



Contact: Hope Gruzlovic (609) 984-2504 or hope.gruzlovic@ag.state.nj.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 21, 2004

SADC Adopts Accepted Agricultural Management Practices for Aquaculture

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) has adopted accepted agricultural management practices for aquaculture – an important step in efforts to develop New Jersey’s growing aquaculture industry, Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus announced today.

“The accepted agricultural management practices provide a benchmark that all aquaculture farms will be encouraged to meet,” said Secretary Kuperus, who chairs the SADC. “These practices are a proactive approach to help everyone – from aquatic farmers to neighbors and municipalities – understand exactly what constitutes established, recognized agricultural standards for aquaculture and help protect farmers who operate in conformance with them.”

The practices are outlined in “Recommended Management Practices for Aquatic Farms” (www.state.nj.us/agriculture/rural/seafood/aquacultureamp.pdf), published by Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture based on extensive research conducted by these agencies and other state and federal permitting agencies. Agricultural management practices that are addressed include those dealing with permits, construction, transportation, water resource management, native and non-native species, bio-security, facility construction and health management.

Under New Jersey’s Right to Farm Act, farmers who are in compliance with accepted agricultural management practices are entitled to protection against private and public nuisance suits and unduly restrictive municipal regulations, provided they meet the other requirements of the Act. These include meeting the definition of commercial farm, operating in conformance with all relevant federal or state rules and not posing a direct threat to public health or safety.

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“The adoption of these practices adds to the significant accomplishments that have been made in 2004 to re-position our farm-raised shellfish and other aquacultured products in the marketplace,” said Linda O’Dierno, coordinator of fish and seafood development for the N.J. Department of Agriculture. These accomplishments include the establishment of an aquatic farmer license program and the launch of the Jersey Seafood website at www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov. A total of 117 New Jersey farms have been licensed to date under the aquatic farmer license program.

Aquaculture is a form of agriculture involving the production and marketing of aquatic organisms – such as shellfish, fish, and aquatic plants -- in controlled or selected environments. In addition to intensive on-farm production strategies, aquaculture also includes efforts that simply improve natural processes, achieving greater yields of fish and seafood to meet growing consumer demand.

While the primary focus of aquaculture in New Jersey is the hard clam and regeneration of the oyster culture industry, potential candidate species for the developing aquaculture industry include hybrid striped bass, bay scallops, soft-shell clams and crabs, black sea bass and koi.

The SADC administers New Jersey’s Farmland Preservation and Right to Farm programs and promotes innovative approaches to maintaining the viability of agriculture.

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