell soda after the last lunch period.

► Candy and items listing sugar as the first ingredient may not be sold or served to students during school.

► Snack foods may have no more than eight grams of fat and two grams of saturated fat per serving.

► Beverages must be 12 ounces or less -- with the exception of water or milk -- containing 2 percent or less fat. Whole milk may not exceed eight ounces. Elementary schools may only offer milk, water or 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice. In middle and high schools, at least 60 percent of the beverages offered, other than milk and water, must be 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice.

► Middle and high schools may allow 40 percent of the ice cream and frozen desserts offered to exceed the standards for sugar, fat and saturated fat.



The standards apply to items sold in vending machines, cafeteria a la carte lines, snack bars, school stores and fundraisers and items served in the reimbursable After School Snack Program.

School districts would have until September 2007 to meet the nutrition standards, but would have to adopt their own district-wide nutrition policies by September 2006.

► **Team Nutrition Grant** – The Division of Food & Nutrition secured a \$200,000 Nutrition Training Grant through the USDA that will fund four programs over two years designed to make fresh fruits and vegetables a more regular part of students' diets. New Jersey was among 21 states to get the grants. The funding will supplement the Department's on-going efforts as part of the administration's "Healthy Choices, Healthy

Kids” initiative, which includes nutrition information and exercise and seeks to make school lunch and breakfast menus more nutritious. Programs to be funded include:

- School food service managers will be trained to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into their meals and a la carte offerings. Tactics for marketing and promoting these products will be addressed to achieve the goal of students eating more of these healthy foods.
- Pilot schools will be funded to promote and expose children to more fruits and vegetables, providing exposure in school meal programs to different types of produce. This expanded knowledge and hands-on experience is expected to lead to children consuming greater quantities of fruits and vegetables.
- Mini-grants to 10 elementary schools (chosen through competitive applications) to provide after-school nutrition education programs for both students and their parents.
- Meetings with school business administrators to work on raising schools’ nutrition policy standards.



► **Web-Based Voucher Payment System** – The Division of Food and Nutrition developed a web-based voucher payment system for sponsors participating in the federal National School Lunch, School Breakfast, After-School Snack and Special Milk Programs. Historically, public and nonpublic schools participating in one or more of these programs would submit a paper optical-scan voucher to claim federal and state reimbursement for meals and/or milk served to eligible students. Processing and receipt of payment under this system would take anywhere from 30 to 90 days after the month of claim. Prior to statewide implementation of this new web-based system on October 1, 2003, the division implemented a pilot payment system with 40 school sponsors during the spring of 2003. Based on the pilot payment results, sponsors who submitted their claim via the web were certified for accurate submission of information and uploaded to the Department of Treasury for payment within 5 to 10 days, thus expediting the return of funds to sponsors by 20 to 80 days. Cost savings to the Department are realized by a significant reduction in staff time associated with handling and processing the paper claim, printing and mailing of 15,000 pre-slugged optical-scan vouchers, and the return of incorrect or incomplete vouchers to sponsors via mail. The payment system has been streamlined and worker productivity has increased. All school program sponsors statewide are receiving their federal and state nutrition funds directly from Treasury via our web-based payment system.

► **Thanksgiving Food Pantry Visits** – Secretary Kuperus participated in two events organized to highlight the problem of hunger, especially during the holidays. In

Secretary Kuperus fills grocery bags with Thanksgiving dinners for recipients at St. Paul's Food Pantry in Paterson.



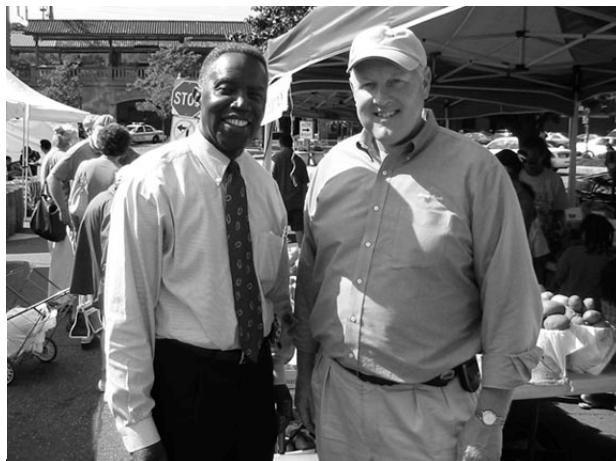
late November, the Secretary helped prepare holiday meals for about 100 children at the Monmouth Boys and Girls Club in Asbury Park. The meals were prepared at the FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties using USDA commodities and Jersey Fresh produce. The Secretary then visited a food pantry at St. Paul's Community Development Corporation in Paterson, where he assembled bags of holiday groceries, helped distribute the bags and handed out turkeys to those in need. USDA commodities are allocated through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which is administered through the state Department of Agriculture. The

NJDA contracts with six emergency food organizations statewide to distribute the USDA commodities to needy individuals and families using a network of 650 local pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters. In 2003, TEFAP served 1.4 million recipients and provided 3.9 million meals at soup kitchens and shelters. New Jersey currently receives 11 million pounds of TEFAP commodities annually from the USDA.

► **Farms to School** – The Division of Food and Nutrition, through its Farms to School program, has distributed 110,825 pounds of peaches and 71,008 pounds of blueberries to schools in 2004. It also distributed 220,000 cases of romaine lettuce.

► **WIC/Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program** – The 69 community farmers markets in the state participate in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) & Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which makes available locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs to nutritionally at-risk pregnant, breast-feeding, or post-partum women; children two to five years old; and eligible seniors age 60 and older. Eligible participants received four \$5 vouchers to purchase locally grown produce from certified farmer vendors. In 2004, there were more than 65,000 WIC participants and almost 40,000 eligible senior participants. There were 180 certified farmer vendors, who benefited from over \$2 million available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Secretary Kuperus with Assemblyman Mims Hackett at the South Orange Farmers Market.



Goal 6: Promote Agricultural Education, Awareness and Involvement

Ensure the sustainability of New Jersey's agricultural industry through agricultural education, youth development, training opportunities, and successful communication with the agricultural community, general public and all levels of government.

► **Calf Sense Workshops** – Two one-day education programs designed for dairy managers were held in December. The “Calf Sense” workshops -- held in North and South Jersey -- focused on calf health and survival during the first three days of life. Program topics included feeding the newborn calf; the digestive system; colostrum quality; standard operating procedures; record-keeping; problem-solving; and disease prevention. Through one-on-one practice with instructors, farmers learned these skills: colostrum testing and storage; emergency colostrum feeding; taking calf temperatures; collecting samples; giving medications; and basic newborn examination. “Calf Sense” is offered by Penn State’s Dairy Alliance, the same group that brought the previous successful barn-side meeting called “Cow Sense” to North and South Jersey venues.

► **New Jersey Junior Breeders** – For the first time in almost five years, the Junior Breeder program received 27 livestock loans from ten counties totaling \$11,524.80. More and more young people are taking advantage of this program as well as the educational opportunities presented by the annual Livestock Symposium.

► **FFA Annual National Convention** – At the FFA’s annual convention held in October in Louisville, Kentucky, New Jersey FFA had teams competing in career development events, one student competing as a proficiency finalist in landscape management – an honor only 196 FFA members out of 476,000 have, a national FFA officer candidate and three state officers serving as delegates to help shape the direction of the national organization in the future. Two FFA students from New Jersey received the American FFA Degree, the highest degree awarded by the national FFA Organization, honoring their outstanding leadership abilities and achievements. Secretary Kuperus, along with two other New Jersey residents, received the Honorary American FFA Degree. The award is given to those who advance agricultural education and FFA through outstanding personal commitment.



Secretary Kuperus with NJ FFA Officers at National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky



► **Envirothon** – The annual New Jersey Envirothon – a natural resources problem-solving competition was held in May, with 185 students making up 36 teams from all across New Jersey participating. It was the best attended Envirothon in the program’s 11-year history. The Envirothon is an important tool to help educate our young people – the leaders of tomorrow – about our environment. By combining year-long classroom study with a day of hands-on competition, the Envirothon provides students with a thorough understanding

of the importance and complexity of our natural resources. The New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts and New Jersey Department of Agriculture's State Soil Conservation Committee were the prime sponsors of the Envirothon. Other sponsors included the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the 16 Soil Conservation Districts in the state.

► **Communications** – From numerous newspaper and magazine articles to television and radio interviews, New Jersey agriculture was in the news in 2004. The Department issued more than 70 press releases, which were used by daily and weekly newspapers, radio and television news organizations, trade publications and internet newsletters. Public events were held in all parts of the state, heralding farmland preservation, the awarding of the first Aquatic Farmers Licenses, a multi-day tour of community farmers markets in the north, central and southern parts of the state, and a visit to an area of the state infested with the harmful pest, the Asian longhorned beetle.



Secretary Kuperus inspects tree branch damaged by Asian longhorned beetles during press availability in Carteret as tree surveying began in August.

The Department continued to upgrade its main website to give people better access to the many services the Department provides. A “Grants, Financial Assistance and Services” page was developed to provide anyone involved in agriculture in the state with a clearinghouse for free or minimal cost assistance programs. Located at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/financialassistance.htm, the web page offers information and links for the following: soil and water conservation grants; value-added producer grants; marketing improvement grants; First Pioneer Farm Credit Grants (AgEnhancement); Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grants; energy and farm bill programs; technical assistance to dairy producers; deer fence cost sharing; and support programs for new and established farmers. In addition, a new page devoted entirely to the Asian longhorned beetle gives weekly updates on the eradication efforts in Middlesex and Union Counties.

Expanding on the success of the *Jersey Fresh* branding and quality grading program, two new websites were added to support the new *Jersey Grown* and *Jersey Seafood* brands. Jersey Grown, found at www.jerseygrown.nj.gov, features helpful and interesting information on the state's horticulture industry, both for consumers and the industry. Visitors can search for nurseries, garden centers, gardens and arboretums. They also can access gardening tips and fact sheets. For the horticulture industry, there is a listing of *Jersey Grown* suppliers and a downloadable *Jersey Grown* application. Jersey Seafood, found at www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov, provides consumers with a wide array of information on seafood products from the Garden State. Recipes, handling and storage information, listings of seafood-related events and more are available to on-line consumers who want to know more about the bounty of New Jersey's waters. View video clips of the recipe of the month and preparation tips. Get information about the aquaculture and seafood industries and scroll through a list of seafood-related publications.

The Department conveyed its vision directly to the public through op/ed articles printed in statewide, trade and even national publications. A piece on the Department's proposed school nutrition policy was printed in a national trade publication. Other articles put out by the Department included: Jersey Fresh's contribution to farmland preservation; a 50 year retrospective of New Jersey Agriculture; and, food innovations in South Jersey agriculture.

The Department also communicated its message directly to New Jersey residents through public forums and direct mailings on issues such as flood relief and the Asian longhorned beetle infestation. One-on-one visits with farmers assisted the Department on a variety of issues.

Goal 7: Guarantee the Delivery of Quality Services by a Well-Trained and Motivated Workforce

Produce quality in all we do through a diverse, effectively managed, highly trained and committed staff supported by efficient use of available technology and resources in a work environment that fosters excellence.

► **Training and Tuition Opportunities** – As part of its ongoing commitment to the continued professional development of its workforce, the Department provided a wide range of training opportunities and tuition assistance to 23 employees. The majority of this training related to information technology.

Division of Animal Health staff members attended a wide-variety of continuing education courses and training sessions during 2004.

The laboratory director attended the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians Meeting and two laboratory staff members attended the National Veterinary Service Laboratory Avian Influenza/Exotic Newcastle Disease Training Course for laboratory certification for a number of tests performed by the Animal Health Laboratory. Veterinary staff members attended several national events, including the United States Animal Health Association Meeting, the American Veterinary Medical Association Animal Welfare Meeting and the Future Trends in Agriculture Meeting held in Washington, D.C. The Animal Health Director was nominated and attended the Office of International Epizootics Animal Welfare Symposium held in Paris, France. The Assistant Director had the unique experience of working at Plum Island while attending foreign animal disease training. Various trainings specifically geared toward New Jersey agricultural concerns were attended by NJDA veterinarians and animal health technicians. Due to an increased threat in the nation, the topic of emergency preparedness encompassed the largest portion of 2004 training. Seminars and trainings on emergency training, counter-terrorism, incident command systems, Hazmat and weapons of mass destruction awareness were just a few of the many topics covered by members of the Animal Health staff.

► **Emergency Response Training** – The Department proudly acknowledges that four of its employees completed Community Emergency Response Team (C.E.R.T.) Training. This program -- the first of its kind in the nation – educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations. C.E.R.T. members can assist others, either in the workplace or in their neighborhood, when professional responders are not immediately available to help.



► **Server Upgrades** – To increase its computing capacity and process response time, the Department upgraded its main computer server. This new equipment provides added storage and capacity to accommodate increasing user demands as well as providing for a computing environment free of never-ending streams of viruses and computer worms.

Meet the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture...



Peter L. Melick
Board President
Hunterdon County
Vegetable Industry



R. Ken Totten
Board-Vice President
Hunterdon County
Grain/Hay Industry



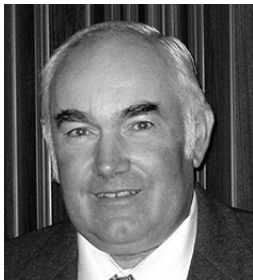
Frank P. Baitinger, III
Board Member
Cumberland County
Vegetable Industry



Neva Moore
Board Member
Burlington County
Fruit Industry



Phillip D. Prickett, Jr.
Board Member
Burlington County
Grain/Hay Industry



Milton "Woody" Eachus
Board Member
Salem County
Dairy Industry



Mary Jo Herbert
Board Member
Mercer County
Equine Industry



William V. Griffin
Board Member
Middlesex County
Nursery Industry

