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Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno Kicks Off Month-Long Agribusiness Tour at Artisan Ketchup Maker First Field

Tuesday, August 07, 2012 Tags: [Jobs and the Economy](#)

Small Business Showcases Home-Grown Jersey Fresh Tomatoes

Trenton, NJ – Emphasizing the importance of agriculture to New Jersey’s economy, Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno today kicked off her month-long agribusiness tour by visiting the test kitchen of First Field in Rocky Hill. Based in Princeton, First Field is a husband- and wife-owned company that makes artisan ketchup from organic New Jersey tomatoes.

“First Field is a small business success story that also showcases the fresh produce grown right here in the Garden State,” said Lt. Governor Guadagno. “What started as a successful farm stand and a family ketchup recipe has blossomed into a thriving business that processes ketchup for restaurants and shops, including Whole Foods. This kind of ‘can-do’ attitude among New Jersey’s small business entrepreneurs is helping fuel the New Jersey Comeback.”

Theresa Viggiano and Patrick Leger call their approach “seed to spoon,” which includes growing their ketchup’s ingredients in order to feature the unique taste of New Jersey tomatoes. The couple grows about 200 tomato plants from seed, often certified organic. With backgrounds in medical research and finance, the couple started the business from scratch, researching growing and canning methods. They partnered with the culinary school of Elijah’s Promise, a New Brunswick-based non-profit that provides culinary education to underserved communities, for processing their ketchup. As their business grew, Viggiano and Leger moved production to Rutgers’ Food Innovation Center in Bridgeton.

First Field is licensed in the New Jersey Department of Agriculture’s “Made with Jersey Fresh” program for their ketchup and relish products. To become licensed, the company had to ensure that all the produce they are using is grown in New Jersey by farmers licensed in the Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program. The company created its own label design, which was approved by the Department of Agriculture.

“While First Field is a small business in New Jersey, the company’s operating philosophy of creating value-added goods from the state’s rich agricultural resources positively affects the economic well-being of many stakeholders,” said Patrick Leger. “First Field’s flagship product, Jersey Ketchup, is made by partnering and supporting New Jersey farmers, is produced in the state, and is sold at numerous retailers in the area. Our company isn’t creating anything new, but rather, re-establishing the kinds of equitable economic frameworks that were once more prevalent.”

New Jersey produces more than 100 kinds of fruits and vegetables and ranks among the nation’s largest producers of blueberries, cranberries, peaches, tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, snap beans, spinach, and squash. The state’s 10,300 farms generated sales of about \$1.1 billion in 2011. This includes nursery and greenhouse plants, sod, fruits and vegetables, field crops, equine, poultry and eggs, and dairy.

“First Field is an inspiration to those who want to start and grow a business in New Jersey,” continued Lt. Governor Guadagno. “Through our Partnership for Action, entrepreneurs can get the advice and the tools they need to start a new business or help for an existing business thrive.”

Led by Lt. Governor Guadagno, the New Jersey Partnership for Action (PFA) supports the vital role business plays in advancing the state’s economy and creating jobs. The PFA is a three-pronged public-private approach to economic development and the starting point for all initiatives, policies, and efforts to grow New Jersey’s economy and create quality, sustainable jobs in our communities. The three elements of the PFA include the Business Action Center, reporting directly to the Lt. Governor and providing the business community with a single point of contact, applying a proactive, customer-service approach to businesses’ interactions with State government; the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, serving as the state’s “bank for business”; and Choose New Jersey, an independently funded and operated 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation created to encourage and nurture economic growth throughout New Jersey.

Businesses considering a move or in need of assistance are encouraged to call New Jersey’s Business Action Center at (866) 534-7789 or visit the State’s Business Portal at www.newjerseybusiness.gov.

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