

# New Jersey Agriculture

2003

Annual Report



Agricultural Statistics



## **Governor's Message**

Our farms are critical to ensuring we have access to fresh fruits, vegetables and other products, our landscape remains green and open, and our children grow up to enjoy a continued high quality of life here in the Garden State.

Sprawl is a major threat to our farmland, our towns and our way of life. That's why I set an ambitious goal of preserving a record 20,000 acres of farmland annually – a goal we successfully met in 2003.

As a result of our efforts, New Jersey leads the nation in farmland preservation, with more than 14 percent of all our farmland permanently protected – a higher rate than any other state.

We also helped establish 10 new community farmers markets across the state as part of a series of efforts to promote new economic development opportunities for our farmers.

Strengthening agriculture is an important part of our commitment to build a better New Jersey. By retaining our farms, we can protect the character of our communities and ensure New Jersey remains green and productive for generations to come.



## **Secretary's Message**

The Department of Agriculture this year undertook a number of important efforts to ensure a strong agricultural industry and improve the quality of life for New Jersey families.

An Agricultural Smart Growth Plan developed by the Department provides realistic and workable strategies for accommodating growth while protecting our farmland and keeping our farming operations strong and successful.

As part of the Farmland Preservation Program's Strategic Targeting Project included in that plan, we are working cooperatively with counties to identify and prioritize important agricultural lands for preservation.

The Department also spearheaded the launch of a multi-agency Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids campaign aimed at improving the health and educational performance of our children through better nutrition and physical activity in schools.

The decisions we make today can have lasting effects on New Jersey agriculture, our economy and our children's future. Through these and other initiatives detailed in this report, we continue to work to retain our farms, strengthen agriculture and maintain a high quality of life here in the Garden State.

## 2003 Overview

Whether it was preserving farmland, increasing economic opportunities for farmers or promoting better nutrition for schoolchildren, the Department of Agriculture set a higher bar for achievement in 2003.

- An Agricultural Smart Growth Plan was developed to better prioritize statewide farmland preservation activities, help farmers be more successful and position agriculture for a strong future;
- A record 20,000 acres of farmland was preserved in 2003, meeting an ambitious goal set by Governor McGreevey and helping to make New Jersey a national leader in farmland preservation;
- Ten new community farmers markets were established, providing important sources of fresh farm products for consumers, helping to revitalize downtown areas and providing farmers with new sales outlets; and
- A Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids campaign was launched to help schools replace snacks with minimal nutritional value with healthier alternatives to protect the health of our children and ensure they are well-prepared to learn.

Following are highlights of these accomplishments:

### **Agricultural Smart Growth Plan Developed**

The Department's new Agricultural Smart Growth Plan provides information and tools to help leaders at all levels of government and in agriculture make the wise choices that will help keep our farmland open, green and productive.

The plan outlines the following five building blocks that form the foundation of a strong agricultural industry, along with a series of specific strategies to help retain farmland and help farmers be successful:

- farmland preservation, including the preservation of 20,000 acres of farmland annually and a strategic targeting project to better identify priority agricultural lands for preservation;
- innovative conservation planning, including equitable density-transfer methods such as clustering that enable growth to occur in ways that consume less land;
- Economic development, including identifying new markets for farmers and facilitating investments in agricultural infrastructure to keep farming profitable;

- Natural resource conservation, including on-farm implementation of conservation practices to improve water quality, conserve water and energy, prevent soil erosion and reduce the use of nutrients and pesticides; and
- Agricultural industry sustainability, or critical activities and policies to support the retention of agriculture. This includes labor and housing assistance, training and education, right-to-farm protection and other farmer assistance initiatives.

Agriculture is an important part of the quality of life we enjoy here in the Garden State. Productive farmland helps keep property taxes down, benefits the environment, adds to a community's character and ensures that New Jerseyans continue to have access to an abundant supply of locally produced fresh food and vegetables.

But we cannot retain our farms by preserving farmland alone. We also need to promote a climate where agriculture can thrive and continue to contribute to our quality of life and economy. The Agricultural Smart Growth Plan provides a toolbox of approaches to ensuring that as New Jersey continues to grow, we keep our farmland open, our farmers working the land and agriculture strong.

The plan is designed to be integrated into New Jersey's overall smart-growth strategy and with plans developed by other state agencies. The full plan is available at [www.state.nj.us/agriculture](http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture).

### **Farmland Preservation Sets Annual Record**

The preservation of 20,000 acres of farmland in 2003 met an ambitious goal set by Governor McGreevey in his State of the State address. That boosted statewide farmland preservation totals to 1,051 farms covering 119,909 acres by year's end. With more than 14 percent of our agricultural lands permanently preserved, New Jersey leads the nation in farmland preservation.

To further this success, the State Agriculture Development Committee began working with county agriculture development boards on a Strategic Targeting Project to help prioritize farmland preservation investments among all levels of government. This coordinated planning approach will improve preservation efforts and ultimately enhance the agricultural industry.

The project has three goals:

- Coordinate farmland preservation/agricultural retention efforts with proactive planning initiatives;
- Update and when necessary create maps to more accurately target preservation efforts in important areas; and
- Coordinate farmland preservation efforts with open space, recreation and historic preservation initiatives.

The SADC developed a draft strategic targeting map by identifying the location and quality of agricultural soils, the location of land in agricultural production and the location of sewer service areas. The next phase of analysis will focus on incorporating the latest land-use information from counties, municipalities and other state agencies.

This coordinated planning approach will help make preservation efforts among all levels of government more predictable, efficient and effective.

### **New Markets Established for Farmers**

To retain our farmland and strengthen agriculture, it is essential to expand the marketplace for farmers.

New Jersey's proximity to large, affluent markets has always been an advantage for the state's food and agriculture industry. In addition, the state's increasing immigrant population creates a new demand for agricultural products. As consumer demands change, so too must the agricultural industry.



*Jeff O'Hara of Morris County helps a customer at the Hoboken Farmers Market during National Farmers Market Week in August.*

Identifying these new markets and providing the products consumers demand is an ongoing effort in the ever-changing agricultural industry.

In January 2003, the Department proposed nearly 100 new economic development strategies. By year's end, more than a third of them were implemented.

The Department also set a goal of establishing at least 10 new markets during the year – a goal that was met in the establishment of community farmers markets alone. The opening of 10 new community farmers markets boosted statewide totals to a record 60 community farmers markets that operated during the season.

Farmers markets are important sales outlets for farmers. A new community farmers market selling Jersey Fresh products can generate as much as \$50,000 during the season for participating farmers.

In developing new market opportunities, the Department is focusing on shortening the market chain – enabling farmers to sell more directly to consumers – and promoting value-added initiatives that take raw farm product and enhance it in some way, such as through processing or packaging. Both are key to increasing profits for New Jersey farmers.

New markets typically start out small, but have the potential to grow into highly profitable sectors as agriculture continues to evolve to meet the demands of a changing marketplace.

### **Healthier Choices Means Healthier Kids**

To combat a national epidemic of childhood obesity and promote better nutrition, the Department of Agriculture led development of a multi-agency Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids campaign announced in May.

Under the campaign, the Department – which administers the federal school breakfast and lunch programs – will require all schools to develop a school nutrition policy and work with schools to replace unhealthy food with more nutritious alternatives.

The Department also will provide training for school administrators and food service directors on marketing nutritious foods to children and incorporating more fruits and vegetables into the school meal program. In addition, the Department is working with Rutgers University's Farm to Schools project to increase the use of locally grown farm products in the schools.

In related initiatives, the Department of Education revised its core curriculum standards to place greater emphasis on nutrition and the relationship between diet and fitness. For the first time, the standards include stand-alone sections on nutrition education. They also include a number of new fitness standards.

The Departments of Health and Senior Services and Education will work with school nurses to collect information on student height and weight as part of a pilot study to assess children's health and assist in developing policies and programs addressing obesity. They also will work together to implement a pilot 10,000 Steps program, a fitness initiative that equips children and teachers with pedometers and encourages them to walk 10,000 steps a day.



Finally, the Department of Health and Senior Services will expand the Seniors and Kids: Breakfast Together program to pre-kindergarten through third-grade students in 56 schools in 2004. In 2001 and 2002, a total of five school districts participated in the program.

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 the natural resources that sustain it, and support the health and welfare of the general public.

## 2003 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 State Board of Agriculture adopted an Agricultural Smart Growth Plan to help inform the state planning process and ensure the farming community and local and county governments have the guidance, education and tools needed to accommodate growth while protecting valuable natural resources. The plan focuses on five key components: farmland preservation, innovative conservation planning, economic development, agriculture industry sustainability and natural resource conservation. The cornerstone of the plan is farmland preservation. The Farmland Preservation Program, in cooperation with counties, is carrying out a Strategic Targeting Project to identify important agricultural lands and help prioritize farmland preservation investments among all levels of government. This coordinated planning approach will improve preservation efforts and ultimately enhance the agricultural industry.



*Taylor Palmer, Jr. welcomes Governor McGreevey to Boxwood Farm in Manalapan - the 1,000th farm preserved under the Farmland Preservation Program and the site of a press event marking the preservation of 20,000 acres in 2003.*

➤ As part of its Strategic Targeting Project, the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) held a series of outreach meetings with county agriculture development boards, county boards of agriculture, municipalities, nonprofits and other interested parties. In addition, three regional meetings were held. As a result, the SADC updated sewer service areas and agricultural development areas, and incorporated local input into Planning Incentive Grant project boundaries. The completed Strategic Targeting Project will be incorporated into the SADC's ranking criteria to better target preservation project areas in 2004. In addition, review of the project's prioritization criteria will be conducted periodically to ensure accuracy.

➤ A record 20,013 acres of farmland was preserved in New Jersey in 2003, meeting an ambitious goal set by Governor McGreevey in his State



of the State Address. A total of 256 farms were preserved, including the 145-acre Boxwood Farm in Manalapan Township – the 1,000<sup>th</sup> farm preserved since the state Farmland Preservation Program was established in 1983.

➤ By the end of the year, approximately 120,000 acres of farmland had been preserved statewide under the Farmland Preservation Program. With more than 14 percent of its available farmland permanently preserved, New Jersey leads the nation in farmland preservation.

➤ In 2003, the SADC acquired development easements on 21 farms totaling 1,896 acres on Pinelands farms. A total of 88 Pinelands Development Credits on those farms have been retired as a result. The SADC entered into 20 new contracts to purchase development easements on farms previously approved for preservation. Additionally, preliminary approval was granted for the preservation of 31 Pinelands farms totaling approximately 8,000 acres under the County Easement Purchase Program.

➤ Four farms totaling 381 acres were permanently preserved under the SADC's Fee Simple Program. In addition, the SADC granted final approval for the preservation of the Stafford farm in Voorhees Township, Camden County. The 140-acre farm, the last farm in the township, was preserved in early 2004 through the efforts of the SADC, the Green Acres Program, Voorhees Township, Camden County and the Trust for Public Lands. The Fee Simple 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.

➤ For the first time, the State Surplus Lands law was used to preserve four farms totaling 381 acres in Montgomery Township, Somerset County, and Marlboro Township, Monmouth County. Under the program, the Department of Treasury identified the lands as being surplus to the needs of the State and suitable for agricultural production. The farms were deed-restricted for agricultural use and then sold to private sector landowners.

➤ Secretary Kuperus formed the State Farmland Affordability/Availability Working Group to advise the SADC on ways to make farmland more affordable or otherwise available to New Jersey farmers. Agricultural land in New Jersey – the most densely populated state in the nation – is among the highest priced in the nation. By removing

development rights from the land, the Farmland Preservation Program helps make preserved farmland more affordable. Despite this, preserved farmland still can be expensive. The Working Group will study the issue and make recommendations to the SADC by April 1, 2004.

➤ SADC preservation funds were bolstered by a \$4,358,652 grant for farmland preservation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program. The funds will help preserve up to 86 farms totaling 7,335 acres.

## **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 U.S. Department of Agriculture approved New Jersey's proposal to establish a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). This state/federal program will provide financial incentives for New Jersey farmers to voluntarily establish stream buffers on agricultural lands and implement other water quality improvement practices. A total of \$100 million in state and federal funds will be available for this program over a period of 10 years.

➤ Through continuing programs carried out in cooperation with the Natural Resource Conservation Service:

- conservation plans were developed for 21,749 acres of farmland;
- erosion control practices were installed on more than 12,167 acres of land, preventing the loss of 119,000 tons of productive soil;
- conservation tillage techniques were used on 3,583 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 14,340 acres of land.

➤ New Jersey's conservation districts processed 4,478 new applications for erosion control on more than 33,000 acres of land under the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Program. Districts conducted 74,189 on-site inspections to verify compliance with erosion and sediment control standards. Conservation measures installed on these construction sites will prevent an estimated 800,000 tons of soil from entering the state's waterways.

➤ To ensure the State Soil Conservation Committee and Soil Conservation Districts operate as effectively and efficiently as possible in protecting and conserving natural resources, a comprehensive operational review was conducted. The review evaluated the institutional, legal, financial, technical and administrative needs of the State Soil Conservation Committee and Soil Conservation Districts; assessed the program's relative efficiency and effectiveness; and made recommendations to ensure the program's continued public accountability and delivery of quality service. Findings of the review will provide the basis for a strategic planning process that will take place in early 2004.

➤ A total of 461 host trees were removed and more than 1,000 other trees safeguarded with imidacloprid treatments as part of state and federal efforts to eradicate the Asian longhorned beetle, detected in Jersey City in 2002. The Asian longhorned beetle is a foreign insect pest that attacks and kills



*A tree removed as part of Asian longhorned beetle control efforts in Jersey City is fed into a chipper.*

maples and other hardwood trees. A quarantine of the site and surrounding area within a 1-1/2 mile radius remained in effect. Department staff worked with the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection and U.S. Forest Service to garner funds for replacement trees.

➤ Aerial treatments using *Bacillus thuringiensis* (*B.t.*) were carried out in the spring on 4,577 acres in 13 forested residential communities and two state properties to protect against heavy defoliation by gypsy moth. The gypsy moth defoliated 5,154 acres of forested lands in 16 counties and 58 municipalities, representing an 88 percent decrease from 2002. Lower gypsy moth populations resulted from a successful spray program and increased fungal parasitic activity due to the cool weather.

➤ As part of biological control efforts for plant and insect pests, the Department:

- protected approximately 80,000 acres of soybeans from damage by the Mexican bean beetle through the release of more than one million *Pediobius foveolatus* parasitoid wasps, saving soybean growers approximately \$275,000 in avoided pesticide costs;

- Released two species of leaf-feeding beetles, *Galerucella pusilla* and *G. californiensis*, to combat purple loosestrife, an exotic, aggressive freshwater wetlands plant that is displacing native plants in the state's marshes and threatening animals that depend on those native plants for food, nesting and shelter; and
- Produced and released 17,500 foreign ladybugs, *Pseudoscymnus tsugae*, at five sites in Sussex County to control the hemlock woolly adelgid that has devastated thousands of acres of native hemlocks in the state.

➤ Leaf samples from 2,673 acres of stone fruits were tested as part of surveillance for plum pox, a foreign plant virus that affects stone fruits (peaches, nectarines, plums). Previously known to occur only in Europe, the Middle East and Chile, plum pox recently was found in stone fruit orchards in Pennsylvania and Canada. Infected trees produce unmarketable fruit and decline in vigor. The Department has tested for plum pox for three years with no positive results.

➤ The Department established the New Jersey Animal Emergency Working Group to develop and implement safe, effective and efficient responses to animal emergencies at the local, county, state and federal levels; to protect wild and domesticated animals (including pets), the public health, and the environment; and ensure the humane care and treatment of animals during emergency situations. The working group — which includes representatives of a variety of animal-related sectors — operates under the Department's Division of Animal Health and the New Jersey State Police Office of Emergency Management. Committees have been established to focus on goals in several areas, including training, volunteer recruitment, coordinated response, animal transportation and relocation, animal rescue and recovery, animal sheltering, veterinary services and safety.

➤ Working with the livestock industry, the N.J. Agricultural Experiment Station and New Jersey Farm Bureau, the Department developed best management practices for security and biosecurity. 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.



- Rules to ensure the humane raising, keeping, care, treatment, marketing and sale of domestic livestock in New Jersey were proposed in May. At year's end, the Department continued to review and prepare responses to the more 6,000 comments received during the public comment period.
- As part of animal disease surveillance and control, the Department:
- Conducted 43,980 diagnostic tests on 33,267 specimens from 8,747 cases at its animal health laboratory. The laboratory achieved 100 percent accuracy in bluetongue and bovine leukemia virus antibody testing as part of certification testing administered by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories;
  - Quarantined more than 100 horses at two contagious equine metritis (CEM) quarantine facilities to test horses imported from countries known to be affected by CEM, a serious equine venereal disease; and
  - Completed 67 disease investigations on New Jersey livestock.
- A record 150 equine cases of West Nile virus were reported in 2003, compared with 47 cases in 2002. Although West Nile virus activity in 2003 was confirmed throughout the state in birds and mosquitoes, the majority of equine cases were in South Jersey, particularly Gloucester and Salem counties. The Department continued to advise that horses be vaccinated against West Nile virus and, because vaccines are not 100 percent effective, also continued to recommend that horse owners minimize potential mosquito habitats. Five horses in New Jersey died from Equine Eastern Encephalitis in 2003, another infectious viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes. The horses had not been vaccinated against the disease.



- For the seventh year in a row, the Department facilitated a film collection program for New Jersey growers. Nearly 497,000 pounds of film was collected at two regional collection sites in Burlington and Cumberland counties. This represents almost a 5 percent increase from the tonnage collected in 2002 and brings the total film collected since the program's inception to almost 1.4 million tons.

### **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.*

➤ Geranium plants in 30 greenhouses in New Jersey were inspected for *Ralstonia solanacearum*, a bacterial plant pathogen. The strain of *Ralstonia solanacearum* (race 3 biovar 2) was of considerable concern because of its ability to infect important food crops such as peppers, tomatoes, eggplants and potatoes. The geranium cutting stock was produced in Kenya and shipped to New Jersey greenhouse growers. Wilted geranium plants at one greenhouse tested positive for the disease. The infested shipment of geraniums was destroyed, and the greenhouse owner disinfected the facility. No additional signs of the pathogen were found, and geranium plants in the remainder of the greenhouses in New Jersey were released for sale. Nationwide, 921 greenhouse operations were examined for the disease. Infected stock was found in 127 greenhouses in 27 states.

➤ Other inspection activities included:

- 17,260 acres of nursery stock in 866 nurseries were inspected to certify they were free from dangerous insects and diseases;
- 4,500 honeybee colonies were inspected throughout the state. Approximately 1 percent were found infected with American Foulbrood disease, and infected colonies were destroyed and burned. Varroa mites were found in 85 percent of the inspected colonies;
- More than 6.5 million vegetable transplants (pepper, tomato and cole crops) shipped from Florida, Georgia and Pennsylvania were inspected to ensure that plants were free from insect and disease problems; and
- A total of 723 seed lots from farmers, dealers and wholesalers were sampled to determine seed quality and to ensure that seed met germination standards established by the New Jersey Seed Law. Emphasis was placed on sampling and testing of seed sold to farmers through direct sales and from New Jersey seed dealers and wholesalers. No violations of the New Jersey Seed Law were detected.

➤ The Department worked with scientists from the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station to refine a diagnostic test for the detection

of blueberry scorch virus. The test was used to screen more than 4,000 blueberry nursery plants for the scorch virus. The screening of blueberry nursery plants helps assure disease-free material.

- Turf seed samples were taken from 27 lots or 119,850 pounds of certified turf seed shipped to New Jersey from other states. Samples were tested to determine eligibility for use in the interagency certified seed program. Seed sold under this program is certified to meet high standards of genetic identity and purity.
- Development continued on liquid chromatography techniques to quickly and accurately identify foreign noxious weeds. The results of work on oats and rice genera (*Avena* and *Oryza*) have been accepted for publication in the journal *Seed Technology* in the spring of 2004. Computer libraries of the species are being developed along with the chromatographic work.
- To ensure that feed, fertilizer and lime sold in the state are accurately labeled and are free from contaminants, the Department collected and analyzed 1,300 random samples. Failure rates were 8.5 percent for feed, 15.5 percent for fertilizer and 11 percent for lime. Warnings or penalties were issued depending on the severity of the violations. Penalties for deficient fertilizers are returned to farmers to offset losses that may have been caused by lower-quality product.
- A total of 9,078 retail stores and 237 milk dealers were licensed to sell milk, and approximately 1,500 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 180 million pounds of product was packed under the Jersey Fresh Grading Program – an increase from 159 million pounds the previous year. The program is designed to increase 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.

- Seafood safety and bio-security recommendations were developed and distributed to processors and dealers to assist them in ensuring the wholesomeness of their products.

#### **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.*

- At the request of Governor McGreevey, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman issued a natural disaster designation for 16 New Jersey counties: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Salem, Somerset, Sussex and Warren counties. This was the result of excessive rain and cool temperatures during the growing season that delayed or prevented planting of many crops, impaired production and caused an increase in disease and insect damage. The designation enabled qualifying farmers who suffered substantial losses to apply for emergency loan assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Farm Service Agency.

- Governor McGreevey signed legislation in September to establish a state organic certification program that will help guarantee consumers

high-quality organic products and help farmers transition to organic production. Under the program being developed, the Department will certify organic producers and handlers, and inspect to ensure compliance with new federal regulations mandating that any organically grown agricultural product must meet U.S. Department of



*Governor McGreevey talks with South Jersey farmers at a farmers roundtable at Edgar Joyce Nursery in Elmer in April.*

Agriculture standards if it is labeled as organic. Farmers who are transitioning to organic production and are in the process of completing



the three-year qualifying period will have the ability to market their products as “transitional” – enabling them to realize the increased prices this niche market supports. The Department began the process of drafting rules to implement the new program, which is expected to be in place in summer 2004.

➤ As part of efforts to encourage an increase in consumer awareness and availability of Jersey Fresh products, Department staff:

- visited more than 700 retail grocery chain stores to distribute Jersey Fresh advertising material to produce managers to help better identify New Jersey-grown products within the stores’ produce departments;
- distributed a weekly e-mail to more than 100 industry produce buyers that advises them of current crop availability, volume and quality forecasts;
- developed a 30-second television commercial broadcast on network and cable television stations throughout the New York/ New Jersey and Philadelphia market during the 2003 farm market season;
- conducted an aggressive radio advertising program to reach consumers during prime commuter time periods and inform them of the availability of Jersey Fresh farm products; and
- placed advertising in trade publications to encourage industry produce buyers to purchase Jersey Fresh commodities.

➤ Jersey Bred and Jersey Grown labels were proposed for the equine and horticultural industries as part of efforts to expand the successful Jersey Fresh promotional program to include all New Jersey farm products.



➤ The Department awarded a \$10,000 matching grant to the Sussex County Co-Operative Milk Producers Association to help fund a feasibility study and develop a business plan for producing milk marketed under the Jersey Fresh label, as well as other Jersey Fresh-labeled products.

➤ The new Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa announced that it had contracted with Formisano Farms in Buena, Atlantic County, to supply its 11 dining facilities with locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs.

- Through the Jersey Fresh Matched Funds Program, the Department awarded \$96,450 in grants to 69 New Jersey agricultural organizations to fund specialized promotions featuring the Jersey Fresh logo. These grants yielded more than \$192,000 worth of additional Jersey Fresh exposure.
- The Department continues to maintain a Jersey Fresh website ([www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov](http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov)) to help consumers locate pick-your-own farms, roadside markets, community farmers markets, and agricultural fairs and festivals. It also provides monthly recipes and other information to encourage the purchase of New Jersey-grown products.
- Ten new community farmers markets opened for the first time during the 2003 season. Altogether, a record 60 community farmers markets were in operation across the state, providing increased access to fresh produce for residents, helping to revitalize communities and offering an important sales outlet for farmers.
- In efforts to identify new marketing opportunities for New Jersey farmers:
  - The Departments of Agriculture from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York were awarded a Federal-State Marketing Proposal Grant to evaluate and explore opening more Canadian markets to these state's respective growers. Considered a major market for New Jersey agricultural farm products, Canadian consumers enjoy New Jersey-grown lettuces, greens, cabbages, eggplants, squashes and blueberries.
  - The Department helped move 3,100 cases of peaches through the school lunch program, as well as another 1,250 cases through the Department of Corrections, to help the New Jersey peach industry address a late-season oversupply.
- The Department was awarded a \$110,390 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help farmers identify and meet the demand for ethnic produce and goat meat in an increasingly diverse mid-Atlantic marketplace.
- To help increase food exports, the Department sponsored New Jersey booths at the annual Canadian Produce Marketing Association's trade



show and conference and the annual Grocery Innovations-Canada show, as well as a pavilion at the U.S. Food Export Showcase in Chicago. The Department also provided targeted market research to five New Jersey companies as they prepared to attend the ANUGA 2003 in Cologne, Germany – the world’s largest food trade show that attracted more than 160,000 buyers from more than 140 countries.

- The first-ever Jersey Bred Festival in September at Monmouth Park featured a full card of races exclusively for New Jersey bred thoroughbreds. The racing card featured three stakes races, a new owners seminar sponsored by the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association, display booths, a parade of breeds, pony rides and other attractions.
- Sons and daughters of New Jersey-based stallions had one of the best racing seasons on the Grand Circuit in recent memory. In 2003, New Jersey stallions produced more than 60 winners of major stake races held throughout North America.
- The Horse Park of New Jersey hosted three international-level events this year and is being considered as a site for several selection trials for the 2004 Athens Olympics. The Horse Park continues to make capital improvements, including a new crossing to the wildlife management area and additional mounting ramps for special needs riders.
- Plant exports to foreign markets increased by 33 percent in 2003 as Department inspectors issued 132 state and 240 federal phytosanitary certificates to enable the export of plants and plant material to other states or countries.
- The Department developed a searchable web directory of New Jersey seafood producers that will allow buyers to search for a specific company or specific product. Utilization of this technology allows both domestic and international buyers ready access to locally harvested and processed products.
- The Department worked with the Department of Environmental Protection to develop a more effective and efficient leasing policy that will allow shellfish and marine finfish farmers the opportunity to utilize the coastal areas that have been made available for lease. In other efforts to encourage and support New Jersey’s emerging aquaculture industry, the Department is developing an Aquatic Farmer License that will extend protections to the industry and streamline the permitting process while maintaining environmental integrity, and an application process for the

import of aquatic organisms that will help protect the environment, wild stocks and the aquaculture industry from invasive species and introduction of diseases.

**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.*

*Secretary Kuperus eats lunch with children at Rosa International Middle School in Cherry Hill as part of an October event with the Philadelphia Eagles to encourage kids to choose healthier foods.*



- The Department spearheaded a Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids campaign to help combat childhood obesity and improve children's academic performance by promoting better nutrition and physical activity in schools. The campaign is being conducted in cooperation with the Departments of Health and Senior Services and Education.
- In January 2003, Governor McGreevey signed into law legislation requiring schools to implement a school breakfast program if 20 percent or more of their students are eligible for free and reduced price meals under federal guidelines. The Department has provided technical assistance and training to all 371 targeted schools covered by the new mandate. Sample model plans for implementation have been developed and disseminated. The bill requires affected schools with pre-kindergarten through grade 6 to submit a plan to the Department for starting a school breakfast program by September 2004. District plans for implementation are in the review process for approval by February 2004. All other affected schools with grades 7 through 12 must submit a plan by November 2004 and implement the program by September 2005.
- More than 22.3 million pounds of USDA-donated commodities were distributed to more than 578,000 New Jersey school children under the National School lunch program.
- Forty-one commercial food processors, including two New Jersey companies, were under agreement to convert donated commodities into finished food products for use by schools.

➤ Under a joint state and federal program to increase the consumption of nutritious foods and improve the diets of schoolchildren, the Department received \$1.4 million in federal funds to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables for the School Lunch Program. This effort included the distribution of more than 515,180 pounds of locally grown Jersey Fresh produce in season during the 2003-2004 school year.

➤ A total of 10.8 million pounds of USDA-donated commodities were distributed to approximately 250,000 low-income persons through 650 food pantries and soup kitchens throughout the state under The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). During the course of the year, more than 80 different food items were provided.

➤ Under the federal School Breakfast and Lunch Programs administered by the Department:

- 1,179 schools offer the School Breakfast Program;
- 2,673 schools offer the School Lunch Program;
- Average daily participation in the School Breakfast Program is 87,879 students (6 percent of total enrollment);
- Average daily participation in the School Lunch Program is 578,000 students (37 percent of total enrollment); and
- Approximately 15 percent of students who participate in the School Lunch Program also participate in the School Breakfast Program.

➤ Under the federal Child and Adult Care Food Programs administered by the Department:

- 1,188 child care centers participate in the Child Care Food Program and serve an average of 39,507 meals daily to 55,796 children;
- 1,143 family day care providers serve 3,416 meals daily to 5,857 children; and
- 155 Adult Day Care Centers serve an average of 5,617 meals daily to 6,671 functionally impaired adults.

➤ The Department conducted 164 training sessions for school food service personnel and various child nutrition sponsors to assist them in streamlining program operations, using the web-based payment system and improving the quality of meals offered.

➤ In conjunction with Rutgers University, Cook College, the Department presented a three-day School Food Service Management Institute for food service personnel in August 2003. The annual institute, entitled “Hot

Days, Cool Topics III: Stepping Up to a Healthier Plate,” attracted more than 200 participants for the three-day seminar. The institute is designed for directors, managers, supervisors and production staff who plan, prepare and serve food in New Jersey’s schools. The goal is to offer technical training, innovative ideas and developmental opportunities to inspire, challenge and reward professionals in school food service management.

### **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.*

➤ The Department provided leadership, resources and services to support food, agriculture and natural resource education programs for more than 2,000 secondary-school students and 65 teachers in 44 school districts. This included more than \$60,000 in grants, curriculum and supplies to school districts for agriculture, food and natural resource education program improvement.

➤ More than 27 career development events serving 1,233 participants were conducted. Nine leadership and professional development conferences were administered for 723 students and 408 professional development credit hours were awarded to agriculture teachers during seven professional development conferences.

➤ Michael Brooks of the Woodstown FFA Chapter was selected as one of four finalists for the FFA Star Farmer of America award. The selection was based on the seven-year development of his entrepreneurial skills in vegetable production and his achievements in FFA and leadership development. The Department coordinates the state FFA association of 33 FFA chapters in New Jersey providing premiere leadership, personal growth and career success for members.



*Michael N. Brooks of Elmer became the only New Jersey farmer since 1930 to advance as far as the finals of the Star Farmer of America competition.*

➤ As a result of an outbreak of Exotic Newcastle Disease in the West, the Department began an informational campaign with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to alert commercial operations and the public to this highly infectious poultry disease. Posters and fact sheets were distributed to all poultry stakeholders — including commercial egg operations, game bird farms, pet stores, livestock auctions, live poultry markets and certified pullorum testers – and a mass mailing was sent to more than 1,000 New Jersey poultry owners. In addition, the Division drafted an emergency order and rule prohibiting any birds or avian products from coming into the state from those counties diagnosed with the disease and from adjacent counties. The order and rule also require a permit for entry for all birds coming into the state.

➤ The Department awarded a \$35,000 grant to help fund a program that assists New Jersey dairy farmers in improving milk quality and farm management practices, thereby enabling them to earn greater economic returns. The grant to New Jersey Farm Bureau will help fund the Dairy Improvement Program, which is administered by Salem County Cooperative Extension in cooperation with New Jersey Farm Bureau and the N.J. Department of Agriculture.

➤ The sixth annual Animal Emergency Management Symposium drew more than 150 animal control officers, police and firefighters, county emergency planners, animal rescue volunteers, veterinary-related personnel and others with an interest in assisting animals during emergency situations. The symposium featured presentations on topics including pet friendly shelters, legal issues for disaster planners and responders, bio-agroterrorism, pet first aid and the development of community animal disaster plans.

➤ Fourteen members of the seafood industry completed a three-day Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) training course offered by the Department. The classroom training fulfills one of the Food and Drug Administration requirements that lead to certification. The program develops a key understanding of the concepts of HACCP and equips individuals to develop HACCP plans for their specific operations. This training will allow New Jersey companies to expand their businesses and help to ensure that the local supply of fish and seafood is both safe and of high quality.

➤ More than 165 students from 30 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 tested their knowledge in these areas through interactive problem solving. The winning New Jersey team, from Hopewell Valley High School, placed 7<sup>th</sup> in the national competition.

### **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.*

- 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 75 employees. The majority of this training consisted of information-technology related courses.
- Easy Pass transponders have been installed in all of the Department's state fleet, helping to speed response time of field staff, reduce administrative paperwork, and improve coordination and supervision of field activities and reporting.
- Greater use of the Purchase (P) card has provided for faster delivery of needed goods and services, prompter payment of vendor invoices, reduced paperwork processing and, in some instances, greater allowances for payment discounts.
- The Department entered into an agreement with the Department of Personnel to establish a Shared Services Center, which is designed to provide high-quality human resource services by capitalizing on shared staff expertise, modern technology, and best practices. Having on-site Department of Personnel approval authority has helped expedite delivery of human resource services.
- A web-based application has been developed to replace the paper reimbursement voucher process currently utilized in collecting reimbursement data under the School Nutrition Program. Effective with the October 2003 reimbursement claim, all program sponsors were submitting monthly data electronically, via the "My New Jersey" web portal. This electronic system is more efficient by providing immediate feedback on voucher errors, reducing paperwork and ultimately accelerating program payments to sponsoring organizations. The Department is planning to convert all other Child Nutrition Programs to web-based payment systems.



- A new Department Intranet page with relevant information was unveiled and updated on a daily basis to help keep staff informed of Department activities.
  
- To promote employee safety and building security, several enhancements were made to the Department's facilities, including the installation of shatterproof film on the laboratory windows; newly designed main building lobby turnstiles keyed to access card entry; an enlarged security force; anti-ram barriers surrounding the office and laboratory buildings, and perimeter fencing.
  
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman honored Patrick Mullen, assistant director of marketing and development, at the USDA's 57<sup>th</sup> Secretary's Honor Awards ceremony, for his work as part of a team that developed an audit verification program for good agricultural and good handling practices.