

NEWS FROM THE NJDA

New Jersey
Department of
Agriculture

December 2015

Volume 3, Issue 6

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Important Dates for your Calendar:

December is Write a Friend Month

Dec. 6 - First Night of Hanukkah

Dec. 12 - Poinsettia Day

Dec. 14 - Roasted Chestnuts Day

Dec. 16 - State Board Meeting, Haskin Shellfish Lab, Port Norris.

Dec. 25 - Christmas Day

Dec. 27 - National Fruitcake Day

Jan. 1 - New Years Day

From the Secretary's Desk



NJ Secretary of Agriculture, Douglas H. Fisher

Anyone who has met a New Jersey farmer knows that they are among the most generous people on earth. During this holiday time, while Garden State Christmas tree farmers are at their busiest, they also are busy giving back to the community. The Department of Agriculture is so pleased to be a part of a new program this year that will brighten the holidays for our New Jersey military families. The New Jersey Christmas Tree Growers Association is donating more than 100 Christmas trees to this initiative, "Christmas Trees for New Jersey Military Families." It truly is a collaborative effort – the New Jersey Agricultural Society is donating its Farmers Against Hunger truck and driver to pick up the trees throughout the state and deliver them to the New Jersey National Guard Joint Military and Family Assistance Center in Bordentown. The Ag Society also purchased the makings for commemorative ornaments, designed and coordinated by the Department. The Northern Burlington FFA Chapter is making the ornaments so every family will get one to go with their tree. The Liberty USO and volunteers from the various organizations will be donating refreshments for the Donation Day, taking place December 14. It is sure to be a special day for all.

From the State Board President



State Board of Agriculture President, Marty Bullock

The State Board will hold their South Jersey Open Meeting at the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, located at 2800 High Street, Port Norris on Wednesday, December 16 beginning at 1:15 pm. The regular monthly meeting of the State Board will be held immediately following at the same location. The purpose of the open meeting is to give the public an opportunity to bring the Board suggestions, problems, or other input about New Jersey agriculture.

Preparations for the State Agricultural Convention continue, the Resolutions Committee has met and is working on the Resolutions received to date. Resolutions are still being accepted.

With that, the members of the State Board and I would like to wish you and your families a very Happy Holiday season and a peaceful and prosperous New Year!



Secretary Fisher Participates in Season of Service

New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher recently joined volunteer wait staff at St. Ann's Soup Kitchen, helping to serve Thanksgiving lunch to 300 area residents in need. The lunch consisted of turkey, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, salad, bread, soup, and desserts.

"Soup kitchens and food pantries are vitally important to New Jersey families across the state," said Secretary Fisher. "Hunger is a year-round issue and feeding agencies such as St. Ann's need volunteers and donations from the public and private companies to continue to provide these services."

Brother Paul Miller of the Secular Franciscan Order and founder of Franciscan Charities opened the soup kitchen about 10 years ago. The kitchen serves 240 people per day, 5 days a week Monday thru Thursday and Saturday.

The first kitchen consisted of a few volunteers in the abandoned St. Ann's church. On its first day 12 people were served. There was no kitchen and very little access to running water or electricity, but the volunteers kept coming back. More than 300 volunteers joined and St. Ann's Church was restored to a fully functioning house of worship with a kitchen.

In addition to St. Ann's Soup Kitchen, Franciscan Charities also operates St. Rocco's Food Pantry which is open the third and fourth Saturdays of each month from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Both St. Ann's and St. Rocco's receive donations from the public, different religious organizations, grants through Shop-Rite supermarkets and government programs, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and New Jersey Department of Agriculture's State Food Purchase Program (SFPP).

The State Food Purchase Program provides \$6.8 million a year to the state's six-contracted food banks to purchase healthy food with an emphasis on Jersey Fresh produce for distribution to their networks of food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters. TEFAP distributes U.S. Department of Agriculture donated foods to the food banks.



The St. Ann's soup kitchen and St. Rocco's food pantry receive monthly allotments of food through TEFAP and SFPP. The food supplied through these programs includes poultry, pork, fish and other items, which are split between the soup kitchen and food pantry. Larry Crawford, Director of the soup kitchen and food pantry, knows firsthand the importance of these programs.

"The food we receive from the state and federal governments is a humongous help," said Crawford. "It is so much appreciated here."

Photo: New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas Fisher prepares to serve soup at the St. Ann's Soup Kitchen in Newark.

USDA Begins 49th Enrollment Period for the Conservation Reserve Program

On December 1, 2015, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack reminded farmers and ranchers that the next general enrollment period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) began that day and ends on Feb. 26, 2016. December 2015 also marks the 30th anniversary of CRP, a federally funded program that assists agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

As of September 2015, 24.2 million acres were enrolled in CRP. CRP also is protecting more than 170,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, enough to go around the world 7 times. For an interactive tour of CRP success stories from across the U.S., visit www.fsa.usda.gov/CRPis30, or follow on Twitter at #CRPis30.

“Over the past 30 years, farmers, ranchers, conservationists, hunters, fishermen and other outdoor enthusiasts have made CRP one of the most successful conservation programs in the history of the country,” said Vilsack. “Today, CRP continues to make major environmental improvements to water and air quality. This is another longstanding example of how agricultural production can work hand in hand with efforts to improve the environment and increase wildlife habitat.”

Participants in CRP establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. At times when commodity prices are low, enrolling sensitive lands in CRP can be especially attractive to farmers and ranchers, as it softens the economic hardship for landowners at the same time that it provides ecological benefits. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish native plant species on marginal agricultural lands for the primary purpose of preventing soil erosion and improving water quality and related benefits of reducing loss of wildlife habitat.

Contracts on 1.64 million acres of CRP are set to expire on Sept. 30, 2016. Producers with expiring contracts or producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP.

Since it was established on Dec. 23, 1985, CRP has:

- Prevented more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks;
- Reduced nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively;
- Sequestered an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road.

Since 1996, CRP has created nearly 2.7 million acres of restored wetlands.

For more information FSA conservation programs, visit a local FSA office or www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

The Conservation Reserve Program was re-authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, which builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past six years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers. Since enactment, USDA has made significant progress to implement each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing, and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/farmbill.

NJDA Farm to School Program Participates in School Lunch Event

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture participated in “No Boxes, No Bottle, No Bags,” a farm-to-school event at West New York Middle School in West New York on Friday, October 23. The NJDA’s Division of Food and Nutrition Director Rose Tricario served up roasted chicken from Griggstown Farm in Franklin Township, steamed broccoli from Shady Brook Farm in Egg Harbor City, and honey-glazed carrots with honey from Bob’s Buzzy Bees in Yardville to students during the program that featured locally-sourced, scratch-cooked foods.

The cafeteria also featured a harvest bar stocked with seasonal fruits and vegetables from New Jersey farms, including pickles made by students earlier in the week. Pizza prepared with dough and fresh mozzarella made by the students also featured local vegetables. And focaccia bread made by students was used to make sandwiches with New Jersey egg salad and roasted Garden State vegetables.

The event was the culmination of Harvest Week at the school, a partnership of the West New York Schools, NuWay Concessionaires, Zone 7 Distribution, New Jersey farmers and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture Farm to School program.



Photo: Rose Tricario, Division of Food and Nutrition Director, serves local foods to students.

Update on Agricultural Legislation

AJR-93 / SJR-73 Designates third week of September as "**New Jersey Gleaning Week.**"

This legislation would designate the third week of September each year as “New Jersey Gleaning Week.” It would also request the Governor to issue an annual proclamation, and the Department of Agriculture to take appropriate measures to publicize “New Jersey Gleaning Week.”

AJR-94 / SJR-74 Designates Wednesday of third week of September as "**Farmers Against Hunger Day.**"

This would designate Wednesday of the third week of September as “Farmers Against Hunger Day,” and would require the Department of Agriculture to take appropriate measures to publicize “Farmers Against Hunger Day.” It would also request the Governor to issue an annual proclamation calling upon public officials and citizen to celebrate “Farmers Against Hunger Day,” and to coordinate their activities with those planned for “New Jersey Gleaning Week.”

These bills will be voted on by the Senate Economic Growth Committee on December 14th.

For more information regarding agriculturally-related legislation, please contact the NJDA’s Legislative Liaison, **Robert Vivian** at Robert.Vivian@ag.state.nj.us.