



Agriculture



A Commitment to Department of Agriculture Priorities *Preserving and Conserving New Jersey Farmland*

A Commitment to the Department of Agriculture's Mission

The mission of the Department of Agriculture is to protect the public's interest in a strong and responsible agricultural industry. Through preservation and conservation programs, the Department works to ensure the state a land base of more than 700,000 acres for a sustainable and thriving agricultural industry. The Department also administers the Federal Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which provides food to more than 625,000 people in need each month.

Protecting Priorities in the Face of an Economic and Fiscal Crisis

The Department's priorities reflected in the Fiscal Year 2011 Budget:

- Ensuring food safety through animal and plant surveillance and testing;
- Supporting assistance of the needy through the State match for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP);
- Stewardship of New Jersey's over 700,000 acres of farmland through natural resource conservation and farmland preservation.

Making Tough Decisions

The Department's leadership understands the need to share in the burden of overall budget-cutting, and has identified areas where reductions can occur, totaling \$5.979 million:

- Eliminating \$439,000 in school lunch aid to non-public schools, although they will still be eligible for federal funds;
- Reducing the State school lunch subsidy to public schools to the minimum required (\$5.6 million) to preserve the current level of federal funding. This will result in a more leveled reimbursement rate for the cost of preparing meals for all income categories;
- Combination of three administrative items that will consolidate duties and implement a cross-utilization of personnel for a total reduction of \$61,000.

Making the Department of Agriculture Work Better for New Jersey

The Department has identified areas where functions are bifurcated or duplicated in other agencies, and where consolidation could result in significant reduction of redundant efforts. This includes consolidating animal health issues now split among three departments, expanding the Department's role from solely privately owned forest land management to publicly owned land, and combining food-safety inspection and food

ordering services to food banks that now are split between the Department and the Department of Health and Senior Services.