



NEWS

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Salem County Farmer Appointed to State Farmland Preservation Board

John H. Coombs, an eighth-generation farmer from Elmer, Salem County, has been appointed to the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) – the agency that administers New Jersey’s Farmland Preservation Program and related programs to maintain a strong and viable agricultural industry.

“As a farmer from a longtime farming family who also is active in local government, John Coombs brings valuable experience to the SADC,” said Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus, who chairs the Committee. “His background will be a strong addition to the SADC as we continue to work to preserve New Jersey’s farmland and strengthen our agricultural industry.”

“John Coombs is a highly qualified farmer who has the respect of the agricultural community throughout New Jersey,” said Assemblyman Douglas H. Fisher. “I am sure that John will be a great asset to the Committee and will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to this agricultural board.”

Coombs is vice president of Coombs Farms LLC, which he owns and operates with his brother James. Coombs Farms grows potatoes, sod, string beans, corn and soybeans on 1,000 acres in Salem County. The farm, which dates back to the 1830s, is a recipient of the New Jersey Agricultural Society’s Century Farm Award honoring farms that are in the same family for 100 years or more.

“I’m looking forward to the opportunity to apply the knowledge I’ve gained locally in South Jersey – both in farming and government – at the state level, as well as also bringing back the state perspective to the local level,” said Coombs. “Our rural areas will continue to face increased development pressure. As that growth occurs, we need to make sure we preserve the farmland that is so important to our agricultural industry and our quality of life.”

Coombs is chairman of the Upper Pittsgrove Township Land Use Board, a former mayor and former member of the Upper Pittsgrove Township Committee, and a former president and former member of the Salem County Board of Agriculture. He also served on the State Agricultural Museum Board of Trustees.

The SADC consists of 11 members – the Secretary of Agriculture; the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, the Commissioner of Community Affairs, the State Treasurer and the Dean of Cook College, Rutgers University, or their designees; and six citizens – four farmer members and two representing the general public – appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Farmer candidates are recommended to the Governor by the State Board of Agriculture.

The SADC administers the state Farmland Preservation Program, the Right to Farm Program and the Farm Link Program, which matches farm sellers with potential buyers. To date, 1,326 farms covering 142,227 acres have been preserved statewide.

