

2002 Annual Report

From the Governor



In the most densely populated state in the nation - a state where our citizens rank sprawl as the top challenge - we are fortunate to have a long and rich agricultural heritage.

Agriculture keeps our farmlands green and productive, enriches the quality of life in our communities, brings farm-fresh products into our homes and offers our hard-working farm families a traditional way of life that has been valued for generations.

As we plan for smart growth in New Jersey, efforts to preserve our farms and maintain a strong agricultural industry are critical to ensuring livable communities and a high quality of life here in the Garden State.

By strengthening agriculture, we will keep New Jersey green and growing in ways that will continue to enrich our lives and those of all generations to come.

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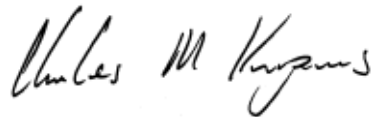
From the Secretary

In December 2002, New Jersey permanently preserved its 100,000th acre of farmland - a milestone achievement that has helped make our state the national leader in farmland preservation.

We are proud of our farmland preservation efforts, which are critical to ensuring a bright future for our agricultural industry. Farmland preservation, however, is only half the battle in retaining our working landscape.

To do this, we must also ensure that we keep farmers on the land. That is why we are working to expand the marketplace where farmers can sell their products, and to encourage and equip tomorrow's farmers who will be the new stewards of New Jersey's food and agricultural legacy.

By preserving farmland, providing opportunity to today's farmers, and hope and training to tomorrow's farm managers, we will retain our working landscape and all of the contributions it makes to a better quality of life in the Garden State.

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Overview

The Department of Agriculture serves many constituencies. Its programs and services range from the protection of farmland and animal and plant resources to the distribution of millions of pounds of federally donated foods to New Jersey's schoolchildren and neediest citizens.

Agriculture must continually evolve to adapt to changing market demand, new technology and a host of other challenges. To respond to those challenges and to better meet the needs of our constituents, the Department of Agriculture in 2002 undertook a comprehensive planning process to reassess its goals and operations.

This process culminated in July with the issuance of the Department's first [Strategic Plan](#), which identifies the agency's major goals, the strategies for achieving them and performance standards to measure progress and success. The plan - which will guide policies and activities through June 2004 - was developed through an inclusive process led by the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture, the department's policy-making body.



The Plan identifies seven major goals:

- Preserve farms;
- Protect and conserve natural and agricultural resources;
- Protect producers and consumers by ensuring safe, high-quality agricultural products and services;
- Support and expand profitable, innovative agricultural and food industry development;
- Provide access to fresh and nutritious foods for children, the needy and other New Jersey citizens;
- Promote agricultural education, awareness and involvement; and
- Guarantee the delivery of quality services by a well-trained and motivated workforce.

The seven goals of the Strategic Plan serve as the headings for the Accomplishments section of this annual report. The list of accomplishments in each section details progress that has been made toward achieving each goal and realizing the Department's overall vision of a productive and profitable agricultural and food industry that protects the natural resources that sustain it, benefits the overall environment, and supports the health and welfare of the general public.

The Strategic Plan served as the framework for addressing a number of key issues in 2002.

Smart Growth

New Jersey's 9,600 family farms contribute to the quality of life in our communities in many ways. Agriculture's working landscapes provide natural buffers against congestion and sprawl. They also offer us direct access to the freshest, high-quality farm products, helping to continue the way of life that earned New Jersey the nickname of the Garden State.

To protect our farms and our communities, New Jersey has undertaken one of the most aggressive

farmland preservation efforts in the nation. In December 2002, the state surpassed the 100,000-acre mark for farmland preservation - a significant milestone that has helped make New Jersey the national leader in farmland preservation.

But preserving farmland is only half the battle in saving our working landscape. To retain our farms, we also must ensure farmers are economically successful so they can afford to stay and work on that land.

The Department of Agriculture in 2002 began developing an Agricultural Smart Growth Plan. The plan will coordinate farmland preservation efforts with proactive strategies aimed at sustaining the state's agricultural industry and ensuring farmers have a bright and profitable future. Designed to be nested into the state's overall smart growth strategy, the plan will identify:

- areas of focus for farmland preservation and retention efforts;
- critical activities and policies to support the retention of the agricultural industry, including labor and housing assistance, training, right -to-farm protection and other farmer assistance initiatives;
- economic development activities, including new market opportunities, needed to support the agricultural industry; and
- natural resource conservation strategies, including prevention and control of nonpoint source pollution, to protect the resources that sustain agriculture.

Market Expansion

The wider the marketplace for their products, the more opportunities farmers have to be successful. The Department in 2002 aggressively focused new efforts on expanding markets for New Jersey farmers and food producers. Those efforts included:

- exploring individual economic growth strategies for each of New Jersey's major agricultural commodity groups; for example, construction of an ethanol production plant to expand the marketplace for grain farmers;
- working with the Department of Corrections to expand its purchases of New Jersey-grown fruits and vegetables;
- identifying and encouraging new and emerging agricultural sectors, such as aquaculture and organic farming;
- expanding the Jersey Fresh promotional campaign to include not only fruits and vegetables, but other food and farm products such as nursery plants and seafood; and
- conducting a series of outreach visits to all sectors of the food industry to identify needs and strengthen the lines of communications between farmers and buyers.



Drought Emergency

At the request of Governor McGreevey, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture in October approved a federal drought disaster designation for New Jersey, making farmers who suffered significant crop losses due to the extended 2002 drought eligible for federal financial assistance.

The designation applied to 19 primary counties: Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Salem, Somerset, Sussex and Warren. The declaration made farmers in those counties eligible to apply for low-interest emergency loans and farm credit programs through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency. Farmers in counties contiguous to primary counties also were eligible for this assistance.

The Department of Agriculture coordinated with the federal Farm Service Agency, which compiled county summaries of crop damage that supported the drought declaration request. The Department also worked with the Department of Environmental Protection to ensure agricultural exemptions from water use restrictions.

2002 Growing Season Conditions

Field Crops: The lack of rainfall throughout the growing season took a toll on the corn crop. Persistent dry weather caused poor pollination and hindered crop development in some corn fields. Lighter test weights, smaller ears and lower kernel quality were commonly found. Some producers reported low ear-to-stalk ratio, which lowered crop output. Rainfall during the later half of the fall season was too late to boost yields and kernel fill. Drought conditions produced lower soybean yields with low test weights and small pod size. Yields varied greatly due to timeliness and amounts of rainfall received. Soybean yields were reported to be higher from early or very late planted fields. Spring rains provided beneficial moisture for winter wheat and barley crops. Warm weather and clear skies provided excellent harvest conditions for wheat and barley. Crop production and yields were above previous year's levels. Some hay cuttings were delayed or missed due to drought conditions.

Fruit: Northern New Jersey growers experienced frost damage during apple bloom stage. Some orchards also faced sizing problems to the extent that some fruit was too small to market. Unfavorable growing conditions during fruit development also lowered apple production. The blueberry crop's bloom set was average despite some frost damage. There was no significant weather damage reported. Drought conditions did not adversely affect the cranberry crop. Cranberry harvest was hindered in some areas due to low reservoir levels caused by lack of rainfall. Spring frost severely damaged peach blossoms. Production of some varieties was very limited due to frost damage.



Vegetables: Dry conditions did not adversely affect the cabbage crop. Cabbage yields and prices were above normal. Tight supplies drove head lettuce prices upward. The bulk of bell pepper harvest season was complete by the middle of October due to dry weather conditions. Crop yields for soft shell squash were lower due to hot and dry growing conditions. Drought conditions lowered sweet corn production, especially in non-irrigated fields. Tomato harvest activities were also shortened by drought conditions. The dry summer growing conditions did not adversely affect the summer potato crop. Potato size was slightly smaller than usual, but the quality and quantity were good. Growing conditions for the sweet potato crop were favorable, with good quality and high prices.



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2002 Annual Report Accomplishments

Goal 1: Preserve Farms

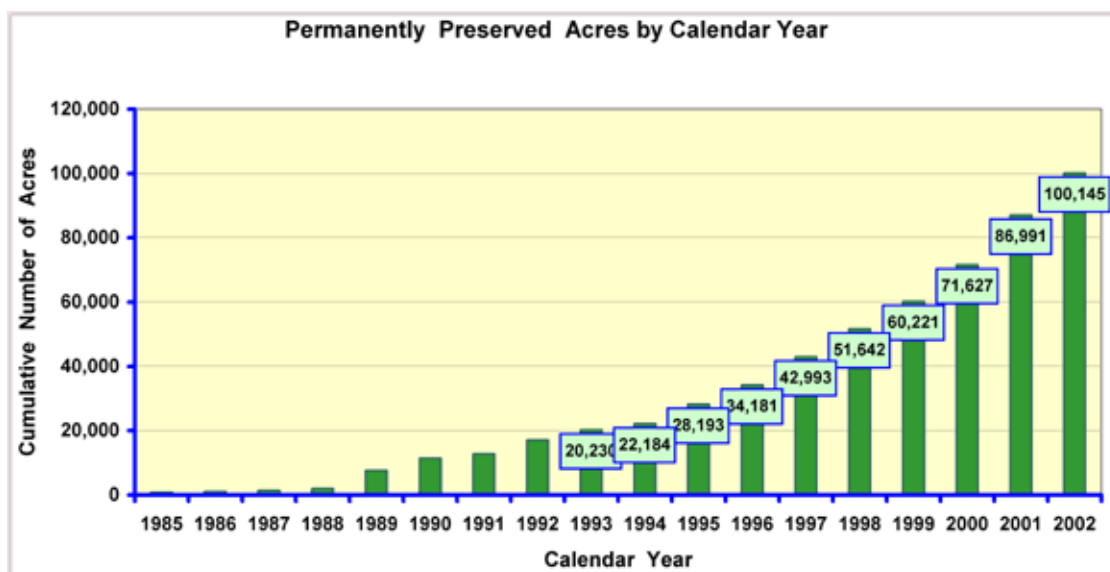
Permanently preserve and retain the maximum amount of New Jersey farmland to maintain a viable agriculture and food industry, and promote smart growth and a high quality of life for New Jersey citizens.



- The Department formed an internal Smart Growth Working Group to coordinate smart-growth efforts across program areas and develop an Agricultural Smart Growth Plan. The plan will identify target areas in the state for agricultural retention, identify economic development activities needed to sustain the industry, and recommend planning techniques that equitably preserve contiguous farmland. The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), which administers the Farmland Preservation Program, initiated a statewide strategic targeting project to identify areas of prime farmland under the threat of development. The project, which is being conducted in conjunction with county and municipal planning efforts, is the first strategic planning project in the program's history.
- New Jersey surpassed the 100,000-acre mark for preserved farmland under the state Farmland Preservation Program. New Jersey has preserved 12 percent of its available farmland - ranking it first among all other states in the preservation of available land base. At year's end, 796 farms totaling 100,145 acres were permanently preserved statewide.
- A total of 161 farms covering 13,154 acres were permanently preserved during 2002 - 35 more farms than the program's previous record high.
- The SADC continued to expand its Direct Easement Purchase Program, through which the state directly purchases development rights from landowners to preserve their farms. Forty-two farms were permanently preserved under this program - a more than 250 percent increase over 2001 totals.
- Nine farms were permanently preserved under the SADC's fee simple program. This program is critical in saving farms most in jeopardy of development - those whose owners are looking to sell. Under this program, the SADC purchases farms outright, then resells them at public auctions with deed restrictions that permanently preserve the land for agricultural use. In addition to ensuring permanent preservation of the land, this program also helps make farmland available for purchase by other farmers at more affordable prices.
- As part of efforts to strengthen communication, the SADC formed a task force with the Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program to coordinate farmland and open space preservation efforts. It also held a series of outreach meetings in various parts of

the state to discuss with farmers and local governmental officials advances in the Right-to-Farm and Farmland Preservation programs.



- The SADC streamlined its closing process to preserve farms at an accelerated pace. Farms under the fee simple program closed in an average of six months from the date of contract, while direct easement purchase applications were closed in an average of nine months from the date of agreement.
- State farmland preservation funds were bolstered by a \$2,303,600 grant for farmland preservation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Federal Farmland Protection Program.
- Legislation was enacted in early 2002 to protect historic structures on permanently preserved farms. Historic structures on any farms preserved on or after January 8, 2003, may not be demolished without the permission of the SADC. In addition, the legislation enables the SADC to give priority for preservation to farms that have historic structures.
- The New Jersey Supreme Court recognized New Jersey's Right to Farm Act as the strongest in the nation, ruling in a case involving a dispute between a greenhouse operator and Franklin Township, Hunterdon County. The court held that the Right to Farm Act preempts municipal land use authority over commercial farms. The court ruled that county agricultural development boards and the SADC have primary jurisdiction over disputes between municipalities and commercial farms, but noted the boards must give appropriate consideration to local ordinances and regulations, and consider the impact of agricultural management practices on public health and safety.
- The SADC adopted agricultural management practices for the installation of fencing and for on-farm composting operations. Farmers who conform with agricultural management practices that have been adopted by the SADC or are considered to be generally accepted are afforded greater protection under the Right to Farm Act. The SADC also formed a subcommittee consisting of federal, state and local officials, and agricultural and environmental interests, to review impervious coverage on preserved farmland.



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.

- The Asian longhorned beetle - a foreign pest that attacks and kills maples and other hardwood trees - was detected for the first time in New Jersey in October in Jersey City, Hudson County. The Department instituted an emergency quarantine of the site and the surrounding area within a 1-1/2 mile radius to prevent the beetle's spread. A total of 102 trees within the core area are infested. A joint state and federal work plan for beetle eradication is being developed.
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- Aerial treatments were carried out on 24,563 acres in 33 forested residential communities throughout the state to protect against heavy defoliation by gypsy moth. Gypsy moths defoliated 41,750 acres of forested lands in 15 counties and 53 municipalities - a 70 percent decrease from 2001. Lower gypsy moth population levels in the state can be attributed to a successful spray program and increased fungus and other parasites in the northwestern counties of the state.
 - Two species of *Galerucella* leaf-feeding beetles were produced and released by Department scientists to combat purple loosestrife. Purple loosestrife is an invasive freshwater wetlands plant, originally from Europe, which is displacing native plants in the state's marshes and threatening animals that depend on those native plants for food and shelter. An estimated 70,700 beetles were released at 10 sites in six counties: Bergen, Burlington, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris and Sussex. The Department noted dramatic reductions in purple loosestrife levels at several locations where native plants once again are reclaiming territory.
 - A total of 47 cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) in New Jersey equine were confirmed by the end of October - an increase over 2001 when a total of 30 equine tested positive for the disease. The virus continued to spread across the United States, with 14,717 equine WNV cases reported in 40 states. The Department recommends eliminating mosquito- friendly environments on farms; vaccinating horses against WNV and other mosquito transmitted diseases such as Eastern equine encephalitis; reducing the exposure of horses to mosquitoes by keeping them indoors from dusk until dawn, and judiciously using insecticide spray. None of the horses diagnosed with clinical WNV disease this year had been vaccinated against the disease.
 - The Department worked to develop humane standards of care for livestock, including cattle, horses, swine, small ruminants, poultry and rabbits. The standards are expected to be publicly proposed in the *New Jersey Register* early in 2003. They are being developed in cooperation with representatives from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), Rutgers University's Cook College, the New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association and the livestock industry.
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- Through continuing programs carried out in cooperation with the NRCS:
 - conservation plans were developed for 35,191 acres of farmland;
 - erosion control practices were installed on more than 17,861 acres of land, which prevented the loss of 137,811 tons of productive soil;
 - conservation tillage techniques were used on almost 4,253 acres of farmland to reduce soil loss and protect water quality; and
 - conservation practices, including conservation buffers and other land management practices, were installed on nearly 27,000.

- As part of efforts to protect water quality, the Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Protection developed a proposal for New Jersey to participate in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). If approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the proposal will enable New Jersey farmers to access \$70 million in federal funds to establish buffers and implement other water quality improvement practices on farms.

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 farm agricultural products and agricultural inputs.

- The Department in October issued its first certificate for food safety under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new third-party audit program for packers, producers and retailers of fresh fruits and vegetables. The USDA's Federal-State Audit Program was modeled after a program developed by Jersey. This voluntary food safety program provides important quality assurances to regional and national buyers and consumers that participating producers are following good agricultural and handling practices.
- To help ensure that ornamental plants purchased by consumers are healthy and pest-free, the Department inspected more than 16,000 acres of nursery stock in 866 nurseries, and certified 64 garden centers and landscape firms as plant dealers.
- As part of a regional coordinated effort to break the cycle of Avian Influenza in live-bird markets, Jersey's live-bird markets were closed for three days in April while the sites were cleaned and disinfected. While this disease does not pose a human health risk, the danger with Avian Influenza is that it could mutate into a high pathogen disease that kills the majority of infected birds. This would result in foreign markets embargoing U.S. poultry. One third of U.S. poultry is exported.
- A total of 9,294 retail stores and 225 milk dealers were licensed to sell milk, and approximately 11,000 inspections were conducted, as part of the Department's efforts to ensure compliance with milk control laws and regulations, and prevent unfair, disruptive trade practices that could adversely affect consumers and producers.



- A total of 159 million pounds of product were packed under the Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program. This program was designed to increase the sales of agricultural products - including fruits, vegetables, salad mixes, fresh herbs, shell eggs and cut flowers - by providing quality assurance for wholesale produce buyers and consumers. After registering under this program, growers are permitted to use the Jersey Fresh logo on their packages, indicating that the contents have been inspected and meet certain quality standards.
- To ensure that feed, fertilizer and lime sold in the state are accurately labeled and are free from contaminants, the Department collected and analyzed nearly 1,200 random samples. Eight percent of feed samples, 15 percent of fertilizer and 7 percent of lime samples failed this testing. Warnings and penalties were issued depending on the severity of the violations. Penalties for deficient fertilizers were returned to farmers to offset losses that may have been caused by the lower-quality product.
- Brucellosis is a contagious and costly bacterial disease of swine that causes abortion, infertility, paralysis of the hindquarters and lameness. Brucellosis is also a public health concern as the disease can be transmitted to humans. On February 22, swine brucellosis was confirmed at a hog farm in Cape May County. Under Department supervision, the farm underwent complete depopulation, with

cleaned and disinfected, and remained free of swine for 30 days. In addition, the Department instituted an area test of all breeding swine in Cape May County and parts of Atlantic and Cumberland counties to determine the scope of the outbreak. The hog farm in Cape May County was the only one affected by the outbreak.

- The Food and Drug Administration awarded the Department a contract to perform inspections in small feed mills in New Jersey for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) rule compliance. The BSE rule was developed in 1997 to prevent meat and bone meal derived from ruminants from being used as feed ingredients for cattle, sheep, goats and other ruminants. This safeguard represents one more way to prevent BSE - or Mad Cow disease - from developing in the United States.

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.

- The Department's efforts to encourage and support New Jersey's emerging aquaculture industry included:
 - working with the Department of Environmental Protection to make available 25,000 Delaware Bay acres and 2,500 Atlantic coastal acres for aquaculture;
 - developing aquaculture management practices that focus on erosion control, storm water management and water quality to help maintain and protect the state's soil and water resources while averting a cumbersome regulatory process for aquatic farmers;
 - developing an Aquatic Organism Health Management Plan to protect aquatic farmers, wild stocks and the environment from the introduction of pests and diseases that could destroy product and have a negative impact on operations; and
 - developing a trade-lead database and dissemination program that provides New Jersey companies with ready access to leads around the world.

Export sales increased by \$2 million as a result of the widespread availability of trade leads, the Department's participation in trade shows and missions, and increased efforts to promote the state as a major producer of high- quality seafood.

- As part of efforts to support and encourage organic farming, the Department:
 - drafted legislation, rules and regulations that would establish a state organic program in accordance with new federal organic regulations. The program would provide farmers who are transitioning to organic production, and are in the process of completing the three-year qualifying period, the ability to market their products as transitional;
 - actively marketed New Jersey organic products as part of the Jersey Fresh campaign at trade shows and meetings, including the Toronto Grocery Showcase and the Canadian Produce Marketing Association's annual event;
 - developed a Jersey Organic logo for use in the Jersey Fresh program starting in the 2003 growing season; and
 - under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service, administered a program that provided cost-share funding to reimburse organic growers for up to 70 percent of their certification costs, not to exceed \$500. During the first two phases of this program, the Department reimbursed a total of \$9,786 to 47 certified organic growers.
- Governor McGreevey in August announced support for plans to site an ethanol plant in

South Jersey, which would create a major new market for the state's grain growers. Garden State Ethanol, a private corporation of farmers, investors and other agricultural interests, seeks to build the first ethanol production facility in the Mid-Atlantic region. It would process about 14.2 million bushels of corn annually to produce 40 million gallons of ethanol that would be sold as an environmentally friendly ingredient for gasoline. New Jersey farmers currently grow nearly 10 million bushels of field corn annually. Much of it is shipped out of state to markets in Pennsylvania or Delaware for use as cattle or chicken feed. An ethanol production facility would encourage New Jersey farmers to plant additional fields in corn or sorghum - an alternative grain that the plant will be able to utilize.



- The Department coordinated with the federal Farm Service Agency in obtaining a U.S. Secretary of Agriculture emergency drought declaration. That declaration makes New Jersey farmers who suffered significant crop losses eligible for low-interest federal loans and credit programs, as well as payments through the federal Livestock Compensation Program.
- The Departments of Agriculture and Corrections worked with state Treasury officials to develop a waiver under the state produce contract that allows Corrections to take advantage of seasonal market conditions by making targeted purchases of New Jersey-grown fruits and vegetables when prices are low. This was expected to enable Corrections to buy an estimated one million additional pounds of New Jersey produce, providing a new market for New Jersey farmers, reducing state costs and offering more nutritious fruits and vegetables throughout the correctional system.
- The Department developed a Jersey Fresh website (www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov) to help consumers locate pick-your-own farms, roadside markets, and agricultural fairs and festivals, as well as provide recipes and other information to encourage the purchase of New Jersey-grown products.
- Through the Jersey Fresh Matched Funds Program, the Department awarded \$320,345 in state grants to 91 New Jersey agricultural organizations to fund specialized promotions under the Jersey Fresh banner. The grants yielded more than \$650,000 worth of additional Jersey Fresh exposure.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture in October awarded \$390,200 in grants for five New Jersey value-added agricultural market development projects. Value-added projects increase the value of raw agricultural products by refining them in some way, for example, through processing or packaging. The grants included \$219,000 to Garden State Ethanol to conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan for an ethanol production plant, and \$107,000 to the Sussex County Milk Producers in Lafayette to conduct a feasibility analysis and develop a business plan for producing Jersey Fresh value-added dairy products, including a Jersey Fresh milk brand.
- To expand available lands for agriculture, the Department worked with the Department of Environmental Protection to reopen agricultural lands in the Six Mile Run area of Somerset County and other state-owned lands for leasing to farmers.
- Department staff provided oversight necessary for 21 New Jersey growers to participate in

the Canadian Blueberry Certification Program and export their fresh blueberries to Canada. In 2002, 18 New Jersey growers shipped more than 514,000 flats of fresh blueberries to Canada - a 29 percent increase over the previous year.

- Governor McGreevey signed legislation that allows foals to be eligible to participate in the New Jersey Sire Stakes Program if they were born to mares that had been artificially inseminated with transported semen from registered New Jersey stallions. This removed the restriction that a mare had to actually be bred in New Jersey for the resulting foal to be eligible for the New Jersey Sire Stakes. This legislation is critical to helping New Jersey retain and attract quality stallions; enhance the purse structure of the New Jersey Sire Stakes Program; enable the New Jersey breeding industry to better compete with surrounding states, and help New Jersey retain its equine farms.
- The Department provided direct technical assistance to nearly 2,000 individuals on business and agricultural economic development, agricultural credit and finance, farmland assessment, motor vehicle requirements, agricultural labor, sales and use tax, specialized farm production, real property taxes, and sales and use tax. Nearly 30 new and beginning farmers were provided guidance in securing credit for almost \$7 million in real property acquisitions and improvements.

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.

- More than 37.8 million pounds of U.S. Department of Agriculture-donated commodities were distributed to more than 500,000 New Jersey schoolchildren under the National School Lunch Program and to more than 250,000 needy families through 650 food pantries and soup kitchens throughout the state under The Emergency Food Assistance Program.
- Under a joint state and federal program to improve the nutritional diets of schoolchildren, the Department increased its purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables from \$400,000 in the previous school year to \$1.6 million for the 2002-2003 school year. This effort included ordering more than 10,000 cases of locally grown Jersey Fresh produce in season.
- The Legislature in December passed a bill requiring schools to offer a school breakfast program if 20 percent or more of their students are eligible for free or reduced- price meals under federal guidelines. The bill requires affected schools with grades K-6 to submit a plan to the Department of Agriculture for starting a school breakfast program by November 2003 and requires implementation of the program by September 2004. All other affected schools must submit a plan by November 2004 and implement the program by September 2005. The Department will provide technical assistance and model plans to these schools.
- Under the federal School Breakfast and Lunch Programs administered by the Department:
 - 1,145 schools currently offer the School Breakfast Program;
 - 2,656 schools offer the School Lunch Program;
 - average daily participation in the School Breakfast Program is 87,838 students (6 percent of total enrollment);
 - average daily participation in the School Lunch Program is 579,272 students (37 percent of total enrollment);
 - approximately 15 percent of students who participate in the School Lunch Program also participate in the School Breakfast Program.

- The Department conducted 79 training sessions for school food service personnel and child nutrition sponsors to assist them in streamlining program operations and improving the quality of meals offered.
- A total of 49 community farmers markets operated during 2002, with more than 160 farmers participating. These markets provide an important source of fresh fruit and vegetables, particularly for thousands of nutritionally-at-risk children, women and senior citizens. At the same time, they offer farmers another market for their products.
- More than \$650,000 was issued to 32,493 pregnant and nursing women and children ages 3 to 5 enrolled in the WIC (Women, Infants and Child) / Farmers Market Nutrition Program. An additional \$482,000 was issued to 24,100 senior citizens under the Senior Market Nutrition Program. These federal and state funded programs - administered jointly by the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Senior Services - provides participants with vouchers they can use to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at community farmers markets.



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.

- More than 150 students from 28 high schools across the state competed in the New Jersey Envirothon, a natural-resource problem-solving competition coordinated by the Department. Throughout the school year, students prepared for the event by studying natural-resource related topics, including soils, forestry, aquatics and wildlife ecology. The Envirothon held in May tested their knowledge in these areas through interactive problem-solving.
- To assist farmers in understanding available assistance in reducing agricultural risks, the Department conducted a farm risk management and crop insurance education and information program in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency and Rutgers Cooperative Extension. In 2001, on average for each dollar farmers paid in premiums for crop insurance coverage, \$1.88 was paid out to cover losses incurred by New Jersey farmers.
- Two dozen farmers and other members of the agricultural community received training through the 2002 New Jersey Agricultural Leadership Development Program, a collaborative effort of the New Jersey Agricultural Society, the Department of Agriculture, Farm Bureau and Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Members of the class studied local, state and federal government issues during a two-day session in Trenton and a four-day study session in Washington, D.C. Participants also devoted several days to discussions regarding land use, natural resources and social issues. The goal of the program is to provide participants with the skills and knowledge to make better decisions for themselves, their operations, the food and agricultural industry, and their communities.
- To help protect the public and livestock from disease, the Department developed a series of six posters for posting at petting zoos, fairs and shows, and other livestock venues. The posters educate the public about the potential for disease transmission between humans and animals, and promote the importance of hand-washing before and after touching animals. Contact

between humans and animals, especially at petting zoos and livestock venues, has been implicated in E. coli disease outbreaks. The Department, in consultation with the Department of Health and Senior Services, also developed guidelines for use at fairs and shows. The guidelines and posters were mailed to fair and show managers throughout the state and to each county extension office.



- The Department provided leadership, resources and services to support food, agriculture and environmental science education programs for more than 2,000 secondary- school students in 44 school districts. These efforts included two dozen career development events for 600 students; leadership and public speaking development events at four statewide conferences; offering professional development credits for teachers in agricultural related topics, and coordination of the state-level FFA, which has 35 chapters in New Jersey.



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.

- The Department in June 2002 completed its first Strategic Plan that sets forth its major goals, and identifies performance standards to measure progress toward those goals and ensure accountability. The plan provides the framework for all of the department's efforts to ensure that New Jersey's agricultural industry is productive and profitable while protecting the natural resources that sustain it, benefiting the overall environment, and supporting the health and welfare of the general public.
- As a direct result of the strategic planning process, the Department reorganized to streamline programs to more effectively meet its goals. The reorganization included the creation of a new Division of Food and Nutrition, which consolidated related programs and placed a new emphasis on food and nutritional issues. The Department also renamed certain divisions to more accurately describe their roles, resulting in the new Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources and the Division of Marketing and Development.
- As part of an ongoing commitment to continued professional development, the Department provided approximately 90 employees the opportunity to attend state- sponsored training courses and at least six staff members with tuition assistance for post-secondary education.
- The Department entered into an agreement with Cook College, Rutgers University, to establish the Visiting Scholar Program, which allows Department employees to serve as guest lecturers, speakers and researchers at the college, and also affords faculty from Cook College and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station the opportunity to work full-time with the Department of Agriculture while on sabbatical.
- Department staff who received national honors during 2002 included now-retired State Veterinarian Dr. Ernest W. Zirkle who was honored by The National Assembly of Chief Livestock Health Officials for his leadership role in addressing national and international animal health issues, and Plant Industry Director Carl Schulze who earned the National Plant Board' s Carl E.

Carlson Award for distinguished achievement in regulatory plant protection.

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